

# THE USE OF HOPE

Biopolitics of security during the Obama presidency

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## Abstract

Through a compilation of four research articles, this PhD thesis investigates ‘hope’ as a biopolitical technology. It interrogates the use of hope by the United States security apparatus, on the one hand, to pre-empt processes of radicalisation and, on the other hand, to prepare the subject of security to cope with permanent insecurity. The dissertation analyses the security discourse of the Obama Administrations 2009 – 2016, paying particular attention to strategic narratives of hope across three principal domains of US security: diplomacy, development and military. The thesis thereby renders visible the ambiguous relations between hope and insecurity in US foreign policy during the Obama period: between hate and hope in the domain of (public) diplomacy; between despair and hope in the domain of development; and between fear and hope in the military domain. To analyse the respective strategic narratives, the thesis employs a theoretical framework drawn from Giorgio Agamben’s theory of biopolitics. Through Agamben’s theoretical perspective, hope appears as a means of governing the future, a technology employed to regulate processes of subjectification. The dissertation’s theoretical ambition is to question a central assumption undergirding important critique of the post-9/11 biopolitical condition: namely that practices of security are inherently at odds with hope, operating through discourses and practices of fear and suffering to reduce the capacity to hope within the global populace. By analysing the appropriation of hope by US security discourse, the thesis explores how practices of security works *through* hope to achieve security. US security discourse achieves this by means of constituting a particular form of hopeful life: an individualised and resilient form of neoliberal life who is called to embody an indistinction between fear, despair, hate *and* hope.

Keywords: hope, biopolitics, Agamben, Obama, security, development, public diplomacy, resilience, radicalisation, counterterrorism, strategic narratives, neoliberalism, discourse analysis.

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