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RICARDO PEREIRA

**PROJECT, IMPLEMENTATION, SUBVERSION:
GRASPING THE CYCLE OF GLOBAL LIBERAL
HIV/AIDS POLICY**

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Correspondência:
Apartado 3087
3001-401 COIMBRA, Portugal

Ricardo Pereira¹

Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra

**Project, Implementation, Subversion:
Grasping the cycle of global liberal HIV/AIDS policy**²

Abstract: Taking the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) as case study, HIV/AIDS interventions – prevention, treatment, and an array of related health and development activities – constitute, in themselves, manifestations of the current U.S. global security project. However, irrespective of its hegemonic features, this project of power faces numerous limits and subversions. Whereas some concern the complexity generated by the adopted models of public-private partnership, others relate to the character of the relations established at different levels between partnership implementers and local target populations. However, those limits and subversions cannot be theorized as projects of counter-hegemony to the dominating political economy.

Introduction

The world of International Relations scholarship has been witnessing in the last ten years the emergence and solidification of scholarship on the nexus between national security and epidemics (Price-Smith, 2002, 2009; Ostergard, 2002), and how it has been incorporated in security thought (Elbe, 2003; Ingram, 2007). As far as the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) is concerned, it received its first large scale acknowledgement as a threat to global security at the United Nations Security Council meeting of January 10th of 2000. This was the first Security Council session ever dedicated to a health issue, proposed by the then-United States' ambassador to the United Nations Richard Holbrooke. This proposal emerged after he toured a number of African

¹ Doctoral Candidate in International Politics and Conflict Resolution at the Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra; Foundation for Science and Technology Grant Holder; and Visiting Scholar at the Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Feedback is highly appreciated through: pereirarjr@yahoo.com.

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countries where he witnessed many orphaned children agglomerated around the capital cities (Holbrooke, 2006). In fact, linkages between HIV and security have been established – thereafter generating several research agendas in the social sciences aiming at testing them – out of the assumption that HIV/AIDS provokes socio-economic disruption, given the high number of deaths and perceived orphanage in the regions where it has already become endemic (Barnett, 2006). Besides, as infected individuals fall ill and are left untreated, quality of life among the populations leads to decreasing labor productivity and political governance capability. Eventually, such disruption potentiates social chaos, violence and extremist connections, hence underpinning contexts characterized by feeble domestic political stability, conflict, disorder and human displacement (Schneider and Moodie, 2002).

But human-related threats – usually framed as non-traditional, or non-classical, threats in International Relations scholarship – are not new, neither original are the pursued countermeasures (Pereira, 2008). Rather than post-Cold War novelties health and disease policies have long been a concern among Western powers, including the United States. Although they constituted a field of “low politics” (Fidler, 2005) in diplomacy and war, both state and private interventions in the field of health have been entangled in the political economy of late colonial exploitation and postcolonial contemporary market relations (Pereira, 2008). Biomedicine in the world’s former colonial territories was introduced as a tool of civilization and evangelization by Christian missions – which pioneered and largely dominated the field – as well as by philanthropic entities and state authorities.

Although it is not this essay’s purpose to further historical accounts of biomedical implementation in the Third World, it nevertheless remains anchored to a preoccupation for processes of continuity. As such, it distances itself from mainstream liberal theoretical standpoints, mostly celebratory of major health implementations as preferable displays of Western (soft) power vis-à-vis military enforcement. Given this refusal of historical acriticism, I am adopting, as discussed in the next section, the concepts of biopower and governmentality (Michel Foucault) and market civilization (Stephen Gill) as instrumental lenses to analyze in the largest integrated mode the ‘totalitarian’ power discourses and practices of political economy in the realm of HIV/AIDS. Yet, precisely because it refuses triumphalism, it is my aim here to go beyond dimensions of project and implementation, finely captured by critical theorists, and discuss the extent to what they are subject to subversion. Thus, this paper seeks to challenge both mainstream understandings of global

HIV/AIDS implementation within the discipline as well as the critical research agenda on the topic, which has been – perhaps for methodological reasons – incapable of identifying and discussing specific micro agencies of power in its mission of researching alternatives to hegemonic political economy.

Critical Captures of Global Responses to HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS can be described as a ‘totalitarian’ phenomenon holding medical-viral dimensions as well as social elements too. Despite developments in drugs and therapies, it remains a chronic disease, meaning that infected people have to deal with it for the rest of their lives. According to latest official data, “in 2007 there were 2.7 million new HIV infections and 2 million HIV-related deaths,” most of them occurring in Sub-Saharan Africa, where “67% of all people living with HIV” are located and “75% of AIDS deaths in 2007” happened (UNAIDS, 2008). As such, HIV/AIDS has increasingly become interlinked with development, and thus with broader issues of international politics and security.

Particularly in Southern and Eastern Africa, where it holds endemic proportions, HIV/AIDS is understood as jeopardizing social and economic development and growth, given the direct impact it has on labor productivity and endurance of central national institutions, i.e. state bureaucracies, police and military forces or education agencies. Furthermore, HIV/AIDS exacerbates existing problems of orphanage and vulnerable children and conflict, and the transnational consequences they bring about. HIV/AIDS and other public health tragedies thus appear as international statehood issues of instability, which, nevertheless, so far, constitute speculative thought. In fact, the few studies analyzing the implication of HIV/AIDS for security negate the causality between HIV and state failure (Sato, 2008; Barnett and Dutta, 2008). Besides, the link between HIV and conflict is not “straightforward,” and might even be indirectly proportional, i.e. HIV proliferation diminishes in context of warfare (McInnes, 2009). For Barnett and Prins (2006), this linkage derives more from intuition than evidence.

Dimensions of exclusion and inclusion, rejection and normalization, continuity and change were some major drivers of the work pursued by French scholar Michel Foucault in the fields of madness, imprisonment and sexuality, and, later, “systems of thought.” Foucault has been extremely important in the social sciences in the last two to three decades, especially in Psychiatry, Psychology and Anthropology. Though considered an historian, Foucault

grounded much of his scholarship on Sociology, notably on the inputs of the *Institut für Sozialforschung*, i.e. the Frankfurt School's critical theory. In the particular field of International Relations and Political Science, his influence has been smaller, although lately very intense (Chandler, 2009a). The main reason concerns the 21st century imperial wars of the United States and a number of 'unfree' policies around globalization, ethnic relations and migration in/to the Western world and development in the peripheries tied to the War on Terror. Michel Foucault and his concepts of biopower and governmentality were introduced and developed within the discipline in order to comprehend the dualistic policies of the Bush Administration based, on one side, on militaristic, aggressive behavior, and, on the other, on liberal, 'soft power' measures in the realm of public health (PEPFAR and President's Malaria Initiative), development (Millennium Challenge Account) and economic growth (African Growth and Opportunity Act). This research agenda included not only the United States but also, and increasingly, other entities such as the European Union. At the core of U.S. liberal politics of free market, representative democracy and philanthropy, enforced through diplomacy, business and war, constitute the philosophy of liberal capitalism, whose modes are scrutinized through an historical-political approach.

In his 1975-76 Collège de France's lecture "Society Must Be Defended!," Foucault (2006) contradicts Claus von Clausewitz, claiming that "politics is the continuation of war by other means," and not the other way around, as the celebrated war strategist put it. This remark is instructive in terms of the shifts of conceptualization of power – liberal rather than absolute – from the 18th century on, with the end of the religious wars and the rise of what later became known as capitalism and liberal democracy. This sense of politics is less territorial and juridical and increasingly more deterritorialized and intensively political (*ibidem*). Accordingly, the nature of liberal power lies less on the utmost capacity and willingness of the sovereign of taking life, but rather on "either fostering life or impede it to the point of death" (Foucault, 1984). This characterization builds on the idea presented previously in the first volume of "The History of Sexuality" that biopower was emerging as a new type of power centered in human beings at the aggregate level and in life in general (*ibidem*). This power emanates from the parallel expansion of scientific thought and shrinking of the religious influence, as a result of the Nietzschean "death of God." Foucault dedicated an entire volume – "The Birth of Clinic" (Foucault, 1994) – to the particular role of medicine and its branches in this revolution in human knowledge about human beings and

others and nature around him, particularly in Europe. Biopower was exercised through the effort of measuring and regulating all dimensions of both biological and social life through Biology, Medicine, Sociology: birth, mortality, criminality, education, employment. Biopower is pungently ‘totalitarian,’ since it is targeted at the totality of the population and life manifestations. Liberal power is particularly complex in comparison with its former form, Absolutism. It requires rationalization and justification so it can be accepted, although, sometimes – as the very case of medicine, for instance, demonstrates – it is applied by force. Thus, power described by Foucault is presented as “power/knowledge” in order to explain the striking influence, namely moral one, of epistemic communities, i.e. groups of scientists and others legitimated by the scientific “truth” and agreeing on the measures to be taken to tackle with a specific issue (Haas, 1992), as the case of environment and even AIDS (Youde, 2007) exemplify. Basically meaning the agent of biopower, the later concept of biopolitics (Lemke, 2001) was introduced, to which one shall add up the concept of governmentality. Described as “conduct of the conduct,” it is a discursive-material apparatus of security embodying rationalities and technologies of government, which account for “discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions” (Foucault, 1980: 184). As one will see further below, the project of public-private partnership (PPP) of PEPFAR, aimed at coordinating and dominating the many parties involved with a concern for efficiency and efficacy, is finely captured by this concept of governmentality. And as PEPFAR demonstrates, these technologies are designed to avoid the use of violence to compel (Lemke, 2001). In a liberal, or liberalizing, context that would be very complicated to achieve from the perspective of the management of the system’s own sustainability. As such, frequently control is exerted through “ideological manipulation or rational argumentation, moral advice or economic exploitation” (Lemke, 2000: 5).

However, we shall remember that Michel Foucault’s concepts and methods were not originally developed to explain international relations. As a matter of fact, his concerns were primarily ‘domestic’ (France and, to a smaller extent, Germany, in the 18th and 19th century). Though not explicitly Marxist, he shared an agenda deriving from Marxian analysis of society and economy borne out of the Frankfurt School. Hence, Marxism lays the foundations for Foucauldian application to international relations (IR), which, according to Jan Selby (2007), has not been properly acknowledged by the IR scholarly community. In recent

article-responses to a number of fellow political science scholars who have been using Foucault as weapon against International Relations realism, on the one hand, and liberal global order, on the other, Selby (2007) and David Chandler (2009a, 2009b) contend the existence of an alternative political solution to liberalism in Foucauldian accounts. Usually, those accounts depart from radical philosophers Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, authors of influential *Empire* (2001) and *Multitude* (2004), who, allegedly, see new contours – biopolitical contours – in post-Cold War/post-September 11 forms of collective opposition. However, Selby (2007) considers that Foucault is, above all, an author who can help to explain the depth and intensity of liberal practices in the international system.

[A] host of writers on the borderlands between IR and postcolonial studies have sought to employ Foucault to analyse the discourses and practices of development and development assistance, contending that Western development discourse and its associated practices have constituted the ‘Third World’ as ‘underdeveloped’ – and thus in need of continual surveillance, discipline and an ever-changing menu of self-improvement programmes. (332-333)

One of those authors is Mark Duffield (2002, 2007, 2008), who continues an avenue of research which, in the last analysis, was initiated at the Frankfurt School in its post-Auschwitz phase. Holding Modernity and its perverse developmentalist creed arguably on the basis of the Nazi horrors as object of critique, it founded Post-development as a field of social critique, namely with regard to the Third World and development aid and rationales pushed by the international establishment (International Monetary Fund, World Bank, major governmental donors and large North-based NGOs). Initiated in the early to mid-1980s by Colombian anthropologist Arturo Escobar (1984/1985), it has influenced a number of authors in several fields seeking to demonstrate that development, rather than a process, is both means and end, heading to no other tangible outcomes than violence and subjection (DuBois, 1991; Brigg, 2002).

Explaining liberal practices, Foucault sheds precious light on how power works, or is meant to work, within capitalist societies, but, according to Selby (2007: 340-341), not why it works the way it does. For him, it is explained by Marxism: “the ceaseless accumulation of capital, and attendant conflicts amongst capitalists, classes and states” (*ibidem*: 340). Hence, both traditions – Foucauldian and Marxist – are “mutually enriching” (*ibidem*) and, moreover, reiterate the conclusion Foucault himself had come to when he stated that “for

many of us [them] as young intellectuals, an interest in Nietzsche of Bataille didn't represent a way of distancing oneself from Marxism or communism. Rather, it was almost the only path leading to what we, of course, thought could be expected of communism" (Macdonald, 2002).

An interest for Marxism in the domain of HIV/AIDS public-private partnerships such as PEPFAR, analyzed with a Foucauldian lens, regards, above all, a concern for international political economy, and its material power implications at the most individual level. Robert W. Cox (2005) has described the post-Cold War era as "global perestroika," given the impact the fall of the Soviet Union, its block of countries and other countries of Communist rule, had in the way that capitalism rapidly embraced those regions. Such global perestroika reconfigured the international system through the elevation in quantity and intensity of non-state actors and international organizations, that is, multinational companies, development and human rights NGOs, private military companies, and, as hybrid forms, public-private partnerships of all sorts and missions. This framework does not mean that states have vanished; on the contrary, in many ways, they reinforced their power through private partner contracting, as the very model of PPP shows, thus corresponding to the liberal ideal of limited formal state governmental power. At the level of political sovereignty, the transfer of formerly state-owned functions, such as welfare-related businesses (social security, basic health care, education) or even policing, to private actors has represented a loss in the democratic discussion – and concomitantly a 'technicalization' – of themes like poverty, social exclusion and, eventually, development. However, this politics of global perestroika were tested in the Third World before the 1989 revolutions in the old Communist world. The now-called "least developed world" worked as a laboratory for recipes of globalization in the shape of structural adjustment reforms, which led to the dismantlement of state bureaucracies and guidance towards the global marketplace through specialization in the most benefiting commodities. In order to capture the profundity of this neo-liberal project of capitalism and surveillance, Stephen Gill (1995) has introduced the concept of "market civilization."

[It] tends to generate a perspective on the world that is ahistorical, economic, materialistic, 'me-oriented,' short-termist, and ecologically myopic. Although the governance of this market civilization is framed by the discourse of globalizing neoliberalism and expressed through the interaction of free enterprise and the state, its coordination is achieved through a combination of market discipline and the direct application of political power. In this sense, there has been a 'globalisation of

liberalism', involving the emergence of market civilization: neoliberal globalization is the latest phase in a process that originated before the dawning of the Enlightenment in Europe, and accelerated in the nineteenth century with the onset of industrial capitalism and the consolidation of the integral nation-state. (*ibidem*: 399-400)

Like Foucault, Gill is concerned with the issue of whose life is fostered or impeded; in other words, of who is included and excluded in the market civilization. Yet, he posits such analysis at Marxian materialistic level: an analysis on who has access to capital and market's promised benefits, and who has not, and how and why. In the case of the Third World, where PEPFAR-funded techniques of HIV and development surveillance are implemented, acceding ones "are urban elites and ruling and emerging urban classes which benefit from the consumption patterns and incorporation into financial and production circuits of transnational capital" (407).

A 'biopolitization' at a macro-structure level goes hand-in-hand, as my case study here shows, with a micro level of biopolitics. Still, both levels of biopolitization descend from liberal, capitalist-led political economies, summarized as panopticism out of "disciplinary neoliberalism."

The concept of discipline advanced [...] combines macro- and micro-dimensions of power: the structural power of capital; the ability to promote uniformity and obedience within parties, cadres, organizations, and especially in class formations associated with the transnational capital [...]; and particular instances of disciplinary power in a Foucauldian sense. [...] [Neoliberal] forms of discipline are not necessarily universal or consistent, but they are bureaucratized and institutionalized, and they operate with different degrees of intensity across a range of 'public' and 'private' spheres. (411-412)

Recent studies of processes of construction, or reconstruction, of national institutions of statehood, usually in the aftermath of armed conflict, have reiterated views presented above with regard to development assistance (Bickerton *et al.*, 2007). The design and implementation of formal institutions in a political-economic context of liberal, capitalist economic growth and development by the international community and the usual Western donors seek the normalization and reengineering of social and political behaviors. Such action in behaviors followed by constant surveillance and reliance on the international community (Bickerton, 2007: 107-108) and aided by a humanitarian and developmental apparatus. Moreover, Chandler (2006) has pointed out that the implementation of institutions providing public goods and working as sites of political democratic deliberation (government,

assemblies and judiciaries) are operating as tie-breakers between national leadership and the populations they are supposed to represent. Whereas the former, given the dependence on the international community, work toward the fulfillment of international community's requirements, the latter, rather than connected to the state institutions for public goods, increase their dependence on the system of international NGOs, private companies, and often criminal activity too.

From a Foucauldian point of view, the micro-level, centered on the individual, is probably the least problematic to grasp. Yet, it demands meticulous analysis. Whereas the question of medicalization represents a crude example of the dialectic domination/liberation of the body, especially when considering HIV/AIDS and the vital role antiretroviral (ARV) drugs play in the survival of many patients, discussions around prevention are much more elaborated. The so-called ABC (abstinence until marriage, be faithful to your partner, and correct and consistent use of condoms) strategy has been a fundamental orientation in PEPFAR funding. While the distribution of condoms and the individual or peer counseling sessions sought to promote their use are meant to function as techniques for individual responsibility-taking and individualization of risk as Eunice Seixas (2009) shows in her discussion of UNAIDS guidelines applied globally, abstinence and fidelity are rather 'different stories.' Although they long belong to World Health Organization's cadre of recommendations (Hardee *et al.*, 2009), the religious connotations they find themselves attached to demand careful assessment. The main reason has to do with the fact that, despite capitalist political economy remains largely legitimated, the project of society proposed by religious institutions may be rather different than the liberal rationalist type grounded on separation from religion. This point will be retaken later in the concluding section.

Nevertheless, awareness-raising in the context of PEPFAR and U.S. foreign policy seeks not only responsibility, but also hope. Lastly these personal values interconnect with notions of self-reliance capacitating toward integration in the global economy. The concept of self-reliance as safety remedy has been critiqued for different reasons, notably for its impossible sustainability in the Third World in circumstances of natural or societal disaster (Duffield, 2008). However, here it suffices to say self-reliance emerges as the ultimate ideal in the project of individual and group hope and responsibility-raising through prevention and treatment against the HIV infection. At the same time, these same values, once inserted in a macro framework engaged in state and economy building or conversion, and prevention of

state failure and extremism in times of global war on terror, operate as liberal technologies of counterinsurgency. As Ward Casscells, President Bush's latest assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, has recently stated: "humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and other activities designed to win the hearts and minds of local populations are important counterinsurgency measures" (Buxbaum, 2009).

PEPFAR Project: Infra-structure and subjectivities

Launched in 2003, PEPFAR has been analyzed in the context of the U.S. War on Terror both from a 'supportive' (Lyman and Morrison, 2006) and critical (d'Aoust, 2006) point of view. The fear of an expanding global jihad exploiting social vulnerabilities provoked by AIDS in the worst-affected territories of Muslim majority or of Muslim 'large minorities,' such as Nigeria, South Africa and Ethiopia, constitutes, according to influent literature, a serious motivation for action and scale-up (Lyman and Morrison, 2006). Yet, as seen above, linkages to security precede, not only September 11 2001 terrorist attacks, but also the very Bush Administration. In the last analysis, it goes as back as to early 1900s philanthropy by such institutions as the Rockefellers Foundation's International Health Commission. Its missions in several regions of the world, notably in strategically relevant Central and South Americas, fulfilled a clear-cut strategy of, without territorial domination (that is, unlike the fading European empires), attaining new markets for the growing, globalizing U.S. economy, in which contemporary intervention builds upon (Arnold, 1988).

But preventing global jihads and local instability through HIV/AIDS implementation does not represent, as such, the sole justification for PEPFAR which so far has allocated close to 15 billion dollars. Other reasons are mobilizing enough too. First, there are domestic constraints, i.e. arguably the need faced by the Bush Administration to respond to its pressuring Christian conservative constituency (Catholic, Evangelical and of other denominations) vastly engaged in HIV/AIDS, and broadly in development, in the Third World (Dietrich, 2007). Second, in the latest period of his mandate, President Bush has arguably 'necessitated' to deposit positive policy-making legacy vis-à-vis very low popularity levels at home and abroad, because of the economic downturn and dissatisfaction with the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan (Feffer, 2008). However, those low levels existed but in PEPFAR's focus countries, as late Global AIDS Coordinator Mark Dybul aptly highlighted during the presidency's transitional period (Dybul, 2009). Finally, philanthropy – often

expressed as “compassion” – has guided both fund allocation and implementation by a wide range of nongovernmental organizations throughout the fifteen focus countries and a number of others where the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) carries out activities in the field too. To an extent, this explanation reflects continuity from the earliest colonial incursions, especially when emphasizing the role of faith-based organizations. However, its very complexity also opens up an exploration of elements of subversion as seen further ahead.

PEPFAR constitutes the largest financial bilateral initiative to fight a single disease ever. Established by the United States Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria Act of 2003 and five years later continued by the Tom Lantos and Henry J. Hyde United States Global Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria Reauthorization Act of 2008. PEPFAR is managed by the Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator and reunites several implementing governmental agencies: U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Peace Corps and Departments of State, Defense, Trade, Labor, and Health and Human Resources. Additionally, PEPFAR has been a program President Bush has been personally involved in until the last year of his mandate, as his tour to a number of African countries in the Spring of 2008 demonstrated.

PEPFAR funding channeled through USAID and diplomatic missions has virtually reached the vast majority of countries where the United States supports development-related work. However, since the beginning, it has focused on fifteen countries, i.e. those countries account for half of the global number of infections by HIV, according to UNAIDS. Most of them are in Southern and Eastern Africa, some of them, coincidentally, of major importance for the United States economy and defense concerns, namely Ethiopia, Nigeria and South Africa.³ Those countries are pertinent in the U.S. foreign agenda for diverse reasons: the first is the most important partner in the localized war on terror in the Horn of Africa, the other two being relevant both for their mineral resources (oil, and gold and diamonds, respectively) and their regional power status as macro-stabilizers of Sub-Saharan African instability. Still, irrespective of the particularities associated with those three countries, all countries were generally presented by former U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator Mark Dybul as the “future” of United States-led global order:

³ Other focus countries are Botswana, Cote d’Ivoire, French Guyana, Haiti, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam and Zambia.

Our future is Africa's future and Africa's future is our future. So there's very much that long-term vision for a stable world in which we play a role and have a role. And it's in our self-interest. [...] [These programs] have changed how people view America. [...] people know what we stand for when we stand with them. And eight of ten of the countries in the world with the highest approval rating of the United States, sometimes higher than the United States itself, are in Africa. [...] These programs touch lives. (Dybul, 2009)

It has been PEPFAR's policy from its inception to discriminate positively faith-based organizations engaged in the provision of care to HIV/AIDS-affected populations in a broader context of evangelization and development. Such policy aimed at facilitating access to funding by a set of traditional implementing organizations allegedly discriminated by the previous democrat Clinton Administration, is seen by liberal critics as a reward by the President to his strong Christian conservative constituency (Fletcher, 2006). However, more than an actual reward, PEPFAR per se, at the programmatic level, matches the conservative agenda through the mandatory allocation of 33% of prevention funds to ABC-rooted strategies. In addition, the Bush Administration reinstated so-called Mexico City Policy, a 1984 President Reagan policy which forbids the U.S. government from funding organizations prescribing abortions for family planning-purposes.

Most critiques of PEPFAR, insistently casted by large family planning organizations such as the International Planned Parenthood Federation and the Guttmacher Institute, can be framed as feminist accusations of neglect of women rights, in general, and specific risk groups in particular, notably sex workers. Also male homosexuals and needle-sharing drug users were marginalized by a moralist agenda of abstinence, faithfulness and the 'Christian family model.' Yet, a further economic critique is to be raised.

According to the Government Accountability Office (2008: 10), budgetary allocations for the 2003-2008 five-year period were mostly oriented towards ARV-based treatment (55%), the rest being dedicated to palliative care (15%), prevention (20%) and orphans and vulnerable children (10%). The problem with PEPFAR treatment funding is that, rather than being used for contracting preferably less expensive, generic ARVs (and thus expanding scale-up efforts), was oriented for the purchase of U.S. "Big Pharma" branded ARVs, comparatively more expensive, as a report by online publication Reproductive Health Reality Check as denounced (Thompson, 2007). As such, PEPFAR has worked as a governmental protectionist scheme for U.S. pharmaceutical companies to enter African markets.

It is important to affirm that, as a global public-private partnership,⁴ host countries' institutions are equally very relevant. As any annual report to the U.S. Congress demonstrates, 'partnership' has been a key buzzword in the process of PEPFAR. PEPFAR policy documents have always been very keen in terms of 'horizontalizing' relations, showing that, in these difficult times of AIDS, the U.S. government and proud nongovernmental organizations stand together with the world's least advantaged. Illustratively, photographs line side by side President Bush or a U.S. ambassador with their counterparts or 'civil society members,' especially children and young people. In turn, the flag of the United States stands side by side with the host country's. However, such horizontalization is 'verticalized' by the inclusion of 'American compassion' as the moral justification for U.S. taxpaying support to AIDS efforts thousands of miles away in Africa.

Over the years PEPFAR has advanced different models of partnership. The latest incarnation has received the title of "partnership framework" (PEPFAR, 2009b) in March 2009, which replaces the previous, called "partnership compact" (PEPFAR, 2009a: 58-59). Allegedly, differences between one and the other merely regard juridical definitions, as the newest denomination is not legally binding. Nevertheless, one can argue that, at the content level, one is essentially talking about the same, and thus it is pertinent to insert this quotation about "partnership compact" extracted from the latest, 2009 annual report to the U.S. Congress:

To build on the success the American people's partnerships have achieved to date and reflect the paradigm shift to an ethic of mutual partnership, the USG is working with host countries to develop Partnership Compacts: agreements that engage governments, civil society, and the private sector to address the issues of HIV/AIDS. The goal of Compacts is to advance the progress and leadership of host nations in the fight against HIV/AIDS, with a view toward enhancing country ownership of their programs. [...] PEPFAR will continue to be part of this new era of development that champions friendship and respect, mutual understanding and accountability — and trusts in the people on the ground to do the work. (PEPFAR, 2009a: 58)

In its March 2009 draft version, the Partnership framework's guidance text states "an optional two-step process of developing a broad initial Partnership Framework and a subsequent more detailed Partnership Framework Implementation Plan" (PEPFAR, 2009b:

⁴ Global public-private partnership can be defined as "a collaborative relationship formed between at least three parties: 1) a corporation or industry association, 2) intergovernmental organizations, and 3) national authorities" (Brown, 2007).

3). Moreover, the five-year co-joint strategic partnership framework is to fulfill principles of transparency, accountability, and the active participation of other key partners from civil society, the private sector, other bilateral and multilateral partners (e.g., Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria [GFATM]), and international organizations, and should support and strengthen national HIV/AIDS strategies” (*ibidem*).⁵ Out of the different principles I would emphasize “country ownership” and flexibility, since they assure the willingness of biopolitical surveillance.⁶ For now, it is relevant to stress that this document reinforces the economic critique which has been commented about shadowy relations between PEPFAR and pharmaceutical companies. However, the question does not regard the generic vs. brand drugs struggle, but, more importantly in my view, the plain absence of transfer of technology in PEPFAR funding towards the installation of manufacturing structures in the host countries. Accordingly, in terms of “ensuring provision of HIV prophylactic treatment of 85% of pregnant women who require intervention” (one objective), the national government is only supposed to procure drugs (PEPFAR, 2009b: 16). In fact, national governments are merely supposed to define curricula for prevention, train and expand male circumcision, and assure laboratory investigations. From a national ownership and future sustainability perspective, one is to wonder how host countries are owners of implemented strategies, since, at least through PEPFAR, they do not benefit from international technology, and thus do not achieve longer lasting solutions through PEPFAR.

Political intensity embedded in PEPFAR – from partnership framework plans and discourses to treatment and prevention actions ‘in the field’ – aims ultimately at recreating hope, responsibility and self-reliance. As suggested in the theoretical section above, this recreation is pursued at macro and micro levels. In fact, sustainable hope cannot be achieved only through Medicine, Social Work or Evangelization. As a global policy, HIV/AIDS must be incorporated in a comprehensive set of practices – no matter how fragmentary they might appear. Hope is construed in function of a liberal creed of economic, business development, and hence requires the celebration of merit and self-esteem. In contrast, hopelessness is taken as a leading factor for rebellion and extremism.

⁵ It should be mentioned that PEPFAR’s budget includes the U.S. participation in the Global Fund. The other multilateral institution in which the U.S. is engaged is UNAIDS.

⁶ Interestingly enough, at time of writing, there was only one co-signature of a Partnership Framework, and with a PEPFAR non-focus country, that is, Malawi. This seems to reinforce the importance of political integration and acceptance, notably of national state authorities, irrespective of juridical statements.

PEPFAR is clearly articulated with the African Growth and Opportunity Act of 2000. Its latest report, of 2008, affirms that it “has helped African firms become more competitive internationally, thereby bolstering sub-Saharan African economic growth and helping to alleviate poverty in one of the poorest regions of the world” (OUSTR, 2008: 7). However, such economic growth has not been large enough in order to reduce the large trade deficit the U.S. maintains with Africa as a whole (DoC, 2009). As such, it is necessary to foster economic growth in order to enlarge a consuming market for U.S. products.

The Limits of Public-Private Partnerships

As a model for domestic governance in the United States, public-private partnership is far from a 1980s neoliberal governance model. “Networked government” (Kettl, 2008) emerged in the wake of the 1930s Great Depression as the possible response for the lagging capacity to continue the 19th century Progressives’ ideal of revered separation between central and local governments, on one side, and constrained state administrations and private and not-for-profit agencies in terms of public policy implementation, on the other (*ibidem*: 4-5). As such, U.S. earliest forms of public-private partnership had to face, first, the problem of vast unemployment and social need, and, later, the World War II effort. Afterwards, those models became permanent throughout the 1950s and 1960s, exemplified by programs such as “War on Poverty,” “Model Cities Program,” Medicaid and Medicare. Whereas during the first three decades after World War II government agencies were involved more directly in policy implementation (hence, going beyond mere management), from the 1980s on general policies of outsourcing of state functions became the norm (*ibidem*). Comparatively, Western Europe’s post-World War II response was much more statist than the U.S. one, grounded on State-run social security; however, similarly, the tendency of privatization of public goods delivery was followed too. As a result, the state as public goods provider is transformed into a “hollow state” (Milward and Provan, 2000), i.e. “a metaphor to describe the increasing reliance of the public sector on contracting with nonprofit agencies and for-profit firms to delivery of taxpayer funded goods and services” (*ibidem*).

Writing particularly about the French case, labor sociologists Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello (2001) have extensively described contemporary forms of public-private partnership as fulfilling the neoliberal ideal of “society by project” and expressing “the new spirit of capitalism” represented by governmental leaders like Ronald Reagan and Margaret

Thatcher. It is “new,” not because capitalism itself was a novelty, of course, but because it was experienced in its world centers in different ways comparing to pre-1980s, industrialist, Fordist era. In the last two to three decades, those centers became primarily sites of financial and company management, as industrialism is outsourced to “emergent” regions of Eastern Asia and other parts of the world. This spirit occurs through an actual scholarly conversion to so-called “sciences of management,” whose research agenda is guided by such keywords as flexibilization, competitiveness, information technologies and projectization. Moreover, this flexible and competitive new spirit of capitalism appears as a renovated fashion to combat previous decades of politicization of social relations, now seen by its proponents – many of them, Boltanski (2008) recalls, former Trotskyist, “permanent revolution” advocates of May 1968 later turned *yuppies* – as “political rigidities” to a ‘more favorable’ economic-growth atmosphere.

As far as international development is concerned, to the keywords above one could add “governance at a distance” (Duffield, 2005: 208-210) through technologies of management like the logical framework. These tools build on a presumption of neutrality of developmental and anti-poverty work, taking the shape of professional-technical intervention impinged to overcome political rigidities, as influential anthropological works of the mid-1990s by Arturo Escobar and James Ferguson (Dar and Cooke, 2008). Partnerships, notably transnational ones, integrate elements of reciprocity, mutuality and pluralism (Kettl, 2008: 10; Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff, 2004: 255). However, that does not mean they are more democratic (Roelofs, 2009), both in terms of inter-partner relations and between the partnership framework and a whole public lying at the margins: from taxpayers, who fund the partnership, to clients, who are subject to their activities’ ambitions and interventions. Flexibility does not mean more simplicity of relations, rather on the contrary: large partnerships tend to generate grand complexity, being admittedly difficult to take hold of theoretically (Milward and Provan, 2000; Kettl, 2008; Roelofs, 2009). Similarly, goals based on empowerment and country ownership – subjectivities connected to hope, responsibility and self-reliance – are advanced too. Country ownership is what recipient countries obtain when “urged to take ownership of development policies and aid activities in their country, to establish their own systems of coordinating donors, and only to accept aid that suits their needs” (Renzio *et al.*, 2008: 1).

According to Cooke (2003), this system of ownership provision, promoted, for instance, by the World Bank and repeated by other donors, discloses close vicinity with colonial forms of administration, namely “indirect rule,” in which colonial administration was tentatively more profitable when transmitted to native elites in order to prevent contestation. However, it is also important, as Katharina Welle (2001) has demonstrated, to bear in mind that partnership as an organizing model of transnational collaboration has had different meanings in contemporary development discourse and practice. In her examination of a collaborative project of water management in Ghana, Welle made the distinction between partnership as “discourse of solidarity” and as “discourse of efficiency” (*ibidem*: 4). Whereas initially (i.e. early 1970s) partnership would stand for a commitment of solidarity as a mode of alternative development (*ibidem*: 7) involving, primarily, nongovernmental partners in the North and South, later, from the mid-1980s until today, as large financial institutions started to implicate NGOs in their development financing (*ibidem*: 9), partnerships started to be understood as means of achieving “good government” (*ibidem*: 10) – or good governance as the latest jargon put it – from an efficiency point of view. In the case of PEPFAR, official texts reflect the paradigm shift:

The U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) seeks to develop public-private partnerships (PPPs) to bring HIV/AIDS interventions to scale, enhance the effectiveness of programs, and fully integrate the initiative into the future health and development plans of partner countries. PEPFAR defines public-private partnerships as collaborative endeavors that combine resources from the public sector with resources from the private sector to accomplish the goals of HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care. (...) PPPs enable the U.S. Government (USG) and private sector entities to maximize their efforts through jointly-defined objectives, program design and implementation. These mutually-beneficial arrangements enhance local and international capacity to deliver high-quality health services and prevention programs, and leverage the core competencies of each sector to multiply their impact. (PEPFAR, 2009c)

This kind of partnership’s discourse represents an example of a tendency identified by Escobar in his mid-1980s article of constant cooptation of alternative discourses advanced by Third World nationalist leaders by the sovereign imperial political-economic power (Escobar, 1984/1985: 390-392), later found being used to reinforce continuous strings of domination. A PEPFAR-related case can be found in the concept of country ownership. Nationalist, anti-colonialist ideals of independence, sovereignty and non-interference, often articulated with collectivism and socialism, was captured by a transnational exploitative discourse, which,

though talking the language of nation-state and nation-building, imposes a meta-narrative of integration in what Susan Roberts and colleagues (2003: 891) call the “functioning core” of their neoliberal geopolitics mapping.

The problem of discourse co-optation followed by attraction to hegemonic liberal capitalism through public-private partnerships resides at the core of my inquiry. However, despite its actual hegemony, it does not mean that it is plainly proficient as a project. As matter of implementation, public-private partnerships face a range of ‘weak sides’ – usually designated as “challenges” by leadership too – which, not only limit its governance, but also can be subject to subversion.

One major trouble associated with PPP implementation, particularly among taxpayers, has concerned questions of accountability and transparency. Although some critical literature of neoliberal governance indicates those features as inherently sources of legitimization (Santos, 2005), it is rather questionable how successful they have been in that task. According to Milward and Provan (2000), “there is little evidence that we know much more about how to manage decentralized programs effectively at the community level [because] what happens on the ground is very complex [and] evaluation is time consuming, expensive, and often bears bad tidings” (361). Besides, unlike bureaucracies, networks risk failing in predictability and stability over time as “managers are continually faced with problems that can lead to instability – negotiating, coordinating, monitoring, holding third-parties accountable, and writing and enforcing contracts – all for organizations that are relatively independent of the funder” (*ibidem*: 363).⁷ Whereas these aspects raise issues of public legitimacy and cohesion of the PPP, Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff (2004) identified the problem of donors running the risk of being funding “revolutionaries” (Malena, 2000). In her account of four NGO types (“beneficiaries, mercenaries, missionaries and revolutionaries”) in relationship with the World Bank, Carmen Malena has called revolutionaries those

[seeking] involvement in Bank-financed projects for strategic or political reasons, [whose] objective is to influence Bank and/or government decisions and actions - often in relation to issues such as poverty reduction, social justice, environmental protection and indigenous peoples' rights (or human rights more broadly) [and] often involve coalitions of directly affected groups (or their representatives) and national or international NGOs who share their concerns. (*ibidem*: 29).

⁷ This description is consistent with Boltanski’s (2008) observation that former-Trotskyists-turned-yuppies are now implementing their youthful “permanent revolution” in restless management of highly decentralized, flexible labor corporate relations!

Interestingly, this type of NGO corresponds to the type eminently engaging, at least, in a repoliticization of poverty, which, as “revolutionary” as they are, from the perspective of the donor, can be considered as demonstrations of “insincerity” by those NGOs. Thus, donors are advised to watch out for “naïve” funding decisions (Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff, 2004: 265).

Micro Dimensions of Subversion

By discussing critically current models of public-private partnership, in which U.S. PEPFAR works as case study, this paper has attempted at building a compact of macro and micro dimensions of today’s global governance of hegemonic liberal, capitalist power built on market civilization, biopolitics and governmentality and their projected subjectivities. However, it is also concerned with the contingencies of this hegemony too, as the previous section demonstrated. In this concluding part, I am connecting those contingencies to further forms of limit and subversion.

A number of very recent medical-anthropological inquiries on local actors involved in HIV/AIDS-related work has been raising interesting questions around how internationally projectized empowerment and sustainability manifest themselves, and how should they be construed: collaborative, syncretic or subversive? These studies are generically about internationally-supported AIDS interventions (not necessarily PEPFAR-funded) in specific Sub-Saharan African contexts. Before going into them, it is pertinent to insert this contextualizing observation by James Ferguson (2006) about Africa in the neoliberal global age.

“Globalization” has not brought a global consumer culture within the reach of most Africans, and still less has it imposed a homogenization of lifestyles with a global norm. Rather, it has brought an increasingly acute awareness of the semiotic and material goods of the global rich, even as economic pauperization and the loss of faith in the promises of development have made the chances of actually attaining such goods seem more remote than ever. (21)

Pessimistically, Ferguson concludes what large sectors of African societies, but also groups of Global North-based governments, private investors and development practitioners,

not to say academics, have been realizing. It is in this context that AIDS interventions tend to find themselves struggling in.

In his studies on HIV in Tanzania, Hansjörg Dilger has been analyzing the limits of biomedical intervention in the country (both as colonial and postcolonial state policy). For him, Foucauldian “technologies of the self” centered in self-responsibility, self-regulation and individualization of risk are imminently confined to urban middle classes, namely youths, standing large sectors of society at the margins of it. Conversely, the rising number of local Evangelical and Pentecostal Christian congregations has been prominent in the response to the ‘masses’ (Dilger, 2009). Although internationally connected, these congregations are locally based and are gaining political influence at the national level. These international linkages are tantamount to the circulation of capital, yet, fragmentarily (Ibid: 8), meaning spaces of “illiberalism,” as expression of refusal or resistance to the biomedical regime of truth in favor of alternative solutions such as rituals of healing. In other national contexts, like Ethiopia, similar expressions take place too. A 2006 field investigation pursued by Washington-based Center for Public Integrity on PEPFAR’s implementation – suggestively called “Divine Interventions” – has documented the strategies based on rituals of healing (opposed to biomedicine) carried out by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (Guevara, 2006).

Despite the porosity of the postcolonial state at the level of local-global connections (Swidler, 2007: 146) and vast unequal relations between the West and Africa, potentiating neo-imperial projects, Swidler identifies room for subversion and change in relations:

Despite donors’ prestige and financial heft, they have more difficulty penetrating and altering local patterns of governance than one might expect. Many kinds of institutional imageries, ideologies, and buzz words are embraced with great enthusiasm by those whom NGOs and other international organizations seek to transform. But what donor organizations offer is received (or seized) within a different social organization. (Swidler, Forthcoming: 7)

Evaluating the process of training of local practitioners for HIV/AIDS care by international NGOs with an aim at building capacities for a long-run sustainable response, Ann Swidler in Malawi and D. J. Smith in Nigeria (Swidler and Watkins, 2009) have drawn attention to the perverse results generated by a system which could be described as ‘financiation’ of capacity-building. Local to-be activists and practitioners are attracted to training workshops through payment of per diems and other incentives. The problem of this

“workshop mentality” (Smith, 2003) resides in the fact that it posits too much confidence on the financial incentives, and hence undermines the response’s long-run sustainability. In contexts of generalized poverty and hardship, as financial incentives end, trained activists and practitioners tend to cease their program collaboration and move to another source of income.

‘Financiation’ of collaboration by locals reveals an issue long identified by Africanist scholarship – relations of patronage – that can be observed in other spheres of program implementation. In the case of community mobilization, fundamental for data collection and several public health activities, like testing, it turns out to be almost inescapable to negotiate with local chiefs the participation of their villagers in such sessions. In practice, typical patron-client relationships have to be reproduced, in which roles might interchange depending on the context: the NGO plays the client and the chief the patron so a ‘mobilization’ can be set up, and vice-versa when the chief seeks to obtain something useful to him and/or his own clients from the international wealthy NGO.

These anthropological inquiries point to important limits and subversions of the hegemonic project. Yet, I would not argue they express a counter-hegemony in terms Gramsci-inspired scholars possibly would, that is, as an alternative emancipative counter-power project *à la* World Social Forum (Santos, 2005). Local church congregations and community chiefs represent local forms of coping with what Swidler calls “global demands” (Swidler, 2007), and thus without menacing the political-economic dictates. They rather represent minor, individualized forms of benefiting from the global circuits of capital, and as such minimal expressions of liberalism. At least for Sub-Saharan Africa, it looks far from predictable a larger expansion of globally integrating markets, and hence a prospect of deficiency in the power project. They do not seem to contribute for the widening of global markets which can sustainably animate empowered, hopeful, responsible and self-reliant mass consumers and in this way secure the U.S. strategic agenda.

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