

foucault society must be defended

foucault society must be defended is a pivotal concept introduced by the French philosopher Michel Foucault, emphasizing the ongoing struggle within societies to manage power relations and conflicts. This phrase originates from a series of lectures Foucault delivered, where he explored how societies justify mechanisms of defense and control under the guise of protection and survival. Understanding "Foucault society must be defended" involves delving into his theories on power, biopolitics, and the state's role in shaping social order. This article provides an in-depth analysis of Foucault's ideas surrounding the notion that societies inherently perceive themselves as being under threat and thus engage in forms of defense that influence law, politics, and social structures. The discussion includes the historical context of Foucault's lectures, the concept of biopower, and the implications for modern governance and social theory. The following sections will unpack these themes systematically for a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

- Historical Context of "Society Must Be Defended"
- Foucault's Concept of Power and Biopolitics
- Mechanisms of Defense in Society
- Implications for Modern Governance
- Critiques and Contemporary Relevance

Historical Context of "Society Must Be Defended"

The phrase "society must be defended" comes from Michel Foucault's 1975–1976 lecture series at the Collège de France, where he examined war as a metaphor for power relations in the development of modern states. Foucault challenged traditional historical narratives by arguing that the history of power is inseparable from conflict and the management of enemies perceived as threats to the social order. His lectures situate the concept within the broader history of political thought, particularly focusing on the 17th and 18th centuries, when the notion of sovereignty and state power evolved in response to internal and external conflicts.

War and State Formation

Foucault discusses how war has historically played a central role in the formation of states and the justification of sovereign power. The state, according to Foucault, defines itself through the identification of enemies and the mobilization of society around the defense against these threats. This militaristic framing serves as a foundation for the state's

authority and its legal and political institutions.

Race War and Biopolitical Control

One of Foucault's key insights is his analysis of "race war" as a metaphor for the conflict that underpins power relations. He argues that the concept of race war was used historically to legitimize exclusionary and violent practices, which later evolved into mechanisms of biopolitical control aimed at regulating populations rather than merely defeating external enemies.

Foucault's Concept of Power and Biopolitics

Central to understanding "foucault society must be defended" is Foucault's redefinition of power. Unlike traditional views that see power as possessed or wielded by individuals or institutions, Foucault presents power as relational, diffused throughout society, and exercised through discourses and practices. His concept of biopolitics further expands this by focusing on how power operates on populations, managing life, health, and biological processes.

Power as a Network

Foucault describes power as a complex network that permeates social relations. Instead of being centralized, power circulates through various institutions, norms, and knowledge systems. This decentralized view helps explain how societies defend themselves not only through overt violence but also through subtle forms of control.

Biopower and Population Management

Biopower refers to the techniques and strategies by which human life processes are managed under regimes of authority over knowledge, power, and the body. This includes public health policies, surveillance, and regulatory mechanisms designed to optimize the life and productivity of populations, which are justified as necessary for societal defense.

Mechanisms of Defense in Society

In "society must be defended," Foucault highlights various mechanisms through which societies organize their defense against perceived threats. These mechanisms extend beyond military action to include legal, political, and social institutions that regulate behavior and maintain order. Understanding these mechanisms illuminates how power is

exercised in everyday life under the premise of protection.

Surveillance and Discipline

Drawing from his earlier works, Foucault explains how surveillance and disciplinary practices serve as forms of social defense. Institutions such as prisons, schools, and hospitals act as sites where individuals are monitored and normalized, reducing disorder and reinforcing societal cohesion.

Legal and Political Control

Legal frameworks and political rhetoric often invoke the necessity of defense to legitimize restrictive laws and exceptional measures. States use the discourse of defense to justify actions that may limit freedoms in the name of protecting the social body from internal or external enemies.

List of Key Defense Mechanisms in Society

- Military and police enforcement
- Legal restrictions and emergency laws
- Surveillance systems and data monitoring
- Public health policies and population regulation
- Education and normalization through institutions

Implications for Modern Governance

The concept of "foucault society must be defended" has profound implications for understanding contemporary governance. Modern states continue to rely on defense discourses to shape policies related to security, immigration, and public health. Foucault's analysis helps reveal the underlying power dynamics that influence these practices and the potential for abuse when defense becomes a rationale for exclusion and control.

Security and the State of Exception

Governments often declare states of emergency or exceptional circumstances to address perceived threats. Foucault's framework suggests that such measures are not exceptions but integral to the exercise of power and governance, allowing temporary suspensions of normal rights in the name of defense.

Population Control and Biopolitical Strategies

Modern biopolitical strategies include vaccination programs, reproductive policies, and urban planning designed to manage populations effectively. These strategies reflect the continued importance of defense mechanisms that operate on the level of life itself, rather than just the legal or military spheres.

Critiques and Contemporary Relevance

While Foucault's "society must be defended" lectures have been influential, they have also faced critiques regarding their applicability and interpretation. Nonetheless, the concept remains relevant in analyzing current social and political challenges, particularly in debates over security, rights, and state power.

Critiques of Foucault's Approach

Some scholars argue that Foucault's emphasis on power as conflict overlooks moments of consensus and cooperation in society. Others critique his approach for being overly cynical about the role of the state and social institutions.

Relevance in the 21st Century

In an age marked by global terrorism, pandemics, and digital surveillance, the idea that society must be defended continues to shape public discourse and policy. Foucault's insights provide valuable tools for critically assessing how defense rhetoric influences governance and social relations today.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main argument in Foucault's 'Society Must Be Defended'?

'Society Must Be Defended' argues that power relations in society are deeply connected to war and conflict, suggesting that societal structures are maintained through ongoing struggles and that power operates through mechanisms of exclusion and control.

How does Foucault link war and politics in 'Society Must Be Defended'?

Foucault proposes that politics is essentially a continuation of war by other means, where power is exercised through strategic conflicts and struggles rather than traditional state-centric warfare.

What role does biopolitics play in 'Society Must Be Defended'?

In 'Society Must Be Defended,' Foucault introduces biopolitics as the regulation of populations through power over life and death, emphasizing how modern states manage populations through surveillance, norms, and control rather than overt violence.

Why does Foucault say 'society must be defended'?

Foucault argues that societies justify their mechanisms of control and exclusion by framing them as necessary defenses against internal and external threats, thereby legitimizing power structures through the rhetoric of survival and security.

What is the significance of the concept of 'race war' in Foucault's lectures?

Foucault uses the concept of 'race war' metaphorically to describe the ongoing conflict between different social groups, illustrating how power struggles are inherent in society and how historical narratives of race war underpin modern power relations.

How does Foucault's view in 'Society Must Be Defended' challenge traditional views of sovereignty?

Foucault challenges the traditional notion of sovereignty as absolute power by showing how power is diffuse, exercised through networks of institutions, and deeply linked to conflict and biopolitics rather than centralized authority.

In what format was 'Society Must Be Defended' originally presented?

'Society Must Be Defended' was originally presented as a series of lectures by Michel Foucault at the Collège de France in 1975-1976 before being published as a book.

Additional Resources

1. *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*

This is Michel Foucault's seminal work where he explores the relationship between war, politics, and power. Delivered as a series of lectures, Foucault examines how power is exercised through social institutions and how societies justify their control mechanisms. It offers a deep dive into biopolitics and the concept of "race struggle" as a metaphor for political conflict.

2. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*

In this influential book, Foucault analyzes the evolution of the modern penal system and the ways discipline is embedded in societal structures. He traces the shift from corporal punishment to surveillance and normalization, emphasizing the role of institutions in controlling bodies and minds. The book provides a foundational understanding of power dynamics in modern societies.

3. *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*

Foucault challenges traditional views of sexuality by showing how power and knowledge intersect in the regulation of bodies and desires. He argues that sexuality is not merely a natural given but is deeply shaped by social discourses and institutions. This work introduces the concept of biopower and its impact on individual and collective identities.

4. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*

This collection of interviews and essays offers insights into Foucault's ideas about the relationship between power and knowledge. He discusses how knowledge systems serve as instruments of power, shaping social norms and behaviors. The book is essential for understanding the practical applications of Foucault's theories in various societal contexts.

5. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*

Foucault explores the methodology behind his approach to history and discourse analysis in this work. He critiques traditional historiography and proposes a new way of examining the rules and structures that govern knowledge production. This book is crucial for those interested in the theoretical underpinnings of Foucault's studies on society and power.

6. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*

This book traces the changing perceptions and treatment of madness from the Renaissance to modern times. Foucault reveals how societal institutions categorize and control those deemed insane, reflecting broader mechanisms of power and exclusion. It highlights the intersection of knowledge, power, and social norms in defining normalcy.

7. *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978*

Following "Society Must Be Defended," these lectures delve deeper into the concept of governmentality and the management of populations. Foucault examines how modern states regulate security and territorial control through various techniques and policies. The work is key to understanding the evolution of state power and biopolitics.

8. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*

Here, Foucault discusses the emergence of neoliberalism and its influence on political rationality and governance. He analyzes how economic theories shape governmental practices and social policies, focusing on the role of the individual within the market.

society. This collection is vital for comprehending contemporary forms of power and control.

9. *Michel Foucault and the Politics of Freedom* by Timothy O'Leary

This book provides a comprehensive analysis of Foucault's political thought, emphasizing his views on freedom, resistance, and power. O'Leary situates Foucault's ideas within broader political debates and explores their relevance to contemporary social issues. It serves as a valuable resource for readers seeking to connect Foucault's theories to practical political activism.

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Foreword: François Ewald and Alessandro Fontana Introduction: Arnold I. Davidson One: 7 January 1976 What is a lecture? -- Subjugated knowledges. -- Historical knowledge of struggles, genealogies, and scientific discourse. -- Power, or what is at stake in genealogies. -- Juridical and economic conceptions of power. -- Power as repression and power as war. -- Clausewitz's aphorism inverted. Two: 14 January 1976 War and power. -- Philosophy and the limits of power. -- Law and royal power. -- Law, domination, and subjugation. -- Analytics of power: questions of method. -- Theory of sovereignty. -- Disciplinary power. -- Rule and norm. Three: 21 January 1976 Theory of sovereignty and operators of domination. -- War as analyzer of power relations. -- The binary structure of society. -- Historico-political discourse, the discourse of perpetual war. -- The dialectic and its codifications. -- The discourse of race struggle and its transcriptions. Four: 28 January 1976 Historical discourse and its supporters. -- The counterhistory of race struggle. -- Roman history and biblical history. -- Revolutionary discourse. -- Birth and transformation of racism. -- Race purity and State racism: the Nazi transformation and the Soviet transformation. Five: 4 February 1976 Answer to a question on anti-Semitism. -- Hobbes on war and sovereignty. -- The discourse on the Conquest in England: royalists, parliamentarians, and Levellers. -- The binary schema and political historicism. -- What Hobbes wanted to eliminate. Six: 11 February 1976 Stories about origins. -- The Trojan myth. -- France's heredity. -- Franco-Gallia.--Invasion, history, and public right. -- National dualism. -- The knowledge of the prince. -- Boulainvillier's *Etat de la France*.--The clerk, the intendant, and the knowledge of the aristocracy. -- A new subject of history. -- History and constitution. Seven: 18 February 1976 Nation and nations. -- The Roman conquest. -- Grandeur and decadence of the Romans. -- Boulainvilliers on the freedom of the Germans. -- The Soissons vase. -- Origins of feudalism. -- Church, right, and the language of State. -- Boulainvilliers: three generalizations about war: law of history and law of nature, the institutions of war, the calculation of forces. -- Remarks on war. Eight: 25 February 1976: Boulainvilliers and the constitution of a historico-political continuum. -- Historicism. -- Tragedy and public right. -- The central administration of history. -- The problematic of the Enlightenment and the genealogy of knowledges. -- The four operations of disciplinary knowledge and their effects. -- Philosophy and science. -- Disciplining knowledges. Nine: 3 March 1976 Tactical generalization of historical knowledge. -- Constitution, Revolution, and cyclical history. -- The savage and the barbarian. -- Three ways of filtering barbarism: tactics of historical discourse.

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 application. -- Population. -- Of death, and of the death of Franco in particular. -- Articulations of
 discipline and regulation: workers' housing, sexuality, and the norm. -- Biopower and racism. --
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 Alessandro Fontana and Mauro Bertani Index.

foucault society must be defended: *Society Must be Defended* Michel Foucault, 2004 Foucault
 deals with the emergence in the early 17th century of a new understanding of society and its
 relation to war.

foucault society must be defended: *"Society Must Be Defended"* Michel Foucault, 2004-03-27
 This text is a full transcript of the lectures given by Michel Foucault at the Collège de France in
 1975-76. The main theme of the lectures is the contention that war can be used to analyze power
 relations. Foucault contends that politics is a continuation of war by other means. Thus, any
 constitutional theory of sovereignty and right is an attempt to refute the fact that power relations
 are based upon a relationship of conflict, violence and domination.

foucault society must be defended: Why Foucault? Michael A. Peters, Tina Besley, 2007
 Textbook

**foucault society must be defended: Insiders and Outsiders in Seventeenth-Century
 Philosophy** G.A.J. Rogers, Tom Sorell, Jill Kraye, 2009-10-28 Seventeenth-century philosophy
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 imagined encounters among Aboriginal peoples, European colonists, Chinese migrants, and
 mixed-race populations produced racial anxieties that underwrote crossracial contacts in the salmon
 canneries, the illicit liquor trade, and the (white) slavery scare in late-nineteenth- and
 early-twentieth-century British Columbia. *Colonial Proximities* explores the legal and spatial
 strategies of rule deployed by Indian agents, missionaries, and legal authorities who aspired to
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 of Chinese migration, this book reveals that territorial dispossession and Chinese exclusion were
 never distinct projects but two conjunctive processes in the making of the settler regime. Drawing
 on archival documents and historical records, *Colonial Proximities* historicizes current discussions of
 multiculturalism and pluralism in modern settler societies by revealing how crossracial interactions
 in one colonial contact zone inspired juridical racial truths and forms of governance that continue to
 linger in contemporary racial politics. It is essential reading for students and practitioners of history,
 anthropology, sociology, colonial/postcolonial studies, and critical race and legal studies.

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 2024-05-16 Our contemporary mode of life is characterised by what Serene Richards in *Biopolitics
 as a System of Thought* calls: Smart Being. Smart Being believes in the solutions of techno-capital
 where living is always at stake and directed to survival. Armed with this concept, this book examines
 how we arrived at this mode of being and asks how it could be that, while the material conditions of
 our lives have increasingly worsened, our capacities for effective political action, understood as the
 capacity for transforming our existing social relations, appear to be diminishing. Drawing from
 jurists and philosophers such as Pierre Legendre, Yan Thomas, Giorgio Agamben, Michel Foucault
 and Gilles Deleuze, Richards argues that biopolitics intervenes at the most minute level of our

everyday lives. She argues that there are conceptual truths presupposed in the mode of biopolitics' functioning, for instance that life can be assigned a value for the purpose of intervention, abandonment, or death, which have implications for our politics. In exciting engagements with political movements such as the post-May 1968 Mouvement des travailleurs Arabes (MTA), Richards shows how demands to transform our system of social relations are undermined by institutional models that proffer to offer rights protection while simultaneously annihilating the living altogether. Through a reappraisal of law, governance and capital, Richards seeks to reconceptualise our collectivity of thought, arguing for a politics of destitution that could form the basis of a communism to come.

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foucault society must be defended: The New Media and Cybercultures Anthology Pramod K. Nayar, 2010-04-26 Moving beyond traditional cyberculture studies paradigms in several key ways, this comprehensive collection marks the increasing convergence of cyberculture with other forms of media, and with all aspects of our lives in a digitized world. Includes essential readings for both the student and scholar of a diverse range of fields, including new and digital media, internet studies, digital arts and culture studies, network culture studies, and the information society Incorporates essays by both new and established scholars of digital cultures, including Andy Miah, Eugene Thacker, Lisa Nakamura, Chris Hables Gray, Sonia Livingstone and Espen Aarseth Created explicitly for the undergraduate student, with comprehensive introductions to each section that outline the main ideas of each essay Explores the many facets of cyberculture, and includes sections on race, politics, gender, theory, gaming, and space The perfect companion to Nayar's Introduction to New Media and Cyberculture

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foucault society must be defended: On the Greek Origins of Biopolitics Mika Ojakangas, 2016-04-28 This book explores the origins of western biopolitics in ancient Greek political thought. Ojakangas's argues that the conception of politics as the regulation of the quantity and quality of population in the name of the security and happiness of the state and its inhabitants is as old as the

western political thought itself: the politico-philosophical categories of classical thought, particularly those of Plato and Aristotle, were already biopolitical categories. In their books on politics, Plato and Aristotle do not only deal with all the central topics of biopolitics from the political point of view, but for them these topics are the very keystone of politics and the art of government. Yet although the Western understanding of politics was already biopolitical in classical Greece, the book does not argue that the history of biopolitics would constitute a continuum from antiquity to the twentieth century. Instead Ojakangas argues that the birth of Christianity entailed a crisis of the classical biopolitical rationality, as the majority of classical biopolitical themes concerning the government of men and populations faded away or were outright rejected. It was not until the renaissance of the classical culture and literature – including the translation of Plato’s and Aristotles political works into Latin – that biopolitics became topical again in the West. The book will be of great interest to scholars and students in the field of social and political studies, social and political theory, moral and political philosophy, IR theory, intellectual history, classical studies.

foucault society must be defended: Power and Progress on the Prairie Thomas Biolsi, 2018-05-22 A critical exploration of how modernity and progress were imposed on the people and land of rural South Dakota The Rosebud Country, comprising four counties in rural South Dakota, was first established as the Rosebud Indian Reservation in 1889 to settle the Sicangu Lakota. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, white homesteaders arrived in the area and became the majority population. Today, the population of Rosebud Country is nearly evenly divided between Indians and whites. In *Power and Progress on the Prairie*, Thomas Biolsi traces how a variety of governmental actors, including public officials, bureaucrats, and experts in civil society, invented and applied ideas about modernity and progress to the people and the land. Through a series of case studies—programs to settle “surplus” Indian lands, to “civilize” the Indians, to “modernize” white farmers, to find strategic sites for nuclear missile silos, and to extend voting rights to Lakota people—Biolsi examines how these various “problems” came into focus for government experts and how remedies were devised and implemented. Drawing on theories of governmentality derived from Michel Foucault, Biolsi challenges the idea that the problems identified by state agents and the solutions they implemented were inevitable or rational. Rather, through fine-grained analysis of the impact of these programs on both the Lakota and white residents, he reveals that their underlying logic was too often arbitrary and devastating.

foucault society must be defended: Necrogeopolitics Caroline Alphin, François Debrix, 2019-10-08 *Necrogeopolitics: On Death and Death-Making in International Relations* brings together a diverse array of critical IR scholars, political theorists, critical security studies researchers, and critical geographers to provide a series of interventions on the topic of death and death-making in global politics. Contrary to most existing scholarship, this volume does not place the emphasis on traditional sources or large-scale configurations of power/force leading to death in IR. Instead, it details, theorizes, and challenges more mundane, perhaps banal, and often ordinary modalities of violence perpetrated against human lives and bodies, and often contributing to horrific instances of death and destruction. Concepts such as slow death, soft killing, superfluous bodies, or extra/ordinary destruction/disappearance are brought to the fore by prominent voices in these fields alongside more junior creative thinkers to rethink the politics of life and death in the global polity away from dominant IR or political theory paradigms about power, force, and violence. The volume features chapters that offer thought-provoking reconsiderations of key concepts, theories, and practices about death and death-making along with other chapters that seek to challenge some of these concepts, theories, or practices in settings that include the Palestinian territories, Brazilian cities, displaced population flows from the Middle East, sites of immigration policing in North America, and spaces of welfare politics in Scandinavian states.

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being shared by a given community. The question explored is the following: If the form of life is what gives us being, what role does language play? Topics explored include the concepts of propaganda and ideology, and how these terms always refer to what others say and do, never to our own actions and discourses. The central part of the book is devoted to an analysis of language itself, including propaganda, emotions, dispositions, and racism and racist discourses. The book also analyses Vladimir Putin's speeches on the occasion of the Russian war in Ukraine, the elements of their propaganda, and the justifying elements that are part of their ethical discourse, whereby actions taken or to be taken are justified as good because they are necessary from their ontological principle.

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Considers the problems of sovereignty through the work of Rousseau, Arendt, Foucault, Agamben, and Derrida.

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Drawing from Michel Foucault's understanding of power, David A. Kaden explores how relations of power are instrumental in forming law as an object of discourse in the Gospel of Matthew and in the Letters of Paul. This is a comparative project in that the author examines the role that power relations play in generating discussions of law in the first century context, and in several ethnographies from the field of the anthropology of law from Indonesia, Mexico, the Philippines, and colonial-era Hawaii. Discussions of law proliferate in situations where the relations of power within social groups come into contact with social forces outside the group. David A. Kaden's interdisciplinary approach reframes how law is studied in Christian Origins scholarship, especially Pauline and Matthean scholarship, by focusing on what makes discourses on law possible. For this he relies heavily on cross-cultural, ethnographic materials from legal anthropology.

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On an Empty Stomach examines the practical techniques humanitarians have used to manage and measure starvation, from Victorian scientific soup kitchens to space-age, high-protein foods. Tracing the evolution of these techniques since the start of the nineteenth century, Tom Scott-Smith argues that humanitarianism is not a simple story of progress and improvement, but rather is profoundly shaped by sociopolitical conditions. Aid is often presented as an apolitical and technical project, but the way humanitarians conceive and tackle human needs has always been deeply influenced by culture, politics, and society. These influences extend down to the most detailed mechanisms for measuring malnutrition and providing sustenance. As Scott-Smith shows, over the past century, the humanitarian approach to hunger has redefined food as nutrients and hunger as a medical condition. Aid has become more individualized, medicalized, and rationalized, shaped by modernism in bureaucracy, commerce, and food technology. On an Empty Stomach focuses on the gains and losses that result, examining the complex compromises that arise between efficiency of distribution and quality of care. Scott-Smith concludes that humanitarian groups have developed an approach to the empty stomach that is dependent on compact, commercially produced devices and is often paternalistic and culturally insensitive.

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Education is a violent act, yet this violence is concealed by its good intent. Education presents itself as a distinctly improving, enabling practice. Even its most radical critics assume that education is, at core, an incontestable social good. Setting education in its political context, this book, now in paperback, offers a history of good intentions, ranging from the birth of modern schooling and modern examination, to the rise (and fall) of meritocracy. In challenging all that is well-intentioned in education, it reveals how our educational commitments are always underwritten by violence. Our highest ideals have the lowest origins. Seeking to unsettle a settled conscience, Benign Violence: Education in and beyond the Age of Reason is designed to

disturb the reader. Education constitutes us as subjects; we owe our existence to its violent inscriptions. Those who refuse or rebel against our educational present must begin by objecting to the subjects we have become.

foucault society must be defended: *Famine in Cambodia* James A. Tyner, 2023-04-15 This book examines three consecutive famines in Cambodia during the 1970s, exploring both continuities and discontinuities of all three. Cambodia experienced these consecutive famines against the backdrop of four distinct governments: the Kingdom of Cambodia (1953–1970), the U.S.-supported Khmer Republic (1970–1975), the communist Democratic Kampuchea (1975–1979), and the Vietnamese-controlled People's Republic of Kampuchea (1979–1989). *Famine in Cambodia* documents how state-induced famine constituted a form of sovereign violence and operated against the backdrop of sweeping historical transformations of Cambodian society. It also highlights how state-induced famines should not be solely framed from the vantage point in which famine occurs but should also focus on the geopolitics of state-induced famines, as states other than Cambodia conditioned the famine in Cambodia. Drawing on an array of theorists, including Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, and Achille Mbembe, James A. Tyner provides a conceptual framework to bring together geopolitics, biopolitics, and necropolitics in an effort to expand our understanding of state-induced famines. Tyner argues that state-induced famine constitutes a form of sovereign violence—a form of power that both takes life and disallows life.

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