State power beyond coercion

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This article starts with the observation that different conceptualisations of power inform substantially different understandings of state power. The article will test this observation through an analysis of the contrast between traditional approaches to state power that rely on a notion of power as a capacity, a causal relation between agents, and critical approaches that involve an understanding of power as a productive relation between actions. The difference of approach between the two literatures informs different understandings of state power as either a simply causal or a productive phenomenon: traditional approaches lead to a view of state power as a coercive capacity while critical approaches result in seeing state power as a violent relation.

The article will establish, however, that despite the stark opposition in the way they see power, both literatures fail to conceptualise state power as something more than coercion. The article will argue that this inability is due to their stated political objectives. For traditional approaches, the aim is establishing the state as a viable political organisation possessing the means of coercion. For critical approaches, the political objective is making possible a return to properly political power relations through a displacement of sovereignty. These political aims are fundamentally different. The first one assumes and aims to establish the state as a bounded political space, as the natural locus of political life. The second aims to expose the violent nature of state practices and show how such practices create the picture of the state as the natural space for politics. The critical literature argues for a move beyond the sovereign state and exploring more fruitful political locations. However, despite such stark differences in objectives, both literatures conclude end up seeing state power as violent and coercive.

Through the analysis of some of the recent initiatives towards diaspora communities by the Chinese government and economic migrants by the British authorities, this article aims to challenge the coercive understanding of state power. Adopting a Foucauldean understanding of power as 'power relations', our analysis will exemplify how state power governs domestic and transnational communities through the means of a set of non-coercive objectives which assume freedom and refusal. By implication, we will argue, state power cannot be seen exclusively as the realm of coercion but it should also be understood as a productive and reflexive form of power.

The paper consists of six sections. The first section discusses two interpretations of power prevailing in the scholarly debates on power in political theory. The second section moves on to discuss the uses of the concept of power in International Relations and examines how state power is conceptualised in the traditional approaches. The third section examines the post-structuralist treatment of state power as a relationship of violence. In the fourth, we introduce a Foucauldean approach to analysing state power, one which does not negate its productive and reflexive aspects. This will be illustrated with examples of non-coercive state practices in Britain and China in

sections five and six. The paper will conclude with suggesting that such an approach could be more useful for understanding the exercise of the modern state's power as it neither demonises nor legitimises it.

Two meanings of power

Coercion exists when 'A secures B's compliance by the threat of deprivation, where there is a conflict over values of course between A and B'.[1] This conception of power has been given a more well-known, but similar expression by Dahl: 'A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do'.[2] In this understanding, power is the ability of persons or groups to carry out their will against the will and interest of others. Therefore, power is seen as a quality of social relations and as a capacity to control social resources to pursue specific ends. This relationship of power can be primarily characterised as a conflictual encounter, as 'a clash between the interests of those exercising power and the real interests of those they exclude'.[3]

For our discussion of power in this article, a further qualification is necessary. Hindess introduces a distinction between power as a capacity and power as a relation. We will be using his distinction to show how an understanding of power as coercion can take both forms. In *Discourses of Power*, Barry Hindess identifies two conceptions of power that have dominated political thought in modern times.[4] The first is the idea of 'power as a simple quantitative capacity', which corresponds to a generalised ability to act in pursuit of one's objectives. In this understanding, power comprises of diverse and measurable components which contribute to the attainment of one's set goals. Power, in this sense, can be an instrument for domination since there will always be an unbalanced, unequal relation between those who employ power and those who are subjected to it.[5] Power as a relationship, the second conception identified by Hindess, is based on a Foucauldean model and is conceived as 'a way in which some act on others'.[6] In this conception, power does not exist as an entity, but only as an exercise on others, as an action on the action of

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[1] Steven Lukes, *Power: a radical view* (London: Macmillan, 1974), 17.

[2] Robert Dahl, 'The Concept of Power' *Behavioural Science* 2 (July 1957): 202.

[3] Lukes, *Power*, 24.

[4] Barry Hindess. *Discourses of Power: From Hobbes to Foucault* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

[5] Ibid., 45.

[6] Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', in *Power. Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984*, edited by J. D. Faubion (London: Penguin Books, 2002, Volume 3), 340.

others. Neither it is a matter of consent, a renunciation of freedom or a transfer of rights: 'It may be an effect of a prior consent but it is not by its nature the manifestation of a consensus'.[7]

This article distinguishes two bodies of literature in International Relations divided over the way they conceptualise state power. The first of the two groups relies on an understanding of power as an institutional capacity. The second group of scholars is critical about the view of power as a capacity and takes seriously Foucault's urge to look at power beyond the institutions of the state. These see power as a relationship that has as its effect the construction of both states and subjects. This article will conclude, however, that despite their different approaches to seeing power as either a capacity or a relationship, they share and understanding of state power as a form of coercion. The critical literature on power, while successful in adopting a more relational and dispersed understanding of state power, continues to see it as a relationship of violence. This observation leads us to conclude that both understandings of state power rely on the idea of a trade-off between the interests of the state and the interests of subjects and on the assumption that the state imposes its will through repressive forms of intervention that inhibit rather than elicit action.

Against both formulations, this article will argue that we could conceive of state power not only as a relationship between state and subjects but as a relationship that goes beyond coercion. State power may utilise violent instruments but it is most concerned with producing subjects through acting on their actions. As a form of action on the actions of others, the power of the state utilises freedom as an instrument, as a strategy for intervention. This reconceptualisation of freedom from the liberal understanding of it as the 'limit of power' to seeing it as an instrument of power shifts the nature of the relationship between freedom and power from one of contradiction to one of presupposition. Freedom ceases to be the limit of governmental intervention and the space of personal autonomy and becomes the main instrument of a form of power that aims to manage free subjects through determining the field of personal choices to a narrow set.

State power as a coercive capacity

In this section we aim to demonstrate that the conceptualisations of state power within the traditional (positivist) approaches to IR is shaped by the understanding of power as a coercive capacity which also informs their notion of state sovereignty. Power here is conceived of as a generalised capacity to attain certain objectives, it contains a sense of effectiveness and is therefore deterministic in nature.[8] It comes down to a collective notion of the state's certain possessions which determine its status and place in the international system. Sovereignty in these

[7] Ibid., 340.

interpretations does not enjoy an elaborate qualification. It is assumed to be conditioned by a certain amount of power for the state to be able to maintain its sovereign status, but the issue of what state sovereignty comprises of and how it is practiced is left out.[9] The ensuing discussion illustrates that the traditional approaches' preoccupations with state power and sovereignty are informed by the notion of power, which sources are downplayed to a number of unified quantifiable factors dismissing the possibility of the heterogeneous character of power. It is also essentially coercive in its nature. The state as the primary form of social relation for traditional perspectives in IR is the one that detains the stock of power in a society and enjoys a monopoly on legitimate violence. It forms a peculiar structure of domination imposing coercive capacity in a top-down manner at the expense of social interests and encroaching on their autonomy. Sovereignty is seen as an effective form of power if and only if the state can claim possession over a number of quantifiable characteristics, such as territory, population, natural resources, economic power, autonomy, etc. Similarly, the simple possession of such characteristics immediately determines the presence of a successful exercise of sovereignty as an effective capacity to act.

For the representatives of the two mainstream approaches to IR – neorealism and neoliberalism – state power is an underlying element defining the status of a particular state in the international system. Waltz, one of the most prominent neorealists, famously attributed the organisational principle of the international system to anarchy where states act according to the accumulative power which they possess.[10] Sovereignty, for Waltz, is assumed to be an attribute of every state, but it is also seen as an objective which every state's exercise of power is aimed at. Sovereign status grants a state a membership in the international system, where each state is functionally autonomous and identical. In this way every internationally recognised state enjoys a bundle of sovereign rights, which come down to the freedom to 'decide[s] for itself how it will cope with its internal and external problems'.[11] Success in the exercise of these rights depends on other geopolitical factors and accumulative power of the state. As such, this interpretation produces a particular understanding of state sovereignty where it is both the outcome of the anarchical nature of the international system, i.e. assumed to be in the character of every state, and a purpose of the practice of state's power. State power and its accumulative aspects in this equation

[8] Cynthia Weber, *Simulating Sovereignty: Intervention, the State, and Symbolic Exchange* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 141.

[9] Ibid., 1-2.

[10] Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of* International *Politics* Reading, (Massachussets: Addison-Wesley, 1979).

[11] Ibid., 96.

appear to determine the status of the state in the international system. State power is informed by an essentially coercive understanding of power as it sets the limits and restrictions on the actions of states beyond which there lies a possibility of an open conflict. The negative and prohibitive character of this notion of power defines its coercive nature.

While agreeing with neorealists on anarchy as the central organising principle of international system, neoliberals concur that institutional arrangements and regimes which states mutually agree on assume part of the state's sovereign power which was willingly delegated by the states themselves. The question which many neoliberal studies have preoccupied themselves with since the 1980s is whether state sovereignty is increasingly eroded in the quickly changing international system under the impact of international alliances. For some of them the growing number and influence of international institutions and regimes provides evidence of a declining state sovereignty.[12] Keohane, for example, suggests looking outside the framework of the state to see who assumes part of state's sovereignty. He embraces other non-state actors in international relations to focus on the issue of who competes with the state in assuming its sovereign rights to exercise authority within its territory. However, the mechanism of understanding the nature of correlation between state power and sovereignty is similar to Waltz. Keohane subscribes to Waltz's argument that state power comprises of a number of quantifiable attributes which can be delegated by the state. The loss of a certain degree of the state's sovereignty assumes that other actors take up parts of otherwise state's sole prerogative. The surrender of certain aspects of power signifies for them the overall weakening of state power and diffusion of its sovereignty. As such, the neoliberal line of thinking in IR also presupposes that the ability to maintain and exercise sovereignty presents the minimum requirement for the expression of state power. And a certain amount of power is essential for the maintenance and practice of sovereignty by the state. The weakening of some aspects of state sovereignty implies that the state enfeebles some of its powers to another actor.

Unlike neorealists, studies in the neoliberal strand of IR literature, underline the importance of soft power in the states' performance on the international arena. Neoliberal preoccupation with soft power emphasises other sources of power, such as information, culture, ideology, commerce but the mechanism of power acquisition and output is similar to the coercive type, where power is

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[12] Robert Keohane, 'Sovereignty, Interdependence, and International Institutions', in *Ideas and Ideals: in Honor of Stanley Hoffman*, eds. Linda Miller and Michael Joseph Smith (Boulder, CO: Westview 1993), 91-107; Robert Keohane, 'Hobbes' Dilemma and Institutional Change in World Politics: Sovereignty', in *International Society. In Whose World Order? Uneven Globalisation and the End of the Cold War,* eds. Hans-Henrik Holm and Georg Sorensen (Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 1995), 165-186.

accumulated, transferred, transmitted, and shared.[13] Moreover, the ultimate objective for the soft power is to increase state's hard power through granting it legitimacy.[14] Soft power is aimed to achieve the same objectives of making B do what it otherwise would not do, but through different 'soft' means such as cooptation or/and attraction. Identifying this, Janice Mattern argues that 'soft power' is in essence a coercive form of power exercised through language, where the attraction of the soft power is to be found in hard power.[15]

While neither Waltz with his reference to power in hard coercive terms, nor Keohane, who delineates both hard and soft aspects of power, specify the nature of state sovereignty, Krasner produces a qualified conception of it. Krasner marks out four uses of sovereignty in international relations: domestic authority (legitimate authority within the territory), interdependence (effective transborder control), international legal (recognition), and Westphalian (control over territory).[16] Here sovereignty is presented as a naturalised norm universally accepted and practiced in the international system, which is tightly related to the nature of the state, but not endogenous to it. Two aspects in Krasner's definition, the control of territory and legitimate authority with the territory, undeniably presuppose an understanding of power which is to be found in the state institutions legitimately executing coercion over a particular territory. This capacity to impose coercion contributes to the state's possession and exercise of sovereignty. In other words, Krasner's qualified definition of sovereignty is, similarly to Waltz, built on the coercive understanding of power.

As appears from the above approaches, sovereignty is treated as an attribute of the state or as a feature in the state-organised international system. For the above accounts only state can be a sovereign subject. Sovereign rights and powers are exercised by the state, and if other actors infringe on them, the erosion of sovereignty occurs. At the same time, those states which enjoy only partial sovereignty cannot be fully referred to as states.[17] As such, the power of state is expressed in the exercise of sovereign rights and is pre-conditioned by the independent position of

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[13] Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: the Means to Success in World Politics* (Public Affairs Ltd, 2004).

[14] Ibid., 11.

[15] Janice Bially Mattern, "Why 'Soft Power' Isn't So Soft: Representational Force and the Sociolinguistic Construction of Attraction in World Politics", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 3 (2005): 583-612.

[16] Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organised Hypocrisy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 227.

[17] Robert Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

the state in the international system. State power in the above interpretations is articulated and expressed through the exercise of sovereignty. All of the above approaches refer to internal and external dimensions of sovereignty moulding the division between international and domestic elements of the manifestation of state power. The ability of the state to enjoy legitimacy and exercise absolute power domestically, as well as be recognised and independent from the interferences from foreign states designates the minimum requirement for the state power. The capabilities of the state which determine states' freedom of action in the international arena lay the grounds for strengthening sovereignty, where the principle of non-intervention provides the minimum requirement for the state's exercise of sovereignty.

Be it an analytical assumption or an empirical arrangement between states, prone to alterations, the commonality which these approaches share is that sovereignty designates the limits of the state's exercise of power. State's sovereign status legitimises the right to exercise exclusive authority within the state's territory and prescribes recognition and respect of other states' independence in the international system. It also conflates sovereignty and state power in a sense that a sovereign status is a precondition of the state's exercise and accumulation of power in international arena, whereas the state should be in possession of certain qualifications guaranteeing it a sovereign status. In other words, to be sovereign is to entertain certain powers, while to have an adequate amount of power guarantees sovereign status. Power in this equation is a set of possessions by the state, its physical properties which lay the basis for the state's legitimate capacity. Power as a legitimate capacity is a variation of power as capacity, where legitimacy is a property or one of the conditions for power to be effective or successful, legitimacy is attained through recognising the right of the sovereign to govern. This recognition is a consequence of the process of consenting, which involves the subjects' relinquishing of their right to self-government and the validation of the sovereign's right to exercise it in their name. But this transfer of rights is a transfer of capacities, which amounts to a transfer of power as a quantity. In this view of power/capacity/right is the sum of all the individual capacities bestowed upon the sovereign, giving him a greater power than the power of any groups or individuals in a society.[18]

The understanding of state power in the above approaches comes down to how a state within the limits of its power articulates its boundaries and defines its authority in the international system. The conceptualisation of both sovereignty and state power is informed by the understanding of power as a coercive capacity. It is organised around the limits to rule and legitimacy. The exercise of legitimate power domestically guarantees the smooth running of the state while internationally the accumulative power of the state designates the state's position in the

[18] Hindess, *Discourses of Power*, 15, 139.

system. In both political domains power, according to these approaches, is a property to be transferred, maintained and distributed. By treating sovereignty as an attribute or norm, and linking it intimately with the state power as capacity the above approaches do not account for the transformations in the relationship between the state and its subjects. While for Waltz sovereignty is ahistorical, for the scholars in neoliberal perspective, and Krasner's new sovereignty debate it is an evolving norm of the international society. But it is essentially an evolution of the properties and capacities constituting state power, rather than a transformation in the modes of governing seen as the relationship between the state and its population. The relationship is defined by the state entertaining the exclusive monopoly on violence in the society where it imposes certain modes of practices at expense of social interests and infringes on their autonomy. As such, the discussed approaches follow a deterministic and coercive understanding of state power where it is constituted through the possession of certain properties rather than produced through the relationship of power. We have illustrated how the use of conception of state power in traditional IR literature is informed by this understanding of power as a coercive capacity determining the limits of sovereignty as composed of a number of quantifiable possessions by the state.

State power as a relationship of violence

This section will illustrate how post-structural approaches to state power rely on an understanding of power as power relations, a conception which differs greatly from the view of power as a capacity present in the traditional approach, as discussed in the previous section. Such a view of power could inspire a more complex understanding of state power as a relationship between state and subjects. The section will show how the post-structural approaches to state power do see it as a relationship rather than as an institutional capacity. In this way, the post- structural literature opens up the possibility for looking at state power in ways that go beyond coercion and focus on the productive and reflexive aspects of the relationship between state and subjects. This section will argue, however, that while adopting a more relational view of state power, this literature fails to move our understanding of state power beyond coercion while by reducing it to a relationship of violence.

Foucault's understanding of power as power relations informs Giorgio Agamben's re-conceptualisation of sovereignty as 'sovereign power'. This re-working sits at the basis of the IR post-structural literature's approach to state power. Agamben sought to clarify a contentious and under explored aspect in Foucault's work: the intersection between political technologies and technologies of subjectification. Agamben set out to conceptualise this intersection as a 'zone of indistinction', a zone where it is almost impossible to distinguish between individualising and

totalising strategies of state power, between voluntary servitude and coercion.[19] Following Foucault, Agamben sees sovereignty as a form of power that penetrates the body of the subject and produces the forms of life he/she takes.[20] Agamben distinguishes between two fundamentally opposed forms of life: biological or bare life and political life. The original activity of the sovereign power is for Agamben the production of the bio-political body; the inclusion of bare life into the political life is the nucleus of this form of power.[21] From this definition it becomes apparent that Agamben sees the production of bare life, the life that can be sacrificed, as the distinctive activity of the sovereign.

The post-structural literature in International Relations uses Agamben's conception of sovereignty as 'sovereign power' to further explore the way power operates beyond the institutions of the state. Edkins and Pin-Fat set out to shift the focus from an engagement with the survival of the state to an engagement with a wider mechanism of power relations within a society.[22] This general mechanism of power combines the power of the state with more productive forms of power, such as discipline.[23] Edkins and Pin-Fat's aim is to make apparent a larger project in the exercise of power. State power functions as a relationship that subjects people to a statist language and modes of subjectivity. Edkins and Pin-Fat end up arguing that we need to move away from an excessive preoccupation with the institutions of the state in order to understand how power functions as part of wider social networks.[24] Power for them ceases to be a causal relationship between already constituted agents, or a capacity of A to impose its interests at the expense of B. Instead, for them power becomes a function of the relationship between state and subjects as a relationship between actions. Submission and acquiescence is obtained through the production of political loyalties. Escaping the power of the state can only work, according to them, through escaping the statist language and subjectivities.

However, while they point towards the increased dispersion of power beyond the state, Edkins and Pin-Fat fail to use this critical argument to challenge the view of state power as simply

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[19] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Translated by D. Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 6-7.

[20] Ibid., 5.

[21] Ibid., 6.

[22] Jenny Edkins, and Véronique Pin-Fat, 'Introduction: Life, Power, Resistance,' in *Sovereign Lives: Power in Global Politics*, eds. Jenny Edkins, Veronique Pin-Fat and Michael J. Shapiro (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 3.

[23] Ibid., 3.

[24] Ibid., 2.

coercive and violent. They make use of an Agambean distinction between *potenza* and *potere*. *Potenza* is synonymous with potentiality and decentralisation of force.[25] *Potere* refers 'to the authority of an already structured and centralised capacity, often and institutionalised apparatus of the state'.[26] Foucault's concept of power relations, they tell us, approaches Agamben's understanding of *potenza*. However, they contend that the power of the state is best described by *potere* (rather than potenza) as it relies on 'the separation of the sphere of naked life from the context of the forms of life'.[27] A life of *potenza* would be one where such a separation does not take place. Edkins and Pin-Fat follow Agamben in asking whether a life of power as *potenza* is possible, that is if a life of properly political power relations can take place under the current political order.[28] Their answer mirrors that of Agamben by suggesting that 'such a life is not possible within present forms of sovereign power', under the current, statist political order.[29] A life of power as *potenza* requires an emancipation from statist politics. This is not, in the words of Edkins and Pin-Fat, 'an escape or emancipation from power relations'.[30] But the way to a life of power as *potenza* is through a displacement of state power and an emancipation from the politics of the state.

Reducing state power to *potere* or a centralised capacity to impose coercion determines Edkins and Pin-Fat to press for an escape from the politics of the state. While expressed as a relationship between state and subjects, state power remains for Edkins and Pin-Fat primarily a relationship of domination. In Foucauldean language, domination describes a relatively stable, hierarchical type of power relation, one that allows for little resistance. Being exercised with a minimum of resistance and assuming a conflictual encounter between the interests of A and those of B, domination is a form of coercion: the interests of A are imposed at the expense of the interests of B. A life of power as potenza is made up for Edkins and Pin-Fat of power relations that are exercised with a minimum of domination. The institutions of the state cannot be the site of potenza and hence they have to be escaped. This calls for a strategy for resistance and a reinstatement of properly political power relations.

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[25] Jenny Edkins and Veronique Pin-Fat, 'Through the Wire: Relations of Power and Relations of Violence', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Number 34, Issue 1 (2005): 9.

[26] Ibid., 9.

[27] Ibid., 9.

[28] Ibid, 8.

[29] Ibid., 9.

[30] Ibid., 11.

Properly political power relations can only take place, according to them, when sovereign power is disentangled from bio-power and maintained as an external apparatus based in the institutions of the state. This prompts them to call not for 'a challenge to a particular sovereign order, but to sovereignty, and sovereign power, in general, as a form of order that entails specific forms of life'.[31] In effect, the result of their strategy is a removal of sovereignty from the realm of the management of populations, the bio-political terrain, and its reinsertion into the institutions of the state. In this way, sovereignty can be resisted as an exclusionary form of order based on the sovereign ban. While this has implications for their understanding of sovereignty, what is important for this article is that this move leads to viewing state power as exclusively defined by the categories of sovereign power, whose main manifestation is the violent distinction between forms of life. The aim of achieving the objective of returning to properly political power relations contributes to seeing state power as an exclusively violent manifestation. The strategy for resisting sovereign power is through displacing sovereignty and re-positioning it in the institutions of the state. State power becomes a form of domination that is characterised by sovereignty manifested as a relationship of violence. While one could take issue with this understanding of sovereignty, important for the argument elaborated here is that state power remains to be seen as coercion. The interests of B are sacrificed and B's acquiescence is obtained through the use or threat of violence.

A similar argument can be found in another post-structural project on sovereignty, Prozorov's article 'The Unrequited Love of Power'.[32] Prozorov's aim in this article is to limit and resist the bio-political interventions of the modern state. For him, the Agambean concept of sovereign power becomes fundamentally problematic as it 'leads to a conflation of sovereign and bio-political modalities of power', through Agamben's linking of the two in the concept of bare life.[33] By bio-political investment, Prozorov understands the power to mobilise, foster and create life, while sovereign power refers to the power to exclude and negate.[34] Prozorov considers modern politics a demonic combination of the two regimes of power, which remain nevertheless 'entirely distinct in their paradigmatic structure'.[35]

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[31] Ibid., 13.

[32] Sergei Prozorov, 'The Unrequited Love of Power: Biopolitical Investment and the Refusal of Care', *Foucault Studies* 4 (2007): 53-77.

[33] Ibid., 53-4.

[34] Ibid., 56.

[35] Ibid., 67.

For Prozorov the first step in a strategy for resistance against this dual regime of power is disassociating bio-politics from sovereign subjection.[36] Aiming to resist the bio-political interventions of the modern state, Prozorov's main move is to separate the two regimes. State's bio-political interventions cannot be resisted, for him, from within a sovereign discourse on rights and citizenship. For him, bio-politics is a historically specific instantiation of sovereignty, while sovereignty as such is a transcendental, negative and lethal manifestation. A refusal of bio-politics has to go through the necessary step of re-casting sovereignty as an external and deductive form of power, of 'relegating power to a position of pure exteriority'.[37] His method of anti-bio-political resistance rests on the success of a move 'to externalise power from human existence and thereby leave its agape unrequited'.[38] Similarly to Edkins and Pin-Fat, Prozorov displaces sovereignty outside the bio-political terrain, a move which implies 'restoring it as a purely ontological condition of all power relations', or a 'law without content'.[39]

Both projects assume the possibility, and even necessity, of differentiating between sovereignty and bio-political manifestations of power. Externalising sovereignty from the bio-political terrain reduces it to its primary function as a timeless ontological condition for order, taking shape in the institutions of the state. In contrast to Edkins and Pin-Fat, Prozorov confesses that a 'refusal of politics can ironically appear to be a re-affirmation of sovereignty'.[40] Fundamentally, for Prozorov the aim is not to eliminate 'the sovereign excesses from the plenitude of bio-political production', as Edkins and Pin-Fat's displacement of sovereignty suggests.[41] Instead, he seeks to empty power of its bio-political content and leave it in its pure form, as sovereignty. Prozorov's strategy for resistance is to reduce all power to sovereignty, a negative, restrictive form of power that excludes the production of the living and the care for the individual. However different in their design, we argue that both projects work towards a similar aim: imagining a strategy for resistance through the displacement of sovereignty from the bio-political terrain. More importantly for this paper, the effects of such strategies are a re-affirmation of sovereignty as transcendental and negative and an understanding of state power as domination and coercion.

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[36] Ibid., 61.

[37] Ibid, 64.

[38] Ibid., 65.

[39] Ibid., 65

[40] Ibid, 64.

[41] Ibid., 67.

But understanding state power as coercion is misleading as it results in it being refused a properly political engagement. Seeing it as a repressive form, one fails to notice how state power aims to implement particular values and not to simply project its power at the expense of subjects' interests. Viewing it as domination, the logic of state action follows a preoccupation with strengthening and implementing a repressive apparatus of law and coercion and is manifested as a relationship of violence. For Foucault, a relationship of violence 'acts upon a body and things by closing off possibilities';[42] when it comes against resistance, violence will attempt to crush it. Power as a relation requires that 'the other, over whom power is exercised, be recognised and maintained as an acting subject'. This form of power will not close off possibilities. Instead: 'faced with a power relationship, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up'.[43] Viewing state power as violence dismisses the possibility of productive and reflexive forms of state intervention. In fact, it negates the very possibility of the relation of power as 'to speak of non- violent power is actually redundant' as power and violence exclude each other, 'where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent. Violence appears where power is in jeopardy, but left to its own course it ends in power's disappearance'.[44]

This section has argued that due to their strategies for resistance, both post-structural projects discussed above reduce the critical potential opened by their use of Foucault's concept of power as a relation. Albeit in different ways, both projects have as their main aim disassociating the bio-political from the sovereign and to maintain the state as the locus of a transcendental and deductive form of power. This is performed in Edkins and Pin-Fat as their hope for a life of potenza relies on the possibility of displacing sovereignty. For Prozorov, the appeal is quite the opposite. It is through reducing all power to a form of sovereignty as transcendental and deductive that we can resist power most effectively. This prompted us to argue that while they both see state power in relational terms, their insistence on separating between sovereign and bio-political manifestations of state power reduce it to a form of domination characterised by violent, conflictual encounters between state and subjects. This maintains seeing state power as coercion, failing to appropriately explore its productive and reflexive aspects as this next section will develop.

[42] Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', 340.

[43] Ibid., 340.

[44] Hannah Arendt cited in Steven Lukes, *Power: a radical view* (London: Macmillan, 1974), 39.

State power beyond coercion

This article has so far claimed that there are two main ways in which a conception of power informs our understanding of state power in International Relations. The first view was that of power as a capacity which has been the model used within the positivist approaches. The second, power as a relation, was shown to be used within the post-structuralist literature. As the conclusions of these two sections have made it apparent, however, both conceptions of power result in a view of state power as a coercive form of intervention. The remainder of the article will challenge this prevailing understanding of state power as coercion. Employing Foucault's argument on the productive nature of power we argue that state power is also a productive and reflexive manifestation that cannot be reduced to simple coercion.

For Foucault, power relations are not simply prohibitive or coercive but eminently productive. The government of men by men does always involve a certain type of rationality, not just instrumental violence.[45] In *The Subject and Power*, Foucault claims that this conception of power as relations presupposes freedom and the potential for refusal.[46] It is a form of power that does not entirely determine others' faith but acts upon their actions, that is what Foucault calls 'government' or 'the conduct of conduct'.

What constitutes a relationship of power is 'a mode of action that does not act directly or immediately on others. Instead, it acts upon their actions, (…) on possible or actual future or present actions'.[47] This does not deny the capacities for action of the other. To govern is to recognise these capacities and to aim to act upon them. This relies on relations of power that act upon actions, which requires developing a knowledge of the subjects and objects to be governed. Governing therefore involves thinking, a way of rationalising the act of governing, so as to appeal to the motivations for actions of subjects. The other is recognised and maintained as a subject who acts. In a relation of power a whole field of reactions and responses are opened.[48]

Power is most often acting on the action of individuals who are free, whose behaviour is not entirely constrained by coercion. Power is exercised on those who are able to choose, and it is trying to influence both the context and content of choices. However, these relations of power are reversible. In fact power requires a degree of freedom; where there is no possibility for resistance

[45] Michel Foucault, 'Omnes et Singulatim: Toward a Critique of Political Reason', in Power. Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984, edited by J. D. Faubion (London: Penguin Books, 2002, volume 3), 324.

[46] Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', 340.

[47] Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', 340.

[48] Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', 340.

there can be no relations of power. Foucault tells us that we can identify in the history of modern governmental practices and rationalities a form of power which takes freedom itself and the 'soul of the citizen', the life-conduct of ethically free subjects, as the main object of its persuasive capacity.[49]

Conceiving power as a relation between actions suggests that power is not always exercised against the interest of the other or that influencing conduct is necessarily perverse. Power does not always result in a removal of liberty or choice. On the contrary, power can be productive and act through empowering the subject, forcing him to act as free, autonomous decision-maker.

Foucault introduces a distinction between power relations and domination. Relations of power are a strategic game between liberties. Domination is what we ordinarily call power:

> We must distinguish the relationship of power as strategic game between liberties—strategic games that result in the fact that some people try to determine the conduct of others—and states of domination, which are what we ordinarily call power. And, between the two, between the games of power and the states of domination, you have governmental technologies.[50]

This distinction between power relations and domination as a particular type of power relations, that are both hierarchical and stable, allows him to condemn domination without condemning power relations. Therefore, Foucault distinguishes between power relations in general and states of domination as particular forms. Power relations, in the general, refer simply to a 'structure of actions bearing on the actions of those who are free'.[51] This implies that power relationships are generally unstable and reversible. Domination designates power relations that are relatively stable and hierarchical, where there is less hope for a reversal. Government rests between domination and forms of power that are reversible ('strategic games of liberties'), and aims at affecting the actions of individuals by acting on their conduct, that is through the way they themselves regulate their behaviour: through freedom, choice and self-discipline. In other words, 'government may well make use of domination, but it is not commonly so directive, aiming less to determine particular actions than to influence overall patterns of conduct'.[52]

[49] Colin Godon, 'Governmental rationality: an introduction', in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, eds. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 5.

[50] Michel Foucault, 'The Political Technology of Individuals', in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, eds. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, Patrick H. Hutton (London: Tavistock Publications, 1988), 19.

[51] Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', 340.

[52] Barry Hindess, 'Bringning states back in', *Political Studies Review*, Number 4, Issue 2 (2006): 120.

However, Foucault did not explicitly use the argument on the dispersion of power to rethink state power. The aim of this article is to question the centre of power, the state, with the same instruments used to analyse the dispersion of power by Foucault. We do not deny that the state could be seen as a unified centre of power but we do not take this hierarchy for granted. What one has to ask is how, by virtue of what political strategies, does the state appear to be a unified centre of power? Therefore, for us, state power operates within a wider field of power relations that extend beyond the institutions of the state. But while we acknowledge the dispersion of power, our main preoccupation in this article is to concentrate on policy initiatives, issued by state officials and to reconsider the type of power the state exercises over its subjects. Our analysis could extend, therefore, to considering how the formulation of policies and the exercise of power by the state can be only understood within the more extensive field of manifestations of power in a society. The scope of this article is, however, more narrowly defined as it aims to reconceptualise state power through highlighting the productive and reflexive aspects of official initiatives.

It is in this way that we aim to contribute to analyses of power in International Relations by showing how Foucault's re-conceptualisation of power as the 'conduct of conduct' can shed new light on the nature of state power. Such an approach emphasises the productive and reflexive aspects of power neglected by the traditional conception of 'state power as institutional capacity'. At the same time, however, it maintains the focus on state power rather than looking at power beyond the state as the post-structuralist literature does. Rather than rejecting it as violent, our objective is to understand how state power operates, without either demonising or legitimising it. We think a Foucauldian approach to power grants one the possibility to take state power seriously, analyse it in its different contexts and manifestations without falling into one of the logics of demonising, and hence having to escape it, or legitimising it, and hence leaving it unquestioned.

Foucault aims to change the view of power as emanating from the unified centre of the state, a view that relies on the understanding of power as an institutional capacity, the ability of an institution to be affective in imposing its will against that of the subjects. Instead, Foucault sees power in a dispersed and decentralised manner. For him, power relations do not derive from institutions but, in their different combinations, produce institutions. He, therefore, does not only challenge the understanding of power as an institutional capacity but shifts the traditional understandings of institutions, in particular the institutions of the state, by insisting on reading them from the point of view of power relations. Seeing the state as an effect of power relations removes its timeless logic of action and makes it contingent upon different programmes of government. The dual shift in understanding both power and institutions creates a radically different understanding of state power. State power ceases to be an institutional capacity or a

simple relationship of violence and becomes a complex form of power that acts on the actions of others thorough political instruments, such as freedom.

Looking at cases from both Britain and China, the article sets out to claim that describing the functioning of state power in this way should not be limited to Western societies. The preoccupation with the detailed, bio-political management of the life of subjects goes beyond the Western tradition of state. However, the focus on fostering the power of life through the management of populations is circumscribable to one type of political order, Foucault tells us, bio-political societies. But bio-political tendencies can be found both in Western and non-Western state tradition. Focusing the analysis on these two cases shows that the productive aspects of state power are not only aimed at ethnic communities beyond the territorial borders (diaspora communities) but at alien subjects within the territory alike.

State power as 'acting on the actions of others'

The issues of integration and community cohesion have always been considered in Britain to be the responsibility for 'Local strategic partnerships', partnerships between local agencies, businesses and communities. The integration of the 'new economic migrants', a term given to the immigrants from the ten countries which became members of the EEA in 2004, is a strategic part of the broader issue of community cohesion that the government considers necessary to be dealt with locally. More recently, however, this issues while maintaining its local status in terms of implementation and monitoring, has become increasingly discussed and framed in national terms. This shift in approach can be explained by the link between immigration and terrorism and the increased presence of the latter on the current affairs agenda. The question remains, what forms does the more centralised approach to the integration of new migrants take? Is it based on legal initiatives or does it rather take the form of a framework of recommendations for both local institutional partners and individuals?

Evidence of the more recent, centralised approach to social cohesion is the announcement made on the 24 August 2006 by the communities secretary, Ruth Kelly, about the creation of the 'Commission on Integration and Cohesion', an advisory body concerned with how local areas can deal with diversity. The final report of this commission, entitled 'Our shared future', was published on 14 June 2007.[53] This report confirms that the implementation of integration programmes

[53] 'Our shared future', report presented by the 'Commission on Integration and Cohesion' on 14 June 2007,

http://www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk/upload/assets/www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk/our_shared_f

remains a local responsibility. Every local area is recommended to map their communities and use the instrument of mapping to identify challenges and opportunities. Several examples are given, such as the Luton Council developing a multi-agency emergency planning protocol that requires partners to collectively detect, map and monitor tensions and challenges to cohesion. Similarly, Cornwall's Local Area Agreement contains a detailed action plan that cuts across its priorities to ensure that cohesion issues related to migrant workers are strategically and operationally embedded in the partnership's work.[54]

The results of MORI, who were commissioned to investigate "what works" in building integration and cohesion and identify best practice, are cited.[55] The initiatives mentioned include: supporting the socio-economic well being of individuals and communities, providing English language training, generating a sense of commonality and positive relationships, engaging and involving all sectors of the community, 'myth-busting' communications and responding to major events that present risks to cohesion. There are a few examples given. In July 2005, Lincolnshire Police, South Holland CAB and Jobcentre plus prepared a 'myth-busting' leaflet on migrant workers. The leaflet aimed to secure the better integration of migrant workers in the local area through the production and dissemination of the leaflets that aimed to dispel common myths about migrant workers, their rights and status.

The model remains that of local agencies working with employers to encourage the sharing of best practice and development of standards for the employment of migrant workers. The integration of migrant workers happens first in the workplace (and the school in the case of their children), and therefore employers' contribution is pivotal. The second place of integration is the local community; therefore the implication of local non-governmental agencies and community groups is also paramount. The above mentioned myth-busting activities such as the production of informative leaflets that address the concerns of the local community have focused on working with the local community to increase community cohesion and a better acceptance of migrants.[56] This approach to integration highlights the way the integration of migrants is managed. It is not only implemented in a decentralised logic but the types of interventions by the local strategic partnerships predominantly take the form of communication and information campaigns for both local residents and migrants.

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[54] Ibid., 51.

[55] Ibid., 52.

[56] Ibid., 105.

This type of intervention has less to do with legal provisions or coercive measures and is aimed at changing the context within which the issue of the integration of migrants is being discussed. The context is being changed by extending the access of migrants to certain local services, health and language training, informing them about their rights and changing the perception of the local community about the newcomers. These measures rely for their effectiveness on the success they have in reaching the audience and performing a change in their knowledge and representations about the other. They are expression of a form of power that aims to regulate behaviours through acting on the actions of others by reshaping the context of personal choices through introducing new information.

However, the conclusion of this report is that one of the main challenges to the central government is setting out a clear national leadership on the issues of integration and cohesion. It continues to maintain that social cohesion is locally driven and delivered by local partners. Nonetheless, it insists that the central government has a responsibility in providing a general framework. The text of the report focuses on the role of the central government in providing a common narrative. The recommendation is that the government invests in a national 'shared futures programme' from 2008 to 2012 leading from the European Year of Intercultural Education up to the Olympics, using these events to further promote a positive message on integration: to 'deepen a sense of our shared futures, reflecting positively on the diversity of experience in Britain, to engender civic pride and to connect that with a national sense of purpose'.[57] The objective of the 'shared futures programme' would be therefore more than a simple PR campaign and would aim to influence peoples' perceptions about each other. The main objective is fostering a sense of civic pride and connecting this with the idea of a shared destiny and national purpose.

What about this shift in the report that points in the direction of a more centralised approach to the issue of integration? What form does the central government's intervention on the issue take? We see again that even at the central level, the focus is on inputting new information into the context that could lead to change perceptions and actions towards the new migrants: 'The starting [in this strategy] point for this must be the traditions and heritage of the country and its regions stretching back over hundreds of years – with a recognition of the important role dissent and non-conformism have played in the past, alongside a binding national narrative. It should incorporate events and projects designed to increase learning between different cultural communities and individuals within these, as well as between different nations of the UK and different regions of England'.[58]

[57] Ibid., 48.

[58] Ibid., 49.

State power as 'acting through freedom'

A good example of states indirect engagements with populations rather than territories, and therefore projection of its power on the action rather than directly on the territory or bodies of the subjects is states' numerous initiatives towards their diasporas. It is not an exaggeration to attest that the majority of governments exercise a bundle of policies and strategies to reach out to their diasporic communities. Transnationalism studies provide a myriad of examples of the states' diverse engagements with their diasporic populations. In most cases, the focus of these policies is not on the control of the territory and physical control of the subjects, but on their cooptation and subjectivization through appealing to their ethnic and cultural identity. Often, states extend the access of migrants to citizens rights (Mexico, China, Italy, Vietnam, etc.) or play a role of cultural authority through engaging in a variety of activities with its diasporic communities abroad.[59] State power here acts beyond the territoriality of the state and takes the form of non-coercive productive force shaping the subjectivities of people through acting on their actions and subjectivities. States appeal to their diasporic populations to attract them to take part in the domestic affairs of their 'home' state through taking part in elections, economic exchange, and cultural activities.

Since mid 1990s, China has been increasingly engaged with its numerous diasporic communities first in the Asia-Pacific, and later in most of the world. Different modes of engagement have been experimented with and China has now a very elaborate variety of policies and practices designed for divergent groups of overseas Chinese. Overseas Chinese, or more specifically China's engagement with them, represents an interesting case of mobilisation through the exercise of a particular form of power. Since the late 1990s China has changed the direction of its policies towards young overseas Chinese from 'to return to serve the country' to 'serve the nation'.[60] In doing this, the Chinese state emphasises not the presence of its subjects on its territory, but the loyalty of the overseas Chinese to the cause and goals of the Chinese nation as

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[59] The People's Republic of China, for example, sponsors the annual celebration of the PRC's national day in most parts of the world, in which overseas Chinese are invited to take part in. This celebration is paralleled by the traditional October 1st grand reception for overseas Chinese in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing (Zhao Hongying 2000: 12). Through these and other activities the Chinese nation-state reiterates the importance of the PRC-bound sense of identity among overseas Chinese communities, which must be maintained and reproduced through exercising the collective memory in celebration of events that are significant for all members of the Chinese nation.

[60] Erkang Chong 'Dangdai haiwai huaren shulüe' (Commentary on the Contemporary Overseas Chinese), Nankai xuebao (Nankai Journal) 5 (1999), 158.

formulated and advocated by the government, and encourages their participation in the state projects across the territory.

Overseas Chinese communities are attempted to be re-appropriated by the former state. While they are not the full subjects of the Chinese state, they are attempted to be subjected through these initiatives. The range of choices people have in how they respond to these initiatives is extensive. China has many provisions and incentives for diasporic communities to be subjected to the power of the state. And there is a multitude of reasons why it engages with their overseas populations. Sentimental issues of common ethnic origins and roots aside, there are also lucid explanations to be found in economic and political spheres of the activities of the state. Ultimately, the governmentality of such transnational subjects is intended to strengthen the influence of the state through either hard currency, political lobbying the host country, or the human capital of transnationals. But state power here does not take the form of coercive relationship, it is a power which shapes the identities of people subjected to it. For example, overseas Chinese have a choice of not getting involved into the programmes and activities organised or sponsored by the Chinese government through Chinese embassies and less formal institutions. Instead, they can take part in the anti-Chinese government protests in support of Falun Gong followers, freedom of Tibet, Xinjiang and etc. But those who do choose to respond and participate in the state-sponsored activities are engaging in practices which shape their identities in particular ways.

The way the Chinese government attempts to mould a sense of a unified transnational Chinese community is through the production and exercise of a discourse that can bring diverse communities together. One recent trend has been the growing approval and support for overseas Chinese organisations and their activities by the government in the PRC, which has prompted a general re-orientation of the overseas Chinese communities towards the PRC. In the past, overseas Chinese organisations were characterised by their strong kinship and locality sentiments and they differed significantly in their purpose and character. They were native places associations, family names associations, and organisations of a professional or religious nature. Since the 1990s, the tendency has been to bring regional organisations together under one unifying body and systematise and coordinate their activities through the organisation of regional gatherings. The newly emerged Chinese overseas organisations, as well as their activities, have been increasingly characterised by their strong apparent orientation towards the PRC, or have been set up with the PRC's direct involvement and endorsement.[61] For example, when the European Association of

[61] Pál Nyíri, 'Chinese Organisations in Hungary 1989-1996: A Case Study in PRC-oriented Community Politics Overseas,' *Internal and International Migration: Chinese Perspectives*, eds. Frank Pieke and Nein Mallee (Richmond: Curzon, 1999), 251-279; Pál Nyíri, *New Chinese Migrants in Europe:*

Chinese Organisations was established in 1992 out of the desire of 21[62] Chinese associations from ten countries to unite, this motion received high praise from the Government which commended on this move.

The above developments suggest that the Chinese government has been appropriating diversified local discourses of the overseas Chinese communities and attempts to bring them together under the banner of patriotism toward the motherland and the leadership in the Chinese state. One Chinese scholar pronounced that the 'international character of Chinese Associations became an example of a cultural sap for a group identity'.[63] Indeed, it seems that the Chinese state successfully capitalises on the knowledge of localised discourse, as well as on the global mobility, trade, communication, technological advancements, and other qualifications of globalisation to diversify the mechanism of its power. These examples of the Chinese state's preoccupation with its diasporic communities demonstrated how state power can work outside its territorial limits in a non-coercive way shaping people's identities and subjectivities without infringing on their freedom.

Concluding remarks

The last two sections have shown that state power does not exist in opposition to freedom and, therefore, freedom is not the absence of power but a condition and a consequence of it. This type of power relies on freedom, otherwise it is simple coercion. In this form, subjects have more options; they are not coercively or legally determined to obey. There might be incentives for them to obey, but they will not be punished if they don't. Prozorov follows Foucault in calling the strategy of the modern state a 'demonic project', always combining 'the negative and the positive, the transcendent and the immanent, scarcity and plenitude, the destructive and the productive'.[64] We concur with this description as we believe that the power of the state cannot be reduced to coercion, a negative and restrictive form of violence. Such a reduction would negate the possibility for state power to be reflexive and productive and this paper has sought to emphasise precisely these aspects.

The Case of the Community in Hungary (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 110.

[62] By 2000 more than 100 organisations from over 20 countries were part of the Association (Zhao Hongying 2000: 13).

[63] Lüe Zhou, 'Cultural Identity of the Overseas Chinese in the Context of Globalisation', in *Selected Papers on Overseas Chinese* (Haiwai huaren yanjiu lunji), ed. Hao Shiyuan (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2002), 337-347.

[64] Prozorov, 'The Unrequited Love', 57.

This article has looked at how conceptualisations of power in the International Relations literature shape understandings of state power. It distinguished between two different conceptualisations of power, as a capacity and as a relation. Power as a capacity, a view dominant within the positivist literature on state power and power as a relation, encountered in the post-structuralist literature were shown to lead to a similar understanding of state power. Despite their different understandings of state power as an institutional capacity or as a relationship of violence, the analysis concluded that both share a vision of state power as coercive, disregarding the possibility of heterogeneous, productive and reflexive expressions of state power. Instead, we have suggested understanding state power as a productive and reflexive form of power, one that governs through freedom.