IdPS Interdisciplinary Political Studies
Number 8 Issue 2/ December 2022
ISSN 2039-8573 online
DOI: 10.1285/i20398573v8n2p299
Published by
University of Salento
Department of Human and Social Sciences

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Global hegemonies, power, and identities

The Liberal International Order, the international community and international terrorism

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Abstract

The present article argues that the Liberal International Order is structured around specific dynamics of power that constitute and shape the whole international community. In this sense, the LIO is deeper than the big powers competition that are shaping the international sphere nowadays. All of these actors belong to the international community and they are shaped by the same power hegemonies. To better appreciate the systematic nature of the LIO and its sustaining power hegemonies, therefore, it is useful to study the actors placed outside of the international community – i.e., international terrorism. It is on international terrorism that this article focuses arguing that it is the potential challenging nature of this violence that allows us to see the power relations shaping the international sphere. These are the reason of the state, of the system, and of civilization. Discursively legitimised by liberal narratives, these are the main systemic pillars of the LIO.

Keywords: LIO; International Terrorism; Power Hegemonies; International Community; Liberalism

Introduction

In the last decades, International Relations has seen the unfolding of the debate about a possible crisis of the Liberal International Order (LIO). Here, many are the voices that argue that the LIO is seeing the emergence of different types of contestations over its main standards and that the current international sphere is shifting towards a post-liberal order (see, for example, some other works in this special issue). Despite scholarly disagreement about the desirability or not of this change (Cuadro, 2021, p. 439), the general understanding seems to be that international politics is in a process of a post-liberal world in the making, an order that will be characterised by an increased normative, institutional, and economic plurality (see this special issue introduction). This debate implicitly adopts a normative position about the meaning of the LIO, one that identifies it with the US and Western leadership (Cuadro, 2021). This can also be observed in the claims that these contestations take place from within the LIO – e.g., with populism raising in EU countries or the US – or from outside the LIO – e.g., where actors such as Russia or China may be challenging this order (see some of the other works in this special issue). This article adopts a different position towards this debate. It argues that what these analyses are concerned with is a post-West version of the international system which, however, does not imply the transformation of the order into a post-liberal one. In other words, these scholarly analyses leave aside the relevance that liberalism has nowadays "in and for world politics" (Jahn, 2013, p. 11).

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This article argues that, coming together through a long genealogical process of formation (Dunne & Reus-Smit, 2017; O'Hagan, 2017), the post-1945 international community was established as a LIO (Schmitt, 2003). The LIO represents the systemic relations of power that structure the international community and its main institutions, all of these embedded in a liberal discourse. In other words, the LIO represents the international community's structure, and, in as such, it is inhabited by both Western and non-Western actors (Schmitt, 2003) that share the LIO's systemic characteristics. Furthermore, as Cuadro reminds us that, at a systemic level, liberalism is a rationality of Foucauldian governmentality (Cuadro, 2021, p. 440). For Cuadro, liberalism impregnates the LIO and it represents "the main global force constituting subjects and subjectivities" (Cuadro, 2021, p. 440). Put it differently, liberalism functions as a technology of power that constitutes subjectivities compatible with the LIO and, at the same time, legitimises this order.

The LIO's systemic nature, as this article argues, can be appreciated the most in its encounter with the LIO's outsiders – i.e., those actors that challenges to the LIO's structural power relations and its legitimacy. One of these challenges, this article argues, is represented by those non-state actors that, structured around an "Islamic-core", perpetrate violence – i.e., the so-called "International (Islamic) terrorist" groups such as Al-Qaeda, ISIL, and their affiliate organisations. Throughout the last decades, the international community has focused its global fight against international terrorism on the groups mentioned (Boulden & Weiss, 2004, p. 7; Kundnani & Hayes, 2018; Martini, 2021). It is in this clash that liberalism emanates its power as a global force in governing subjects and subjectivities and leads to the emergence of a global dispositif of counter-terrorism – i.e., discourses but also practices of governmentality coming together to govern "international terrorism" (Foucault, 1980, p. 194). This dispositif, this article argues, is shaped by three LIO's dimensions of power, i.e., the reason of the state, the reason of the system, and the reason of civilisation (Buzan & Lawson, 2015).

The present article thus draws from previous works inquiring into the discursive construction of "international terrorism" at a global level (Herschinger, 2013; Ditrych, 2014; Martini, 2021). Building on these works, the present article explores this construction as a result of the power relations structuring the LIO – and its outsiders. The work argues that it is the study of the LIO and the three main global hegemonies mentioned - the reason of state, the reason of the system, and the reason of civilisation – that allows the understanding of the crystallisation of the dispositif on 'Islamic terrorism' – i.e., a kind of political violence that is carried out by "Islamic, international, non-state actors" and thus challenges the LIO's legitimacy, as this article explains. At the same time, through this reflection, the article also wants to reflect on the LIO and its systematic and structural nature.

All in all, this work bridges together different theoretical approaches in IR. On the one hand, the article draws on Critical Security Studies and Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) in its understanding of "international terrorism" as a discursive formation (Ditrych, 2014; Martini, 2021). On the other hand, it draws from the British School to examine the relations of power shaping the LIO (Buzan, 2015; Buzan & Lawson, 2015; O'Hagan, 2017). Bridging these different theoretical positions, this research wants to contribute to the existing critical literature on security and terrorism. Filling a gap in the literature, the article analyses these international hegemonies together to formulate a theoretical approach to the study of the power dynamics shaping global counter-terrorism but also the constructions of international threats more in general. Although to a lesser extent, illustrating a process of formation of global identity and of legitimisation of global hierarchies, the present work is, in part, also a contribution to the literature centred on the study of the liberal international community

and the liberal hierarchies shaping it – and, in as such, it wants to provide a different perspective on the debate about the LIO.

To do this, the article will first analyse these three raisons as levels on which the violence that is constructed as "international terrorism". Or, in other words, it will focus on the three LIO's levels where the struggle for legitimacy and power is carried out – i.e., the state *raison*, the system *raison*, and the civilisation *raison*. Lastly, it will analyse the role of the dispositif in the (re)production of these global relations of power.

On the LIO's global hegemonies and international relations of power

The three LIO's systemic power relations have influenced and shaped the emergence of a global, standardised dispositif of "international terrorism". Foucault defined the concept of dispositif as an "heterogeneous ensemble" consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid" (Foucault, 1980, p. 194). In this sense, dispositif refers both to the discourse but also to "the system of relations that can be established between these elements" (Foucault, 1980, p. 194).

As such, the study of the global dispositif of "international terrorism" captures practices, understandings, behaviours, but also subjectivities, and ideas constructed for and in relation to a certain violence and the actors perpetrating it, and the (re)production of these practices. At a global level, the international dispositif has focused on groups such as Al-Qaeda, ISIL, and their affiliates. This means that, at an international community level, these groups have been interpreted as the "epitomes of terrorism" (Boulden & Weiss, 2004, p. 7) and that global counter-terrorism strategies have narrowly focused on these actors (Ditrych, 2014; Kundnani & Hayes, 2018; Martini, 2020, 2021). In other words, the dispositif has constructed these groups as "international (Islamic) terrorism" and centred the international practices of countering terrorism on these actors (Ditrych, 2014, p. 14). Furthermore, the global dispositif has played a key role in the processes of depoliticisation, criminalisation, moralisation, and delegitimisation of this violence and in the discursive depiction of its perpetrators as barbaric, inhuman and irrational actors (Behnke 2004; Ditrych, 2014; Gray, 2003) – thus delegitimising the possible challenges to the LIO.

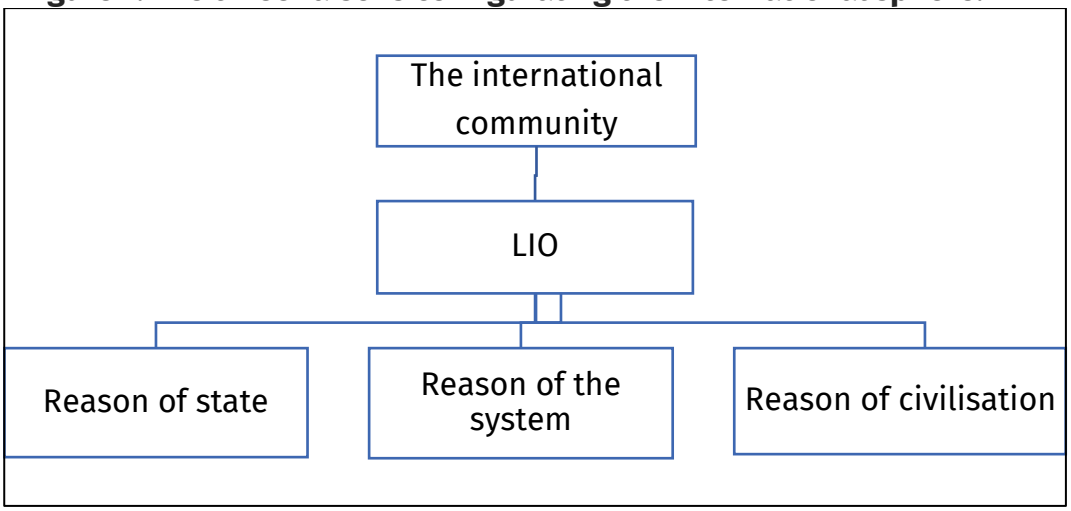
From a Schmittian point of view, this discursive construction renders this violence into foe – i.e., an enemy that needs to be annihilated because it represents an ontic negation of the Self (Schmitt, 2004). Here, the Self is represented by the international liberal order and its characteristics – i.e., its relations of power and the liberal discourse that maintains them and legitimises them. In other words, this violence has been interpreted as challenging the LIO's status quo and thus been rendered into a Schmittian foe – i.e., depoliticised and Otherised. This depends on the fact that its political aims are understood as challenging the relations of power shaping the international sphere and, above all, the legitimacy of these hierarchies. The global dispositif of counter-terrorism thus works as a technology of power that delegitimises this violence and, in turn, legitimises the LIO and its institutions. It is in these processes of (re)production of the structure that the LIO's systemic nature is observable – a nature that shapes the actors inhabiting this structure.

As said, this article identifies the relations of power that shape the inside and outside of the LIO as the reason[1] of state, of the system, and of civilisation (Peñas Esteban, 1999; Dunne & Reus-Smit, 2017). Importantly, this position does not deny the existence of other actors in

[1] It should be acknowledged that reason and *raison* may not always convey the same meaning, being the former a wider concept in English and the latter a term linked to specific philosophical and theoretical matters. However, in this works, reason and *raison* are used as synonyms.

the international realm. At the same time, it recognises that the coming together of the international community was shaped by extrastate and intrastate institutions and forces, and by Western and non-Western actors – in a process of co-constitution of actors described by Dunne and Reus-Smit as 'globalisation of the international society' (Dunne & Reus-Smit, 2017). All in all, this article builds on Barry Buzan's definition of these relations of power as "*primary institutions*" of the international community, "deep, organic, evolved ideas and practices that constitute both the players and the game of international relations [...]" (Buzan, 2015, p. 129; Buzan & Lawson, 2015). Buzan adds, "These primary institutions define both the rightful, legitimate membership of, and rightful, legitimate behaviour within, international society. [...] it is these institutions that dominate discussion" (Buzan, 2015, p. 129). It is these institutions that shape the structure of the LIO and it is these institutions that liberalism as a discourse legitimises (Schmitt, 2003). The global dispositif has crystallised on the political violence whose aims question the fundamental principles of the international (see Figure 1). The following sections will dissect these different levels.

Figure 1. The three raisons configurating the international sphere.



Source. Author's elaboration. See also, Martini, 2021, p. 27.

The state raison

The first element that needs to be discussed when analysing the crystallisation of the dispositif on the violence perpetrated by the groups mentioned is sovereignty. Considered to begin in 1648 with the Peace of Westphalia, the formation of the sovereign state is a long genealogical process and cannot be discussed here extensively (Bartelson, 1996; for an overview, see, among others, Thorup, 2010). Nevertheless, what is relevant for the present analysis is the mutual relation between the dispositif under study and the consolidation of the sovereign state and, more specifically, of the reason of the state – i.e., the "theory of the interests of the state" (Meinke, 1983, p. 20; Peñas Esteban, 1999). The reason of state, or, the safeguarding of the reason of state, is the idea that justifies state's actions even when these are considered transgressive of moral principles. This justification is usually formulated under the imperative of necessity or in the name of the safeguarding of the state and its characteristics (Peñas Esteban, 1999, p. 84).

When analysed in relation to sovereignty and the reason of state, it can be argued that the global dispositif of 'international terrorism' has evolved around the political struggle for legitimacy of the use of force at an international level (Thorup, 2010). There are two historical processes of the formation of the state which influenced the evolution of dispositif. The first is the establishment of the state as sovereign and as the (only) entity with the legitimate right to the monopoly of force. As Max Weber argued, the state is "that

human community, which within a certain area or territory [*Gebiet*] [...] (successfully) lays claim to a monopoly of legitimate physical violence" (Weber, 1919, pp. 510-511). Historically, as the modern state emerged, "the blood [...] dried in the codes of law" (Foucault, 1975, p. 3) and the state successfully naturalised and legitimised its own violence (Thorup, 2010, p. 126). Here, legitimacy implies two elements: the state's duty to monopolise force, but also people's acceptance that this monopoly is legitimate because it is established for their own protection (Stohl, 2012, p. 47). Being the security of its population among its primary functions, the state has both the legitimate right and the duty to monopolise violence and to use it. That is to say, the state conferred upon itself the monopoly of force, self-legitimised itself hiding its own violence, and self-regulated this privilege through international law (Crelisten in Stohl 2012, p. 47).

The constitution of the state as the only institution with the right to the legitimate use of force created the idea of the state as "as neutral conflict manager or arbiter of social conflict within society" (Stohl, 2006, p. 4). It also rendered illegal all the other kinds of armed violence and, above all, the violence that is usually directed against the state – being this usually the case for contemporary "international terrorism" (Erlenbusch-Anderson, 2018; Martini, 2021; Townshend, 2011, p. 15). Furthermore, once established as the basic political unit in the structuring of the social-international sphere, the sovereign state erected itself in the international system as the only authority in charge of "policing the frontier between the legitimate [...] and the illegitimate (violence)" (Thorup, 2010, p. 126). Consequently, the understanding of legitimacy shifted from a violence/nonviolence differentiation to an actor-based differentiation between state/nonstate violence (Thorup, 2010).

This genealogical conformation of sovereignty paved the way for the consolidation of the second, more recent, element. The genealogical analyses of the conformation of the dispositif reveal that this was attached almost exclusively to non-state actors in the late 1990s-early2000s (Ditrych, 2014; Erlenbusch-Anderson, 2018; Author, 2021). This does not imply that the idea that "there is no such thing as state terrorism" (Stohl, 2006, p. 101) is not contested. Rather, that the consolidation the LIO drove the crystallisation on non-state actors. The First and Second World Wars shaped the system into state unities (Peñas Esteban, 1999) and the decades of the Cold War saw the coming together of various LIO's institutions (Dunne & Reus-Smit, 2017). However, it was during the last decades of the Cold War and the beginning of the post-Cold War era that the LIO imposed itself as a political rationality. This was legitimised by a global discourse of liberalism that constructed the whole international community as in charge of a 'global humanity'. The strengthening of a new language of human rights, democracy, free market, and individualisation (Buzan, 2015; Cuadro 2019, 2021) consolidated the understanding of sovereignty as a relation between the state and the individual rather than the state and the territory (Ruiz-Giménez Arrieta, 2005, p. 137). In the making of the US-led Liberal International Order, the sovereign was tasked with the protection a universal humanity and with the provision of human rights to the population as primary duty (Thorup, 2010, p. 151).

Therefore, sovereignty and the state's hegemonic status as main organisation of the political were further legitimised. Here, the possibility of the state as a sovereign institution being a violent illegitimate actor was gradually dismissed. Violations of human rights and the use of violence against the population were not interpreted as manifestations of sovereignty and state's power, rather as abuses of it (Buzan, 2015; Thorup, 2010). Considered the exception, this use of extreme violence was understood as a perversion and exploitation of sovereign power by the respective government. Consequently, (re)produced by the international community of sovereign states, the global dispositif of 'international terrorism' crystallised on the violence perpetrated by non-state actors. Understood as a violence directed against a state and its population, terrorism challenges the legitimacy of

state's power, established on the understanding of the state as provider of security to its own population (Townshend, 2011, pp. 8-11). Terrorist attacks prevent the state to comply with its primary duty of protecting its population, being this the state's function legitimising its hegemony. Moreover, non-state actors' violence reveals the fictionality of sovereignty's duty and right to the monopoly of force and they display that the state's claim to the monopoly of power is "just a claim" (Stohl, 2006, p. 48). Furthermore, by challenging it, this kind of violence jeopardises the hegemonic narrative of the legitimacy and universal acceptance of sovereignty as main normative model of organisation of the political and social spheres (Thorup, 2010). It thus reveals its constructed and, above all, contested nature.

The challenging nature of "terrorism" is among the elements that drove the crystallisation of the dispositif on non-state actors' violence. In this sense, counter-terrorism represents 'the ultimate manifestation of political sovereignty' (de Benoist, 2013, p. 77). In fact, as Schmitt famously argued, "sovereign is the one who decides on the exception", implying that the sovereign establishes that a situation is no longer normal and decides on the measures to apply in an exceptional situation (de Benoist, 2013, p. 76). By deciding on the exception to the norm, the sovereign also defines the norm: by countering non-state terrorism under exceptionality, the sovereign also normalises its violence, its role in the system and its exceptional powers (de Benoist, 2013, pp. 85-92).

Within this context, the "(non-state) terrorist' became the figure that reinforces the sovereigns" legal order. States created international law, and it is the international community of states that also created the "terrorist" (Thorup, 2010, p. 42). Now established as always criminal and illegal violence, "terrorism" only exists outside the law. In other words, "terrorist" violence is always marginal and irregular because it is the violence that is constructed outside the law, *hors la loi* in Schmitt's words (Schmitt, 2004, p. 67). In this light, the terrorist should be understood in relation to the state, but the state should also be understood in relation to the terrorist. This institution came into being and is continuously shaped by its answer to terrorism. The articulation of the terrorist on the 'outside' reifies the established order. As Thorup argued, paraphrasing Tilly, "states fight challengers and challengers (inadvertently help) make states" (Thorup, 2010, p. 42). Nevertheless, to understand how this dispositif took shape at a global standardised level, the reason of the system should also be discussed.

The system raison

The *raison* of state cannot take place in a system that does not present a high degree of homogeneity (Peñas Esteban, 1999, p. 85). Therefore, the underlaying *raison* of the international community is not solely the reason of state but rather the *raison de système*, "the idea that it pays to make the system work" (Watson, 1992, p. 14). In this sense, the raison of the system is not only the sum of its parts but rather the order which composes the international and that structures interactions among its parts (Wight, 1977). The system serves and is structured around different goals, as identified by Hedley Bull (Bull, 1977). The first goal is the "preservation of the system and the society of states itself", which, as Bull explains, means that "The society of (sovereign) states has sought to ensure that it will remain the prevailing form of universal political organisation, in fact and in right" (Bull 1977, p. 16). The second goal is "maintaining the independence or external sovereignty of individual states," while the third is the "goal of peace". Here, peace is not understood as the absence of conflict. Rather, Bull argues, "What states seek to make secure or safe is [...] their independence and the continued existence of the society of states itself which that independence requires" (Bull 1977, p. 17). The fourth goal is the "limitation of violence" that,

for Bull, means that "States co-operate in international society so as to maintain their monopoly of violence, and deny the right to employ it to other groups" (Bull, 1977, p. 17).

States regulated their interactions and reified these norms through the creation and shared acceptance of International Law (IL), International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the principle of *pacta sunt servanda* (Bull, 1977, p. 53). Referring specifically about the rules of law, Bull points out that, rather than serving the interests of all the members of society, these rules are "imbued with the special interests and values of those who make them" – i.e., those who inhabit the system (Bull, 1977, p. 53). Shaping IL and IHL, the goals of the system (re)produce and reify the hegemonic status of sovereign states at an international level, and their privilege over the legitimate and legal, but also exceptional use of force – i.e., the reason of state (Bull, 1977, p. 17). All in all, within the reason of the system, "(sovereign) powers recognise that their interests are broadly compatible" (Watson, 1992, p. 14). Again, this does not mean that their relations will see the absence of conflict – rather, that they will share the priority of the preservation of the (LIO) system's status quo.

While hegemonies are present among its members, the society of sovereign states presents a homogeneity in the sovereign shape of its constituting units. As Bull argued, states manage to form a society when they are able to recognise certain common interests and values (Bull, 1977, p. 13). In this sense, sovereignty plays a central role in the maintenance of the community together and in the formation of the dispositif of 'international terrorism' crystallised on non-state actors' violence. Sovereignty thus draws a frontier between, on the one side, the members of a system that accept sovereignty as one of the main institutions – including its characteristics, i.e., the monopoly of force. And, on the other side, outside actors that reject these institutions and challenge the system's defining features – e.g., challenging the state's monopoly of force, but also the rules of the system mentioned above.

All in all, while the World Wars gave the system its final shape, the establishment of liberal international organisations such as the League of Nations and, after it, the UN, institutionalised the goals of the LIO and the sovereign's privilege on violence. They also institutionalised the LIO and, at the end of the Cold War, liberalism with its focus on individualisation processes, human rights, and free market as the international community's language (Cuadro, 2019, 2021). Perpetrated by "the enemy of humanity" (Cuadro, 2016), non-state actors' uses of violence became an 'attack on civilisation' (Thorup, 2010, p. 129). Carried out against a – now, global – "civilisation", violence that did not respect the internal rules and was, for example, perpetrated by non-state actors, challenged the whole global society of sovereign states and it was thus interpreted as "international" (Ditrych, 2014; Kundnani & Hayes, 2018; Martini, 2021). In other words, the violence challenging the rules of the system was perceived as a threat for the whole system, and, therefore, it was constructed as an "international" threat – i.e., a threat "to the international".

This process led to the formation of a "global frontierland" (Thorup, 2010, p. 205) which shaped an international inside/outside division (Walker, 1993). Inside, the monopoly of force belonged to the sovereign units; outside, those who were denied this privilege and that were now interpreted as "international foes". Here, the gradual formation of a global dispositif of 'international terrorism' played a central role in the performance of this division and in the maintenance of these global hierarchies. Jeopardising the legitimacy and the narrative of the universal acceptance of this global (b)order and its hierarchical status, non-state actors' violence was constructed as "international terrorism" and depoliticised, demonised and delegitimised. Countering this violence in a global fight, led and institutionalised by, for example, the UN (Herschinger, 2013; Ditrych, 2014; Kundnani & Hayes, 2018; Martini, 2021).

The categories of "international terrorism" and "international community" were placed in a hierarchical but also mutually constitutive relation. Here, the identity constructed for the former – i.e., as criminal, illegitimate and immoral violence – reinforced the identity of the other – as just, legitimate and moral violence. This process also internally homogenised these two categories, shaping an international Self challenged by – and thus fighting – a global Other. However, to understand the crystallisation of the global dispositif on a violence that is usually interpreted as "Islamic", a third relation of power shaping the global sphere needs to be discussed: the reason of civilisation.

The civilisation raison

The civilisation *raison*, the related "standard of civilisation(s)" and the inscription of the Other(s) in the outside is a racialised and racialising logic that has a long genealogy and that has been extensively debated in in International Relations (see, among others, Salter, 2002; Vv. Aa., 2014). This *raison* has characterised the encounter of the Christian, European, then Western world and the rest of the world throughout modernity. Driving the *mission civilisatrice,* the reason of civilisation identified as central goal of the Western expansion the creation of humanity and civilisation in "barbaric" non-European, then non-Western and uncivilised societies (Ruiz-Giménez Arrieta, 2005, p. 41). As Itziar Ruiz-Giménez argued, the standard of civilisation 'served to strengthen the hierarchical nature of the (international) society', opposing the civilised societies with the savages and the barbarians, whose sovereignty was not recognised (Ruiz-Giménez Arrieta, 2005, p. 51).

In the long process of globalisation of the international society, the genealogical "civilisational transformation" of the world started taking place. Gradually, the European, then Western community became the 'international community', as other nations joined it and previous "Other(s)" started inhabiting the inside, adopting – but also shaping – the existing structures. The sovereign state was globally consolidated as the model of political organisation in the XX century with the two World Wars and decolonisation (Buzan, 2015; Thorup, 2010). The latter led to the extension of sovereignty to the whole world – officially recognised with the General Assembly's Resolution 1514 (1960) granting independence and the right to exercise sovereignty to colonial countries and peoples[2] (Ruiz-Giménez Arrieta, 2005, p. 36). These processes further shaped the inside as an 'international community' inhabited by actors that recognised the principal institutions of the LIO that was coming together.

Similar to how the "standard of 'civilisation" helped to define the international identity and the external borders of the dominant international society in the XIX and XX centuries' (Peñas Esteban, 1999, p. 109), in the same way the global dispositif of international counter-terrorism divides these between the inside and the outside and maintains a specific structure of the global in a dominant position. As Foucault has argued, an island of civilisation could not exist without a barbarian existing outside of it (Foucault, 1975, p. 194; see also, Salter, 2002, p. 12) – an image that becomes even more productive when the Other resists or fights against the established order as in the case of 'international terrorism'. In other words, the current 'international "civilised" community of sovereign states' encompasses all the states that participate in the enterprise of the fight against international terrorism, not in a material but in a discursive way – i.e., virtually, all the states of the international system (Herschinger, 2013; Ditrych, 2014; Erlenbusch-Anderson, 2018; Martini, 2021).

[2] Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Contained in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1514 (1960).

As mentioned above, the genealogical globalisation of the international society led to the configuration of the international system in the LIO, or, in other words, the universalisation of the, first European, then Western, now universal sovereign system shaped by liberalism (Peñas Esteban, 1999, p. 58). For all that, sovereignty, the reason of the state and of the system that are at the base of modern constitution of the LIO have been described as (Christian) European/Western concepts universalised (Peñas Esteban, 1997). While the mutual constitution of actors inside the community and the ones joining it cannot be denied (eds Dunne & Reus-Smit 2017), the process of modernisation that has transformed the international system can also be understood as a "Westernisation of the world" which has reached the status of *de jure* (Peñas Esteban, 1997).

The reason of civilisation may thus be considered as the ultimate explainer for the crystallisation of the dispositif on a violence understood as Islamic. Here, it is the transformation of the world in the 1990s that lays the conditions of possibility for the emergence and institutionalisation of the dispositif at an international level – i.e., its acceptance and (re)production by the whole international community. The end of the Cold War reified the US-led LIO (Salter, 2002, p. 128). It is in this moment that Western language of democratisation, human rights, and (neo)liberalism impregnated the international community's social imaginary (Salter, 2002, p. 129; Cuadro, 2019). Paraphrasing Jacinta O'Hagan's words, nowadays, "A pluralist discourse of civilizational politics features in the rhetorical policies and practices" of the members of the international community, including countries such as Russia and China (O'Hagan 2017, p. 198). In other words, these two countries may challenge the Western leadership of the LIO, but they do not challenge the structural power relations shaping the international community. Still taking from O'Hagan, both Russia and China "in their current foreign policy rhetoric – if not always in their actions – both declare their commitment to protecting the key norms and institutions of international society: sovereign independence, territorial integrity, international law, and the centrality of the UN. In this regard, these states seek to place themselves at the heart of international society rather than contesting its legitimacy. [...] there is ongoing and vigorous contestation about how institutions and values of international society are defined and whether they should be more fully represent a diversity of perspectives within a global international society. Civilizational discourse forms an important aspect of this contestation" (O'Hagan, 2017, p. 198).

In this sense, the LIO and its key institutions represent the new standard of civilisation that defines the inside of the international community brought together by the safeguarding of the structural international power relations. This allowed the global dispositif to crystallise on non-state actors that violently challenge this order – positioned outside by the LIO hegemonic position. As mentioned, this crystallisation depends on the fact that these groups contravene the key norms of the system and the legitimacy of the hegemonic character of sovereignty, as analysed so far. Moreover, articulated around an "Islamic core" (Cuadro, 2020), their project of establishing a global Caliphate, the language of the *ummah* and the transnationality and universality of this political model represent a direct challenge to the sovereign-state-system.

As O'Hagan argued, "their concept of political community unsettles conventional conceptions of the sovereign state' to the point that they 'do not simply contest, but directly challenge the political, normative, and institutional structures of the contemporary international society" (O'Hagan, 2017, p. 201). This depends mainly on the different understanding of the political sphere these two models formulate. As Luca Mavelli explains, "in the historical and political formation of Western/European modernity, Islam is perceived as a threat as it evokes the (problematic) image of an all-encompassing system of belief that conflates religion (private) and politics (public)" (Mavelli, 2012, p. 161). The groups

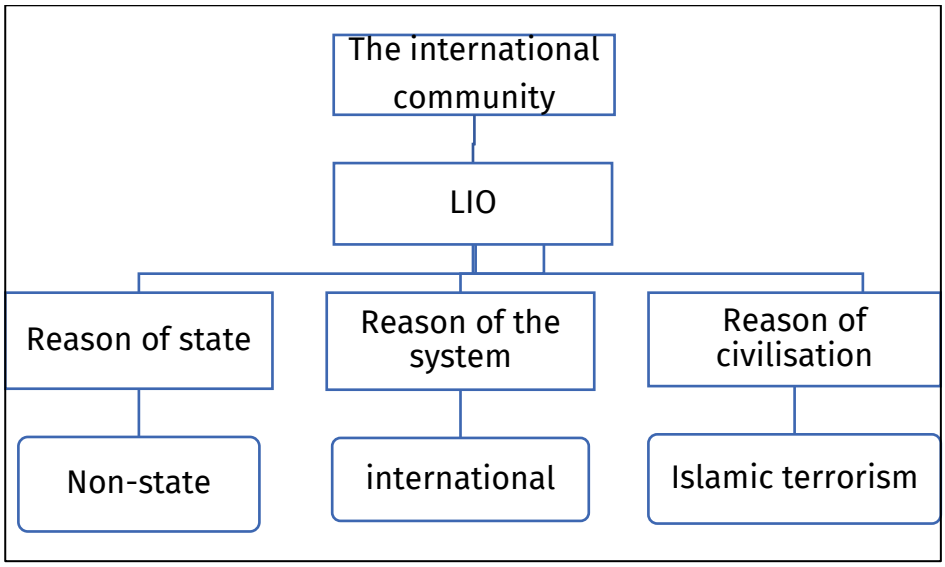
described as such are centred on an "Islamic ideological nucleus" and, as a consequence, express their grievances in a language that, "under Western eyes" (Mohanty, 1984), is rather religious than political. It is certainly true, as Mamdami argued, that the political violence that "does not fit the (Westernised) story of progress (and universality)" or even challenge it, as in this case, tends to be described in theological, civilisational and moral narratives (Mamdani, 2005, p. 4).

In effect, the dispositif separates the inside inhabited by the Western-shaped 'global international community' and the outside "international Islamic terrorism". Or, in more general terms, it separates and performs two different understandings of the organisation of the social and of the international sphere, while maintaining and (re)producing the hegemony of one side through the standard of civilisation demarcation. Here, the terrorist foe's contestation of this status quo leads to the international community's need for the annihilation of an existential threat, a fight that is shaped by the same reason of civilisation and depicted as a moral enterprise.

The fight against terrorism is thus shaped by the language of morality, and the demonisation and depoliticisation of the Other. This language depoliticises this violence and neglects its political claims while justifying and legitimising the superiority of a political model – in this case, the political model of the sovereign nation-states system with its genealogical origins in the European, Western expansion and the standard of civilisations. In other words, a "normative horizon" has been constructed – based on the language of liberalism, the philosophy behind this international configuration – which has delegitimised other models of societal organisation (Peñas Esteban, 2003). This process has been carried out in the name of the elimination of conflicts, democratic peace and human rights, shaped and influenced by the LIO spirit (see, among others, Peñas Esteban, 2003; Thorup, 2010).

As Todorov argued, a civilisational conflict could be solved with either a conversion or a conquest (Todorov, 1989). "Islamic terrorism" represents a foe for the international community and therefore, the struggle against it is played out in theological and moral terms. In this respect, the fight against 'international terrorism' may be interpreted as a further step in the "standard of civilisation" hierarchy on which the international (European/Western-centric) community is based. The displacement of conflict to the binary categories of the struggle between Good vs. Evil and Civilisation vs. Barbarism can be interpreted as the (supposed) secularised version of the logics that have guided the conquest of other parts of the world, the subsequent redistribution of power within the international system and the resulting hierarchies that structure the global sphere. Together with the other two *raisons* mentioned above, the *raison* of civilisation structures and reproduces the hegemony of the inside based on the LIO. As said, the three reasons constitute the power dynamics that shape the global fight against international terrorism – understood as the formulation of global counter-terrorism as negotiated, agreed, and shared by the whole international community (Ditrych, 2014; Erlenbusch- Anderson, 2018; Martini, 2021;), as depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2. The three reasons and the crystallization of the dispositif on 'international, Islamic terrorism'



Source. Author's elaboration

The LIO and the global dispositif of counter-terrorism

The LIO is not only shaped by the three hegemonies mentioned so far. It is also embedded and rooted in a liberal discourse that legitimises it (Behnke, 2004) based on claims of universality, morality and "humanity" (Erlenbusch-Anderson, 2018; Cuadro, 2021). Nonetheless, Cuadro argues that liberalism also needs to be understood as a rationality of Foucauldian governmentality (Cuadro, 2021, p. 440). In other words, it is not only that "liberal discourses and liberalization practices are still dominant in everyday international politics", it is also that liberalism as governmentality currently represents "the main global force constituting subjects and subjectivities" (Cuadro, 2021, p. 440).

It is in this light that it can be claimed that the global dispositif of international terrorism (re)produces the dynamics of power shaping the LIO, performing and maintaining its hegemonic position. By way of Andres Behnke's (Behnke, 2004) and John Gray's (Gray, 2003) argument that "international terrorism" is a product of modernity, it can be sustained that the dispositif is the product of 'the relationship between globalization, modernity, sovereignty' – where modernity is understood as the LIO and its power relations. The safeguarding of the hegemonic structuring of the international in the three reasons is carried out through the construction of a (terrorist) foe placed in the fictional outside. Along these lines, as Odysseos has argued, the global fight against international terrorism can be interpreted as the "quintessential liberal cosmopolitan war" (Odysseos, 2007, p. 136): it has a "punitive character of social pest control" (Ditrych, 2014, p. 14), it aims at the complete annihilation of those who oppose this order – the foes. Put it differently, liberalism can be described as a political rationality that not only posits the universalisation of its principles but that only shapes the described dispositif as "a means of social defense in a global economy of power that exercises the right" (Erlenbusch-Anderson, 2018, p. 136) in a discourse centred on the protection of humanity and of the desirability of a model that is understood as international.

Furthermore, in line with Cuadro's argument on liberalism, Odyssseos adds that the global fight against international terrorism played a central role in the spreading of a modern liberal subjectivity through both military and governing practices (Odysseos, 2007, p. 137). It is in these practices, she claims, that it can be observed how the dispositif of international terrorism is also bearer of the LIO governmentality – i.e., it is in this way that power operated

to produce certain forms of subjectivities through governing, regulating, coercing, policing, controlling, surveilling the population (Odysseos, 2007).

Moreover, the governmentality of the dispositif has further undergone an individualisation process in the last decade. Here, the dispositif has slowly shifted from a focus on counter-terrorism to the incorporation of practices of countering and preventing radicalisation and extremism (P/CVE) (Martini et al., 2020; Kundnani & Hayes, 2018). Rather than reacting to violence – as in counter-terrorism, these practices are concerned with "extremist" ideas and ideologies that may radicalise individuals into violence and focus on preventing individuals from adopting them (Kundnani & Hayes 2018). In this sense, the binary category of extremist/moderate has emerged at the core of the dispositif, where moderate would correspond to the desirable (liberal) subjectivity to inhabit the inside (Cuadro, 2020). Contrastingly, the "extremist" category constructs the subject in need of P/CVE intervention. These interventions will happen in the realm of ideas and ideologies – therefore, on ideological contestations and on individual's subjectivities (Kundnani & Hayes, 2018; Martini et al., 2020). Put it differently, P/CVE focuses security interventions on 'extremist ideas and thoughts' – reconducting the individuals towards moderation, a desirable subjectivity shaped by liberalism.

P/CVE's focus mostly on the extremist (Islamic) Other, rendered into a foe by the evil, immoral and illegitimate nature of its ideas and thoughts that challenge the narrative of universality of the LIO – and thus, the legitimacy of its hegemony (eds author 2020; Kundnani & Hayes 2018). Incorporating the new P/CVE practices, the dispositif thus reifies liberal subjectivities, while disciplining (illiberal, Islamic) challenges to the LIO. Inserted within a global, liberal hegemonic interpretation of subjectivity, "extremist subjects" became undesirable because of the threatening nature of their ideas. Shaped by the LIO, the dispositif thus legitimises and enforces a liberal homologation of thoughts and reifying subjectivities based on the liberal, Western understanding of the modern, Muslim subject – compatible with liberalism (Cuadro, 2020). At the same time, it identifies dangerous Others inhabiting the inside based on a process of identification of potential challenging ideas, behaviours and (religious) identities (Kundnani & Hayes, 2018; Martini et al., 2020).

Drawing from these reflections, P/CVE bears liberal governmentality in various ways. On the one hand, the focus on possible threats has been leading to the securitisation of Muslim communities. In various Western – but also, non-Western – countries (see, for example, the various non-Western cases discussed in Martini et al., 2020), Muslim sub-groups of the population have been identified as at risk of contagion but also risky because of their "Islamic" nature (Heath-Kelly, 2013, p. 4), in a process that identifies them as "suspect communities" but also constructs them into threats. Here, the dispositif rendered these communities as places of intervention for preventing extremism initiatives and for enforcing (liberal) moderation (Heath-Kelly, 2013, p. 4). On the other hand, P/CVE also work as subjectivising processes – i.e., identifying threatening individuals based on their (non-liberal) ideas, behaviours and identities. Here, P/CVE act on subjects to discipline them into a desirable, moderate (liberal) subjectivity. All in all, rendering the "personal political", the dispositif on extremism implemented a kind of governmentality that entered all spheres of the society (Auchter, 2020).

The incorporation of these new categories transformed the global fight against international terrorism from a (mostly) military and security enterprise into a disciplining process which permeates societies through the growing focus on individuals and sub-groups of the population. Eventually, all these practices have been put together in a historical and contingent interrelationship which controls and disciplines both the inside and the outside, the public and the private, co-constituting and reinforcing each other (Heath-Kelly, 2013; Ragazzi, 2017; Martini et al., 2020;). Rephrasing Odysseos and as a last

reflection, it can thus be argued that not only the global fight against international terrorism, but also the new practices of the prevention of radicalisation and extremism can be interpreted as "the latest (violent) form of a longer project intent on subjectivizing peoples, who have only partially been subjectivized through colonialism, through the expansion of global capitalism, through the international biopolitical operations of the UN system [...]" (Odysseos, 2007, p. 138). Nowadays, therefore, the dispositif is not only central in maintaining and performing the inside/outside division but in the disciplining of subjects and subjectivities into liberal ones.

Conclusion

While disagreements exist about other kinds of political violence and their political interpretation, the article examines the conditions of possibility for the international community's common formulation of an international strategy of counter-terrorism focused on violent non-state actors articulated around an "Islamic" core – e.g., Al-Qaeda, ISIL, and their affiliates. These conditions of possibility reside in the global relations of power that structure the international community – the reason of the state, of the system, and of civilization. These compose the power constellation of the LIO and, as such, drive the formulation of counter-terrorism – understood as a violent elimination of possible challenges to the global status quo.

In other words, a Foucauldian dispositif of counter-terrorism bearer of liberal governmentality has focused on the groups violently challenging the status quo – non-state actors understanding the political in a non-liberal, religious way. These actors violently challenge the global status quo – i.e., the LIO based on the three reasons – and are thus at the centre of the dispositif. The LIO represents the conditions of possibility for the crystallisation of the dispositif on "non-state, Islamic actors", a violence that challenges the legitimacy and the hegemony of the international community and that is thus depoliticised, demonised and moralised. Here, the dispositif has thus been central in (re)producing the hierarchy of the international community inhabiting the inside and projecting its violence toward the terrorist Others in the abstract outside. Furthermore, in its latest developments, the governmentality of the dispositif has also emerged in P/CVE practices that centre interventions on individuals inhabiting the inside and that thus act on ideas and identities considered as potentially threatening. Therefore, here, liberal governmentality becomes manifest not only in relation to the actual use of violence but in the shaping of ideas and subjectivities internationally.

Overall, and in the light of the debate put forward by the present special issue, the article aims to reflect on the LIO. Through the discussion of the crystallisation of the dispositif of counter-terrorism on this specific kind of political violence, the article wants to reflect on the systemic nature of the LIO and liberalism. The study of this global fight allows us to ask us what the conditions of possibility for the international community's shared agreement are. In other words, the international community's identification of a common and shared enemy to be placed in the outside allows us to reflect on what the characteristics of the inside are. All in all, the article understands that the three reasons represent the LIO, legitimised and reified by liberal discourses of universality and desirability of this order. The LIO is thus the international community's structure – not its actors. It is its systematic and structural features that shape all of its actors. In other words, international politics may be in a process of transition into a post-West world. However, so far, the LIO pillars still represent the systemic forces shaping the international community. While non-Western – and, to some extent, Western – actors seem to be challenging Western leadership, they are, so far, reproducing and reifying the three systemic forces shaping the LIO status quo.

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Funding
The writing of this article was partly funded by the Spanish Juan de la Cierva - Formación scheme (FJC2020-046251-I/MCIN/AEI /10.13039/501100011033 and "NextGenerationEU"/PRTR).

Acknowledgements
I would like to thank Flavia Lucenti, Matteo Dian, Riccardo Nanni, Giulia Dugar, Carlotta Mingardi, Cecilia Ducci, Carlo Catapani, Andre Leite Araujo and Sagwadi Mabunda for the collective work and feedback on the previous versions of this article. Also, I would like to thank Armon Hicks for his generous comments and feedback on the initial idea behind this paper. Lastly, I would like to thank the IdPS editorial board for all the kind support and editorial work, above all, Alessandra Russo and Arianna Marcolin.

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