On the Surprising Implications of Coercion Theory

Miriam Ronzoni

Abstract
According to much of self-labelled coercion theory, the state is both the ground of egalitarian demands of distributive justice, and the (sole) domain to which such demands apply, in virtue of its exercise of coercive power which only distributive equality can justify. This article argues that, when properly unpacked in its theoretical commitments, coercion theory has surprising implications both within and beyond borders. Within borders, coercion is either *fully* justified by its necessity for autonomy; or it is not, in which case egalitarian distributions cannot do the trick, either – although *political* equality might. Beyond borders, the view turns out to have significantly demanding global implications, contrary to how it is often presented. It indeed differs from global egalitarianism simpliciter, but it gives rise to an interesting, complex set of cross-border obligations which reach far beyond the ‘global sufficiency, domestic equality’ picture. This surprising account of the implications of coercion theory rests on a crucial insight: when closely examined, the view turns out to be grounded in a natural duty of justice account of political obligation.

Keywords
coercion, global justice, natural duty of justice, Michael Blake, democracy

Accepted: 10 December 2020

Introduction
According to most proponents of ‘coercion theory’ (Blake, 2011), the coercive apparatus of the state is both the ground of egalitarian demands of distributive justice and the domain to which such demands apply (Blake, 2001, 2011, 2013, 2016; Miller, 1998; Nagel, 2005). Liberal justice, so the argument goes, prescribes indeed the global protection of the preconditions for freedom or autonomy (Blake, 2001; Valentini, 2011). This, however, requires no egalitarian distribution per se. The demand for comparative entitlements only arises because state coercion is apparently at odds with autonomy or freedom, but also necessary for it; special conditions must, therefore, apply to its exercise. Michael Blake (2001, 2011) makes this argument in its starkest form, by arguing that, whereas the conditions to secure autonomy, which are due to all moral agents, only require sufficiency, state coercion triggers equality among those subject to it.
This article disputes such straightforward ‘global sufficiency, domestic (distributive) equality’ narrative, by arguing that coercion theory, when unpacked in its theoretical commitments, has surprising implications both within and beyond borders. Within borders, there is no straightforward connection between coercion and egalitarian distributions. Coercion is either fully justified by its necessity to secure autonomy, in which case no further conditions are required; or it is not, in which case distributive equality does not seem able to do the trick, either – although political equality might. Beyond borders, even if we were to accept the domestic egalitarian implications of the view, the global implications would be much more demanding than it is normally assumed – and for different reasons than those raised by its cosmopolitan critics (e.g. Caney, 2008). It indeed differs from global egalitarianism simpliciter, but it gives rise to an interesting, complex set of cross-border obligations which reach far beyond global sufficiency. First, equality as such is not a requirement of global justice, but the imperative that each state be internally egalitarian is; hence, I owe to those who are not my compatriots that they be able to live under their own egalitarian institutions. Second, it is plausible to claim that our world needs additional and different coercive institutions compared with existing ones – not only coercion exercised by states, but also some coercion of states and of transnational non-state actors. New, supranational coercive institutions, however, also mean new egalitarian demands. Third, several critics have pointed out that there already is a great deal of coercion beyond the state. Blake has partly acknowledged this, and has also claimed that most forms of global coercion are not necessary for autonomy, and must therefore simply be eliminated. I suggest, however, that the elimination of unnecessary global coercion sometimes requires coercive means – which in turn, again, trigger new egalitarian demands. These implications, I finally argue, remain far reaching even if I am correct in maintaining, in the first part of the article, that there is no straightforward connection between state coercion and distributive equality.

This revised account of coercion theory rests on a crucial insight: when closely examined, the view turns out to be grounded in a natural duty of justice account of political obligation. Coercion theory is often presented as an attempt to justify state coercion as something contingent, if unlikely to disappear. At closer scrutiny, however, its commitment to state coercion turns out to be much more fundamental: we must have coercive institutions to honour demands of justice which hold regardless of their existence (for coercion is necessary for autonomy). However, while a natural duty of justice view can justify differential requirements, it is incompatible with a simple ‘global sufficiency, domestic (distributive) equality’ story.

The article unfolds as follows. The ‘Political Obligation, Coercion Theory and the Natural Duty of Justice’ section argues that coercion theory must be understood as being committed to a natural duty of justice account. The ‘What Does It Take to Justify Coercion?’ section argues that it cannot ground domestic distributive equality in any fundamental, non-instrumental way; state coercion is either fully justified by its necessity for autonomy (with no need for further requirements); or offers, if at all, a better justification for political, rather than distributive, equality. ‘The Global Demandingness of Coercion Theory’ section shows how, if coercion theory is grounded in the natural duty of justice, and whatever its right conception of domestic justice, its statism must be relaxed in along the three lines mentioned above. The ‘Conclusion’ section concludes by briefly pointing out the implications of the argument if both ‘What Does It Take to Justify Coercion?’ and ‘The Global Demandingness of Coercion Theory’ sections are correct.
Political Obligation, Coercion Theory and the Natural Duty of Justice

In the early days of the global justice debate, arguments against global egalitarianism used to be framed in terms of justifying partiality towards one’s compatriots, even when these are better off than outsiders (Miller, 1997). More recently, however, there have been attempts to construe special obligations towards fellow citizens as a complex implication of impartiality, rather than as a display of legitimate partiality (Blake, 2001; Freeman, 2006; Sangiovanni, 2007; Stilz, 2009). True impartiality, so the argument goes, requires recognition of the fact that certain relations make a moral difference (Blake, 2001: 259–261). If I make a promise to you, I incur special obligations towards you which I do not have towards others; denying this would not be an act of impartiality, but a failure to treat you as someone worthy of respect, promises to whom are therefore binding. Living under the institutions of the same state, the argument continues, similarly generates egalitarian demands which do not otherwise exist. Thus, special obligations towards compatriots can be construed as complex ramifications of an impartial morality.2 There are at least two different takes on why exactly this is the case. According to the first, the specific kind of social cooperation that the state enables generates obligations of fair distribution which do not otherwise hold (Freeman, 2006; Klosko, 2009; Sangiovanni, 2007). According to the second, state coercion calls for a special justification which only equality can provide (Blake, 2001; arguably Nagel, 2005).

A striking feature of these accounts is the extent to which their language resonates with the conceptual apparatus of the literature on political obligation. Advocates of the social cooperation view focus on the benefits that the state bestows upon its members; coercion-based views, instead, resonate with a broadly Kantian story about the necessity to exit the state of nature and enter the civil condition. This, I shall argue, is no coincidence: at closer scrutiny, political obligation is the very tool via which these theories attempt to justify special duties as compatible with impartiality. Some advocates of the social cooperation view make this connection explicitly, by arguing that special obligations of social justice are ‘the obverse of political obligations’ (Klosko, 2009: 245). For the advocates of the principle of fairness, we must obey the law because the institutions of the state bestow upon us goods which are both non-excludable and essential to lead a flourishing life. George Klosko (2004) further argues that these goods must be fairly distributed to generate political obligations; thus, members of the same state also have special obligations to maintain such fair distribution (Klosko, 2009; Sangiovanni, 2007). At closer look, however, this is no special quirk of social cooperation views: coercion theory is also the flip-side of a commitment to a specific account of political obligation – the natural duty of justice approach.

Blake (2001, 2011, 2016) argues that, whereas a commitment to liberal impartiality mandates the global protection of autonomy, it is only in conjunction with state coercion that such a commitment generates a concern for relative economic shares. Every person, regardless of where they live, has an entitlement (which they hold against all other moral agents) to the necessary preconditions to lead an autonomous life, namely, ‘access to those goods and circumstances under which they are able to live as rationally autonomous agents’ (Blake, 2001: 271). This basic conception of justice is truly global in scope and allows for no priority for compatriots over outsiders: we ought to be ‘as concerned with poverty abroad as that at home’ (Blake, 2001: 271, emphasis added; see also Blake, 2011: 556). However, it also does not require any substantive equality per se. Autonomy is an
absolute, rather than comparative, requirement: it demands that all individuals on earth have *enough* to select, pursue and revise a plan of life (Blake, 2011: 258–260 and 266–273). Global justice is therefore *sufficientarian*.

Autonomy appears, quite self-evidently, to be at odds with coercion, for when the latter occurs, ‘an individual’s chosen plans and pursuits [are replaced] with those of another’ (Blake, 2001: 272). Yet, institutional coercion is omnipresent even within liberal societies – is this compatible with their commitment to individual autonomy? At this juncture, Blake (2001: 262) declares a commitment to ‘institutional theory’, a kind of normative theorising which asks ‘what the institutions we currently have would have to do to be justified’, rather than design an ideal world order from scratch. Thus, given that states are unlikely to disappear any time soon, we should try and see whether their coercive power may be made compatible with liberal autonomy after all (Blake, 2001: 265). This is where the implications of liberal impartiality become more complex. Given its tension with autonomy, coercion requires special conditions to be in place for it to be justified. Blake (2011: 273–285) starts off by illustrating how two major sources of coercive power exercised by the state, namely, criminal and civil law, can plausibly be justified through devices of hypothetical consent inspired by John Rawls’ (1999) original position and Tim Scanlon’s (1999) reasonable rejection test. When criminal and civil law exhibit certain features (they are fair, proportionate, etc.), they can be construed as practices which we have reason to consent to or cannot reasonably reject, that is, which we have reason to endorse *autonomously* (Blake, 2001: 281–283). What does it take, however, for coercion to be worthy of hypothetical consent? The discussion of criminal and civil law, with its focus on proportionality, indicates that such institutions must affect those subject to them in fairly equal ways (Blake, 2001: 281–283). For instance, in the original position we would have reason to adopt Rawls’s (1999, 2001) difference principle because, if we turned out to be the worst off members of our own society, we would be better off under it than under any alternative scheme (Blake, 2001: 283). Therefore, while the *moral* equality of all persons requires the protection of their autonomy regardless of where they live, it is only in conjunction with state coercion that *material* equality is required. Thus, a truly impartial liberalism ‘can concern itself with absolute deprivation abroad, and reserve a concern for relative deprivation for the local arena’.

Let us briefly focus on Blake’s commitment to ‘institutional theory’. States are likely to be around for the foreseeable future, he argues, so we might as well ask whether their coercive power can be justified. However, he also makes an additional claim at this juncture: ‘some forms of political coercion seems *necessary* for autonomous functioning’ (Blake, 2001: 265, emphasis added). State coercion, he further claims, stands in a paradoxical relationship with autonomy (Blake, 2001: 282). On one hand, the very nature of coercion seems to imply the denial of autonomy, for it appears to ‘bend the will’ of its targets (see also Nagel, 2005, *passim*). For this reason, liberal justice typically seeks the elimination of all forms of *unnecessary* coercion (such as those used to impose a specific religion, or vision of sexual morality); after all, its very point is to enable people to lead a life that is self-legislated (autonomous, literally). On the other hand, some coercion seems to be necessary for autonomy. Some components of autonomy seem to be *constitutively* tied to coercion: enjoying them *means* living within a coercive institutional order (of the right kind). This is the case, for instance, for the *secure* enjoyment of one’s rights; knowledge of their *determinate* content (Ripstein, 2009; Stilz, 2009); and the confidence that one’s legitimate expectations will be honoured. In addition, the coercive machinery of the state can plausibly be said to be *instrumentally* necessary for the delivery of certain goods
that are necessary for autonomy (a safe infrastructure; education; a healthcare system; poverty relief, etc.).

Blake (2011: 559) initially does not linger a great deal on why exactly he deems coercion to be necessary for autonomy. In his later work, he puts particular emphasis on the Kantian claim that the state is necessary to end the ‘cycle of disputation over respective shares’. If this is true, however, the fact that we are unlikely to get rid of states any time soon is irrelevant. The point is that we must have them. The pivotal role of Blake’s commitment to this point is demonstrated by the fact that, in fending off critics (Caney, 2008; Cavallero, 2010; Valentini, 2011), he forcefully states that the sheer existence of global forms of coercion is neither here nor there – if these are not necessary for autonomy, they must simply be eliminated (Blake, 2011: 557, 566). What is more, in responding criticisms by Simon Caney (2008) and Andrea Sangiovanni (2007, 2011) – according to whom we would have obligations of egalitarian distributive justice even in a society where social cooperation occurred without coercive means – Blake (2011: 559) resoundingly asserts that one such society in unimaginable, as it would not ‘last through the week, let alone through the first bad harvest’, and that its members have one main duty, namely to ‘leave their anarchic circumstances, through the creation of a coercive state’ (emphasis in the original).

Finding a way of justifying institutional coercion is therefore essential whether or not a lot of it is already happening. Why does this, however, ground a commitment to the natural duty of justice? Let us first clarify what natural duty approaches are to begin with. In his discussion of political obligation, Rawls (1999: 97) makes a distinction between obligations and duties. The former are transactional, in that the relevant responsibilities are incurred in some way; the latter are borne simply in virtue of being moral agents: we come into this world as duty-holders. The question is whether the moral imperative to obey the law of the land, if there is such a thing, is grounded in an obligation or in a duty. A classic example of the former view is offered by consent theories, according to which one comes to have political obligations by accepting them (see, e.g. Simmons, 1979). Incurring an obligation need not necessarily be a voluntary act; theories of fair play, for instance, argue that one can incur political obligations by benefiting from the existence of the state (Klosko, 2004), whether or not one has deliberately accepted it. Natural duty approaches to political obligation, instead, do not envisage any type of transaction. Such theories ground the imperative to obey the law of the land (if it is reasonably just) in duties to further justice which we simply have qua moral agents. Complying with the commands of the state (providing the state exhibit some relevant features) is required because, and to the extent that, it enables us to do what justice independently requires. This claim can be grounded in a variety of ways; one prominent family of arguments in this respect is offered by the broadly Kantian idea that we have an unconditional imperative to leave the state of nature and enter the civil condition, not in virtue of a voluntary social contract, but because only in the civil condition can the freedom of each and every person be jointly respected and secured (Ripstein, 2009). The fundamental idea here is that the freedom of each and every moral agent must have a determinate content to become a proper right, and that such content must be specified via the public or ‘omnilateral authorization’ of an authority empowered to decide and act in the name of all (Ripstein, 2009). Only the state can perform both functions. Variations on this insight can be found beyond Kantian scholarship narrowly defined (Dworkin, 2011; Stilz, 2009: 53).

Regardless of which of these stories is the correct one, what is relevant here is that Blake does, and must, endorse one such story. Coercion theory does adopt a transactional
language when it comes to vindicating equality within state borders: we incur egalitarian obligations of justice, which we otherwise would not have, in virtue of being subject to the coercive apparatus of the same state. However, whereas it is true that egalitarian obligations in particular are incurred, they are only a function of whom we are in coercive relations with: special obligations hold among those who live under the same coercive scheme – but live under one such scheme, with some others, we must. My claim, to wit, is not merely that Blake can be interpreted in this way, but that this is the only way for coercion theory to be internally coherent. The theory, recall, aims at justifying special duties towards compatriots while (1) remaining committed to an impartial morality and (2) acknowledging that coercion also happens across borders, yet (3) refusing to recognize that equality is called for in such cases (Blake, 2011: 557 and 566). For the theory to consistently hold all of these three claims, it must acknowledge that coercion only triggers special obligations when we have a prior, independent duty to have coercive institutions to begin with – otherwise, we should simply dispose of it.

Crucially, if special obligations are justified in this way, their difference in content entails no moral priority. Outsiders are owed less, but what is owed to them cannot be sacrificed in the name of special obligations to compatriots: global sufficiency is more modest in content, but of no less priority than domestic equality. This is something which most coercion theorists, and Blake (2001: 271; 2011: 556) in particular, readily accept. Grounding coercion theory in a natural duty of justice view, however, has further important implications – to which the article now turns.

**What Does It Take to Justify Coercion?**

The previous section has argued that coercion theory must be understood as a natural duty of justice view: our duty to secure the autonomy of all entails the duty to subject ourselves to a coercive scheme, for there is no autonomy without coercion. However, since coercion is also problematic for autonomy, its exercise must meet specific and stringent criteria to be justified – only coercive institutions of the right kind can do the job. Blake argues that only coercive institutions which maintain material equality among their members are of the right kind, and that they are of the right kind in virtue of their acceptability in a decision-making procedure of hypothetical consent. This section argues that this way of justifying coercion is wanting, and that none of the more plausible alternatives assigns a fundamental, non-instrumental role to distributive equality – although some may assign one to political equality. Before I proceed, note that the arguments offered in this and in the next section are modular – those who are left unpersuaded by this section may still accept the argument, made in ‘The Global Demandingness of Coercion Theory’ section, that coercion theory (even if fully correct about its domestic implications) has more demanding global implications than usually assumed.

As we have seen, then, Blake (2001: 258) argues that ‘relative economic shares’ are not a cause for concern for autonomy per se, but do become an issue within a coercive scheme, where coercion must be made compatible with autonomy by means of hypothetical consent – and only attaching egalitarian requirements to coercive rules does the job. The first thing to remark here is that the very necessity of coercion for autonomy must be, at a minimum, a necessary element of any plausible justification of coercion. Regardless of which other features it exhibits, a coercive rule that is not necessary for autonomy must be eliminated – as Blake (2011) himself argues about many forms of supranational coercion in response to his cosmopolitan critics; or when he states how crucial it is to find a good
justification for state coercion, because, given its ‘(paradoxical) importance of government for the protection of autonomy’ (Blake, 2001: 282), it is not a form of coercion which we can let go of. It is, thus, a bit surprising that Blake does not mention this when he asks what it takes for coercion to be justifiable. Given that it must be at least a necessary condition, however, the first question we must ask is why it does not also constitute a sufficient one (as powerfully argued, for instance, by Pevnik, 2008). In what follows, I intend to show that, for all possible forms of justification of coercion (i.e. even beyond Blake’s own one), it either is indeed sufficient, or – if it is not – distributive equality does not seem able to do the trick, either.5 Two scenarios are possible: either the correct theoretical strategy to figure out whether coercion and autonomy can be compatible is via hypothetical consent, as Blake argues; or the justification must take a different, more direct route. I shall address the two possibilities in turn.

Blake (2001: 277) seeks to prove coercion and autonomy compatible by illustrating how one could construe coercion as the object of hypothetical consent. By appealing to the principle that *volenti non fit injuria*, he suggests how consent is a ‘possible way to justify what would otherwise be prohibited’ (Blake, 2001: 278). When it comes to state coercion, of course, unanimous and ostensive consent is not an option – as scholars of political obligation know all too well. However, it may be possible to show that certain forms of coercion, if imposed in a certain way, would command the unanimous consent of agents under idealised and privileged choice conditions, and we cannot therefore reasonably reject them (Blake, 2001: 281). Note that there are two unusual features about this strategy. First, the procedures of hypothetical consent to which Blake refers (namely, Rawls’s and Scanlon’s) are attempts to provide an account of *what the content of justice is in the first place*: hypothetical consent is a tool to identify the content of justice – there is no full-blown conception of justice prior to it. In contrast to that, Blake’s coercion theory starts from an *already spelled out* account of (global) sufficientarian justice: justice requires making sure that each of us has *enough* to lead an autonomous life.6 Of course, for all we know, this very conception could have been arrived at via a decision-making procedure of hypothetical consent; Blake, however, does not explicitly do that, but rather uses hypothetical consent to show the compatibility between it and coercion. This move departs from the way in which Rawls’s original position and Scanlon’s test are most often used, but need not necessarily be mistaken. The second unusual aspect is, however, more problematic: Blake’s account of the acceptability of coercion by means of hypothetical consent does not mention its necessity at all. One could argue, however, that the necessity of coercion for autonomy is *all* we need for hypothetical consent: hypothetical agents in a hypothetical procedure, one could argue, could not possibly object to those forms of coercion which are necessary for autonomy. After all, Blake presupposes that we have global obligations of justice to secure autonomy, and that some forms of coercion are necessary for autonomy, so he must hold that we are duty-bound to accept those (and only those) forms. This is, at closer look, the vindication of the natural duty of justice itself by means of hypothetical consent: we must acknowledge a natural duty of justice to support some coercive institutions, because this is something we cannot reasonably object to, given both our commitment to autonomy and the necessity of some forms of coercion for it. Those forms of coercion which are necessary for autonomy – and, crucially, only those – cannot not be reasonably rejected and/or would enjoy hypothetical consent. So far, however, so sufficientarian.

One could, however, insist that the parties in an ideal decision-making procedure might still *reasonably* object to coercion, even if they recognised its necessity for
autonomy. Could this be where distributive equality becomes relevant? I think it is very hard to see how. Recall that hypothetical consent of the kind that Blake appeals means *unanimous* consensus or, in a more Scanlonian language, the impossibility to *reasonably* reject something. If this is the case, however, it seems fairly implausible to *jointly* claim that it is reasonable for hypothetical choosers to reject coercion, even if proven to be necessary for autonomy, and that it is suddenly *unreasonable* to do so if coercion is accompanied by distributive equality. One can imagine how some agents might switch side when distributive equality is added to the offer; but it is much harder to envisage why such an offer could, suddenly, no longer be *reasonably* rejected (while at the same time holding that the one grounded in the necessity of coercion alone can). In other words, this option requires us to see distributive equality as a game-changer (not just as something that might persuade a few) while not seeing the necessity of coercion for autonomy as one. Therefore, if the justification of coercion is to be grounded in hypothetical consent, and if the ultimate aim is to protect autonomy, either the necessity of coercion for autonomy is enough, or the least we can say is that remains to be explained why distributive equality should be able make a difference. The argument for that (at face value highly implausible) view is missing – especially if, as per assumption, autonomy itself requires no appeal to distributive fairness, but only sufficiency. One might suggest at this point that, even if this is not what Blake himself does, one could use hypothetical consent to show that coercion cum equality is *fair*, and that *this* justifies coercion. This, however, would no longer count as a hypothetical consent justification properly: the fairness of the coercive norms is what justifies coercion in this story, and hypothetical consent is simply used as a device to settle, in a Rawlsian style, what counts as fair to begin with. If this is the case, however, what still remains to be settled is whether fairness can actually justify coercion – something which we shall address with direct justifications below.

A more plausible hypothetical consent story is one where, to be persuaded, the parties would need *guarantees of equal control* over what coercive institutions do – that is, they would consent to coercive institutions which do nothing but secure the necessary preconditions of autonomy and which are equally accountable to all the coerced in that respect. This is a tighter account of why the sheer necessity of coercion for autonomy would not be quite enough, because it is faithful to the idea – with which coercion theory starts – that autonomy is what matters ultimately. To the extent that hypothetical consent would need extra conditions to be secured, they would be conditions of additional assurance grounded in that very same rationale. It is also, however, a story which, while being egalitarian, makes a case for *democracy* and *political equality*, rather than for egalitarian distributions per se. As we shall see, this point reappears in other justifications of coercion.

Let us now turn to the second scenario. Many reject hypothetical consent as an apt justification – in this case or more generally. Now, any justification that does not rely on hypothetical consent already departs from the one offered by Blake-style coercion theory (or Valentini, 2011). Still, could any such justification provide a fundamental vindication of distributive equality? It seems that there are three main ways in which one might justify coercion without relying on hypothetical consent. The first, quite simply, is to ask whether necessary institutional coercion can, under certain conditions, enjoy the unanimous *real* consent of all those involved – something which we can quickly leave aside as highly unlikely to ever happen, as theorists of political obligation know all too well. The other two strategies consist in arguing that there are compelling objectives, third-person reasons in favour of coercion, whether or not each and every agent subject to it actually consents to it. The second consists in stating that the benefits of coercion for autonomy,
under certain circumstances, outweigh or offset its evils (see also Blake, 2016, in response to Sangiovanni, 2007, 2011, 2016) for actual, real agents. If we endorse one such justification, however, it is hard to see how the sheer necessity of coercion would not be enough. If one jointly believes that (1) justice requires securing autonomy; (2) coercion is a pro tanto wrong; (3) its pro tanto wrong can be outweighed but sufficiently strong considerations and (4) coercion is necessary for autonomy – it is hard to see how 4 would not count as a sufficiently strong consideration (for what else is more important?). One might, perhaps, argue that it is preferable for the necessary evil of coercion to be exercised fairly, and equality might become relevant then; but there seems to be a gap between saying that this is preferable and saying that, without it, the evil of coercion is not outweighed – especially on a view according to which the prior, fundamental demands of justice are emphatically declared to concern autonomy only, not distributive fairness.

The third way, finally, requires that the will-bending nature of coercion be properly eliminated, not merely outweighed. What this justificatory strategy asks is whether actual moral agents can live under a coercive order and yet not have their ‘chosen plans and pursuits [replaced] with those of another’ (Blake, 2001: 272). Now, some have already and eloquently argued (Pevnik, 2008), that the necessity of coercion for autonomy (with no further requirements) does just that: necessary coercion enables us to live on the basis of our own plans and pursuits, so we should see it as enabling rather than will-bending. One is not, thus, harmed by (necessary) coercion at all. Again, however, one could resist this conclusion: we already know that some forms of coercion are necessary for autonomy, but we also already know that coercion inevitably involves will-bending; hence we are back at square one, namely at the paradoxical relationship between autonomy and coercion.

Is this where distributive equality becomes relevant? It is quite hard to see how this could be the case: egalitarian distributions might be an extra fringe benefit, but why would they eliminate the will-bending nature of coercion in a way that appeal to the very necessity of coercion would not? One might point out that coercion with egalitarian norms is fairer, and that this might swing things; again, however, we are after elimination here, and it is not clear at all how equality can be a game-changer while insisting that the necessity of coercion for autonomy cannot be one. Once more, then, the least we can say in these cases is that the argument for this conclusion must be delivered, and that the hypothesis appears highly implausible. Indeed, whether it is at all possible to eliminate (not merely offset) the will-bending aspect of coercion is highly controversial. Yet, a long-standing democratic tradition, most often associated with Rousseau (2004 [1762]), claims that, under the right institutional circumstances, the coercive order can be construed as being the product of, rather than an imposition on, our autonomous agency. When we participate in democratic decision-making and thereby accept the will of the people that emerges from it as our own, coercive power becomes something over which we have ultimate and equal control: something of which we are authors and ‘rule-makers’, rather than recipients and ‘rule-takers’. Blake (2001: 286, emphasis in the original) himself seems to be motivated by a similar idea in some Rousseauian-sounding remarks of his – note, for instance, his claim that ‘citizens of a democratic regime coerce themselves’. Famously, under this understanding, democracy is seen as a system whereby each of us remains ‘as free as before’ (Rousseau, 2004 [1762]), in that, democratically constituted coercive rules and institutions are something we jointly and actively shape in a way that engages, rather than suppresses, our autonomous agency. Whether this is at all possible is an open question, settling which falls beyond the scope of this article. What
matters is that distributive equality would play no pivotal role here, either. Conceiving of coercion theory in this way would, on the contrary, significantly relocate its position in the literature – even at the domestic level, it would best be seen as offering a justification of democracy rather than distributive justice. Interestingly, other approaches which may also be described as examples of ‘coercion theory’ already put the emphasis on democracy rather than distributive equality (see, e.g. Abizadeh, 2008, and, to some extent, Hassoun, 2012).\textsuperscript{10} Consider, as well, Ronald Dworkin’s (2011: 300–324) associational view of political obligation. Dworkin’s (2011: 319–320) argument (which starts with the value of dignity, rather than autonomy) runs as follows: (1) we have obligations to respect the dignity of all persons; (2) the state apparatus is necessary to secure the rights which protect dignity and (3) ‘coercive political organizations undermine the dignity of their members \textit{unless} each accepts a reciprocal responsibility to the others to respect collective decisions, \textit{provided} that these decisions meet appropriate conditions’ (emphasis added).\textsuperscript{11}

Distributive equality can, of course, play an \textit{instrumental} role in all of the scenarios above – indeed I think it should. Even if the necessity of coercion were a sufficient condition for the justification of some coercive institutions, we would still need to \textit{ensure} that coercive institutions do what they must do and nothing but what they must do. Limiting economic inequality might achieve just that, by ensuring that all the coerced have the means to hold institutions under control (Hassoun, 2012, 2019) and that nobody is capable of usurping coercive power so as to use it in unacceptable ways. This justification, however, sees distributive equality as an instrument, if a very important one. More importantly still, distributive equality is, at closer scrutiny, used as a proxy for \textit{political} equality here: we are concerned with material inequality because it so easily translates into power inequality. We need to ensure that coercive institutions do what they are supposed to do and nothing but what they are supposed to do; for this to be possible, the control over the exercise of coercive power must ultimately lie in the hand of all those to whom such power will apply in a roughly equal manner, so that no opportunities for undue power grabs occur. In the world as we know it, this is further implied, this cannot be securely maintained under high levels of socio-economic inequality, for the wealthy simply become capable of exercising undue influence over political institutions. Distributive equality is the instrument of an instrument in this argument, and our commitment to it significantly downstream.

I, therefore, conclude that distributive equality seems to play no fundamental role in the justification of coercion:\textsuperscript{12} at the level of fundamental justification, it is either unnecessary or the least we can say about it is that the argument in favour of it being a game-changer is missing – although it can be instrumentally useful.\textsuperscript{13} Political equality seems to play a more important role than distributive concerns under all possible readings (although it is itself instrumental under some of these).

\textbf{The Global Demandingness of Coercion Theory}

This section argues that understanding coercion theory as grounded in the natural duty of justice has far-reaching implications beyond borders, as well. These implications come in three forms, which I address in turn in the next three subsections. My mode of arguing in this section, as in the previous one, is modular: I am here assuming, for the sake of the argument, that Blake is correct about distributive equality being non-instrumentally necessary to justify coercion. In the ‘Conclusion’ section, I will briefly tackle
what my arguments in this section imply for those who also agree that distributive equality plays no such role.

One caveat is in order before I proceed. My focus on Blake’s account as the chief example of coercion theory might seem all the more puzzling at this point, for there already are attempts to relax the statist conclusions of the view by means of an internal critique (e.g. Caney, 2008) and attempts to construct forms of coercion theory with more nuanced global implications (Valentini, 2011). My reasons for focussing on Blake are twofold. First, Valentini (2011: 15 and 121–154) does indeed reject unqualified statism in favour of a more nuanced, intermediate view – but she does so, largely, because she holds a wider understanding of coercion, whereby all ‘non-trivial restrictions of freedom’ count as coercive, whether they occur via deliberate will-imposition (interactional coercion) or through networks and patterns of norms and behaviour, without an agent’s active and intentional involvement (systemic coercion). Therefore, the account is particularly vulnerable to the challenge of overstretching the meaning of coercion (Wollner, 2013). If, however, we can show that the statism of coercion theory must be relaxed even when coercion is understood in a more conventional, narrower sense, our case for rejecting the statism of the view becomes particularly robust. Second, Blake’s account has often been presented with the challenge that coercion, even of the narrow kind, already exists beyond as well as within borders (Caney, 2008; Valentini, 2011).14 However, Blake has so far resisted this challenge, as we have already seen, by arguing that a lot of cross-border coercion might not be necessary for autonomy. We must therefore simply eliminate it. I am going to argue, however, that several forms of cross-border coercion are indeed necessary for autonomy, and that some unnecessary ones might nevertheless require coercive institutional action to be successfully resisted. Focussing on Blake is, therefore, the strongest way to demonstrate the global demandingness of coercion theory.

The Egalitarian Institutions of Outsiders Matter, Too

As we have seen, Blake claims that egalitarian standards are only appropriate among those who live under the same coercive scheme. However, since living under one coercive scheme that meets the relevant special standards (whatever these are) is also necessary for autonomy (because coercion is), it is an imperative of global justice that each moral agent be enabled to live within a scheme of this kind. Therefore, domestic equality within each jurisdiction is part of what ‘enough’ is, although global equality is not. Without coercion, and without coercion that has passed the relevant justificatory test (i.e. without equality within coercive schemes), people do not enjoy the necessary conditions to lead autonomous lives.15

Global justice, therefore, requires that (a) all have enough to lead an autonomous life (global sufficientarianism) and that (b) all live under a coercive scheme that internally implements the relevant special standards (distributive equality for Blake). Indeed, a more accurate way of putting this would be to say that (b) is part of what (a) requires. Those who are subject to the same coercive scheme, then, have a mutual duty to (c) uphold the relevant egalitarian standards among themselves. However, since coercion theory subscribes to liberal impartiality, both (a) and (b) are just as stringent demands of justice as (c); prioritising the former at the cost of the latter is not permissible. I do not need to worry about (c) with those who are not my compatriots, but I do need to worry about both (a) and (b) with them, and with the same degree of concern as I should worry about (c) with my own compatriots. Recall that the coercion view does not
vindicate priority for compatriots, but different duties towards compatriots and outsiders respectively (Blake, 2001: 258). Both are requirements of justice and therefore enjoy the same level of stringency. While Blake is already happy to concede that this is the case for (a), I submit that his account also commits him to (b), for there is no autonomy without justified coercion, and justified coercion means distributive equality on his view. If global sufficiency is of no lower priority than domestic equality, the same is true for the intra-societal equality of all polities. Note that this is a fairly direct implication of coercion theory’s commitment to the natural duty of justice. If coercive institutions are required to honour our universal, extra-institutional duties of justice, every moral agent is entitled to live under a coercive order of the right kind. Different coercive orders might very well enjoy different comparative standards of living, but it is an imperative of global justice that they all respect the relevant standard of domestic equality internally.

This has non-trivial implications for the demandingness of our duties of global justice. If you and I are not compatriots, it is not my obligation to ensure that you are not too much worse off than me; but since it is my business to ensure that you have what it takes to lead an autonomous life, then it is very much my business to ensure that you are able to live in a just society of your own, namely an egalitarian one. If foreigners live under unjust schemes, this is just as problematic as them not having enough in absolute terms. This means that I have an obligation of justice, for instance, to make sure that decisions taken by the coercive scheme of which I am a member do not adversely affect the capacity of outsiders to uphold egalitarian institutions. There are important constraints on what the institutions of my society can do – and such constraints do not only concern, as most statists would readily admit, the deprivation of others in absolute terms, but also the way in which my polity may adversely affect the internal equality of other polities. For instance, some policies adopted by my polity – such as the engagement in aggressive tax competition – might make other polities more unequal, by creating downwards pressures to their fiscal systems or forcing them to shift the tax basis from more progressive to more regressive kinds of taxation (Ronzoni, 2014). What is more, when the fiscal structure of a polity is more influenced by international competitive dynamics than by the will of the people, we can no longer say that the citizens of the affected polities are equal authors of their own institutions – or indeed authors, period (Ronzoni, 2014). They become rule-takers rather than rule-makers. These must be concerns for coercion theory, even if they do not affect global distributive sufficiency as such.

This is, of course, particularly pressing under circumstances of intense global interdependence, such as ours. However, if outsiders do not live under egalitarian institutions, and cannot lead an autonomous life as a result, this generates obligations of justice for us even if our state is not causally implicated in their plight. This point might strike readers as counter-intuitive: surely, if outsiders live under unjust institutions for reasons that we are not responsible for, the primary responsibility to address this falls onto those who actually are? Coercion theory, however, cannot fence off the issue so easily. Recall that all persons around the globe are to have enough to lead an autonomous life, and that living under coercive institutions that uphold the relevant egalitarian standard internally is part of that. This does not mean that we have an all things considered duty to forcefully intervene in polities which fail to uphold such standards. This may well be impermissible all things considered, imprudent, or counterproductive for all sorts of reasons. What is more, our power to influence the matter might often be importantly limited and, indeed, far from clear – but the same is true, crucially, for the duty to secure global sufficiency, which, as development scholars and practitioners know all too well, is hardly ever a straightforward
matter of transferring resources. What is crucial, however, is that the sheer fact that ‘we did not do it to them, hence it is not our responsibility’ is not a good reason for inaction.

Coercive Schemes Are Not Set in Stone

What about the mutual compatibility of domestic and global duties, however? We can and often are faced with hard choices – where, say, a course of action that honours global sufficiency comes at the cost of deteriorating the egalitarian quality of our own domestic institutions. Think, for instance, of open borders policies. These can be justified in terms of global sufficiency, but arguably may have adverse effects on the egalitarian nature of host countries. Opening our borders, for instance, might be beneficial to those who are welcomed in sufficienitarian terms, but trigger a downwards pressure in domestic labour standards. It seems, therefore, that we are often faced with situations where we must choose between global sufficiency and domestic equality, and it therefore makes no sense to claim that there is no relationship of priority between the two.

This challenge, however, relies on the mistaken assumption that existing contours of coercion must be set in stone for coercion theory. While Blake (2001: 261–266) certainly lends himself to that interpretation, I submit that this is incompatible with the understanding of coercion theory as grounded in the natural duty approach, which I have argued coercion theorists must endorse. At closer inspection, coercion theory is particularly well equipped to respond to the particularity objection (Simmons, 1979), according to which natural duty views cannot ground the duty to support the institutions of one’s state in particular, rather than just institutions in general. Coercion theory can successfully meet this challenge, by endorsing a merely contingent loyalty to one’s state – and turning this into a strength. If the world is already divided in subunits, and these manage their job fairly well – in that their existence and current borders are compatible with global sufficiency and the internal further requirement that apply internally, and thus with the autonomy of all – there is no reason to question the current state system. Indeed, given the uncertainties involved in trying to design an entirely new system, any plausible natural duty view would probably conclude that we should stick to the existing one – and that, therefore, each of us ought to comply with the coercive order of the state they are already a member of. Everybody should be under a coercive order of the right kind with some others, but it does not matter much (at least not at this level of abstraction), which order and with whom, as long as the autonomy of all is protected. We might say, therefore, that the interpretation of coercion theory as a natural duty of justice view retains some commitment to ‘institutional theory’ after all: if the current state system, with the existing national borders, can be organised in such a way that all moral agents enjoy autonomy, there is no need to think about what the world system might look like if we were to build it from scratch.

This, however, is contingent on the current order being able to ensure the autonomy of all – if it is not, then we must challenge it. In this case, the natural duty of justice requires us to work towards a partial redesigning of existing boundaries. This enables us to solve the puzzle with which this subsection started: if, in the current system, our equality appears to be incompatible with global sufficiency, we should not jump to the conclusion that priority rules must be established between these demands after all, but rather think about redesigning the very boundaries of coercion. We might simply have to start thinking more imaginatively: more, or simply different, coercion might be required. This could take the form of supranational institutions which regulate competitive dynamics among
states; of global and coercively imposed welfare standards; of cross-border regulations for powerful transnational corporations; of measures to reduce problematic forms of global financial speculation or capital flight; and so on. This is a very rough and ready sketch; but the general point should be clear: whenever we see a conflict between our global and our domestic obligations, the first question we should ask is not which of the two has priority, but whether the existing contours of coercion should be redesigned.17

However, if coercion theory is to be taken seriously, new coercive schemes entail new special demands. Of course, to the extent that these new institutions fall short of replacing the state system with a world state in both depth and scope, the demands triggered by them may fall short of collapsing into full-blown global egalitarianism – what is likely to emerge is rather a complex, interlocking picture. This is still very different from the ‘global sufficiency, domestic equality’ picture with which we started.

What Does It Take to Stop Unnecessary Global Coercion?

Several authors have pointed out that coercion already occurs beyond and across borders, not only within them (Caney, 2008; Valentini, 2011). Blake (2011) has responded that many of these forms are not as troubling as state coercion, but has conceded that some are. However, he has argued, showing that there is some coercion in global politics is not enough. Recall that a necessary (if not even sufficient) condition for the justification of coercion is its necessity for autonomy. Do the forms of global coercion mentioned above meet this condition? Arguably not, at least in many cases. The capacity of the United States to exercise undue power in foreign policy throughout the twentieth century seems a clear example. Arguably, the same might be said about, say, the lending conditionality of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or some of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules. However, forms of coercion that are not necessary for autonomy must be eliminated, period – for nothing can justify them. Simply pointing to their existence is therefore no good reason to call for an extension of egalitarian standards. Blake (2011: 569–570) even acknowledges that only quite a lot of global redistribution might successfully ensure that these forms of coercion be eliminated – he does not tell us why exactly he thinks that, but plausibly what he means is that only a fairly radical international power rebalancing will do.18 Still, as he claims, it matters to get ‘moral story correct even when no practical differences will follow’ (Blake, 2011: 570).

This, however, is only half of the story. To understand what the other half is, it is worth unpacking a bit more the reasons why some coercion is necessary for autonomy. As we have seen, Blake mentions a variety of reasons, but part of the justificatory strategy relies on the assumption that, without a coercive scheme, it is impossible to prevent all the possible ways in which individuals might infringe upon each other’s autonomy. Some of these ways will be direct episodes of interference – that is, interactional coercion between two individual agents –; some will have to do with the diffuse effects of our cumulative interaction – that is, more akin to what Valentini calls ‘systemic’ coercion. In other words, an important part of the justificatory story why coercion is necessary is to prevent and counter (informal) coercion of the bad, that is, unnecessary, kind – what Valentini (2011: 125) calls the ‘lawless’ coercion of the state of nature. In other words, institutional coercion is necessary, among other things, because it is uniquely positioned to counter unnecessary, but hard to counter, coercion. For instance, by enforcing contracts and legitimate expectations, coercive institutions protect individuals from the risk that what is rightly theirs be taken away from them. Similar considerations can be made about unnecessary global coercion.
Unnecessary as it may be, this coercion does not seem to be going anywhere any time soon. Therefore, it is worth being very honest about what it might take to eliminate it: more coercion. The prevention of forms of international arm-twisting can, plausibly, only be secured through coercive institutions that protect us from them – these might include supranational constraints on domestic foreign policy as well as constraints on some forms of lending conditionality; and might go as far as envisaging orderly procedures to enable a sovereign state to default to avoid problematic coercion by its creditors. As in the previous subsection, figuring out which forms would be needed and justified is beyond our scope here; what matters is that the broad point be clear. To put it in a word play: unnecessary, but hard to counter, coercion is one of the reasons why some institutional coercion is necessary. Global politics – with its own global bullies – is no exception.\(^1\)

These might be hard to achieve – but, as Blake claims, it matters to get the moral story correct. And indeed, if the moral story is correct, the natural duty of justice will require the establishment of new coercive schemes in these cases, as well – and these will in turn trigger new special demands.

**Conclusion**

The argument of this article is now completed. I have argued that coercion theory must be interpreted as being committed to the natural duty of justice, and that this interpretation is not without consequences. Domestically, coercion theory does not seem able to ground domestic distributive equality in the way it aims to do. Globally, the implications of coercion theory are much more complex, ramified, and ultimately demanding than the ‘global sufficiency, domestic equality’ story suggests. These two arguments are independent from each other (although they both rely on coercion theory being grounded in a natural duty of justice approach). In bringing the article to a close, let me briefly mention how the combination of the two insights may generate interesting complications of its own.

As the ‘What Does It Take to Justify Coercion?’ section argued that, for any plausible and consistent attempt to justify coercion, either its necessity for autonomy is fully sufficient to justify it, or – if at all – political equality is required. In the former case, no equality is called for under coercion theory – neither at home nor internationally – other than perhaps instrumentally. Thus, there is no significant difference in standards of justice at home or abroad. However, ‘The Global Demandingness of Coercion Theory’ section gives us reason to think that coercion, while not triggering any additional principles of justice, is called for in several cases well beyond the state. Thus, the overall implications are still much more radical than is usually implied.

What if political equality is required? On one hand, the new cross-border coercive institutions which, I have argued, we plausibly need would not necessarily imply radical economic redistributions. This might, thus, seem to suggest that conceiving of coercion theory as committed to political equality mitigates its global demandingness. On the other hand, however, if new coercive institutions trigger new politically egalitarian demands, this seems to be even less compatible with the picture of a world constituted by fully sovereign and independent states which coercion theory is often taken to defend. New coercive institutions, according to this story, also mean new forms of sovereign, democratic control over them by those who are subject to them. Of course, such coercive institutions would not entirely replace the state; therefore, as they would not reduce coercion theory to full-on global distributive egalitarianism if we were to rely on a conception of distributive equality, they similarly do not reduce it to an argument for global
democracy or a world state if we rely on a conception of political equality. Figuring exactly how much global dispersal of power would be required is a complex task, and one for another day. Undeniably, though, new cross-border coercive institutions would entail new democratic constituencies and, with it, new layers of sovereign power. Therefore, in one way or another, this account puts significant pressure on the picture of the world order upon which much of coercion theory relies.

Acknowledgements
The author is very grateful to the students in my ‘Global Justice’ module, teaching which gave me the inspiration for this article. The article has benefitted from comments by the audiences of a workshop on ‘Global Justice and Political Obligation’ held at University College London in the Summer of 2015; research seminars at the Centre for Ethics in Zurich (Spring of 2016), Manchester (Autumn 2016) and Hamburg (Autumn 2018). The author is also grateful to Christian Schemmel, Michael Blake, Laura Valentini and Avia Pasternak and, last but not least, two anonymous reviewers for their feedback.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests
The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Funding
The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD
Miriam Ronzoni https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5280-8744

Notes
1. Blake (2011: 568–569) has more recently acknowledged that the practical implications of his view might be less statist than the initial presentation of the theory suggests. In ‘The Global Demandingness of Coercion Theory’ section, I will argue that this acknowledgement, while acute, is still insufficient.
2. See also the work of Anna Stilz (2009: 7) who claims that liberals can succeed in justifying special obligations to one’s particular state, whilst remaining liberals, only by appealing to principles that are ultimately extra-institutional, such as the respect for the freedom and equality of all persons.
3. This does not reduce institutional theory to a meaningless concept; as we shall see at the beginning of the subsection ‘Coercive Schemes Are Not Set in Stone’.
4. In the remainder of this section, I will mainly focus on Blake because he offers the most detailed account of how the justification of coercion must work. Most of the arguments of this section, however, apply to some other coercion theorists as well – and notably also to Valentini, who challenges many aspects of Blake’s argument, but not the claim that coercion must be justified by appealing to a scheme of distribution (if not necessarily an egalitarian one) which would enjoy hypothetical consent.
5. For a discussion of how coercion theory might not be able to justify distributive equality, see also Sangiovanni (2007), to whom I briefly return below, and Kis (2020), whose argument applies to institution-based theories more widely.
6. Blake remains, however, fairly non-committal about what exactly the contours of this sufficientarian conception are – readers are left free to ‘plug in’ their own favourite account of what, exactly, is ‘enough’ to secure autonomy into the argument.
7. One might object, at this point, that Rawls does believe that his principles would command consensus in the original position. Of course, one could simply respond that many disagree with this verdict. What is more relevant to our point here, however, is that pace Blake (2001: 283), ‘the real purpose of the difference principle’ is not ‘to justify coercion to all those coerced’ but to establish what counts as fair terms of social cooperation, whereby the fact that institutionally regulated cooperation is going to happen is taken as a given. Consensus in idealised conditions is a device of representation to establish what is fair (as said above, to establish what counts as justice to begin with) in a coercive scheme whose existence is not itself questioned – not as a proxy for real consent to coercion.
8. If Blake’s favourite liberal egalitarian package is Rawls’s justice as fairness, as he suggests, then one should acknowledge that political equality is also part of such a conception, and indeed lexically prior. However, as already argued, the original position argument answers a different kind of question. What is more, the lion’s share of Blake’s argument is occupied by claims about economic shares.

9. Sangiovanni (2016) also entertains the possibility that democratic equality might ‘compensate’ the evil of coercion, which I shall not discuss here as I agree with him (and Blake, 2016) that this would be implausible.

10. The same is true, to wit, of natural duty approaches which put emphasis on unique features of the state other than its coercive power. Stilz (2009) argues that state institutions are necessary to specify what the contours of claims of justice actually are – in their absence we would have nothing but vagueness, disagreement, and unilateral interpretations of such claims by individuals. However, Stilz complements this Kantian insight with a Rousseauian one: specifying what freedom and equality mean for a particular people in a non-arbitrary, unilateral way requires their equal democratic participation.

11. Arguably, this remark could apply, even more relevantly, to Thomas Nagel’s (2005) account, for whom the state acts ‘in our name’ are the central feature. For a discussion of this issue, see Miklosi (2016).

12. Understanding coercion theory in this manner also has implications for an important criticism of the view. Andrea Sangiovanni (2007: 10, 2012, 2016) has argued that egalitarian obligations stem from the demands of fairness in the joint production of social goods that are essential to leading a flourishing a life – whether or not this cooperation occurs under the threat of coercion. At most, what can be established is that independently justified distributive principles should govern the coercive institutions of the state, if these turn out to be necessary to ensure social cooperation. If my analysis is correct, Sangiovanni is right that coercion cannot itself justify distributive equality – but perhaps it need not to.

13. Valentini (2011: 155–178) also rejects the strong link between domestic coercion and distributive equality, and also frontloads democracy in her account of the justification of coercion. This, however, is due to her belief that many different distributive patterns (rather than fully egalitarian ones only) would pass the test of hypothetical consent, whereas any such justification would contain an appeal to democracy. Thus, although she disagrees with Blake on a vast set of issues, she follows his methodology at this specific juncture of her argument.

14. Valentini’s (2011: 187–188) ingenious and otherwise highly original approach suggests that we currently live in a world that can be described as a system of ‘nested islands’.

15. One might object that the state can do all of the things that render coercion necessary for autonomy (secure basic material wellbeing, guarantee legitimate expectations, end disputes in a final way, etc.) without implementing distributive equality. I would agree, but I think this is the case because it is hard to see how making sure that state coercion is limited to ensuring the necessary preconditions for autonomy would not be enough to fully justify it – as I have argued in section 3. What I am doing in this section is granting Blake’s point about distributive equality being necessary, and showing how this has more radical implications than usually thought. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for alerting me to this point.

16. Self-determination along national lines does not seem to make a moral difference at this stage – though it might matter at a less abstract level, for instance for reason of stability. This plausibly also explains why Blake (2001: 261–266) does not seem troubled by the contingency of national borders: we can take state contours as they are (whether or not they respect aspirations of national self-determination) if this is compatible with the protection of the individual autonomy of all.

17. Of course, circumstances might be such that, regardless of how much redesigning we do, we cannot have a world where both global sufficiency and equality within coercive schemes fully obtain. In such non-ideal scenario, however, it makes little sense to say that we must decide which of the two should take priority, for coercion theory conceives of both as necessary for autonomy. It makes more sense to accept that in such a scenario no full autonomy can be had anyway, and ask which compromises and hard choices might minimise its loss overall (and quite plausibly, a logic of proportionality would prevail over one of lexical priority, see Garcia-Gibson, 2016). I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer drawing my attention to this point.

18. Note the structural analogy between this argument and my argument against the fundamental role of distributive equality in the justification of domestic coercion.

19. One might argue that, if this is impossible, imposing egalitarian norms on unnecessary but ineliminable forms of coercion might be an acceptable second best. This might be the case, although the point needs further reflection; also, it is far from clear that this strategy would be more feasible than the institution-building one. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for alerting me to this point.
References

Abizadeh A (2008) Democratic Theory and Border Coercion: No Right to Unilaterally Control Your Own Borders. *Political Theory* 36 (1): 37–65.

Blake M (2001) Distributive Justice, State Coercion, and Autonomy. *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 30 (3): 257–296.

Blake M (2011) Coercion and Egalitarian Justice. *The Monist* 94 (4): 555–570.

Blake M (2013) *Justice and Foreign Policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Blake M (2016) Agency, Coercion, and Global Justice: A Reply to My Critics. *Law and Philosophy* 35 (3): 313–335.

Caney S (2008) Global Distributive Justice and the State. *Political Studies* 56 (3): 487–518.

Cavallero E (2010) Coercion, Inequality and the International Property Regime. *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 18 (1): 16–31.

Dworkin R (2011) *Justice for Hedgehogs*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Freeman S (2006) The Law of Peoples, Social Cooperation, Human Rights, and Distributive justice. *Social Philosophy & Policy* 23 (1): 29–68.

García-Gibson F (2016) Conflicts between Domestic Inequality and Global Poverty: Lexicality Versus Proportionality. *Ethics & Global Politics* 9 (1): 1–16.

Hassoun N (2012) *Globalization and Global Justice: Shrinking Distance, Expanding Obligations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hassoun N (2019) Global Justice: What Is Necessary to Legitimate Coercion. *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 16 (5): 563–589.

Kis J (2020) On the Core of Distributive Egalitarianism: Towards a Two-Level Account. In: Brooks T (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Global Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.71–98.

Klosko G (2004) *The Principle of Fairness and Political Obligation*, 2nd edn. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Klosko G (2009) Cosmopolitanism, Political Obligation, and the Welfare State. *Political Theory* 37 (2): 243–265.

Miklosi Z (2016) Collective Responsibility and the Scope of Justice. *Ethics & Global Politics* 9 (1): 1–19.

Miller D (1997) *On Nationality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nagel T (2005) The Problem of Global Justice. *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 33 (2): 113–147.

Pevnik R (2008) Political Coercion and the Scope of Distributive Justice. *Political Studies* 56 (2): 399–413.

Rawls J (1999) *A Theory of Justice*, Revised edn. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Rawls J (2001) *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.

Ripstein A (2009) *Force and Freedom: Kant’s Legal and Political Philosophy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Ronzoni M (2014) Global Tax Governance: The Bullets Internationalists Must Bite – And Those They Must Not. *Moral Philosophy and Politics* 1 (1): 37–59.

Sangiovanni A (2007) Global Justice, Reciprocity, and the State. *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 35 (1): 3–39.

Sangiovanni A (2011) Global Justice and the Morality of Coercion, Imposition, and Framing. In: Ronzoni M, Banai A and Schemmel C (ed.) *Social Justice, Global Dynamics: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives*. London: Routledge, pp.26–46.

Sangiovanni A (2012) The Irrelevance of Coercion, Imposition, and Framing to Distributive Justice. *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 40 (2): 79–110.

Sangiovanni A (2016) Is Coercion a Ground of Distributive Justice? *Law and Philosophy* 35 (3): 271–290.

Scanlon T (1999) *What We Owe to Each Other*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Simmons J (1979) *Moral Principles and Political Obligations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Stilz A (2009) *Liberal Loyalty: Freedom, Obligation, and the State*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Valentini L (2011) *Justice in a Globalized World: A Normative Framework*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wollner G (2013) The Third Wave of Theorizing Global Justice: A Review Essay. *Global Justice: Theory Practice Rhetoric* 6: 21–39.

Author Biography

Miriam Ronzoni is Professor of Political Theory at the University of Manchester, and a founding editor-in-chief if *Global Justice: Theory Practice Rhetoric*. She works on issues of global socio-economic and political justice and on issues of justification in normative theory, with special emphasis on the methodology of constructivism.