

## Profit-driven policy and human insecurity

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Submission date: 3 May 2023; Acceptance date: 19 July 2023; Publication date: 17 November 2023

### Abstract

This article provides a holistic account of the deep-rooted structural harms permeating contemporary society, offering theoretical and philosophical analysis of how such harm occurs, and how it is supported and sustained. Context is supplied so as to assess the ways in which profit and power are a primary focality of contemporary societal structures, at the expense of human security. By providing contextual analysis, it assesses the current political, economic, and societal climate and how human insecurity is a by-product of such. Critically considering how profit-driven policies exist within this setting, it offers a critical consideration of how power dynamics create a disparity between social, state and corporate actors and their subjective (il)legal proceedings. The article retains the question of whether true human security is an attainable reality.

**Keywords:** security, neoliberalism, profit, power, capitalism, harm

### Introduction

This article assesses how profit and power drive policy in political, economic, and social settings at the expense of human security, by providing the theoretical tools from a variety of philosophies and academic frameworks, so to attain a holistic understanding of injurious narratives, structural violence, and social injustices perpetuated outwardly of a weighted system. The overall argument is that harms are imposed through power dynamics outward of neoliberal and capitalist systems, at the expense of human security. More specifically, this paper critically analyzes concepts of the War on Terror and global arms trade, providing global relativity to traditional security failings in terms of human security, and privatization and policing in austerity to offer a localized scale of understanding. It also examines the medicinal marijuana trade in terms of neoliberal capitalization, state-corporate criminality, and power to circumvent legality symbiotically criminalizing such on a societal scale, understood in

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terms of ultra-realism, transcendental materialism, special liberty, and pseudo-pacification. It concludes by looking at the zemiological harms and structural violence evident in the cost-of-living crisis.

## **Part 1. Theorizing power and harms within a human security framework and political, economic and social landscape**

### *Traditional and human security*

Security in academia is an essentially contested concept (Gallie & Broad, 1956). Security saturates modern societies universally; in politics, statute and foreign policy, mass media, and even within societal discourse (Williams & McDonald, 2018). As a multi-disciplinary concept, the term encompasses a scope of theorem, applicable to a variation of related practice. Here, traditional and human security are cardinal in saturated understanding (Baldwin, 1997). Human security theory, a revolutionary movement within the field of research, seeks to confront the complexities of (in)security, implementing a collaborative approach in the interface of the theorem to understand the threat, from a civilian-centric, context-based perspective, utilizing a protection and empowerment framework (UNTFHS 2009). The theory idealizes an egalitarian society, structurally underpinning notions of equality and fairness. The CHS definition of human security inherently protects essential human freedoms in the core elements of life, securing individuals from threat to livelihood in a social, economic, political, and cultural sphere (CHS, 2003). Ultimately human security theory re-conceptualizes security fundamentally, centralizing citizenry by departing from traditional security theories of state centrism and militant security in the physical manifestation of threat, recognizing that state interests do not mirror that of society (Williams & McDonald, 2018). Traditional security theory aligns a more superficial definition of security and threats in the preservation of the state and its borders existing in an international system; security practice and academic discourse predominantly remain focal on traditional avenues, neglecting to consider more critical theories. Associated theorems of liberalism and realism, although oftentimes opposing one another, prioritize the state in securing global hegemony in profit and power (Smith, 2021; Williams & MacDonald, 2018).

What constitutes true security and the attainability of such, objectively speaking, is discerned in the rationally adjudged lack of threat, existing in a risk society, implying the quantifiable nature of security. In essence, are the impositions consequent of prevalent threat objectively parallel to the imposed risk? (Rothschild, 1995; Baldwin, 1995). Fully realizing security in a subjective, fluid manner, what comprises security centralizes the feeling of such, focal on the individually and socially constructed scale of risk and the confidence in institutions entrusted with security proceedings. Convictions of security are rooted in social contexts rendering the concept as socially constructed, not dissimilar from the dominant security threat, terrorism (Newburn, 2017; Jarvis & Holland 2015;). Given the subjectively socially constructed nature of security and threats, focality on traditional academia and practice inherently neglects this notion in the hyperfocus on chief singular risks to physical state security. This allows the emergence of threat in avenues separate from this creating insecurity concerning the wider institutional, structural, and societal harms considered within the human security framework (Žižek, 2009). Contextualizing this based exclusively on the interest of the public, the priority of security and that what it secures should fundamentally be society, rooted in the accepted scale of risk; that what society considers of chief importance in the highest threat should hold value in the primary focus of security practice (Williams & MacDonald, 2018).

### *Neoliberalism and capitalism*

Capitalism and neoliberalism work in duality, their fundamental principles of privatization, enrichment, and power hegemony working to reinforce one another in a symbiotic relationship (McLaughlin & Muncie, 2019). Neoliberalism is understood as an economic and political doctrine, corresponding with a *laissez-faire* policy of minimal state intervention in the private sector inherently reinforcing ideologies of monopoly, individualism, and competition (Chomsky & Mcchesney, 2011). Capitalism is a political and economic system in which state affairs are controlled by private actors for profit as opposed to centralized state control (Coates, 2016). Neoliberalism and capitalism fundamentally capacitate the ease of free trade; establishing a free market legitimizes deregulated trade of assets within enterprise, permitting optimum profitability and efficiency with freedom to subjectively self-govern conduct. Optimal functionality when free of external control, seeing the state as a hindrance to enrichment potential given its regulatory power, thus seeks to “cut the red tape”, advancing imprudence toward wider contemporary society (Lynes et al., 2020; McLaughlin & Muncie 2019). The conceptualization of “the invisible hand” by Adam Smith initially exhibited notions of self-regulated markets reliant on the internalized pursuit of profit, maintaining individualism and self-enrichment rather than community and togetherness (Smith, 2008). Overlooking the societal implications of a preferential and weighted system generates economic expansion for those holding greater power at the expense of wider society as a consequence of neoliberal ideologies (Harvey, 2005). What Smith neglects to account for is the widely accepted notion that such coercion toward financial hegemony motivates criminality and deviance in society, particularly those impuissant to the economic system (Atkinson, 2014).

A widely held consensus is that state collective power is the result of the uprising of neoliberalism. Neoliberal and capitalist ideology in their inherent pursuit of monopoly, by default, sanction those possessing higher power the capability to utilize greater opportunity permitted by social hierarchy (Hillyard & Tombs, 2017). Mark Fisher theorizes late capitalism as a point of no return ensuing a capitalist system, an outward consequence of a partisan society. Failure to confront the systematic and societal harms resultant of a weighted system with no appraisal of alternative notions creates conditions whereby substantial systematic change is a rapidly depreciating reality, or even a feasible one (Fisher, 2009). *The Shock Doctrine* further conceptualizes how globalized capitalist policy shocks citizenry into conforming to the status quo, by extension the socio-economic-political regime, devoid of the requisite power to administer change and thus forced into a system stacked against them (Klein, 2007). Reinforcing free market economics is the supposition that such is inherently favorable. Acquisition of wealth and material assets concentrates enrichment to those opportunistic, holding power for prosperity through avenues of capitalism and neoliberalism. A cardinal consideration is the manifestation of such power in influencing and manipulating trade for certain interests, extending to policies, structures, and procedures, at times producing necessary conditions, so as to maintain individualized profit (Trevino, 2011). As such, 42 of the wealthiest individuals hold the same wealth as the 3.7 billion poorest, adding that 8.2% of global wealth generated in 2017 went to the richest 1% (Oxfam, 2023). Authorizing such privileged freedom promotes the aspirational pursuit of profit in self-serving respects of power hegemony at the expense of the well-being of the wider citizenry. Again, contemporary society could exist underpinned by community values, liberty, and co-equality instead of structures that promote human insecurity (Winlow & Hall, 2013).

### *Power*

Power is a pre-eminent facet in best conceptualizing the nuance of matters discussed in this article. The study of power is extensively researched evoking frequent debate in academia; with

no widely accepted definition, the term pertains to individuals' subjective definition rooted in idiosyncratic theory and knowledge (Wright Mills, 1956). Steven Lukes theorizes power constructs in three dimensions, established coinciding with individual standing in the social order. In context, the symbiotic relationship shared between the state, media agencies, and corporate actors expands the capacity for opportunity and mutual profit (Lukes, 2005). The successful operation of media is outward of a globalized world and promotes a swift exchange of knowledge and information, particularly in the age of technology and the internet (Jewkes, 2015). Infamous for his authoritative reign over the predominance of British media institutions, Rupert Murdoch is closely connected to the political sphere and an abundance of powerful political actors; as such his influence over news media enables the promotion of ideologies aligned with political ideals symbiotically rejecting narratives nonconforming to the asserted status quo (Hobbs, 2010). Galtung in his conviction of power and violence gives light to the close working relationship of the state and media for the primary purpose of profit and power hegemony and promoting ideals so as to secure normality in the state of affairs (Galtung, 1969).

Foucault's stance on power theorizes the capacity for such, although not a guaranteed facet, is exhibited in all acts of contemporary societal structure and function; remaining focal on its productive nature retains the notion that power is not a given and instead is induced outwardly of drive for dominion and monopoly (Demchenko, 2008). Such conviction somewhat aids in understanding the nature of debate in this paper, in that it presents the persuasive nature to pursue power hegemony. Awareness of this thinking is necessary, however a more nuanced and deep understanding of this matter is offered in the work of Bourdieu. Bourdieu provides the theory of symbolic power which critiques individualized analysis, offering contemporary and progressive effort to theorize the evermore ambiguous manifestations of power in modern systems and institutes of societal function. Bourdieu's theory intrinsically links the relationship shared in individual habitus and societal structure, noting the subjugation of social actors and organizations of contemporary civil culture. Howbeit, such theorizing of symbolic power disallows "the possibility of autonomous agency and an emancipatory political praxis" (Cronin, 1996).

To offer a more nuanced cognizance of such interpersonal relations and symbolic power, the work of C. Wright Mills covers the symbiotic relationship pertaining to state, economic, corporate, and military power dynamics, stating that such reciprocity creates an environment for opportunity, affluence and profit, a prerequisite of neoliberal ideals. Such a hypothesis expresses the significance of power dynamics uniting corporate and governmental agents, furthering the successful functionality and profitability; specifically, the inner workings of power and elitist spheres utilize their collective power where such lies for mutual profit and power hegemony (Wright Mills, 1956). C Wright Mills advocates a necessity to revert to an elite centralized definition of power denoting the term has become misdirected and lost its literal meaning; commonly power is underrepresented in theorizing criminality and harmful narratives perpetuated by state-corporate institutions (Treviño, 2011). Society is often underrepresented, symbolizing the lack of power and resources to tackle state-corporate criminality. Those holding necessary power control narratives, circumvent laws, and produce policy for assured ease of function; it is identifiable that society is blindsided by the systematic problems encroaching. Individuals secure in the knowledge that power attainment is futile, with no desire to focus on this narrative tend to separate themselves from such as it is easier than efforts to evoke true structural and systematic change for the better in relation to society as a whole (Dorling, 2015; Hall & Winlow, 2015).

### *White collar crime*

Early academia and research into corporate crimes first refers to the term "white collar crime" in relation to harms precipitated by powerful social, political, economic, and

corporate agents of distinction and privilege. Proposing that actors in corporate and state spheres possess the necessary power to hold influence over legal affairs and policy production outward of their social class (Sutherland, 1961). As it stands, criminal law and social policy is designed and administered by state and governmental agents whereby the opinion of powerful agents is influential, particularly in economic and corporate settings (Hillyard & Tombs, 2017). Understanding this with the severity of harms perpetrated by such remit of power, it is clearly signified how much remains far beyond the reach of legal action; those guilty harbor power to define such criminality, ensuring evasion of legal repercussion. In avoidance of such, legality is secured despite great immorality, like the deviant acts themselves, meaning that an abundance of harmful actions, policies and narratives are pursued without a criminal title (Hobbs, 2013). The complete failure to recognize such state-corporate deviance within the criminal justice system allows the issues, if at all recognized, to be managed internally away from the public eye and thus not regarded in the context of harm it creates, supplementing the understanding that business and legal proceedings exist under the guise of ethics and security (Tombs & Whyte, 2015). Removing the veil reveals how the system in all avenues supports profits driven by power and works in a cyclical nature to sustain itself, avoiding legal and social action by remaining beneath the surface of the “iceberg of violence”.

Lassett advances this in his cognizance of state-corporate crimes, more specifically state-initiated and state-facilitated crimes, seeking a nuanced understanding of the field. Lassett says how, in one respect, states are the primary agents engaging in advantageous corporate ministrations. In another respect, states permit criminal proceedings by acting in collusion through avenues of laxity and inadequate mandate; both avenues of state-corporate criminality are foundational in connivance with the latter cardinal in supplementing the understandings of this article (Lassett, 2014). Finding basis in the united relationship of powerful state and private agents, displaying the allied and collaborative nature, research conducted coherently accentuates how the political and economic landscape in which modern society exists creates conditions for such state-corporate criminality to materialize with ease; notwithstanding that systematic and administrative inadequacies promote this environment but, in truth, profit and power supremacy is an assumed element of which states substantially commend and endorse (Snider, 2015). A pre-eminent factor in best conceptualizing this paper is recognizing the similitude of organized crime and state-corporate crimes when regarding their structure, motivational factors, and functionality, at times their methods of operation. Oftentimes a complete disconnect in relating the two avenues of criminality, viewed in complete polarity but inherently are one-in-the-same, with disparity conserved through opportunities available to powerful state actors.

### *Structural violence*

Traditional security practice remains largely focused on physical avenues of securing state security and borders, often the reality of such is extreme use of force. In the same regard, physical acts of violence remain in predominant interest when thinking about how violence manifests. Violence is commonly related to an individual actor committing visible and superficial acts inducing physical harm, remaining focal on a singular identifiable agent and outward physical impairment (Žižek, 2008). According to Bufacchi, violence can be conceived through two avenues, the first of which is a “minimalist conception” wholly focal on bodily harms outwards of a use of force (Bufacchi, 2005; Glasser 1994). Stanko’s definition of violence is regularly utilized in academia, fitting the narrative of singularly perpetrated physical bodily harms however extends to psychological harms (Stanko, 1990). Such superficial convictions on violence are largely critiqued in terms of epistemology and ontology, rendering

state-corporate or institutionally inflicted harms outward of structure and policy remain beyond this theory of violence (Lynes et al., 2020).

An important note is that violence is produced in various ways based on the motivational and situational realities of the actor; harm in this context can manifest physically, psychologically, socially, and structurally. The work of Žižek symbolizes how violence has transposed from conventional formality to more pervasively ingrained, systemic violence and harms inflicted on the social system inherently linked to hierarchical dimensions of power (Žižek, 2008). The ultra-realist theory seeks to explore how such violence and societal injustice and harm manifest, noting the thought that “Violence is no longer conducted with the sword, but with the pen” (Hall, 2009). Interpretations of violence in a conventional fashion often refer to direct forms of violence; Galtung theorizes such forms constitute only the top of his metaphorical “iceberg of violence”, a theoretical framework developed to visually represent how a great number of marginalized, unheeded harms remain beyond the scope of recognition in public spheres, camouflaged under the guise of a secure, just society, governance and structure. As a fully realized concept, violence is not only physical and individualistic but is psychological and collective. Galtung coins the term structural violence in relation to unnoticed forms of violence which fabricate the profound depths and concealed element of the “iceberg of violence”. Galtung, when conceptualizing structural violence, refers to exploitative, corrupt and unethical social, political, and economic systems evoking great psychological harms extending to social, economic and political injustices. Components like cuts to public funding, disassembly of social welfare, job insecurity and unemployment all supplement the understanding of structural violence; it provides a medium to detail how social dispositioning situates humanity in the way of harm (Galtung, 1969). Such permeating violence is denoted as structural as they are deep-set economic, political, and corporate institutions of the social sphere and lived reality; they are violent as they cause harm to individuals. Žižek further develops the concept of structural violence in his theory of objective violence, interpreting that prominence placed on structural forms of violence and harm gives light to a capitalist system of economy and politics fixating society as collateral in the ease of function, suggesting that violence is intrinsic to the system itself. Žižek advocates that such violence in modern neoliberal systems stimulates exploitative practice, insufficient welfare, and systemic inequality, outwardly producing poverty in every sense of the word and by extension human insecurity (Oksala, 2016). Essentially, there is a failure to recognize such harmful narratives as a form of violence promoting harm as it is entrenched in the “normality” of social function and status quo.

### *Zemiology and harm*

Conventional criminology permits a myriad of social harms to be ill-considered; the periphery of criminological understanding renders social harms conceptually limited and impedes the contextualization of wider harms. Zemiology is wholly critical of criminological study suggesting it fails to truly recognize and comprehend the issue of harm and how such manifests subjectively in reality, offering contemporary theoretical perspectives on violence and harm so as to attain a deeper understanding of how such substantiates reality (Canning & Tombs, 2021). Zemiology goes beyond the scope of philosophy offered by the criminological discipline, seeking depth in understanding injurious harms outward of an unjust structure fostered in decision-making and social-economic injustice permeating all aspects of contemporary society (Hillyard & Tombs, 2017). The discipline begins to shed light on contemporary criminality, more widely social harms and structural violence inflicted by such causing widespread trauma in various regards, providing the necessary tools and theoretical basis for conceptualizing social harm and injustice outward of profit and power-driven policies. It provides deeper insight into the structural functionality aiding recognition of societal issues

surrounding structural violence and harm. Those with the necessary power to do so can steer policy and navigate law utilizing economic, political and powerful resources and connections available to them due to their social standing; criminology neglects to theorize how such produces harmful narratives, deviance and criminality (Boukli & Kotzé, 2018).

Through the lens of zemiology there is a prominent perception of how state-corporate harm and deviance, even criminality, sustains social injustices by virtue of structural and systemic violence (Soliman, 2021). Viewing the contents of this paper through a zemiological lens displays how affiliation of power and political influence allows the conditions for those to circumvent laws, producing policy so that such harmful narratives go beyond the reach of the law, extending beyond the public eye. Beliefs that criminology fails to account for harmful consequences of deviant actions, in this context the harmful narratives perpetuated from the profit and power-driven decision-making in positions of elite power. Hillyard and Tombs consider nine key elements in understanding social harm and state how those with the necessary power to do so will utilize deviancy to maintain the societal status quo, and supplement personal interest and motivational factors, fully recognizing that where criminology lacks the theoretical framework to best conceptualize this, zemiology allows room for acknowledging how powerful agents take advantage of the opportunistic disposition of which they exist in (Hillyard, Pantazis, Tombs, & Gordon, 2004)

#### *Ultra-realism, transcendental materialism, special liberty, and pseudo-pacification*

Ultra-realist criminology seeks to expose and examine the injurious narratives that remain under the “iceberg of violence” and unnoticed in mainstream criminological thinking (Žižek, 2008). It recognizes the true reality of crimes of the powerful and state institutions and the creation of conditions whereby the lived reality of the working classes of contemporary society is that of depravity and struggle, with criminality and illicit/deviant behavior as a virtual certainty to maintain monetary, social and independent security and conform to the societal norm (Kotzé & Lloyd, 2022). Ultra-realism analyses crime and harm and how such manifests, looking beneath the ontological and epistemological assumptions of orthodox criminological perspectives on human nature, recognizing that remaining focal on the empirical and the actual maintains a superficial comprehension. Neglect in examining the nuance of reality reveals an abstruse underlying generative process existing in contemporary social systems. Such nuanced depth of understanding is vital in conceiving the reality of criminal and harmful actors and how such behaviors manifest oftentimes at the expense of society (Raymen, 2022). Ultra-realist criminology seeks understanding beyond the confines of empirical criminological research, placing focus on considerations of ideological motivations, political landscape and the structural underpinnings and inner working mechanisms of societal function (Raymen & Kuldova, 2021). Theorizing crime is an outward “expression of capitalist values” and “a synecdoche and direct unmediated expression of political-economic conditions alone” (Wood et al., 2020).

Transcendental materialism, in seeking to comprehend the construction of malevolent, injurious, and in some instances criminogenic subjectivities, enhances the intellectual framework of ultra-realism by providing nuance to extended theorem alike special liberty and pseudo-pacification and is a core component of the ultra-realist paradigm. Categorized as an ontological perspective of ultra-realism, it provides the understanding to conceptualize the “relationship of the individual subject and the wider socio-symbolic structure” (Wakeman, 2018; Kotzé & Lloyd, 2022: 20). Analyzing the manifestation of good and evil, the framework rejects philosophy, by extension criminological theory, asserting that the subject, existing in a distinct social, cultural, political, economic context, is inherently neither good nor evil instead possesses equal prospects for both (Hall & Winlow, 2015). Instead, individuals act in compliance with the customary status quo, society’s conception of

orthodoxy and deviance, and their subconscious code of morality. It aids in understanding the motivations behind the creation of harmful sub-narratives by providing a theoretical framework for how such comes to fruition in the name of exclusive profitability and power at the expense of contemporary society (Kotzé & Lloyd, 2022).

The theorem of special liberty is understood as a consequence of individual liberty and by extension neoliberal and capitalist structures (Fisher, 2009). It formulates the perception that once, albeit by self-proclamation, power and prestige are certainly acclaimed, the individual or collective state-corporate power as a superior influence is absolved from social responsibility and is free to conduct business freely despite any notable risk factors to wider society (Kotzé & Lloyd, 2022). Conceptions of special liberties are supplemented in the theory of pseudo-pacification in that cooperatively they underpin the “powerful and historically specific libertarian macro-cultural current that underlies modernity and capitalism” (Hall & Wilson, 2014: 245). Concurrent with the symbolic order entrenched in contemporary society, ideologies of individualism, monopoly, and self-sufficiency are embedded in and reflected across all levels of the social hierarchy expressing how motivations are self-same despite social standing. Situating the notion of special liberty and pseudo-pacification, theorem considered an inevitable reality in contemporary society through avenues of a globalized world and neoliberal structure, within the context of the central governance displays their homogenous power serving an advantage in the utilization of special liberty for individual profitability in all regards, symbiotically controlling policy and procedure thus generating socio-economic inequality to the comparably disadvantaged. The conditions for attainable enrichment in such a system lay in favor of those existing in power dynamics, in this context power relates to the attainment of opportunity in a monetary, political, corporate, and social sense (Hall et al., 2018). It is cardinal to consider that across society’s hierarchical structure, at all levels monetary prosperity, social influence and monopoly are key motivational factors foundational in the conduction of self-stability. Contextualizing this in such a manner exhibits unwaveringly the creation of conditions whereby such abundant enrichment is viable without consequence for those holding such power to do so; evidently, the great disparity is present in the attitudes directed toward those situated primely in the chain of power and those at the bottom (Hall & Winslow, 2018). Special liberty advances such thinking in the assertion of an internalized and singular focus in relation to power and profit neglecting social responsibility, morality and legality attached to behaviors (Tudor, 2018). The control of such narratives is viable, aside from power relations, through avenues of neoliberalism and a globalized world in the production of a free market, communication, and the share of political and legal knowledge to attain the best deal. Such partiality and partisanship assist the functionality of capitalist and neoliberal structures (Hall & Wilson, 2014). The essence of special liberty is the notion of utilizing whatever means possible so to personally benefit, without a second thought for the wider implicational factors.

## **Part 2. Contextualizing profit and policy in contemporary society within a human security framework**

### *The global arms trade and the War on Terror*

Security has fluctuated across history in terms of what constitutes security and the attainment of such, perpetually reverting to traditional focality (Jarvis & Holland, 2015). An over-riding factor existing in modern-historical security practice is the Global Arms Race, seeing states compete for global hegemony in terms of superior, highly advanced instruments of war. Mass destruction in World War I and World War II secured principles of Mutually Assured Destruction; The atomic bomb of Hiroshima, in August 1945, unequivocally substantiated MAD outward of state-on-state conflict (Williams & McDonald, 2018). Vast expenditure



placed monetary value on military development, producing a lucrative arms trade market to justify spending, materializing newfound conflict prospects, inherently neglecting human security in nuclear disasters seeing the end of humanity, producing insecurity by default in the prioritization of profit at the expense of societal well-being (Hough et al., 2015). To date the market remains with the UK estimated as the second largest exporter of defense weaponry; from 2012–2021, 51% of total export was to the Middle East (Kirk-Wade, 2023). Policies sanctioning such directly create human insecurity in third-world countries where such arms are utilized.

9/11 was influential to the ways in which Western foreign policy approaches security risks, seeing terrorism “abruptly emerge” as the pre-eminent threat to the developed Western world, remaining as such presently; the global War on Terror was declared resultantly, justifying focality on the newfound terrorist threat (Jackson, 2007). The construction of the “terrorist-other” demonized sub-populations, specifically the Islamic community more broadly the Middle East, met by extreme hypervigilance grounded in visual optics. Creating a deviant subculture of vast religious populations in the name of security creates mass human insecurity for demographics (Baker-Beall, 2013). Considering post-colonialist attitudes that power favors the West within a globalized context enables the global north to “other” to the global south whereby perceived threats to state security exist solely in the international territory and home states are indefinitely secured from risk (Rogers, 2016; Hough et al. 2015). Declaration of war in Afghanistan, so to overthrow the Taliban regime, saw the use of force designed to intimidate so to advance ideological cause, arguably fitting the same narrative as the widely accepted definition of terrorism, a clear causation of human insecurity (Jackson, 2011). Until 2021 when the UK military withdrew forces, multitudinous war crimes were committed, although prosecution for such is scarce, exhibiting human insecurity in war-stricken countries in the lack of justice (Baldwin, 2020). Demonizing the Middle East pushed the perception of threat overseas, implying the lack of threats in home territory, and allowing the state to remain seemingly secure (Rogers, 2016).

### *Privatization*

The essence of traditional security in academia and practice presents the state as solely secure given that states exist in principle to secure the society they protect in solidarity. What is discussed gives the impression of security within the state by viewing threats existing solely in the global south (Barkawi & Laffey, 2006). Security in all its grandeur serves as a visual optic of power and status particularly in the context of privatization. Public security services fall short of serving socially accepted standards of security, a common narrative in a social discourse given the loss of public confidence in the police’s ability to serve and protect society. When considering traditional security practice in a localized context, failure in truly securing society is apparent in the rise of private security actors and the loss of confidence in police practice.

Evidently, traditional security measures fail to secure the nation, a driving factor in the utilization of private security measures for proficient service implying that superiority is withheld for those with socio-economic standing and, by inference, deserve such; notions higher classes deservedly take focus by prerogative is a profoundly degrading narrative rooted against the lower classes (Mandel, 2002; Williams & McDonald 2018; Jarvis & Holland 2015). Neoliberalism and capitalism promote privatization whereby actors are empowered to self-regulate based on individual subjectivity. The construction of the state as omnipotent provides state actors with the ability to control the security narrative, remaining as prime client. State-driven security presents questions about whether the primary interests of state actors are reflected in the public sphere whereby the lived reality is unrepresentative of wider society, a cardinal consideration of the state and centralized power in security decision-making.

Security operating as a commodity, client-orientated in nature, becomes an integral component of capitalism subscribing to its monopoly given the intersubjectivity of wealth and privatization (Wood & Shearing, 2007). Within public security services a clear disparity respecting power that perceptibly does not serve the interest of the public given that in contemporary society power does not lie with the public instead remains in the control of central governance. Measures cannot serve to secure society given its focality on profit, securing the needs of clientele, inherently contributing to economic and social disparity thus human insecurity through zemiological harm and structural violence (Hills, 2004).

### *Policing and austerity*

The Age of Austerity is an era of extreme budget cuts to public funding to which society was forced to adapt so to sustain the resultant conditions. Contrarily the state, elites and powerful actors saw the period as a benefit to the economy in the restructuring of budgets, prioritizing what was deemed of prime importance (Schui, 2015). Extreme cuts to public expenditure saw education, healthcare, policing and a multitude of wider institutions expected to function at the exact same rate of success despite huge losses to staffing, resources and funding. Such extreme losses in the public sector meant the services they provide either ceased or became far less effectual and thus the notion of human insecurity was intensively secured outward of the capitalist system (Stanley, 2014).

Policing was greatly affected by austerity measures, seeing funding cut in real terms by 20% triggering substantial influence and change in functionality of policing. Initially, austerity measures were set to last from 2010–2015 however presence is still evident. Despite this, forces were required to function at an unchanged degree of success while performing with great depletion in officers, cessation in recruitment and lack of resources. Over-reliance on remaining officers meant policing became reactive in place of proactive measures with problem-based policing being a key factor in understanding this paper. Successful operation was now recognized in targets met as opposed to preventing criminality and promoting community relations (Joyce, 2011). Of course, apprehending offenders is positive but raises questions of targeting demographics and whether the time and resources could be better employed to greater effectuality; low-level offenses targeted with intent for the purpose of making quotas, although procedurally justified, is questionable in terms of ethics and morality. Operations targeted at street-level drug offenses are notable with an increase since 2010 when austerity measures were enacted. Police apprehend drug dealers with the intended purpose not only to convict but to seize crime accessories, specifically vehicles, so as to repurpose them for covert operations of which are often focal on such demographics and drug criminality (BBC, 2019). This symbolizes how policies of austerity, actioned for the pursuit of profit, create insecurity for those targeted and for society in ignorance toward wider criminality that causes harm. Symbolic policy is that which is actioned so as to be seen as doing what's right in terms of the status quo of political ideals, in this context capitalist politics as those subscribed to such often hyper-demonize such criminality (Abdel-Murshed, 2022). Considering the cyclical nature of drug crimes, such continues despite policing efforts to combat such producing the query of whether targeting these demographics is justified; time and resources could be of greater effect when spent on alternative criminality speaking to the immoral decision-making outward of austerity, such promoting human insecurity in various fashions.

Strain theory seeks to dissect the various strains imposed on individuals existing in contemporary society, suggesting how straining factors produce negative emotions and insecure conditions whereby criminality is utilized so to diminish such strains (Agnew, 2001). Conventional understandings of strain theory remain largely focal on superficial strains, with little recognition of how individuals turn to criminality resultant of contemporary society's

economic, political and social state of affairs. Ideologies of profit, individualism and power promoted outwardly by neoliberal and capitalist structures promote inequalities, creating a status quo to which society must conform to so to remain secure stressing the narrative of self-protection. Societal structures do not allow for social equality, instead promote protecting one's own at the expense of all else meaning those subsisting in lower social classes lack the opportunity and necessary power to progress and thus are stuck within a system stacked against them. Inequalities outward of economic and political spheres cause strain for those unable to keep up with the status quo and in absent opportunistic dispositions whereby progression and legitimate goals cannot be legally attained and thus turn to illegal opportunities that produce profits and secure the individual. This provides understanding as to why individuals turn to drug crimes, a lucrative market of high demand, so to sustain a lifestyle of profit and power.

### *The medicinal marijuana trade*

Illegal enterprise theory accentuates the likeness of licit and illicit affairs, stating that in duality actors possess the same intent. Observing offenders as regular, profit-driven entrepreneurs that, although illicit, are stimulated comparatively to legal affairs and laws of supply and demand the disparity being that contract law is actionable in legal spheres. The theory displays actors' ability to overpower and profit comfortably within legal standing, theorizing individuals enter lucrative markets with prominent demand for commodities where profitability is guaranteed (Reuter, 1983). The idiom "the juice is worth the squeeze" augments this understanding when relating to motivational factors across all levels of licit and illicit hierarchies.

In 1998, GW Pharmaceuticals established a business in Cambridge, England, and resultantly the UK became the chief actor in the trade of medicinal-grade marijuana. Official reports comprising international state-acquired data published an approximate 95 tons of product manufactured in 2016 and 320 tons of legal produce in 2019 seeing profits increased threefold, displaying the extremely lucrative nature of the market. Production of medicinal cannabis in 2019 constitutes 75% of gross international product rendering the UK as the leading provider, spotlighting the successful operationality of the corporation in terms of economic and power hegemony in the global sphere. Profitability is secured and extends to influential actors complicit through avenues alike stocks and shares (Mortimer, 2021). Clarity of such enrichment in power dynamics is presented clearly in the business valuation of £1.35 billion or 517p/share in 2016 (Jacobs & Calloway, 2016). Philip May, husband of Theresa May, is rewarded frequently as an employee in Capital Group who owns considerable shares in GW Pharmaceuticals (Thompson, 2018). During her time as prime minister, Theresa May expressed the absolute necessity for greater prevention of street-level drug criminality, synchronously profiting greatly through the legal trade expressing an attitude of connivance, displaying transcendental materialism in utilizing special liberty at the expense of morality. Research conducted found no evident association between the use and trade of illicit drugs and stronger policing operations, principally contradicting attitudes present in the office. In attempts to justify the preferable status quo, Theresa May with assistance from political aids endeavored to rework results so to supplement their ideology (Cowburn & Sims, 2016). This clearly indicates how the state in its absolute power utilizes special liberties and power dynamics so to remain beyond legal reach in licit markets securing ultimate profit and simultaneously guiding narratives in illicit markets.

Cultivation, possession and sale of medicinal-grade marijuana is sanctioned by a yearly renewable cultivation license (Home Office, 2020) (MHRA). Given the apparent difficulty to attain the necessary licensing in that only two corporations within the UK acquire such, it is wholly clear that bias is present in decision-making and beneficial relationships of

corporations and states are prominent. Protection theory, commonly relating to organized criminality, when realized within this context displays the control over the licit and illicit market where laws, policies, and licensing are interchangeable and dependent on the context of trade; in this sense, structural violence is utilized in place of the physical. Producing a complete lack of market maintains the UK as the sole trader in a lucrative market with illicit actors facing criminal proceedings and prison time when found guilty (Paoli, 2014). Notions of capitalism and neoliberalism induce a highly specified state of affairs empowering GW Pharmaceuticals to enrich those related through necessary power dynamics. Social embeddedness theorizes how organized crime is supported by community and social interconnectivity. In this instance corresponds to mutually beneficial relationships between the state and corporations and how opportunism, biased decision-making, and loopholes in policy, so circumvent legality without power dynamics would be unattainable. The globalized world socially embeds the UK in the global economy promoting profitability in the distribution to states where the product is decriminalized (Paoli, 2014). Themes of ultra-realism, special liberty, and transcendental materialism and state-corporate crime are evident.

### *The cost-of-living crisis*

The cost-of-living crisis is understood as a period of mass inflation relating to life necessities like food, fuel, and energy prices. The impression of taking necessary action is presumed within political speeches however the reality of such is questionable with businesses placing burdens of inflation onto society. Individuals are forced to sacrifice what before was affordable so to sustain everyday life given the heightened cost in all aspects and the lack of wage increase to supplement this (Marmot, 2022; Hourston 2022). Individuals prioritize heating or eating given that inflation in both respects is substantial, a harmful by-product of the economic and social state. As such, demographics, particularly the elderly, go without heating across winter months to afford energy costs which have risen extortionately; from August 2021–2022, domestic gas prices increased by 95% and domestic electricity prices increased by 54% (Bolton & Stewart, 2023). Evidently, profit is at the forefront of policy as a sacrifice to human security given that individuals cannot afford basic necessities like heated homes, a zemiologically harmful narrative outward of structural violence.

Food prices increased by 13.1% from August 2021–2022, seeing individuals forced to purchase less, skip meals and utilize foodbanks; Trussell Trust reported a 33% increase in the use of services in 2021–2022 and 93% of Independent Food Aid Network foodbanks reported a significant increase in the necessity for services so far in 2022, with 95% stating such was outward of the cost-of-living crisis (Gorb, 2022). Human insecurity, again, is apparent given that individuals are forced to find free alternatives to basic necessities. Marcus Rashford stepped up when government actors refused to, campaigning for free school meals for families unable to provide such. Initially, the government repealed policies of provision seeing no necessity for such at a time of poverty and great socio-economic disparity between classes of society displaying how political agents serve their own interest at the expense of society, producing zemiological harms (Varley, 2020). Evidently, human insecurity is caused outward by capitalist policy, or the lack thereof in this case, with the sole intention of heightened profitability in power dynamics.

Society, unable to sustain systemic conditions, riot and strike intending to trigger government action in relation to the cost-of-living crisis (Burke, 2022). Labor workforce strikes within transport, civil servants, teaching, and NHS staff saw pay disputes as a primary cause for such, accounting for an estimated 75% of lost working days from 1999–2018; on account of inflation, the real value of regular wages decreased by 2.5% from October–December 2022 (ONS, 2023). For society to see no alternative in promoting reform than to

protest for securer conditions, evidently contemporary society exists in a completely insecure state thus society is effectually begging for securer conditions. Ideals of neoliberalism and special liberty inducing zemiological harms, the individualization of profit for states and corporations with little intervention and regulation are clearly apparent considering the current social state of affairs. Considering the immense disparity in the lived reality of powerful agents and the society of which they are empowered to protect, clearly government actors are less, if at all, affected by the social climate lacking the necessary understanding to best secure society from zemiological harms, thus human insecurity is confirmed.

### *Homelessness*

Homelessness statistics present the harmful reality of socio-economic inequality existing within the UK. In the period 2021–2022, 278,110 households were deemed homeless or threatened by such, a 2.8% increase from the previous year. Additionally, 113,460 households were recognized as threatened by homelessness, a 11.3% increase from the previous years, symbolizing how the structural violence of the cost-of-living crisis has left a vast population of contemporary society in great insecurity and zemiological harm (DLUHC 2022). Clearly not enough is being done to combat the harmful issue of extreme poverty given such a vast increase across a period of 1–2 years. Impressions that homelessness and its causes of such are enigmatic and preventive measures are destined for non-success are proven to be ill-evidenced given that the vast majority of contemporary society is just two paychecks away from homelessness or poverty, speaking to the mass insecurity and structural violence outward of neoliberal structures (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). Various factors can lead toward homelessness however research remains largely focal on surface-level causation; a more dynamic approach to understanding conditions outward of policy speaks to elements of structural violence and zemiological harms previously discussed. What is far less considered is how those placed in the system of social housing understand individuals as housed, despite extremely harsh conditions within such systems that often displace individuals creating difficulty to secure work and monetary gain, healthcare and education and community/social connections. Despite attempts to create secure conditions, the lack of resources, funding, and necessary care inhibits such and thus retains human insecurity in that homeless and displaced individuals become stuck in a poorly functioning system. Considering how anti-homeless architecture is increasingly more popular, attitudes of turning a blind eye is evident toward the issue as opposed to a proactive approach to managing such threats, evidencing structural violence and zemiological harms causing human insecurity (Anderson & Christian, 2003; Bramley & Fitzpatrick 2017).

### **Conclusion**

In closing, this article provided the necessary theoretical frameworks and contextual analysis of deep-routed structural violence and zemiological harms existing within contemporary reality in relation to neoliberal and capitalist economic, political, and societal structures. It provided an overview of how traditional security, placing the state as centric, outwardly presents as secure but inherently fails to be so when placed within context and a human security framework upon which this article takes its basis; evidenced through the War on Terror and global arms trade, privatization and policing in the Age of Austerity of which echo state criminality, power dynamics, and economic-political structures in an ultra-realist framework, extending to include elements of zemiological harm outward of structural violence. This paper offered a contextualization of human (in)security existing in a social vacuum by providing an understanding of how such manifests in contemporary society through power

dynamics and structural violence within a zemiological understanding. Evidenced through the medicinal marijuana trade and cost-of-living crisis, theoretical depth is offered by situating such within the framework of state-corporate criminality, ultra-realism, transcendental materialism, special liberty, and pseudo-pacification. This article theoretically and evidentially provided a nuanced and holistic understanding of the ways in which modern society operates upon a basis of profit and power. With an opportunistic disposition, powerful agents are spared social responsibility, allowing a range of harmful narratives and discourse to go unnoticed and untouched in wider social settings, creating a cyclical nature of human insecurity.

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