



Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse

The Liberal Script between Individual and Collective Self-Determination

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Cluster of Excellence
“Contestations of the Liberal Script (SCRIPTS)”
Freie Universität Berlin
Edwin-Redslob-Straße 29
14195 Berlin
Germany

+49 30 838 58502
office@scripts-berlin.eu

www.scripts-berlin.eu
Twitter: [@scriptsberlin](https://twitter.com/scriptsberlin)



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AUTHORS



Prof. Dr. Tanja A. Börzel is professor of political science and holds the Chair for European Integration at the Otto Suhr Institute of Political Science, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany. Since 2019, she is director of the Cluster of Excellence “Contestations of the Liberal Script (SCRIPTS)”, together with Prof. Dr. Michael Zürn. She focuses on global processes of diffusion and resulting transformational changes inside the EU and European states. In her recent research, she investigates the contestation of liberal norms, such as academic freedom, within democratic societies.

tanja.boerzel@fu-berlin.de



Prof. Dr. Thomas Risse is Senior Professor and director of the Berlin International College of Research and Graduate Training (BIRT) at the Cluster of Excellence “Contestations of the Liberal Script (SCRIPTS)”. Until early 2022, he was Professor of International Relations and Director of the Center for Transnational Relations at the Otto Suhr Institute of Political Science, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany. His research interests include governance, international norms and institutions, and comparative regionalism.

thomas.risse@fu-berlin.de

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Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse

ABSTRACT

We argue in this paper that individual and collective self-determination have to be thought as co-original for the liberal script, as giving prime of place of one over the other is difficult to sustain. Treating individual as well as collective self-determination as co-constitutive core of the liberal script allows for a better understanding of inherent tensions as well as varieties of the liberal script which can be distinguished according to how they solve these tensions and their evolution in time and space. Such an understanding also clarifies the differences between internal and external contestations of the liberal script and, thus, of what constitutes illiberalism as well as non-liberalism. Finally, treating individual and collective self-determination as co-original for the liberal script allows for a better appreciation of how non-Western traditions have contributed and/or relate to the development of the liberal script.

1 INTRODUCTION¹

Conventional wisdom has it that the principle of individual self-determination, freedom, and autonomy (ISD) constitutes the core of the liberal script from which all other principles are derived, including democracy, human rights, and the rule of law (see e.g. Börzel/Zürn 2020; Zürn/Gerschewski 2021). Indeed, ISD has become a central concept of modern Western philosophy rooted in

a specific interpretation of political thinkers of the enlightenment, e.g. Immanuel Kant (see e.g. Gosepath 2022). However, there is another tradition in Western philosophy and political theory going back to, for example, Aristotle's civic republicanism (1962: 104 ff.) and to the Roman understanding of *liberalitas* (Rosenblatt 2018: ch. 1). This tradition emphasises republican virtues, orientation toward the common good, communitarian principles, and collective self-determination (CSD; see e.g. Pettit 1997). More recently, Jürgen Habermas (1994, 1996) has tried to find a middle ground between approaches emphasising individual freedom and republicanism in his theory of deliberative democracy (see also Forst 2011). For him, individual and collective self-determination have to be considered co-original (*gleich ursprünglich*) for the liberal script, as giving primacy to one over the other is difficult to sustain (see also Möllers 2022 who refers to John Stuart Mill in this context).

What might seem an arcane and esoteric debate among philosophers and political theorists has consequences for conceptualising the liberal script. We argue in the following that treating ISD and CSD as the co-original or co-constitutive core of the liberal script allows for a better understanding of:

- inherent tensions in the liberal script, which mostly centre around the relationship between individual rights (e.g. property rights) and collective goods (e.g. social welfare).
- varieties of the liberal script, which can be distinguished according to how they solve the

¹ This paper relies heavily on numerous debates at SCRIPTS. We thank the participants in the discussions of the draft with the four Research Units Borders, Orders, (Re-)Allocation, and Temporality, as well as with PhD researchers in our SCRIPTS Course. In particular, we are grateful for the detailed comments by Annette Fasang, Rainer Forst, Michael Freeden, Jürgen Gerhards, Jessica Gienow-Hecht, Stefan Gosepath, Mark Hallerberg, Philipp Lepenies, Yasemin Soysal, and Michael Zürn.

inherent tension between ISD and CSD and its evolution in time and space.

- the differences between internal and external contestations of the liberal script and, thus, of what constitutes illiberalism as well as non-liberalism.

Finally, we submit that treating ISD and CSD as co-constitutive core principles of the liberal script allows for decentring the liberal script and a better appreciation of how non-Western traditions have contributed and/or relate to the development of the liberal script. We illustrate this point with regard to dependency theory and the liberal re-allocation script and postcolonial thinking contesting the liberal script in general.

We proceed in the following steps. First, we develop the argument that ISD and CSD can be treated as co-original or co-constitutive core principles of the liberal script. Second, we discuss the implications of such a conceptualisation for the boundaries of the liberal script, including the distinction between internal and external contestations. What follows is a discussion of the implications for the tensions within the components of the liberal script as well as its varieties in time and space. We conclude with some thoughts on how an emphasis on the co-originality of ISD and CSD allows for a better appreciation of “non-Western” contributions to and contestations of the liberal script.

2 INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE SELF-DETERMINATION AS THE CO-ORIGINAL CORE OF THE LIBERAL SCRIPT

Any description of the liberal script in the 21st century would probably include principles, such as individual freedom, human rights, democracy, the rule of law, private property, and market economy (cf. Freedman 2015: ch. 3). This list is not exhaustive and does not answer the question of how these principles hang together and which of

them constitute the core of the liberal script from which all other features are derived. The conceptual contestations lie with the grammar of the liberal script and the content of its core. This juncture is where we carve out our position focusing on the tension between individual and collective self-determination.

To begin, there appears to be a general consensus that individual self-determination in the sense of liberty, also understood as individual autonomy or freedom, constitutes a core component of the liberal script, without which one cannot even start describing what “liberal” means. The relevant controversy is not whether ISD is at the core of the liberal script but whether it constitutes the *only* core component from which all other principles and components of the liberal script are derived. At SCRIPTS, Michael Zürn and Johannes Gerschewski (2021: 15–17) have articulated this position most prominently, identifying ISD as a first-layer principle of the liberal script while conceptualising *collective* self-determination as a “second-layer feature” that follows from the first. Stefan Gosepath (2022: 5) appears to concur with this position when he writes: “Since morality has to precede the ideals of democracy and universal basic moral rights, moral (human) rights have precedence over democracy. They result directly from the principle of morality; they define in terms of norms that which can in principle meet with the approval of everyone”.

Since Gosepath is making a normative argument about the moral foundations of the liberal script, let us deal with his position first:² Moral autonomy, that is, the right of morally equal individuals not to be subjected to actions or laws that cannot be justified among equals and with regard to general principles that apply to everyone, can indeed be regarded as the ultimate basis of human dignity (cf. Forst 2011 and the “right to justification”, see

² We owe the following argument to Rainer Forst.

also Forst 2016). This is a reasonable philosophical position to get at the basic foundation of morality with a firm grounding in Western philosophy (e.g. Immanuel Kant). Yet, we maintain that moral autonomy should be regarded as the ultimate justification for both human rights and democracy or for individual and collective self-determination. As Rainer Forst put it most eloquently:³ “Both types of rights [of individual as well as collective self-determination] originate from the normative status, not to be subjected to actions or norms or orders that cannot be justified sufficiently”. We are less concerned with moral philosophy (in the sense of final justification or *Letztbegründung* of morality) than with the liberal script, which can be normatively justified from a variety of philosophical or theological positions, including Gosepath’s. What is important here is that individual moral autonomy per se does not necessarily result in individual self-determination having primacy over collective self-determination.

Zürn and Gerschewski do not regard ISD or liberty as pre-social or pre-political. Referring to Bernard Williams (2005: 83), they argue that:

Liberty thus refers not only to private freedom, but to authoritative limitations to liberty to protect the liberty of others [...]. This authoritative source needs to be legitimized. The key question for liberty as the first-layer principle of liberalism thus is how far a person’s freedom should be extended or protected, which in turn must be determined collectively (Zürn/Gerschewski 2021: 15).

In other words, both the protection of individual freedom and its limits are subject to collective self-determination. This argument comes very close to co-constitutiveness. Unlike Zürn and Gerschewski, however, we maintain that individual *and* collective self-determination have to be considered first-layer principles of the liberal

script if the limits of ISD are collectively defined. On the one hand, putting individual freedom and individual self-determination always first in any social setting renders human coexistence impossible. On the other hand, if collective self-determination always trumps individual freedom, it amounts to what Alexis de Tocqueville (1994 (1835-1840)) called the “tyranny of the masses”.

ISD and CSD should, therefore, be treated as the co-original (*gleichursprünglich*) and co-constitutive core of the liberal script. We follow Habermas (1994), who has developed co-originality as a third position between “liberalist” and “republican” understandings from a discourse theoretical perspective. In “Between Facts and Norms” (Habermas 1996: ch. 3.1), he criticises Hobbes’ theory of the social contract, arguing that rights protecting individual autonomy (or individual self-determination) presuppose socially embedded individuals:

At a conceptual level, rights do not immediately refer to atomistic and estranged individuals who are possessively set against one another. On the contrary, as elements of the legal order, they presuppose collaboration among subjects who recognize one another, in their reciprocally related rights and duties, as free and equal citizens. This mutual recognition is constitutive for a legal order from which actionable rights are derived (Habermas 1996: 88).

In a similar way, Forst’s “right to justification” (2011: 1) presupposes a social as well as political community in which individual agents are embedded: “If we want to understand human practices, we must conceive of them as practices bound up with justifications; no matter what we think or do, we place upon ourselves (and others) the demand for reasons, whether they are made explicit or remain implicit”. Here, justification serves as the link between individual and collective self-determination. If my actions infringe upon the freedoms of others, I owe them justification, which can then be

³ In his email reacting to the first draft of this paper.

challenged and counter-challenged until we reach a consensus among free agents. At the same time, the community owes me justifications (hence my “right to justification”) to the extent that it infringes upon my individual freedom. For Habermas, ISD and CSD originate together from both the discourse principle and its legal institutionalisation, while Forst sees the “right to justification” as the ultimate grounding of both individual and collective self-determination.⁴

While social contract theory has to assume socially embedded individuals in order to make sense, the moral basis of inalienable human rights can also be deduced from the discourse-theoretical pre-conditions of human interactions, including practices of mutual justification. Human rights, in this understanding, need not be derived from some pre-social natural law as early liberal thinkers did:

The scope of citizens’ public autonomy is not restricted by natural or moral rights just waiting to be put into effect, nor is the individual’s private autonomy merely instrumentalized for the purposes of popular sovereignty. Nothing is given prior to the citizen’s practice of self-determination other than the discourse principle, which is built into the conditions of communicative sociation in general, and the legal medium as such (Habermas 1996: 127–128; for a discussion, see Nickel 2008).

Thus, the constitution of individual self-determination in a legal system guaranteeing these rights implies and can only be normatively justified if we assume a political community that exercises collective self-determination. To quote Habermas again:

Because the question concerning the legitimacy of freedom-securing laws must find an answer within positive law, the social contract

establishes the principle of law by binding the legislator’s political will-formation to conditions of a democratic procedure; under these conditions the results arrived at in conformity with this procedure express per se the concurring will or rational consensus of all participants. In this way, the morally grounded primordial human right to equal liberties is intertwined in the social contract with the principle of popular sovereignty (Habermas 1996: 93–94).

The co-originality of individual and collective autonomy or self-determination is furthermore expressed in the liberal understanding that the addressees of the legally enshrined rights are ultimately also the authors of their own rights (Habermas 1996: 104). Or, as Christoph Möllers (2022: 4) has put it: “[T]he act of constitution-making in which the natural freedom of the individuals is transformed into subjective rights is itself a collective political project. So, the priority of individualism is the result of a collective decision. Individual rights are constituted by a political community”.

So far, our argument has been normative. Even if one grounds the principle of self-determination in the moral autonomy of individuals and their right of justification, one can still derive both ISD and CSD as co-constitutive features of the liberal script from this ultimate grounding, let alone other philosophical approaches.

Moving from a normative to a more analytical perspective, the history of the liberal script in Western theories and practices – not to mention in non-Western philosophies and theologies – shows that both ISD and CSD have been discussed as core principles from the very beginning. Helena Rosenblatt (2018: 8–9), in particular, argues that a republican understanding of what constitutes “liberal” predates a conceptualisation that starts with individual rights: “For almost two thousand years, liberal [*or liberalitas* in ancient Rome/TABTR] meant demonstrating the virtues of a citizen, showing devotion to the common good, and

⁴ We thank Rainer Forst for pointing this out to us.

respecting the importance of mutual connectedness” (see also Freeden 2015 for a similar interpretation). It was much later that “liberalism” came to be identified with individual freedom and individual self-determination, while republicanism became the label for those thinkers emphasising collective self-determination and an orientation toward the common good. Even iconographic thinkers of “liberalism” in the Western tradition, such as John Locke, did not make these distinctions. For Locke, individual liberty was both constituted and constrained by the rule of law that – in turn – had to be determined collectively (on Locke see Freeden 2015: 40; Rosenblatt 2018: 22).

With regard to American liberal thinkers, Thomas Paine pleaded for a democratic republic and collective self-determination against British colonialism in his “Common Sense” (1776).⁵ In her history of the liberal script, Rosenblatt (2018) shows that an understanding of liberalism as focused on individual rights has dominated the Anglo-Saxon tradition, while the continental European tradition has emphasised more republican notions of collective self-determination. In a way, the distinction between republicanism and liberalism itself appears to be rather Western-centric, referring to particular European and Anglo-Saxon traditions in political theory (overview in Ladwig 2022: chs. 6, 13). In our understanding of the liberal script, both traditions can be regarded as varieties of the liberal script emphasising different aspects. While the position stressing ISD has been labelled “liberal” in much of the history of (Western) political thought, it should more adequately be called “libertarian”. Likewise, the so-called republican tradition should be referred to as “communitarian” as it shares many similarities with communitarianism.

Both the “liberal/libertarian” and the “republican/communitarian” traditions of political thought have to be integrated into an understanding of the liberal script rather than constructing a hierarchy between ISD and CSD. In social theory, such an understanding corresponds to the ontological conceptualisation of the relationship between human agents and social structures as co-constitutive. While Weberian sociology already pointed in that direction (Weber 1978 (1922)), this position was probably most clearly articulated in the structuration theory of Anthony Giddens (1984; for a similar stance, see Archer 1996). Co-constitutiveness of structure and agency means that one cannot even start describing the properties of an agent without reference to the social structure in which they are embedded. The same holds true for social structures, which are constantly produced, reproduced, and, thus, changed through social agency. From this perspective, human beings are social beings. To describe what it means to be a human individual must take into account her embeddedness in social structures, groups, and communities. Social identities are exactly about that. I cannot even start describing myself without references to particular social groups. At the same time, communities are produced and reproduced through the social interactions of individuals and their sense of belonging. As Michael Walzer put it:

The individual who stands wholly outside institutions and relationships and enters into them only when he or she chooses and as he or she chooses: This individual does not exist and cannot exist in any conceivable social world. [...] The individual does not create the institutions that he or she joins; nor can he or she wholly shape the obligations he or she assumes. The individual lives within a world he or she did not make (Walzer 1984: 324).

There is no pre-social self that is “liberated from all connections, without common values, bindings ties, customs or traditions” (Walzer 1990: 8).

⁵ We thank Jessica Gienow-Hecht for pointing us to Paine’s writings.

Individuals are “creatures of community” (Walzer 1990: 13).

Of course, structuration theory is orthogonal to the liberal script since it pertains to an ontology that applies to any social or political system, including illiberal or non-liberal systems.⁶ What matters to us is that the normative argument about the co-originality of ISD and CSD matches a structurationist ontology that opposes both structuralism and methodological individualism. Structuralism connotes a social theory deriving the properties of agents and individuals almost entirely “top-down” from social structures (the varieties of structural Marxism being a prime example which excludes human freedom almost entirely). In contrast, methodological individualism theorises social structures “bottom-up” from the properties, interests, and social interactions of human agents. It is no coincidence that certain versions of libertarianism and modern neoliberalism are ontologically embedded in rather extreme rational choice approaches firmly grounded in methodological individualism.

In contrast, the normative argument about the co-originality of ISD and CSD coincides with the co-constitutiveness of agency and structure in structuration theory. The collective is not simply the sum of co-existing isolated individuals but has an intrinsic value in itself and to its members. Individual rights find their limits in both the individual rights of others and the common good, which, however, is not pre-defined but agreed upon by the individuals who constitute the collective.

A final point of clarification points to the relevant community as the subject of collective self-determination. The liberal script has no preconceived notion of the collective. Individuals have the right

to associate with each other, constitute a community, and determine its organisation. As individual rights are universal, the liberal script provides no criteria for defining membership in the community. Historically speaking, 19th-century nationalism and liberalism aligned. Ernst Haas (1997) has shown how the different ways this relationship has been calibrated explain varieties of liberal nationalism in the US, Germany, France, and Japan. The same holds true for many anti-colonial movements beginning with the American settler colonies and continuing with 19th-century Latin American anti-colonialism up to Asian as well as African independence movements of the 20th century (on the relationship between nationalism and liberalism, see Haas 1997).

Another candidate as the locus for CSD is, of course, the state. Statehood in the Weberian sense as a rule and authority structure (*Herrschaft*) that claims the legitimate monopoly of the means of violence over a particular people in a geographically defined territory emerged in authoritarian contexts, e.g. absolutism in 17th and 18th century Europe. Over time, however, it has become the primary, if not the exclusive, form of legitimate organisation of political communities in modern scripts, liberal or otherwise. For more than two centuries, the world has been organised into sovereign, equal, and self-determining nation-states that share many structural similarities (Meyer et al. 1997). The legal right of people to self-determination is a core principle of modern international law regulating the relations among states and is enshrined in the United Nations (UN) Charter.⁷ It explicitly or implicitly refers to *national* self-determination, i.e. the right of peoples to organise as nations in sovereign states (Fisch 2015). The right to self-determination empowered independence movements in the process of decolonisation and has been invoked by secessionist

⁶ We thank Jürgen Gerhards and Yasemin Soysal for alerting us to this point.

⁷ The UN Charter refers to “friendly relations among *nations* based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples” (Chapter 1, Article 1, part 2, emphasis added).

movements all over the world. At the same time, authoritarian populists justify their rejection of international authority on the principle of popular sovereignty.

The nation-state is also the primary enactment of collective self-determination in the liberal script (cf. Börzel/Zürn 2020). Key components of the liberal script, such as individual rights and freedoms and the rule of law, are intended to tame the Leviathan, constraining the state's monopoly over the legitimate use of force and its ability to effectively enforce central decisions. At the same time, nation-states gain legitimacy by guaranteeing individual rights and freedoms and limiting them, where individual activities have undesirable effects (e.g. negative externalities, such as environmental pollution).

The dominance of the nation-state in the contemporary world and international system notwithstanding, the co-originality of ISD and CSD applies irrespective of whether the liberal script is enacted by political orders based on consolidated statehood or in areas of limited statehood (Börzel/Risse 2021). No normative logic links the autonomous individual to the self-determination of nations organised in states (Kohler 2011). The nation-state represents a particular form of organising the relationship between individual and collective self-determination, with democracy having become the main link. In areas of limited statehood where central state authorities are too weak to enforce central decisions (the law), the subject of collective self-determination has often moved to other communities, including local Community-Based Organisations (CBO), tribal groups, or extended kinship networks, which have become much more relevant for collective self-determination than central state authorities, particularly in many countries of the Global South.⁸ It is no coincidence that these non-state

collectives are often key providers of public and common goods in areas of limited statehood, such as education, health care, and economic subsistence (for a detailed analysis, see Börzel/Risse 2021). It is a Western myth that individual and collective self-determination can only be secured in liberal democratic welfare states. While democracy and human rights protection correlate rather highly in empirical studies (see particularly Simmons 2009), consolidated (Weberian) statehood is no guarantee for human rights compliance since many autocratic states fulfil all criteria of modern statehood. At the same time, we find huge variations in the degree of human rights protection in areas of limited statehood (Börzel/Risse 2013).

To summarise, there are at least two understandings of what constitutes the core of the liberal script. There is a normative argument that starts with individual self-determination from which other principles are derived. We have introduced an alternative conceptualisation of the core of the liberal script and a normative justification for an understanding of liberal democracy that combines human rights, the rule of law, and the participation of citizens. It comprehends individual and collective self-determination as equally original so that the latter cannot be derived from or reduced to the former and vice versa.

In this understanding, all varieties of the liberal script have to incorporate both ISD and CSD at their core. This conceptualisation has important implications for how we study contestations of the liberal script.

⁸ We thank Anette Fasang for pointing this out to us.

3 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STUDY OF CONTESTATIONS OF THE LIBERAL SCRIPT

3.1 ISC, CSD, AND THE BOUNDARIES OF THE LIBERAL SCRIPT

Conceptualising individual and collective self-determination as the two core components of the liberal script allows for a clearer delineation of the boundaries of the liberal script than other conceptualisations. We distinguish between *non-liberal* and *illiberal* scripts. We define *illiberalism* as a script that, in an absolute sense, prioritises individual self-determination over collective self-determination or – vice versa – the collective over the individual. Scripts that neither recognise ISD nor CSD are *non-liberal*. Our proposed distinction between illiberalism and non-liberalism follows Marlene Laruelle (2022: 308 ff.), who defines illiberalism in its “*ex-negativo* relation” to liberalism. Our focus on the co-constitutiveness of ISD and CSD, however, leads to different conclusions regarding which scripts qualify as illiberal.⁹

Let us start with *non-liberal* scripts. Medieval monarchies based on divine right (*Gottesgnadentum*) would qualify as non-liberal, as do the absolute monarchies of 16th to 18th century Europe. In contrast, constitutional monarchies would be classified as illiberal since the power of the monarch is at least to some extent constrained by legal rules, without, however, recognising collective self-determination by the subjects as a constitutive principle of political order.

It is hard to find purely non-liberal scripts in the 20th and 21st centuries since even the most brutal autocrats often justify their rule with some references to a collective (which would be an illiberal position in our understanding, not a non-liberal

one). In this sense, populist rulers might be illiberal rather than non-liberal since they claim to represent the collective will of the people. This observation documents the hegemony of the liberal script in the contemporary world (cf. Meyer 1987). Purely repressive one-person or military dictatorships (think North Korea or Myanmar) come closest to following a non-liberal script. Note, however, that the degree of repression itself is no indicator of the difference between non-liberalism and illiberalism. Several illiberal regimes in the 20th and 21st centuries have been responsible for genocides and crimes against humanity justified in the name of some collective, including National Socialism, Stalinism, or Maoism.

As to *illiberal* scripts, most liberal thinkers would probably agree that placing the collective (nation, class, party, race, religious community) above everything else, including individual freedom and the rule of law, represents an illiberal position. Such illiberalism is found in the communism and fascism of the 20th century but also in contemporary authoritarian populism (Zürn 2022), religious fundamentalism of various dominations (Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Islam), and, arguably, China’s one-party state.

However, it must be noted that not every placing of the collective over the individual falls outside the boundaries of the liberal script. Communitarianism is often described as an anti-liberal or illiberal position – and indeed, some strands put the social collective above and beyond individual rights, which we could consider illiberal (overview in Bell 2020). Harvard law professor Adrian Vermeule, for instance, advocates “common-good constitutionalism” as an order script in which political power is concentrated in the hands of the president to promote the common good, even if this requires overriding what he considers selfish claims of individuals to private rights (Vermeule 2020).

⁹ For Laruelle, illiberalism is always a form of postliberalism, i.e. must be a critique of an existing variety of the liberal script. China, therefore, is not illiberal since, arguably, it has never experienced the liberal script (Laruelle 2022: 311).

At the same time, there are varieties of communitarianism that mainly take issue with extreme versions of libertarianism and are primarily concerned with preserving the rights and values of the community against unconstrained individualism that take ISD to the extremes (cf. Walzer 1990). Amitai Etzioni's "Limits to Privacy" (1999) expresses such a view (for a more recent version of this argument, see Polimédio 2019). It is different from positions found among nationalist, right-wing, and religious conservatives that reject what they see as excessive individualism and moral nihilism intrinsically linked to economic and political liberalism (e.g. Hazony 2018, 2022).

In the same way, the struggle or tension over the borders of the relevant community constituting the community that claims the right to collective self-determination is inherent to the liberal script (Zürn/Gerschewski 2021: 26–27; see also de Wilde et al. 2019). As a result, secessionist movements must not be regarded illiberal per se. While demands for Scottish or Catalan independence are highly contested in the UK, Spain, and elsewhere (Dalle Mulle 2017; Keating 1996), they are not illiberal.

Identifying the cut-off point for illiberalism is more complicated at the other end of the spectrum since proponents of ultra- or hyper-individualism often self-identify as "liberals". However, our conceptualisation of the liberal script built upon the co-originality of individual rights and collective self-determination puts scripts based on the exclusive protection of individual rights outside the bounds of what can be considered "liberal". Extreme versions of libertarianism can be characterised as illiberal since the sole purpose of the political community is the protection of individual freedom, property rights, and the market participation of agents. In other words, we posit that the boundary between what is a variety of the liberal script and what would be an illiberal position goes right through libertarianism.

For instance, Long's conceptualisation of libertarianism as "any political position that advocates a radical redistribution of power from the coercive state to voluntary associations of free individuals" (Long 1998: 304) can probably be characterised as illiberal. Interestingly enough, this position comes close to anarchism, as advocated by James Scott (2012). In contrast, there are versions of libertarianism that, while emphasising ISD, are perfectly compatible with the core principles of the liberal script (Kane 2007). Even some anarchist positions can be considered liberal (see Prichard 2022 for an overview).

Another potential candidate for crossing the boundary between individual autonomy and illiberalism is "neoliberalism", which is an essentially contested concept (see, e.g. Phelan/Dawes 2018; Slobodian 2018; see also Schmidt forthcoming). Critiques often lump together the Austrian School (von Mises, Hayek), the Chicago School (Friedman), and the Freiburg School (Eucken) under the roof of "neoliberalism", mixing in its political expressions, such as the deregulation of capital markets, austerity policies, and the political ideologies of privatisation and deregulation by the likes of Margret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. However, if we look at the historical origins of the concept in the first half of the 20th century, neoliberalism had a different meaning. As Thomas Biebricher (2018: ch. 1) documents in detail, early "neoliberals", including Wilhelm Röpke and Alexander Rüstow, but also Friedrich Hayek and the (young) Milton Friedman, coined the term to distance themselves from what they considered the "*laissez-faire* liberalism" of the 19th century as well as from (Soviet) collectivism and – to some degree – Keynesianism. While these early neoliberals all coalesced around the (liberal) concept of a market economy, they differed to some extent with regard to the role of the state in regulating markets so that they could function properly. For example, the German *ordo-liberalism* of the Freiburg School (Eucken etc.) emphasised the

necessity for a strong state to regulate markets and prevent distortions, such as monopolies and oligopolies, while Friedman (1962) sought to limit the regulatory capacity of the state. In short, the arguments of the early neoliberals are well inside the boundaries of the liberal script and constitute one way to cope with the inherent tensions between individual and collective self-determination.

What is mostly identified as “neoliberalism” today is a particular articulation of the liberal (re-allocation) script that emerged in response to Keynesianism and its counter-cyclical interventionism in markets and the economic crises of the 1970s. It became more prominent in the politics of the US (Reagan) and the UK (Thatcher) in the 1980s and can be summarised as follows: “By the early 1980s, neoliberalism was used in a very different way, as it came to describe the wave of market deregulation, privatization and welfare-state withdrawal that swept the first, second and third worlds” (Venugopal 2015: 168). Most versions of this neoliberal thinking – not to be confused with neoclassical economics – fall once again in the realm of legitimate varieties of the liberal (re-allocation) script (Zürn/Gerschewski 2021: 21–22). However, some extreme versions of neoliberalism based on a hyper-individualist conception of freedom constitute illiberal positions outside the boundaries of the liberal script. The “super-empowered individual”, as described by Thomas Friedman (2002), negates society as a condition of freedom, denies almost any active role of the state in regulating the economy, and rejects even minimum welfare protection of citizens to preserve individual freedom. A prominent example appears to be the “Chicago Boys”, a group of (mostly) Latin American economists who studied with Milton Friedman in Chicago and then put their ideas into practice, particularly in Chile under the military dictatorship of Pinochet (Valdés 1995). One could also point to the “shock therapy” advocated by Jeffrey Sachs and others at the

time to be instituted in former Communist Central Eastern Europe and Russia after 1990 to transition these countries from centrally planned to market economies (Köves 1992; Medvedev 2000).

In sum, treating ISD and CSD as co-original cores of the liberal script implies a clearer view of what constitutes its possible boundaries, either on the ISD or on the CSD side. We submit that our focus on co-originality allows us to decide whether particular political philosophies, ideologies, or scripts qualify as liberal or illiberal, irrespective of how they view themselves or are viewed by others. Compared to understandings of the liberal script that give primacy to individual freedom and autonomy, we acknowledge that our conceptualisation tends to be more open towards articulations on the CSD end of the spectrum, such as democratic socialism (Busky 2000; Meyer 2009), while being more critical toward approaches emphasising radical ISD, such as extreme libertarianism or the neoliberalism of the “Chicago Boys”, which denies almost any collective restrictions on individual rights, including property rights.

3.2 TENSIONS WITHIN THE LIBERAL SCRIPT AND ITS VARIETIES

Treating ISD and CSD as co-original for the liberal script from a normative position does not imply the absence of tensions between the two, as we have hinted above when discussing republicanism, communitarianism, libertarianism, and neoliberalism. Historically speaking, individual and collective self-determination were sometimes considered to co-exist in an unproblematic manner, while at other times, liberals emphasising ISD clashed strongly with other liberals focusing on CSD. Most of the internal contestations of the liberal script can be interpreted as controversies over how to reconcile individual rights and their constitutional protection with the rights of the relevant community to determine principles and norms of collective governance as well

as the provision of collective goods. Different institutionalised solutions to these tensions define varieties of the liberal script. Since most of these tensions, as well as the varieties of the liberal script, are aptly described in Zürn and Gerschewski (2021: particularly 21–27), we can be brief.

3.2.1 BORDERS

In line with our argument about the co-originality of ISD and CSD and the predominance of nation-states in the contemporary international system, Daniel Drewski and Jürgen Gerhards define the liberal border script as:

characterized by a tension between the principles of individual and collective self-determination, that is, the right of individuals to interact across national borders in the name of individual self-determination, and the right of the state to control its borders – in so far as this rests on the equal consent of the state’s citizens (i.e. collective self-determination) (Drewski/Gerhards 2020: 10).

The concept of national sovereignty – as “organized hypocrisy” as it might be (Krasner 1999) – enshrines the right of the state to control its borders and resist external interference in its domestic affairs. The latter principle – incorporated in the UN Charter – directly derives from a people’s right to collective self-determination (Risse forthcoming). Citizenship laws, migration regimes, and understandings regulating access to collective goods, such as healthcare, social welfare, and education, attempt to negotiate the inherent tension between individual rights to cross borders and collective rights to control who and what is entering. As to migration regimes, the EU’s internal regulations to ensure borderless traffic (“Schengenland”) coincides with ever stricter controls at the EU’s external borders (“fortress Europe”) to prevent, for example, labour or social migration. This border regime inevitably clashes with the international refugee regime that aims

to protect human beings whose rights of self-determination have been severely curtailed (right to asylum and principle of non-refoulement). The EU border regime leads to various internal contestations about the right of refugees vs the right of the EU to control its border (Börzel and Zürn 2021). Migration policies are among the most contested policy areas internal to the liberal script (on the US, see Toro/Covarrubias forthcoming).

Another instance of internal tensions and contestations of the liberal border script concerns the conditions under which external (military) interventions into the domestic affairs of sovereign states are allowed (see also Drewski/Gerhards 2020). On the one hand, “Westphalian” sovereignty (the non-interference principle) is enshrined in the UN Charter and elsewhere in international law, ensuring the right of collective self-determination against foreign intrusion. On the other hand, there are clear limits on a state’s right to rule over its people. The right of collective self-determination of a nation-state is conditional upon the respect for the right of individual self-determination of its citizens. Genocide, as well as massive human rights violations, are prohibited by international law and justify the interference in domestic affairs authorised by the UN Security Council. This tension has led to numerous attempts at the international level to negotiate between the principles of non-interference to protect CSD and the responsibility of the international community for the protection of ISD. The normative principle of the “responsibility to protect” constitutes all but one effort to resolve the tension between ISD and CSD on the international level.

3.2.2 ORDERS

With regard to the liberal order script, the tension between ISD and CSD translates into the various ways in which liberal democracies seek to reconcile individual freedom and majority rule. Separation of powers, as well as constitutionally

guaranteed rights, are attempts at institutionalised solutions to this tension. In particular, the judicial system, as a non-majoritarian system that nevertheless institutionalises the triadic structure of deliberative procedures, serves as a check on majoritarian institutions, such as parliaments (Kumm under review). The tension between ISD and CSD also informs many policy contestations in liberal orders. The controversies about mask mandates and vaccination requirements during COVID-19 were typical examples of the inherent tension between individual rights and public security and public health. Another example concerns the controversies about the limits of free speech between individual freedom of expression and community norms. Institutional solutions range from the almost unlimited predominance of rights to free speech and free assembly under the first amendment of the US Constitution to the German basic law prohibiting the denial of the Holocaust as an effort to protect German post-World War II national identity.

Another tension within the liberal order script concerns the boundary between the “public” and the “private” spheres. This distinction has been an intrinsic part of liberal thinking, at least in the Western understanding, for a long time (see also Zürn/Gerschewski 2021: 15). It is another example of the co-originality of ISD and CSD in the liberal script since the “private” sphere as the protection of individual freedom from “public” interference only exists because of a collective determination of the respective boundary. And this boundary keeps shifting back and forth throughout the centuries. LGBTIQAP2S+ issues constitute a perfect example: Homosexuality among adults was penalised in Germany until 1969, and it took another 35 years until § 175 of the penal code was completely abolished in 1994 (Giersdorf 2000). Until then, sexual relations between homosexual and queer persons and their individual right to sexual self-determination were severely constrained by public regulations and only became part of the

“private” sphere afterwards. In contrast, domestic (sexual) violence was considered “private” in Germany until 1997, when marital rape became part of the penal code. Even sexual harassment in the workspace was legal and, thus, considered part of the “private sphere” until the mid-1990s (Zippel 2006). The ongoing contestations about abortions and the “right to choose” in many countries, including liberal democracies, are another example of the variation in boundaries between the “public” and the “private” spheres.

At the global level and the liberal international order (LIO), the tension between individual and collective self-determination plays out in slightly different ways in terms of the boundary between the international realm and international public law, on the one hand, and the sphere of domestic sovereignty, on the other. We already discussed human rights and the “responsibility to protect” under the liberal border script. Another hotly contested issue – inside and outside the EU – concerns the question of how intrusive the LIO should be in regulating domestic affairs internal to states (for a discussion, see Börzel/Zürn 2021). The EU only constitutes the tip of the iceberg with regard to the supranational intrusiveness of international institutions in the domestic politics of states. The issue becomes particularly dicey in controversies about the level at which the collective right to self-determination – the democratic principle – should be exercised and what that means for the intrusiveness of international institutions.

3.2.3 (RE-)ALLOCATION

The inherent conflict between individual and collective self-determination can also be found in the liberal (re-)allocation script. On the ISD side, liberal values, such as property rights and individual merit, are central to the (re-)allocation script. Regarding CSD, the contestations are mainly about two issues related to the relationship between

the state and the market. First, to what extent is state intervention needed to regulate markets to ensure efficiency? Second, how far should redistributive policies and welfare state provisions by the state go in enabling people to exercise their individual and collective rights and, at the same time, securing equal and fair chances for underprivileged people to participate in economic, social, and political life? It is not surprising that the contestations about the proper ways to reconcile the efficiency of markets with solidarity and social justice have been and continue to be the most contentious in the history of the liberal script (Schmidt forthcoming). The various institutional solutions for how to solve the tension between ISD and CSD with regard to (re-)allocation issues have given rise to the literature on varieties of capitalism (Hall/Soskice 2001) and welfare states (Esping-Andersen 1990). On the international level, the tension between ISD and CSD has led to contestations over the international economic order ever since the 1944 Bretton Woods conference, if not earlier (on controversies at Bretton Woods, see Helleiner 2014a). “Embedded liberalism” (Ruggie 1983) was one attempt to allow for the compensation of the domestic losers of an open international trade order. The contestations over a “right to (economic) development” have been with us, from attempts to establish a New International Economic Order (NIEO) in the 1970s to current debates on the differentiated responsibilities of states concerning the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change (see Section 3.2.4).

3.2.4 TEMPORALITY

Climate change and other long-term effects of (neo)liberal capitalism also raise issues of ISD vs CSD in the liberal temporality script. The tension between short-term private goods pursued by autonomous individuals and long-term collective goods benefitting the community as a whole touches upon the right of collective self-determination of future generations.

Already in the 18th century, Adam Smith referred to the collective right of each successive generation to the earth and its resources (Lopez 2015: 184–186). This right is hardly represented in democratic deliberations of how to use scarce resources or to what extent private interests should be constrained to preserve these resources. The liberal script struggles with reconciling the rights of present and future generations regarding climate change, pension funds, public debt, or COVID restrictions. Contestations of intergenerational justice arise around the extent to which future generations have rights against present generations (Howarth 2011). Children and young adults have filed lawsuits contending that their governments’ insufficient attempts to mitigate climate change would harm their future lives and the lives of their descendants.¹⁰ Germany’s federal constitutional court ruled that the Climate Protection Act partly violated the German Constitution as it did not sufficiently protect coming generations.¹¹ Yet, courts seem reluctant to grant future generations legal standing. If they consider rights violations in the future, they refer to the future rights of the plaintiffs. It remains to be seen whether climate litigation by individuals invoking their right to self-determination will eventually establish collective self-determination as the future right (*Zukunftsrecht*)¹² of coming generations, including intertemporal limitations of individual self-determination (Dann under review) or a duty of “collective self-limitation” (Brand et al. 2021) for present generations that do not overlap with future ones.

¹⁰ For instance, the climate-related lawsuit *Juliana, et al. vs United States of America, et al.* filed in 2015 (US Climate Change Litigation n.d.).

¹¹ *Leitsätze zum Beschluss des Ersten Senats vom 24. März 2021*. 1 BvR 2656/18, 1 BvR 78/20, 1 BvR 96/20, 1 BvR 288/20 (Klimaschutz). 24 März 2021.

¹² We thank Philipp Lepenies for pointing this out.

3.3 OVERCOMING THE WESTERN AND EURO-CENTRISM OF THE LIBERAL SCRIPT

The final implication of treating individual and collective self-determination as equal core principles of the liberal script concerns the debate about the (not just) Western origins of the liberal script. Proponents, as well as critics, of the liberal script often assume without further examination that the liberal script originated in Europe and North America from the Age of Enlightenment onwards and then diffused globally, beginning in the late 19th century and – even more profoundly – after World War II, supported by US hegemony (Ikenberry 2009; Meyer et al. 1997; Thomas et al. 1987). This historical narrative faces three problems. First, it ignores that the tension between individual and collective self-determination is, and has been, resolved differently around the globe giving rise to distinct, non-Western varieties of the liberal script. Second, it treats Europe and North America as cultural containers and overlooks the entangled histories, such as those between Europe and Asia, Latin America, and the Islamic world over the centuries (Conrad/Randeria 2013). Third, it neglects the many authors from Latin America, Asia, and Africa the liberal script has had over time, as well as their continuous contestations of how Western actors sought to balance ISD and CSD (Risse under review). The international human rights regime that evolved after World War II is a case in point (see, e.g. Jensen 2016; on India, Berger 2022; on Latin America, Sikkink 2014).

If we take a more global perspective on the liberal script, it becomes immediately obvious that an interpretation of liberalism that starts with the individual and its self-determination has a peculiar Anglo-Saxon or Western ring to it. Latin American, Asian, and African thinkers have emphasised the socially-embedded individual, focusing on collective self-determination, particularly in the context of decolonisation. The key principles of CSD, including sovereign equality and

non-intervention, had first been established by Latin American states in the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States of 1933 and were further developed by anti-colonial movements and postcolonial states in Africa and Asia after 1950 (Tourinho 2021). Attributing to the US and its allies the inscription of the nation-state as the sole reference point for collective self-determination into existing varieties of the liberal script is another case of Euro-Western provincialism. So is the case for the opposite view that collective rights “have typically been promoted by governments and groups from the third world, or what is now more commonly known as the ‘Global South’” (Rhodes 2020: 6). This latter position simply reifies the “West vs the rest” dichotomy, overlooking that neither the “West” nor the “Global South” constitute homogenous entities or cultural containers amidst their long histories of mutual entanglement. In the next sections, we discuss two major “non-Western” contributions to the (international) liberal script and its contestations with regard to the tension between individual and collective self-determination.

3.3.1 CONTESTATIONS OF THE LIBERAL REALLOCATION SCRIPT ON THE GLOBAL LEVEL: DEPENDENCY THEORY

The dominant narrative of the origins of the liberal international economic order (LIEO) is heavily centred on the US and the UK as the major Western powers at the 1944 Bretton Woods conference (see, e.g. Ikenberry et al. 1988; Ikenberry 1992; for the next passage, see Risse under review). Conventional wisdom not only ignores that the liberal content of the LIEO was contested from the very beginning but also that Latin American as well as Asian (especially Indian and Chinese) authors and negotiators tried to put “international development” and global redistributive justice on the agenda from the very beginning (details in Helleiner 2014a). The development agenda had emerged in Latin America through,

for instance, the writings of Raul Prebisch even before he was engaged in Latin American development and regional organisations, such as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL; see Fajardo 2022). In China, Sun Yat-sen expressed similar ideas (Helleiner 2014a: ch. 7, 2014b). US negotiators took up these ideas, establishing the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) as part of the World Bank. The IBRD's blueprint was the ill-fated Inter-American Bank (IAB) negotiated between the US and various Latin American governments in 1939 and 1940.

The post-Bretton Woods LIEO focused on trade liberalisation while the concept of “embedded liberalism” was mainly confined to domestic redistribution (on “embedded liberalism”, see Ruggie 1983). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, dependency theorists from the Global South put global redistributive justice back on the international agenda (see, e.g. Amin 1977; Cardoso/Faletto 1979; Fanon 1961; Frank 1967). Dependency theory argued against modernisation theory that the world economic system was based on the structural dependency of the postcolonial Global South (the periphery) on the economic core of the global North. Core and peripheral elites collaborate in preserving and perpetuating the hierarchy in the globalised capitalist system between the developed core and the underdeveloped periphery. Its structural dependency on the core systematically disadvantages the periphery in the international distribution of labour.

Marxist *dependistas* invoked collective self-determination, calling for a decoupling of the Global South from the global capitalist system (e.g. Frank 1967). Reformists, in contrast, deemed an integration into the global markets unavoidable and advocated import substitution policies and global economic redistribution, including cartels of raw material-producing states (e.g. Cardoso/Faletto 1979). In other words, dependency

theorists drew on the CSD side of the liberal re-allocation script as well as of an illiberal alternative. The former gave rise to internal contestations of the LIEO by the non-aligned movement in the 1970s demanding a New International Economic Order (NIEO) (Krasner 1985; Laszlo et al. 1978; Rothstein 1979). The NIEO largely failed, and neoliberalism became the dominant paradigm of the international economic order from the 1980s on. But the contestation of the LIEO, particularly in its neoliberal form, has continued to this day. New developmentalism emerged as a challenge to the neoliberal Washington Consensus, advocating macroeconomic policies based on fiscal and exchange rate responsibility as well as a strategic role of the state in investment and industrial policy (Bresser-Pereira et al. 2014). Moreover, global justice issues are back on the international agenda in the context of climate change negotiations on how to interpret the Kyoto Protocol's principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities” (Petri/Biedenkopf 2020). Demands for global redistributive justice amount to internal contestations of the liberal script in that they mostly refer to the broken promises of the liberal re-allocation script (but see, e.g. Escobar 2018 for a more radical critique).

3.3.2 POSTCOLONIAL THINKING AND THE LIBERAL SCRIPT

Another contestation of key components of the liberal script externally and internally, originates in postcolonial thinking. While there are certain similarities to the dependency theories of the 1970s, postcolonial theories are much broader and encompass political, economic, and cultural arguments.

Focusing on the relationship between colonialism, racism, and liberalism, postcolonial thinkers offer alternative ways of reading and interpreting the liberal script, shedding light on features of the liberal script that are not part of what is

defined as liberal by Anglo-Eurocentric scholarship and its focus on Western traditions of liberal thought. Postcolonial approaches contest the dominance of the liberal script, denouncing its biases, forms of violence, and oppressive tendencies. A particular focus lies on “the darker sides” (Mignolo 2011) of the liberal script and the liberal justification of illiberal ideas and practices (Go 2016). Colonial powers rationalised the domination, exploitation, exclusion, and violence, which blatantly defied the liberal principles they practised at home, by the necessity, if not moral obligation, to discipline, educate, and “civilise” people considered to follow illiberal or non-liberal scripts (Fanon 1963; Pitts 2009). Exploitation and exclusion justified by the liberal script still prevail today (Agathangelou/Ling 2009; Grovogui 1996; Manzo 1996). The “long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism [...] define culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations” (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 243; cf. Mignolo 2000). In fact, for postcolonialism, illiberalism abroad is constitutive of liberalism at home because of the particular way the liberal script constructs the self and the other. Due to its universal claims, the liberal script needs to be imposed wherever it is not enacted. This “urge to empire” (Mehta 1999: 10) results in the imposition of liberal principles through illiberal practices. Identifying such illiberal practices of coercion and exclusion, and the liberal principles that have produced and legitimised them, provides a critical reading of the liberal script and its contemporary varieties.

Post- and decolonial thinkers share a rejection of the colonality of the liberal script. They equally denounce liberal legacies of oppression and violence, seeking to break the collective enthrallment of postcolonial societies with the liberal script and develop their own scripts rather than emulating the ideas and institutions of the former colonisers. At the same time, they differ in

how they approach decolonisation and postcolonial reconstruction (cf. Kerner under review). Radical decolonial thinkers, including Walter D. Mignolo, dismiss the liberal script altogether. The “colonial wounds” (Mignolo 2000: 7) can only heal if postcolonial societies radically decouple from the liberal script and the totalising effect of its false universalism and epistemological imperialism. Others are more ambivalent. Gayatri Spivak, for instance, recognises a liberating potential in the liberal script. In her deconstruction of the liberal script, she highlights the European Enlightenment and its globalisation as both “enablement” and “violation” (Spivak 1999: 371). Human rights can empower the subalterns helping to “righting wrongs” (Spivak 2004). In a similar vein, Achille Mbembe (2001) advocates a re-reading of the liberal script and its universalism to transgress colonial lines of differentiation altogether. To overcome colonial racism, he invokes the idea of common human nature, which differs from but resonates with Western humanism.

While external contestants of the liberal script, such as Mignolo, renounce the liberal script, deeming it impossible to use the Master’s tools to dismantle the Master’s house (Lorde 2018), more internal contestants, including Spivak and Mbembe, instrumentalise the liberal script to contest its “instrumentalisation for illiberal ends” (Kerner under review: 21).

4 CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we have discussed two understandings of what constitutes the core of the liberal script. A rather common conceptualisation starts with individual self-determination and derives all other principles from this core. Its corresponding ontology is methodological individualism. The individuals with their natural rights are primary, and the collective is secondary, the product of individual will.

However, centring the understanding of what is liberal around individual self-determination reflects an Anglo-Saxon, if not Western, bias, which is neither necessary from a normative point of view nor adequate from a historical perspective. Normatively, individual as well as collective self-determination can be considered as co-constitutive features of the liberal script, even when starting from the moral autonomy of individuals and their right to justification. Historically, not all liberal thinkers have conceptualised individual self-determination as natural, pre-social rights independent of their social origins and social consensus. Both the libertarian and the republican or communitarian traditions have been part of liberal thinking since Greek and Roman antiquity. Likewise, collective or group rights have figured prominently in Western liberal thinking, from Adam Smith's rights of successive generations, the US Declaration of Independence statement on the rights of people and states, to the constitutional protection of minority rights to prevent Tocqueville's "tyranny of the masses". The fight for collective rights (such as non-Whites, labourers, women, Indigenous peoples, migrants, children, and persons living with disabilities) has been a major part of the internal contestations that shaped the evolution of the liberal script.

Our alternative conceptualisation of the core of the liberal script provides a normative justification for an understanding of liberal democracy that combines human rights, the rule of law, and the participation of citizens. It comprises individual and collective self-determination as equally original so that the latter cannot be derived from or reduced to the former and vice versa. ISD and CSD then co-constitute the invariant core of the liberal script. ISD and CSD are linked because they are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for a script to be liberal. As a result, radical libertarianism that puts individual freedom above everything else invariably violates the right to ISD of others. Likewise, radical collectivism, which

negates the freedom of the individual, undermines the very basis of liberal democracy.

Treating ISD and CSD as the co-constitutive core of the liberal script has significant implications for how we study contestations of the liberal script. First, today's internal and external contestations of the liberal script target the protection and promotion of group rights (based on race, nationality, religion, gender, social background, and sexual orientation) that come with affirmative action, multiculturalism, and identity politics. To assume the existence of a homogenous people (nation or society) or to conceptualise the individual as a "radically socialised self" (Walzer 1990: 21) are as irreconcilable with collective rights as extreme individualism with its idea of the pre-social self. The right to collective self-determination plays an important role in ensuring the social cohesion of pluralist societies. The liberal script emerged as a solution to the problem of "peacefully managing diversity in pluralistic societies" (Fukuyama 2022: 7). This presupposes both individual and collective self-determination.

Second, treating ISD and CSD as co-constitutive or co-original allows us to get a better grip on both the tensions inherent in the liberal script resulting in internal contestations and the varieties of the script. We have shown this with regard to the liberal "BOAT", i.e. borders, orders, (re-)allocation, and temporality. A major insight of our discussion is that the borderline between liberal and illiberal contestations goes right through both neoliberalism on the individualist end and communitarianism on the collectivist end of the continuum, defining varieties of the liberal script and distinguishing them from illiberal and non-liberal alternatives.

Last but not least, treating ISD and CSD as co-original contributes to de-centering the liberal script. The one-sided focus on individual self-determination reflects a Western provincialism that

ignores the existence of non-Western varieties of the liberal script and non-Western contributions to Western varieties of the liberal script. Our conceptualisation helps us get a better grip on global entanglements and better appreciate that the liberal script has had many authors as well as contestants over the centuries.

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