ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE TRANSNATIONAL STATE: PARADOX OF GLOBALISED DISCOURSES[1]

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Abstract:

The paper enquires into two fundamental conceptual questions regarding the state under globalisation- "Is the state becoming transnational?" and following that, "How does accountability play out as a global discursive formation in the making of the transnational state?" Looking at the transnational processes and discourses impacting the state, the paper explores the transnational state as a global discursive formation, using a methodology based on secondary data, through studying of literature like academic papers, government and non- government reports and books on this and related subjects. Following from an approach which looks at the state as a set of practices, the paper furthers this definition by bringing into centre the discourses and ideological frameworks, enabling certain practices to come into being and a particular kind of a state to be imagined. The transnational state does not emerge as a stable, monolith formed by a one- way process of globalisation. Rather, looking at specific sites, arenas and processes provides an insight into the open ended and flexible nature of the processes whereby the transnational state is created and imagined. Accountability, in the contemporary era, emerges as such a site where the transnational state is emergent and imagined, and it is here that the extremely paradoxical nature of accountability, in particular, and globalised discourses, in general, comes forth. The paper looks at the varied and competing meanings taken by accountability, in terms of two separate domains in which the term is conceptualised- "Accountability as responsibility" and "Accountability as transparency." Looking at the variety of meanings taken by the term in its everyday manifestations in both these domains, the paper shows how accountability and the transnational state emerge as a contentious and conflict- ridden formation.

Keywords: Accountability, Audit, Globalisation, State, Bureaucracy

1. Introduction

Analytically overused terms like globalisation, neoliberalism and good governance often become floating signifiers especially in the contemporary era where the velocity of the flow of language has increased phenomenally. The paper is an attempt to understand the paradoxes behind what is, arguably, one of the most dominant floating signifiers of our times- accountability. This paper uses "accountability," so as to refer to an ability of a site of institutionalised political power to take responsibility for the promises made and to ensure the effective and efficient fulfilment of those promises in a fairly transparent manner without any kind of unacceptably corrupt practice. In this definition itself, the paper has given two criteria along which accountability could be defined. Firstly, accountability could be the ability of an agency, institution or largely any site of power, to take responsibility for the consequences of its actions and to direct their actions towards fulfilment of certain promises made. Secondly, accountability could signify the ability to be fully transparent with its activities and the promise of not engaging in any act of corruption, financial or any other type, which is outside the domain of accepted and normalised practice. Thus, accountability emerges as a word with multiple meanings and different modes of conceptualising. Such multiplicity inherent in the word opens significant opportunities to utilise the word in order to further public good and make claims upon the state; but it opens up an equally dangerous terrain where the misused articulations of the word could be used in far more pernicious ways.

The state under globalisation is visibly impacted by the forces of globalisation, but does the state get "globalised"? Paying attention to the state and its changing forms has seen indulgence from anthropology lately, literature which has problematised the notions of boundedness associated with the nation- state. (Truillot 2001; Ferguson and Gupta 2002) The paper goes slightly beyond this existing literature to look at the creation and erasure of boundaries and borders as a two- way process, one way of which dismantles existing borders and another way creating new ones. How do new borders get delineated in the globalised "borderless" world? Michel Ralph- Truillot brilliantly sets the problem and agenda for the anthropology of the state in the age of globalisation, saying, "In the age of globalization, state practices, functions, and effects increasingly obtain in sites other than the national but never entirely bypass the national order. The challenge for anthropologists is to study these practices, functions, and effects without prejudice about sites or forms of encounters." (Truillot 2001, 131) The paper goes further not just to look at certain practices and effects, but also the multiple and varied discourses, along with their formations, which will enable us to understand the boundedness of the state as an entity, both in relation to its own territoriality and the domain of society outside the state. Thus, two forms of boundedness will be examined in this paper- that between the national state and state practices in other sites, and the other form of boundedness between the state and society. Each state practice which creates certain state effects, is steeped in a set of multiple, and competing,

discourses and ideologies. The paper intends to interrogate and interpret the discourses and ideologies inherent in one such state practice- accountability.

The paper, based on secondary literature, uses a variety of textual sources, like research papers, academic works of other authors, government reports, reports and other texts by NGOs, consultancies and others. The paper will start with a theoretical and conceptual reflection on the shifts in the nature of governance and stateness in the era of globalisation, looking at the social and political ideas upon which accountability emerges as a global discursive formation. The paper will then analyse the paradoxical nature of this globalised discourse of accountability which, as a floating signifier, can take various forms, to see the configurations which come into place to create an imagination of a particular kind of a transnational state, and to understand the implications of this for popular politics and governance. The section will also look at the various ways in which people mobilise these signifiers to further their own politics and counter the forms in which discourses present themselves through sites of transnational governance.[2]

2. "Is the State Becoming Transnational?"

"Is the state becoming transnational?" The question here entails too many terms which should not be taken as apriori fixed categories, but as effects of certain practices, ideologies and configurations. Charles Tilly's thesis on the formation of European states places national state as not the only one, but one of the many possible forms of state as it has developed in Western Europe, others including city states and tribute-taking empires. (Tilly 2002) What made national states different, for Charles Tilly, was not just war, statemaking and extraction, which were properties found in the other formations as well, but rather that the national state was "compelled by bargaining over subject population's cessation of coercive means to invest heavily in protection, adjudication and sometimes even production and distribution." (idem 157) Therefore, the national- state, according to Tilly, is not to be seen teleologically in the sense of a historical development, but rather as a particular configuration bought about by a certain interplay of coercion and capital. While this is far from being the only view on national states, even in Europe, it convincingly shows that national state has always been coexisting with other forms of state, in competition or cooperation.[3] The purpose of the paper, following Ferguson and Gupta (2005, 108) is "to draw attention to the social and imaginative processes through which state and statelike practices are made effective and authoritative" and through which the transnational state comes to be defined in multiple ways

Before going further into the question asked at the beginning of the section, however, the paper will approach the issue of studying the state in the first place, an issue which is represented by the question, "Where does one find the state?" The state has, conceptually, probably been one of the most contested objects of study in social theory. At one point of time around the 1950s, anthropologists and political scientists had proposed abandonment of the state as an analytical concept, owing to its

perceived limitations, which included "its 'ideological' use as a political myth, as a 'symbol for unity,' produc(ing) disagreement about exactly what it referred to and even if agreement (were) reached, these symbolic references of the term excluded significant aspects of the modern political process." (Mitchell 2006, 171) We see this disavowal of the state among the structuralist anthropologists of that time as well, who preferred the term "political system" which could be analysed in a far more concrete and tangible manner. (Pritchard 1940; Fortes and Pritchard 1940)

While political theory in the later part of the twentieth century did propose to 'bring the state back in,' (Evans et al 1985) the questions underlying the abandonment of the state went largely unanswered. Where does one concretely pin down the state? Here, the ethnographic turn towards studying the state became important, of which one of the most significant ones is that of Timothy Mitchell (2006). Mitchell proposes the state to be not a tangible and concrete entity out there, but rather as "an effect of mundane processes of spatial organization, temporal arrangement, functional specification, supervision and surveillance, and representation that create the appearance of a world fundamentally divided into state and society or state and economy." (idem, 185) Much work on an anthropology of the state in the everyday has followed Mitchell's analysis of the state an effect of everyday processes and practices. (Gupta 2012; Sharma 2008; Hansen and Stepputat 2001)

While the state is an effect of practices, these practices in turn aren't autonomous processes. Rather they get defined and contested in a field wherein diverse ideologies and discourses coexist, compete and sometimes overlap with each other. Gupta (2006) argues in favour of a transnational approach to studying the state while cautioning, "This is not to argue that every episode of grassroots interaction between villagers and state officials can be shown to have transparent transnational linkages; it is merely to note that such linkages have structuring effects that may overdetermine the contexts in which daily practices are carried out." The paper here argues, that the structuring impact of transnational discourses is neither an autonomous effect of state practices, nor is it an irreversible flow of ideas and discursive formations emanating and diffusing from transnational centres of power.

Everyday state practices are structured by a variety of discourses and ideologies, and these emerge not just from a single centre but rather have myriad origins and interact in a complex way with each other. A case in point would be that of Bitcoins- a 'global and fast circulating' currency, which operates perfectly well outside and beyond the bounds of the national state. In fact, attempts to regulate and create statist alternatives to Bitcoins have only resulted in failure and increased complicatedness. Bitcoins are less centrist and less regulated than other currency systems, and most importantly one finds it difficult to point to a centre of origin of bitcoins as a Central Bank can be denoted for a national currency. To create a global non- state alternative to national currency, bitcoins are enabled by a coalescence of those statelike processes and practices which "obtain in nongovernmental sites." (Truillot 2001, 130) Bitcoins are not just the result of certain statelike practices and processes

obtaining in nongovernmental sites, but they are make us rethink and reimagine what statelike practice would mean in the age of globalisation.

Accountability, the focus of this paper, will be studied in a similar way. While there would be a focus on the various institutions, ideas and entities which shape and modify its contours and contents, there would be an equal focus on how the discourse of accountability shapes everyday state practice. Through such a study, the paper attempts to understand the interrelated ways in which accountability comes about and thus discuss the emergence of what the paper claims is a transnational state. A study of what is being proposed as a "transnational state," needs to be mindful of the everyday practices of state institutions and bureaucrats, as well as the discourses and ideas impacting the 'formation' and 'imagination' of the state.

However, it would be a mistake to interpret this as saying that there is an effervescence of globalised discourses which are making borders redundant in a swift, ruthless and one- way manner. Indeed, new models of governance and forms of reimagining the social and political have emerged through novel processes unleashed by globalisation, and these are bound to change the way in which state is conceptualised. However, "while new social and political imaginaries… come to the fore with globalisation, the 'old' persists and coexists with the 'new.'" (Hansen and Stepputat 2001, 37) It is in the fragile and ambiguous ground created by the coincidence of these myriad processes that the transnational state lies where those practices and discursive formations which push towards the elimination of borders coexist with those which push towards the recreation of borders in new ways.[4] The transnational state can only be studied if one concentrates on a particular discursive formation and looks deep and wide enough to see the tensions and politics at work in the creation and assertion of these discourses and their merging, superimpositions and juxtapositions with others. The paper will now go deeper into one such discursive formation- accountability- to see what one can deduce about the nature and working of the transnational state.

3. Accountability- A Discourse of the Transnational State?

Accountability is an idea which is closely related to stateness and state practice through a complicated process of interaction and intermediation. The word itself is not new as a "language of stateness."[5] Accountability has always been an attribute desired by people who have lived under entities engaged in statelike practice. It is in fact a consequence, one could say, of the way in which the state claims a vertical spatial position above society. People and collectives, even those whose subjecthood has largely been seen in opposition to state, like peasants and indigenous communities, have also often desired something like the state, aspiring and imagining a state which is better and more effective in bettering their living conditions and fulfilling their aspirations and desires.[6] In large parts of the world, state as an entity has been seen in the same way as other institutions of modernity- desired for the immense liberties and benefits they harbinger, while reviled for their oppressive and

violent tactics. Accountability, then, needs to be seen as having a life outside the statist discourse, in the domains of "popular politics" and "society".

Accountability is one of the most famous terms in a conceptual vocabulary made popular by the good governance agenda of the IFIs which has been appropriated in literature and rhetoric of neoliberal governance around the world. However, as Aihwa Ong (2006), Gupta and Sharma (2006) and Sharma (2008) show in their work, neoliberalism is far from being a monolithic hegemonic discursive formation; rather it is always appropriated in a measured way, constantly being juggled with alternative social and political imaginaries. While the discourse of accountability in international development literature, consisting of a plethora of reports and discussion papers, is one way of imagining accountability, it's not the only one. Within these reports themselves there are diverse ways of imagining accountability, of which in the introduction, the paper outlined two. Aspirations, ideologies and discursive rationalities of accountability manifest in myriad ways within the dimensions of each definition. In the context of the first definition regarding the ability of an agency, institution or any site of power to take responsibility for the consequences of its actions and to direct their actions towards fulfilment of certain promises made, the domain of accountability as "responsibility" is central to this imagination of the discourse. In contrast, "transparency" is central to the imagination of accountability according to the second definition, which signifies the ability to be fully transparent with its activities and the promise of not engaging in any act of corruption, financial or any other type, which is outside the domain of accepted and normalised practice.[7]

Politics of Assigning Responsibility

Accountability as the assigning of responsibility for an action by an individual or an organisation is a widely used interpretation of the word. "To make the government/ public official/ people at the helm accountable for their actions" is an oft- used phrase in popular culture and everyday discourse. To assign responsibility and to take it are deeply political acts. In relation to transnational state practices and its discourses, where does accountability as responsibility figure?

Accountability, as made ubiquitous in the disciplinary regimes of globalisation and neoliberalism, involve the diversification of the centres which regulate and extend the practice of accountability. Due to the globalisation of the discourse, the diverse practices of accountability emerge in a way as to place the burden of "being accountable" at numerous sites. Transnational governance in the age of globalisation "endorses government through the twin passage points of economic efficiency and good practice." (Strathern 2004, 1) The efforts to further this kind of government involves two major and interrelated modalities- regulation of "organisations" and techniques of self- disciplining. Audit has emerged as a significant global practice of disciplining under the language regime of global transnational governance. As Nikolas Rose (1999:42) states, "Auditing becomes an example to add to all the myriad ways in which people govern themselves, and the social state gives way to the enabling

state." Audit thus, involves a stress on organisations and individuals to make themselves accountable by taking responsibility for their own practices, and guaranteeing the efficacy and efficiency of these. While importance of the very notion of responsibility of organisations and individuals cannot be refuted, the way in which it is imagined by transnational governance discourses and practices presents some paradoxes and has certain implications.[8]

Firstly, such a discourse merely presents accountability and practices like audit as a technical and representational fix in the operational sheet of an organisation, depoliticising the questions of culpability and responsibility. A number of discussion and research papers by major development organisations talk about "information" and "participation," which in the language of transnational governance sound staggeringly depoliticised, emptied of any emancipatory potential. E.g. Public Affairs Centre's 1998 Report Card on urban services in Mumbai mention, as advice to the people and NGOs, that "the residents of the slums themselves could become more vocal in bringing their problems to the notice of the agencies and in demanding redress," and that "NGOs could act as catalysts ... by using the findings as weapons in their drive to obtain better public services for their fellow citizens." (Balakrishnan and Sekhar 1998, 24) Commenting on the sentence, and its context, Jenkins and Goetz (1998, 619) write, "Such findings can be considered 'weapons' only if the politicians and bureaucrats in question are ignorant of the service-delivery problems in the first place. Most, in fact, are already aware of the dismal state of public amenities in India's slums." The approach of the grassroots activist organisation, Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), they write, is markedly different from such an approach, as it "begins from the assumption that what would motivate officials to take remedial action is concrete evidence of their complicity in misappropriating funds intended for addressing these problems." (ibid) Thus, the placement of responsibility at the doorstep of elected and bureaucratically appointed officials of the state is central to the imagination of a politicised idea of accountability, which we obtain from grassroots organisations and activists like the MKSS.

Secondly, the loose assignment of responsibility upon "organisations," makes an assumption of collectives like corporate bodies and organisations existing beyond certain individuals. While the assumption isn't completely flawed, the extent to which the morality and ethical dimension of individual action is effaced in the discourse of transnational governance is phenomenal. It is not just the effacement of individuals which is problematic, as Ananta Giri (2004, 183) says, "Audited accountability not only privileges organizations over individuals, it has a very particular notion of organizations which are monological and teleological." The auditing and accountability regime of transnational governance does not allow any real assessment of moral or ethical regimes prevalent in an "organisation." Talking about the case of auditing in University of Cambridge, Ananta Giri (idem, 178) writes, "The auditors' interest is not in producing an 'organizational model' in the sense of a

model of an ongoing organization with its own characteristics, but in producing a model that would show how well Cambridge is organized to achieve 'its' goals."[9]

A form of accountability which effaces the individual as the holder of ethical and moral responsibility and sees the organisation solely in terms of its ability to fulfil pre-set goals, has become ubiquitous with transnational governance. In contrast, we see the trope of individual responsibility and its other side, individual rights, coming up constantly in other kinds of discourses often played in the domain of accountability outside the domain of transnational governance. James Scott (1985) talks about the ways in which peasants in Sedaka (Indonesia) make claims upon the authority of landowners and employers, in order to provide higher wages, in cash, kind and gifts. The authority of the landowner is not outright challenged but rather, all efforts are directed at making it more accountable in terms of what are considered the duties of the landowner towards the peasants working on his land. The placing of responsibility upon an individual, in order to ensure accountability, is also seen in the ways people interact with the state. Akhil Gupta (2012, 12) recounts an encounter with the bureaucracy in Uttar Pradesh (India) where a village headman who refused to move, despite the *tehsildar*[10] ordering the people in front of his desk to disperse, was asked by the *tehsildar*, "*Aap kaun hain? Yahan Kyon khade hain?*" (Who are you? Why are you standing here?) To this, the headman replied, "*Main aadmi hoon*." (I am a man) According to Gupta (ibid), in this act of his, the headman, beyond his bureaucratic privilege, "was asserting not just his rights as a human, but also the more specific claims of citizenship, of membership in the national community. He was asserting his right, as a citizen, to be treated with respect by the bureaucrat."

The encounter also tells us something about subaltern encounters with accountability. Accountability, even when there is a matured idea of a coherent state, is mostly demanded from individual officials. In other words, using the terminology offered by Abrams (2006), even if the state as a system is agreed upon, the state as an idea is seen as based in the person holding the position of a bureaucrat, which allows the person, as a citizen and a human, to claim their rights and assigning responsibility for these upon the bureaucrat as an individual.

Regimes of Transparency

Accountability as transparency is the second major strand of meaning which this paper tackles. In contrast to responsibility, the discourse of accountability as transparency in transnational governance doesn't tackle transparency in any vague manner at loosely defined organisations, but rather through a stringent set of mechanisms of surveillance.

Audit, as mentioned earlier, has become a ubiquitous statelike practice in the age of globalisation, encouraging people and organisations to govern themselves. However, despite its massively apolitical and loosely defined grounds of assigning responsibility, the primacy of transparency as a desired

attribute is a sine qua non of all audit procedures. In fact, within the dyad of passage points used to evaluate transnational government according to Strathern (2004, 1), while the definition of accountability as responsibility refers vaguely to good practice, the definition of accountability as transparency involves a strong signification in both, good practice as well as economic efficiency. Nobody can, in principle, oppose the desire for transparency. However, if for reasons pertaining to transparency, a procedure is added in a bureaucratic setup or a new course of action necessitated, it could steer a policy towards numerous unintended consequences. Elizabeth Hull (2012), through her ethnography in a South African Hospital, discerned how the procedures meant to introduce accountability, in terms of a set of practices meant to make functioning transparent, end up having numerous unintended consequences, the most important of which is an impact on the efficiency of the work and effort of the employees, especially of the nurses. As paperwork undertakes more and more of their time, "the government's effort to instil an ethos of new public management by encouraging the 'creative energies' of nurses in fact becomes a source of intense anxiety and serves to exacerbate workload." (Hull 2012, 629) In addition, through the juxtaposition of new audit practices over existing workplace hierarchies and discourses within the hospital, the new audit regime isn't experienced as "a radically new regime, but rather the intensification of existing practices." (ibid) Thus, firstly, in the effort to bring about transparency in workplace and state practice, the focus from doing the primary duties is atleast partially shifted towards completing paperwork as a task in itself. Secondly, in the effort to institute a new practice of accountability, it often coalesces with existing discourses and ideas of organisation and hierarchy, intensifying rather than bypassing existing practices.

The practice of transparency through new regimes of accountability like audit can have unpredictable consequences on state practice, cultures of workplace and state- society interactions. Outside the discursive rationalities of transnational governance, however, accountability also exists as a strongly desired state practice. As Akhil Gupta mentions, accountability is the "other face of the discourse of corruption." (2006, 225) Corruption has long been a politically charged metaphor for the degradation of public services and governance, and transparency, as an anti- corruption discourse, has been claimed not just through organised struggles but also in idioms of popular culture. Filippo and Caroline Osella (2001) talk about the everyday discourse of corruption in Kerala, India where the people use tropes of family, religiosity and patronage to talk about their relation with particular state officials, and assert a moral claim to just citizenship, accepting acts of corruption only within acceptable limits. While corruption here is decried, it is also often justified by people as something regarding which the officials have no choice, considering low pay and high expenses of living. As the authors state, "The recognition that people are basically *onnupole* (like each other) provides an explanation- albeit not an apology- for corrupt practices, and acknowledges that those accepting bribes have, like everyone else and by virtue of shared common humanity, specific familial duties." (idem, 151) This kind of a routinized, but flexible and contextual experience of corruption is common in the

postcolonial world, especially in India. Corruption, as Akhil Gupta (2006, 214) argues, is a vital component of the everyday interaction of people with state bureaucracies which is integral to the constructions of the "state" in popular imaginations. Popular discourses of corruption, therefore, problematise the binaries like state-society, or public-private. Popular culture and rituals themselves present ways of imagining accountability and claiming accountability as a moral right of citizenship, while accepting the fact that people holding bureaucratic power as human, having their own flaws and limits.[11]

In addition to popular everyday discourse and rituals of citizenships, corruption and the demand for accountability has also been central to organised political action as well, the foremost example with regards to which could be the struggle for Right to Information (RTI) in India. Information itself is a contested terrain and a discourse, the meaning of which can't be fixed. However, as a political tool, information is also central to the practices of accountability. The struggle for RTI has also been central to the work of the MKSS. Transparency, in the mission of organisations like MKSS, is a claim of citizenship made by actively contesting the "corrupt actions" of the state bureaucrats at all levels. This kind of transparency comes neither by increasing the paperwork of departments nor could it be achieved by abiding current social norms and hierarchies. Challenging the status quo through collective information and action is essential. As Jenkins (2004, 220) points out, the organic origins of MKSS in recognising the importance of transparency in bettering the lives of poor who labour on government employment guarantee schemes might be substantially responsible for the emancipatory notion of accountability which emerges from the work of MKSS. While on the surface the success of MKSS might look like a derivative of the nature of the discourse of "information" as being inherently emancipatory, the term itself can be based on assumptions which are far from emancipatory.

Information is also a discourse popular in communities and networks of transnational governance. However, the nature of information in such sites is highly technical and functional, assuming that if citizens knew about the functioning of government schemes, they would be proactive in demanding more effective implementation. E.g. The PRAGATI (Pro Active Governance and Timely Implementation) initiative of the Government of India, focuses on information sharing and grievance redressal among higher level bureaucrats and Prime Minister, representing this as a pathbreaking measure of inducing accountability, while assuming that a mere sharing of information could bring about a conscientious change among bureaucrats, or a greater pressure on them to deliver on their promises. Using Data Management and Analysis, Geo-spatial Applications as well as Video-conferencing, the Prime Minister is apparently able to get "full information and latest visuals of the ground level situation." (GoI 2015) Such an approach to information assumes not just political neutrality of actors but also the political neutrality of "information," assuming that technological assistance can render the entire field of governance visible for the bureaucracy and executive arm of

the government to govern righteously. Such programmes and interventions play into a similar depoliticising narrative which was discussed in the previous section. Thus, transparency and the related discourses of corruption and information operate in a myriad of ways and people, in their everyday and in certain events, imagine the transnational state through the way these discourses and ideologies creatively and contingently define certain practices and performances, of the state and of the people in relation to the state.

4. Conclusion: Where does Accountability Locate the Transnational State?

Our analysis of the complex and pluricentric field of discourses forming the global formations of accountability is based on a simple question: What kind of transnationalism does the state manifest in the age of globalisation, on the field constituted by the discourses of accountability? People in their everyday encounters, recreate accountability with elements of politics and culpability, often putting assertions and contestations at the centre of these claims while also channelizing claims onto particular individuals. Even when the assertions of accountability are seen through tropes and metaphors of family, community and morality, they exude an emancipatory and democratic character. On the other hand, we have a discourse of accountability prevalent in transnational governance discourse, which presents itself as technical, depoliticised and based on a teleological view of organisations with humans as mere instruments rather than actors. Transnational governance, in its idea of accountability, practices and performs its rationalities of stateness, utilising discourses and ideas of such kind which manifest as profoundly undemocratic.

David Harvey talks about a paradox inherent under neoliberal governance, wherein the democratic institutions of the state are retracted but at the same time we see "intense state interventions and government by elites and 'experts' in a world where the state is supposed not to be interventionist." (2005, 69) However, neither are these discursive rationalities of transnational governance hegemonic in character, nor are the rituals and practices of transnational governance reproduced verbatim. Rather, the transnational discourses interact and face other discourses which are far more political and specifically located in the subaltern and popular contestations. It is not necessary that the transnational state imagined by transnational discourses essentially effaces borders while people essentially recreate them. People outside the state apparatus also could appeal to the state to be accountable while using a transnational language of rights, as the headman uses in the incidence recounted by Gupta (2012). Speaking in the context of Latin America, Rachel Sieder (2005, 204) says, "In recent years… social movements and individuals have used international human rights law to secure truth and justice in cases of gross violations of human rights, particularly when local courts fail to enforce accountability (as, for example, in the Pinochet case)." At the same time, people could also use local forms of claiming accountability from the state and authority as a weapon against creeping global capitalism, as the peasants do in James Scott's (1985) work, who use local forms of claims and tropes to demand

accountability from landlords in order to counter the global language of profits, labour market and productivity employed by the landlords. Thus, when one looks at accountability, in the domains of both responsibility as well as transparency, the transnational state discourses coexist with other transnational and local discursive rationalities and ideologies which could clash as well as intersect.

A vital detail which is often not emphasised enough (though rarely missed completely) in ethnographic analysis of the state is that while the state is constructed through its daily practices, these practices aren't autonomous of certain discourses and ideologies which shape human action and interactions and thus create an imagination of the state. State practice and the imagination of the state is highly contingent on such discourses which shape human action. Thus, the state effect produced by accountability in terms of its transnationality, is channelled according to particular discourses, produced at various sites, the interplay of which creates the "transnationality" of the state. Accountability, being a floating signifier, is appropriated by various entities in a variety of ways, and the interplay of all these discourses creates the globalised discursive formation of accountability which seldom follows a straightjacket path and is often a field of contestations and contradictions, factors which are only enhanced by the transnational nature of globalised discourses.

The transnational state, thus, is far from a hegemonic formation which decimates known forms of stateness. Rather, it exists in a field of diverse discourses and other rationalities of government, which compete for space in producing certain effects, creating an environment of confusions and contradictions. The nature of the state, then, emerges not solely as transnational, but rather the transnational state emerges as a tendency towards which state practices could deviate, producing certain effects. This emerges from the fact that the field in which the transnational state operates is also that where other discourses and ideologies also operate. The deviation of state practices and processes towards being transnational, in turn, depend upon the contestation and coalescence of various discourses and ideologies within particular discursive formations, one of which is accountability. Accountability itself manifests in the same field in diverging ways, thus resulting in diversity of meaning and coexistence of contradictions. The transnational state is not just an effect produced by practices of transnational governance but rather a larger configuration produced by multiple discursive rationalities and ideologies intersecting to produce an effect, which is seen sometimes as the transnational state. The transnational state, therefore, is only as one of the possible forms in which the 'State' could manifest.

Endnotes

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[2] The paper uses the term "transnational governance" to describe the assemblage of international organisations, national states and other local and translocal organisations, which collectively peddle certain discourses in certain ways, such that they are internally fluid and open to conflict and yet depoliticised.

[3] This view also considers the fact that nation- states, however strong they pretend to be, have always been defined by transcultural processes and have had to constantly engage in a certain transcultural binding and unification, even in Europe.

[4] Here, a caveat would be that not all non- globalisation discourses recreate borders. The paper would show this later through examples.

[5] The term "language of stateness" has been used by Hansen and Stepputat (2001, 6-7) to talk about ways, practical, symbolic as well as performative, in which the idea of modern state is talked about and becomes universalised, and the ways in which modern forms of governance proliferate across the world.

[6] Several works on peasant uprisings have shown the ambiguous nature of people's demands which weren't "radical", rather merely represented specific disgruntlements which were then given a more "radical" shape by an ideologically motivated leadership. (Wolf 1969; Guha 1983)

[7] These aren't neat binary categories of imagining accountability but conceptual nodal points, if one may say using Laclau and Mouffe (1985), which align the public discourse in a contingent way. This does not mean that the two consist mutually exclusive set of elements. Rather, these nodal points articulate multiple signs and elements, and often coincide. E.g. Accountability as responsibility could become a nodal point for articulating multiple and diverse problematics, which in turn will be called the elements/ nodes constituting the discourse.

[8] This is not to suggest that the international organisations, to whom the steering of these discourses is often credited, are a monolith. They, themselves, have massive contestations and debates within themselves. Harper (2004) who has ethnographically studied the mission meetings at IMF, points out that the procedure of collection of data is not just a technical process, but also a majorly social process, dominated by debates, discussions, disagreements and politics among members of the team which does the work.

[9] Anant Giri here, most probably, means that the goals themselves are not set by Cambridge but rather provided in a top down manner to the organisation.

[10] Tehsil is a district subdivision in India, and tehsildar is the chief government official holding various responsibilities in the tehsil.

[11] An example of this being the trope of "Return of Mahabali" and the "idea of a just and good ruler," performed by people in Kerala during Onam. Despite this kind of a ritual of citizenship, people holding bureaucratic positions are seen as "human" and "flawed." (Osella and Osella 2001)

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