

## SOVEREIGN POWER, DISCIPLINARY POWER AND BIOPOWER: HOW TO MAKE SENSE OF FOUCAULT'S CONCEPTUALIZATION OF POWER MECHANISMS?

### EGEMEN İKTİDAR, DİSİPLİNER İKTİDAR VE BİYO-İKTİDAR: FOUCAULT'NUN İKTİDAR MEKANİZMALARINI KAVRAMLAŞTIRMASI NASIL OKUNMALI?

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#### ÖZ

*Foucault'nun çalışmalarında güç nosyonu kilit kavramlardan biridir. Foucault, modern dönemde insanların maruz kaldığı hâkimiyet kurma tekniklerine ışık tutabilmek için, güç mekanizmalarının gelişim sürecinin bir takibini gerçekleştirmiştir. Kendisi, egemen otorite, disiplin mekanizmaları ve biyopolitika kavramlarına odaklanarak, Batı toplumlarında gücün nasıl işlerlik kazındığını açıklama amaçlı çeşitli kavramsallaştırmalar ortaya koymuştur. Kendilerine has özelliklere sahip olan egemenlik, disiplin ve biyo-iktidar ile ilişkili güç mekanizmaları, farklı tarihsel konjonktürlerde öne çıkıp, farklı işlevselliklere sahip olmuşlardır. Bu üç güç kaynağı arasında biyo-iktidar, üretken ve pozitif özelliğiyle diğer varyantlardan ayrılmaktadır. Batı toplumlarında biyo-iktidar, toplumların yönetiminde şekillendirici bir özelliğe sahip olup, korunması ve devam ettirilmesi gereken bir yaşam şekli için gerekli güç kaynağını teşkil etmektedir. Halihazırdaki süreçte de biyo-iktidar Batı'daki toplumsal yaşam üzerinde tayin edici bir etkiye sahiptir; fakat bu etki, egemen ve disipliner güç mekanizmalarını âtil hale getirmektedir. Foucault'nun merceğinden bakılarak bu çalışmada ortaya konulduğu gibi, biyopolitik hedeflerin gerçekleştirilmesinde, egemen güç ve disipliner güç mekanizmaları hala önemli işlevler görmektedir. Böylece nüfusların yönetiminde, bu üç farklı güç kaynağı birbirlerini tamamlayıcı nitelikte unsurlar olarak göze çarpmaktadır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Foucault, Biyo-iktidar, Egemen İktidar, Disipliner İktidar

**Jel Kodları:** N43, N44, Y80, Z00

#### ABSTRACT

*Power is one of the key concepts in the works of Michel Foucault. Foucault traced the development of various power mechanisms across the modern period so as to shed light on the techniques of domination which human beings were subject to. By focusing on sovereign authority, disciplinary mechanisms and biopolitics, he introduced several conceptualizations to illustrate the operation of power in modern western societies. Sovereign, disciplinary and biopower emerged at different historical junctures and thereby carry unique characteristics and fulfil different functions. As the latest variant among the three, biopower separates itself from its analogues with its positive and productive feature. Biopower acts a formative force with regards to the administration of societies in the west and constitutes a source of power that is essential for the protection and promotion of certain forms of life. Despite biopower's determinative influence over the social body, it does not render sovereign and disciplinary powers redundant. As shown in this work through Foucault's prism, sovereign and disciplinary power mechanisms still fulfil key functions in the pursuit of biopolitical objectives. Hence, in modern societies these three forms of power mechanisms act as complementary instruments in the administration of populations.*

**Keywords:** Foucault, Biopower, Sovereign Power, Disciplinary Power

**Jel Codes:** N43, N44, Y80, Z00

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Michel Foucault is one of the most influential philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His works still contribute to almost all branches of social science including political theory, philosophy, sociology, gender studies, just to name a few. By adopting a genealogical approach, Foucault attempted to explain in his works how practices, norms and subjectivities emerge and take root in the social sphere. This, for Foucault, was the key to understanding inter-human relations and more broadly, the functioning of the social body. Foucault also sought to show the way in which knowledge, practices and techniques of governance emerged in certain historical junctures as well as their impacts on human life. In a broad sense, Foucault's aim was to shed light on the production of knowledge in tandem with the operation of power mechanisms. He also sought to shed light on the role of institutions and instruments of control in the maintenance and reproduction of certain social orders. Examples of key concepts which Foucault focused on include state, society, power, governance, sovereignty as well as disciplines such as psychiatry, criminology, pedagogy and so on. In a nutshell, Foucault attempted to unveil the techniques of domination that human beings were exposed to in their social environments – mostly in the context of western societies. In doing so, he explored power relations in different historical periods and produced insightful analysis about various technologies of governance that were employed in the administration of societies.

Since power is one of the pivotal concepts in the Foucauldian literature, I will analyze in this work its conceptualization in reference to sovereignty, discipline and biopolitics. The objective of this work is to illustrate how political regimes have utilized various power wielding instruments from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards. In the context of western modernity, I will elaborate on sovereign power, disciplinary power and biopower as the three key sources of power mechanisms. Following Foucault, I will show that although these three forms of power came into existence in different periods, they are still operative and fulfil certain functions as punitive, corrective and regulative instruments. More specifically, by showing that Foucault did not discount the significance of sovereign and disciplinary powers when he developed biopolitics, I will argue through a Foucauldian prism that, when new power mechanisms emerged, rather than displacing their predecessors, they have co-operated with them in the social organism, which comprised a complex set of inter-human relations. On the basis of this contention, I will explain with reference to Foucault that sovereign, discipline and biopolitics are complementary concepts and understanding the operation of modern governing techniques requires demonstrating the co-existence and co-operation of these power mechanisms. Despite this complementarity, I will also show that biopower is the most important constituent among the three variants, thus sovereign and disciplinary powers playing supplementary roles.

As for the structure of this article, I will begin by explaining Foucault's approach to the notion of power as well as its different variants. After that, I will discuss the emergence and operation of biopower and lay out this constituents' inherent characteristics. Finally, this article explains the way in which sovereign, disciplinary and biopower operate in the social body in conjunction with each other.

## 2. FOUCAULT AND THE NOTION OF POWER

One of the key concepts that appear in the works of Foucault is power. He underscored the importance of understanding the operation of power mechanisms in the social body and constructed conceptual frameworks for this purpose. As Foucault set out to investigate power relations, he adopted "the double methodological principle of neutrality or scepticism" which indicated "an analysis in terms of power, which bases itself neither on a moral philosophy nor on a social ontology" (Gordon, 1980: 235). Rather than concerning himself with moral or ontological issues in his investigations on power, Foucault's chief interest lied in detecting where power is located, how it operates and affects individuals in social organisms.

As Foucault began to grapple with issues such as power, knowledge, disciplinary institutions and biopolitics, he

contextualized his analysis on the basis of the specifications of certain time periods. His philosophical approach reflected the view that an analysis of power (as well as other concepts he focused on) required understanding the radical transformation that human life underwent with the advent of the modern phase. This transformation, in simple terms, involved man's distancing himself from mystical practices and adoption of a new rationality which was based on universally applicable scientific laws (Foucault, 2009: 234-236). In a nutshell, the new modern era was characterised by the "demise of the subject consequent upon the demise of divinity which once guaranteed it" (Dillon ve Reid, 2009: 19). This meant, in the context of western civilization, that man put aside ecclesiastical practices and began to live his life based on a secular imaginary. The main characteristic of this new phase can be described as man's ability to seize the finitude, which represents a world that is devoid of a divine authority. And in this new era, as Foucault argues, disappearance of "God's pastoral government of the world" paved the way for "a de-governmentalization of cosmos" (Foucault, 2009: 236). Deleuze describes Foucault's approach to this new phase by observing that

"[M]an must begin by confronting and seizing hold of the forces of finitude as if they were forces from outside. [...] Then and only then, in a second stage, does it create from this its own finitude, where its knowledge of finitude necessarily brings it to its own finitude" (Deleuze, 2006: 127).

The juncture that was marked by the seizure of the finitude was a crucial turning point, since it gave birth to modern man. According to Foucault,

Man "is a quite recent creature, which the demiurge of knowledge fabricated with its own hands less than two hundred years ago: but he has grown old so quickly that it has been only too easy to imagine that he had been waiting for thousands of years in the darkness for that moment of illumination in which he would finally be known" (Foucault, 2005: 336).

The process that began with modernity paved the way for man to create new forms of knowledge, which also gave rise to new power relations. But, power was not a passive object in this process and the already-existing power relations in the social body also affected the way in which knowledge was produced. As Foucault points out "The exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power" (Foucault, 1978: 52). Hence, power and knowledge are best described as co-constitutive variables. As will be described below, in Foucault's view, different historical phases involved the dominance of different power wielding mechanisms. Thus, his aim was to track these phases and explain the way in which power was exercised in connection with the transformation of human life brought about by modernity.

Foucault's exploration of the functioning of power in the social organism involved a microlevel approach. This approach was adopted so as to unveil the hidden and masked power relations which human subjects found themselves in. From Foucault's perspective, power is viewed as an all-encompassing constituent, from which human-beings could not refrain (Foucault, 1978: 82). Thus, social organism is infused with manifold power relations which come in myriad forms. Power relations "can be in play family relations, or within an institution, or an administration – or between a dominating and a dominated class power relations" (Foucault, 1988b: 38). Given the ubiquity of power, Foucault describes the practice of domination as being characterised by "multiple forms of subjugation that have a place and function within the social organism" (Foucault, 1980: 96). Understanding the impact of power mechanisms on individuals, therefore, necessitated identifying, where micropower was located in the social body. As he put it:

"[I]n thinking of the mechanisms of power, I am thinking [...] of its capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives" (Foucault,

1980: 39).<sup>1</sup>

Since Foucault remained aloof from approaches based on hierarchical depictions of social relations, he paid scant attention to the concept of the state in his analysis of power. Staying at the micropolitical level, he instead sought to unveil techniques of domination and technologies of government that individuals were exposed to in modern societies. This required addressing how practices and techniques involving the exercise of power came into existence. And in his research, as an oft-cited source of power, the state was not conceived as an entity that could act as an autonomous power mechanism. Foucault's approach to this subject was predicated on the view that "the State can only operate on the basis of other, already existing power relations" (Foucault, 1980: 122). According to Gordon, "Foucault holds that the state has no [...] inherent properties; more generally, state has no essence. [...] Political theory attends too much to institutions, and too little to practices" (Gordon, 1991: 4). In this respect, for Foucault, interpretations of the state "as timeless abstraction, as pole of transcendence, instrument of class domination, or cold monster [were] overvaluation of the problem of the state" (Senellart, 1978: 381).

Although, Foucault remained distant to the concept of the state, this does not mean that he attributed no explanatory value to it. That is, as the state has no essence in an ontological sense, its analysis, seen through Foucault's prism, requires explaining its structural effects, rather than its material existence (Mitchell, 1991). As Foucault argues:

"The state is nothing else but the effect, the profile, the mobile shape of a perpetual statification (étatisation) or statifications, in the sense of incessant transactions [...] relationships between local powers, the central authority, and so on. [...] the state has no heart [...] but not just in the sense that it has no feelings, either good or bad, but it has no heart in the sense that it has no interior. The state is nothing else but the mobile effect of a regime of multiple governmentalities" (Foucault, 2008: 77).

This captures the essence of Foucault's interest in governing practices themselves, rather than the modern state apparatus or its material or ideological manifestations. The reason from a Foucauldian perspective is straightforward: neither state-centric nor class analysis have enough explanatory capacities to describe the origins of power relations;

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<sup>1</sup> Foucault's approach was criticized widely due to his refusal to specify power relations in a concrete way. This meant leaving unanswered the sources from where power emanates. A Marxist critique of Foucault, as performed by Poulantzas for instance, would show that Foucault's explorations of power relations take place on an abstract plain, whereby relations of production and social division of labour are not given weight. Similarly, a Marxist reading would reveal that, relations between the state and those that retain the means of production need to be unveiled to give a real account of power relations in social systems. To put the matter more clearly, Poulantzas argues that Foucault glosses over many of the crucial aspects of power relations in modern societies because he focuses too much on subtle mechanisms. As he puts it, "Foucault is led to underestimate at the very least the role of law in the of power within modern societies; but he also underestimates of the State itself, and fails to understand the function of the apparatuses (army, police, judicial system, etc.) as means of physical violence that are located at the heart of the modern State. They are treated instead as mere parts of the disciplinary machine which patterns the internalization of repression by means of normalization" (Poulantzas, 1980: 77). On a different note, another critic of Foucault, Berman, identifies a deterministic approach in Foucault's conceptualization of power. This, according to him, leads Foucault to refuse to acknowledge the possibility of individuals being able to free themselves from power mechanisms that surround them as disciplinary institutions. The pessimistic picture painted by Foucault based on his belief that individuals cannot dissociate themselves from power is criticized by Berman in the following terms: "Foucault is obsessed with prisons, hospitals, asylums, with what Erving Goffman has called "total institutions." [...] Foucault's totalities swallow up every facet of modern life. He develops these themes with obsessive relentlessness and, indeed, with sadistic flourishes, clamping his ideas down on his readers like iron bars." Berman also states that "Foucault reserves his most savage contempt for people who imagine that it is possible for modern mankind to be free" (Berman, 1988: 34). Edward Said highlights a similar point. He takes issue with Foucault for the latter's indifference towards notions such as freedom and emancipation. Said describes Foucault's understanding of power relations by noting that "There is nothing to look forward to: we are stuck within our circle. And now the line is enclosed by a circle." (Said, 1994: 26). This, according to Said, led Foucault to adopt an apathetic stance towards liberation struggles in 1960/1970s. He saw the reason for this in Foucault's interest in micro-physics of power. As Said puts it, Foucault "turned [...] his attention away from the oppositional forces in modern society which he had studied for their undeterred resistance to exclusion and confinement [...] and decided that since power was everywhere it was probably better co concentrate on the local micro-physics of power that surround the individual" (Said, 1994: 26). As this work aims to present a discussion on ways to make sense of Foucault's conceptualization of power mechanisms, it is beyond the scope of this work to elaborate in detail on Foucault's critics. But his this would be a worthy attempt that may be undertaken in a separate work.

thus, as opposed to abstract concepts such as the state and the class, it is the techniques of domination that requires scrutiny in order to understand how power is exercised (Foucault, 1980: 101). Foucault's works on institutions reveal that methods of exclusion, related to madness for example (Foucault, 1988a), had already been present in the social system, before the modern state apparatus came into existence. When the modern state did emerge, techniques of domination "came to be colonised and maintained by global mechanisms and the entire State system" (Foucault, 1980:101). Therefore, in explaining the functioning of power, entities such as the state have limited utility and one should instead concentrate on governing practices themselves and how these operate, expand and contract in different historical periods (Foucault, 2008: 6). Even if practices of domination are implemented through the state, it is the techniques themselves, rather than the entities, that give birth to power relations.

### **3. FOUCAULT'S EXPLORATION OF DIFFERENT FORMS OF POWER**

As the above discussion illustrates, understanding power relations requires looking beyond the state apparatus. From a Foucauldian angle, explaining the operation of power necessitates a genealogical approach, which he adopted as his principal methodology. He traced the principle sources of power across history by focusing on sovereign power, disciplinary power and biopower. These three concepts of power, though not mutually exclusive, have different functionalities and Foucault's aim was to demonstrate how power was exercised as an instrument to repress and regulate human subjects and but also reproduce certain forms of subjectivities.

Regarding the way in which power was exercised when the sovereign reigned supreme, Foucault argues that during the ancient times the sovereign was viewed as the "father of the Roman family" (Foucault, 1978: 135) and possessed the right to use hard power over his subjects. However, during the classical era, the sovereign's ability to wield power was limited to demanding from his subjects to sacrifice their lives in the name of the protection of his principality. Machiavelli's prince and Hobbes's leviathan are cases in point. Hence, the sovereign "wielded an "indirect" power over them of life and death" (Foucault, 1978: 135). Nevertheless, under certain circumstances, the sovereign still retained an undisputable right to exercise power over his subjects. This was evident in situations that were characterized by a threat to the sovereign's authority, prompting him to employ punitive measures against the culprits (Foucault, 1978: 135). Seen in this light, the manner in which power was exercised pointed to the existence of a rigid hierarchical structure, in which the sovereign held incontestable authority within his territorial jurisdiction.

Foucault came to conclude that, with the passing of time, hierarchical power structures had given way to more subtle mechanisms, through which techniques of domination were exercised (Foucault, 1980: 95). Regarding the beginning of this new phase, he highlighted the principle role played by disciplinary mechanisms in the administration of societies. The essence of this approach is the institutionalization of power, involving the acquisition of obedience through techniques of discipline, rather than brutal coercion. Through "the training of behaviour" (Foucault, 1995: 129), Foucault argued, the aim was to organize the social body in a strategically more efficient and economically less costly way (Foucault, 1995: 129). In this new disciplinary framework, institutions such as hospitals, schools, asylums and prisons fulfilled key functions, as they helped create 'the right individual' through corrective and punitive practices.

However, Foucault came to believe that exploring power relations by focusing on disciplinary techniques also had limitations (Gordon, 1991: 5). He admitted this by saying that "I perhaps insisted too much on the techniques of domination" (Foucault, 1997: 177) by which he alluded to disciplinary institutions such as asylums and prisons. Yet, as I describe below, Foucault did not dismiss the significance of disciplinary power mechanisms, but he seems to have considered it necessary to broaden his analytical scope by looking beyond such instruments. He clarifies this by arguing that "[The new] technology of power does not [...] exclude disciplinary technology, but it does dovetail into it, integrate it [...] embedding itself in existing disciplinary techniques" (Foucault, 2003: 242).

The new technology of power that he refers to is biopower, which takes as its referent “the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life” (Foucault, 1978: 140). Since biopower concerns itself with the well-being of populations, governance based on biopolitics requires paying close scrutiny to factors such as disease, hygiene and sexuality. Although biopower often operates in tandem with disciplinary and sovereign power, Foucault maintains that “it exists at a different level, on a different scale, and because it has a different bearing area, and makes use of very different instruments” (Foucault, 2008: 66). These instruments are known as “regulatory apparatuses (*dispositifs*)” (Senellart, 2009: 378) which are technologies to supervise “a biopolitics of the human species” (Senellart, 2009: 378).

#### 4. THE EMERGENCE AND OPERATION OF BIOPOWER

According to Marchetti and Salamoni, Foucault’s move towards biopolitics occurred as a result of the new archives he had discovered, as well as his growing interest in life sciences, all of which led him to reconsider his prior conceptualizations of power (Marchetti ve Salomoni, 2003). Until he developed biopolitics (and governmentality), as mentioned above, Foucault had thought of power in terms of its disciplinary outlook – prohibition, asylum, confinement being the key themes he focused on. But with the onset of his conceptualization of biopower, he began to construe power as having a productive essence. In a nutshell, and as alluded to above, biopower is “a ‘life-administering power’ concerned with using social science and statistics to ‘normalize’, control and regulate the life and health of populations” (Lukes, 2005: 94).

Biopower emerged against the backdrop of a significant set of developments. For example, natural history, wealth and language’s replacement with biology, economics and philology respectively proved crucial in the move towards a new understanding of life (Foucault, 2005: 336). In the field of economics, for instance, when Foucault explores the transformation of political economy, he observes that Adam Smith’s economic conception, in which the acquisition and cultivation of land is the foremost value-creating activity, was superseded by an economic activity characterised by the “relocation of wealth in the creative forces of human biological life” (Cooper, 2008: 6). In other words, accumulation of wealth and creation of value now acted as sources to invest in the life properties of human beings. In this new biopolitical framework, life itself becomes the referent object in political calculations and individuals begin to be treated as species, meaning that they are no longer seen as “man-as-body”, which was prevalent in disciplinary societies, but rather as “man -as-living-being” (Foucault, 2003b: 242).

It bears stressing, in this context, that biopower is a different force than sovereign and disciplinary powers in that through its reproductive potential, it aims to “make life live” (Dillon ve Reid, 2009: 88). In biopolitical orders, the practice of using force is a means to an end. That is, force is employed with the aim of neutralizing the elements that pose a threat to the biological existence of populations (or species) (Dillon, 2008: 176-177). Therefore, punishment serves as a positive regulator in the sense that it helps protect and maintain certain forms life.

Biopolitical governance has further implications for the functioning of the social body. This significance derives from the inherent characteristics of biopolitical orders, enabling individuals to take part in the processes of subjectivity creation. Since biopower is a positive force that act upon and through desires and aspirations, actors operating in the social sphere which is governed through biopolitical means started producing new “technologies of subjectification” (Evans ve Reid, 2014: 1). In the context of “modern biopolitics”, as Gordon argues, “individuals have begun to formulate the needs and imperatives of that same life as the basis for political counter-demands” (Gordon, 1991: 5). Therefore, biopolitics provides a basis for the “‘strategic reversibility’ of power relations” and “‘counter-conducts’” (Gordon, 1991: 5). In this respect, it renders governance an exercise, which is determined by the “limits set by [...] the independent dynamics of life processes; such as those exhibited [...] by ‘population’” (Dillon, 2008: 172).

Therefore, when biopower begins to circulate, one sees the operation of a complex array of biopolitical dispositifs within social organisms. In social systems where biopower is prevalent, individuals become exposed to various sorts of subject forming mechanisms. Hacking's expression, "making up people" (Lukes, 2005: 91) aptly captures the implications of the impacts of such mechanisms on people. From the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, instruments of subjectification proliferated so much so that they extend into all spheres of individuals' lives, including their bodies and sexual desires. Foucault explains this by drawing attention to "economic (and also perhaps ideological) exploitation of eroticization, from sun-tan products to pornographic films" (Lukes, 2005: 91). He goes on to note that "Responding precisely to the revolt of the body, we find a new mode of investment which presents itself no longer in the form of control by repression but that of control by stimulation. 'Get undressed - but be slim, be good-looking, tanned!'" (Lukes, 2005: 94).

## **5. HOW DIFFERENT POWER MECHANISMS OPERATE**

Despite the formative influence of biopower in the administrating societies, it does not render disciplinary and sovereign powers redundant. Disciplinary and sovereign power mechanisms act in a way that facilitates the circulation of biopower. In this respect, on a close look, one would notice that these three power mechanisms play complementary roles in the social habitat. Moreover, with respect to disciplinary mechanism, for example, it is important to note that, according to Foucault, punitive instruments and biopolitical dispositifs may be hard to distinguish in certain contexts. For instance, police is a disciplinary apparatus, but it is also a regulatory instrument in that it helps protect the biological existence of populations (Foucault, 2003b: 250).

In a similar manner, mental asylums also perform a dual role, which is to act as an instrument of control and a regulatory institution. Regarding mental asylums role as a disciplinary tool, measures intended for madman include categorizing them and inscribing a negative mark upon them in order to mark out their 'inferior' position within the society. As Foucault notes, the asylum "organized the guilt" (Foucault, 1988a: 247) of the madman and in the asylum, there was "no longer repression, but authority" (Foucault, 1988a: 251). However, similar to the police apparatus, mental asylums have also served as regulatory mechanisms, aiming to guarantee the smooth functioning of the social body. While analysing how asylums operate in a biopolitical context, Foucault describes them as institutions whose central function was no longer to cure mentally unfit, but rather to manage "individual abnormalities" (Foucault, 2003a: 316), in order to ensure "the scientific protection of society" (Foucault, 2003a: 316). This means that psychiatry "becomes a science of the biological protection of the species." (Foucault, 2003a: 316).

Similar to the relationship between discipline and biopower, sovereign and biopower also operate in tandem. From a Foucauldian perspective, analyzing power relations by focusing on the sovereign has limited utility. This is because, as Foucault saw it, power is not a blunt and coercive instrument which the sovereign used to employ it as such. Lazzarato sums up Foucault's approach to this subject matter by emphasizing that "the grounding force will not be found on the side of power [...] but on the side of the forces that constitute the "social body" or "society." (Lazzarato, 2002: 104). Despite seeing little utility in focusing on the sovereign to explain power relations, Foucault did not treat the sovereign as a dysfunctional entity. As noted above, during early modernity, the sovereign was external to his people, and people who inhabited his territory were "the sovereign's strength" (Foucault, 2009: 105). However, as the modern phase progressed, the population became the referent object in terms governing practices and thus the sovereign took on a new task which was based on the protection of species.

To explain the way in which sovereign and biopower co-operate, a glance at the issue of the protection of race would provide useful. In recent history, the objective of protecting racial characteristics of human groups, as seen in the case of Nazi Germany, necessitated the use of deadly force by the sovereign. In Foucault's analysis of Nazi biopolitics, he shows that biopolitical objectives were closely tied with the protection of the biological properties of

the German race, for which the sovereign carried out mass murder (Foucault, 2003b: 259. See also; Esposito, Campbell ve Paparcone, 2006: 55-56; Reid, 2006: 29-30). The sovereign's central objective was to take unworthy lives such as those of the Jews, gypsies, homosexuals and disabled people that were believed to infect the superior German race. What is also important to note is that Hitler's policy of racial purity was not limited to achieving this goal solely for the German people. His objective was broader, as he sought to create a world that was organized along racial lines and the elimination of degenerate elements was believed to serve this bigger purpose. Hence, the war that was being waged was "in the name of all races" (Bauman, 2010: 68).

While implementing their extermination policies to cleanse the social body of degenerate elements, the Nazis made skilful use of the modern state apparatus and its bureaucratic infrastructure (Bauman, 2010: Chapter 4). But while the state apparatus or (as Foucault put it) the sovereign's "murderous power" were employed for biopolitical objectives, the Nazis did not subject only 'the others' to the "threat of death", but also the members of their own race. As Foucault emphasized;

"The Nazi State makes the field of the life it manages, protects, guarantees, and cultivates in biological terms absolutely coextensive with the sovereign right to kill anyone, meaning not only other people, but also its own people" (Foucault, 2003b: 260).

Therefore, for the Nazis, the realization of a grand objective, which was racial purity, entailed exposing their own people to the risk of a mass death as well. These points demonstrate clearly the biopolitical dimension of Nazism, since 'life' itself remained at the centre of the political calculus, manifest in both taking others' lives and sacrificing the lives of 'their' own; thus, the overall biopolitical objective being the protection and promotion of a certain form of life. Taken together, Nazi Germany serves as a useful case study in understanding the accomplishment of biopolitical objectives through the sovereign's "power to kill which ran through the entire social body of Nazi society" (Foucault, 2003b: 259).

Realizing biopolitics objectives in liberal societies also requires sovereign's coercive power. As discussed above, with the onset of modernity, the gradual entrenchment of a secular imaginary brought about the demise of divine authority. This was particularly so in the context of liberal regimes. But, as Fletcher points out, "modern liberal politics is dependent on divine violence, despite its explicit disavowal of metaphysics" (Fletcher, 2004: 52). Moreover, it "seeks to disarticulate religious authority but, *de facto* if not *de jure* [...], liberal peace is derivative [...] of transcendent sovereignty" (Fletcher, 2004: 52). In this respect, in liberal regimes the sovereign possesses the right to use deadly force for the protection of the liberal subject (Dillon, 2014).

When force is employed, the purpose is not to protect the sovereign as such, but rather to neutralize the threats that are thought to pose a biological danger to species. As Foucault emphasizes, "the existence in question is no longer the juridical existence of sovereignty; at stake is the biological existence of a population" (Foucault, 1978: 137). Trying to overcome the constant threat posed to the liberal way of life by rogue elements, liberal regimes have often employed force internationally. International Relations experts writing in a Foucauldian vein argue that when liberal nations resort to the use of force, they do so not with imperialistic impulses in the traditional sense, but rather with biopolitical motives (Reid, 2005; Reid, 2006). The latter necessitates the eradication of malign forces and transformation of non-liberal spaces into liberal ones, as tried during the Post-Cold War era through various military interventions. This trend culminated with the War on Terror, which consisted of a set of extensive military campaigns; and the execution of respective wars were geared towards the accomplishment of certain biopolitical objectives (Dillon ve Reid, 2009; Reid, 2005; Donnie, 2014). It is important to note in this context that in liberal regimes, the desired security can only be acquired "on the level of ontological change, when the human moves from fundamentally insecure to fundamentally secure" (Donnie, 2014: 82). This helps shed light on the inclination of



liberal regimes to employ force and why, for example, military power has been an oft-used instrument for the west in its interactions with non-western world.

As the above arguments illustrate, understanding the co-operation of different power mechanisms requires a glimpse into international life where sovereign's coercive force is often employed for the realization of biopolitical objectives. The sovereign in liberal regimes has often sought to eliminate unruly elements through the use of force and it remains "obsessively interventionist in response to the fear of [...] immanent emergencies" (Dillon, 2013: 128). In this respect, as emphasized by Dillon and Reid, "Global liberal governance is a hybrid political order in which sovereignty and governmentality are combined (Dillon and Reid, 2000: 128). Overall, the goal to eliminate recalcitrant elements is integral to the overall objective of spreading liberal practices and creating liberal spaces.

Taken together, biopolitical governance has taken the central stage in western political calculus. Surpassing sovereign and disciplinary power, biopower became the utmost determinative power mechanism in the administration of societies. As Foucault illustrated, governing societies biopolitically became dominant in the western world, thus the social body becoming infused with biopolitical dispositifs. However, with the passage of time, attempts were also made for the realization of biopolitical objectives internationally. This was done with the aim of protecting and promoting liberal way of life, which has become a primary task that liberal regimes are increasingly occupied with.

With regards to the realization of various internal and external political objectives by liberal regimes, sovereign and disciplinary powers also have key roles to play. But, these roles are best described as supportive rather than constitutive, since the main function they fulfil is to guarantee the circulation of biopower. In this respect sovereign and disciplinary powers, rather than acting as independent forces, serve as supportive punitive and corrective mechanisms. Viewed through a Foucauldian lens, then, these three power mechanisms are best understood as coexisting in the social body (Lazzarato, 2002: 104; Dillon, 1995: 335; Dean, 2001: 122). The functions they fulfil are complementary, but biopower singles itself out as a constitutive force with its positive and productive feature.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Foucault's basic premise about the notion of power is that social organisms are characterised by complex power relations and individuals are caught up in a web of various power mechanisms from which they cannot remain aloof. Foucault also noted that historical periods are marked by the emergence of different power wielding mechanisms, thus underscoring the necessity of making contextual analysis. Through an analysis of the chronological evolution of power, Foucault conceptualized sovereign, disciplinary and biopower as the three main forms of power mechanisms that emerged in modern western societies. Yet he also maintained that sovereign and disciplinary powers have been superseded by biopower, which has become the utmost influential power mechanism. Hence, given the central role of biopower, understanding the way in which societies are governed requires looking beyond sovereign and disciplinary power mechanisms.

In tandem with biopower's emergence of the utmost prevalent form of power, political governance became increasingly preoccupied with the administration of life. Hence, with life itself has become the main referent in the governing of societies, individuals began to be exposed to a type of power that acts as a regulative rather than a punitive or coercive force. Since guaranteeing the conditions for the maintenance of certain forms of life became the main strategic and political objective, human beings began to be treated as species. Thus, their biological properties became an object of political governance. Within the system known as biopolitical governance, the power mechanism (biopower) operating in the social body has a positive and productive essence. This means that biopower operates as a mechanism which aims to protect and promote certain forms of life.

Although biopower became the main power variant characterising power relations in modern western societies, it has not made sovereign and disciplinary mechanisms redundant. Biopolitical governance often requires their employment in the pursuit of political objectives. The function that sovereign and disciplinary mechanisms fulfil is to eliminate, punish, correct or cure those elements that pose a threat to the functioning of the social organism and the biological continuity of human subjects living within it. Thus, biopolitical governance still requires the operation of other power mechanisms. This is especially true at the national level (within politico-territorial entities), where disciplinary institutions carry out punitive and corrective functions. But, it is also true at the international level. Especially the goals espoused by liberal regimes such as to neutralize threats beyond their borders and create liberal spaces internationally necessitate the sovereign's employment of force.

All this presents a picture that social habitats embody different power mechanisms which intersect with one another, and each carrying out certain functions. In this respect, since power operates in a complex terrain, Foucault's conceptualization of power is best understood as a trilateral framework. Within this framework consisting of sovereign-discipline-biopower, one sees the co-operation of these three sources of power in a complex web of social interactions. Despite the fact that disciplinary and sovereign power mechanisms are still operative, rather than acting as autonomous forces, they act as supportive instruments for the continued circulation of biopower.

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