

FAR-RIGHT CIVILIZATIONISM: LIMITS AND
CONTRADICTIONS

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Abstract

This thesis critically explores the ideological aspects of political contestation within the states and societies of the so-called Liberal International Order (LIO) in recent years. Such divisions are associated with key capitalist social and political formations which are concerned with the LIO's nature, its governance model, and the future of this political bloc within the twenty-first century world order. The focus of this thesis is concerned with the ideological aspects of political contestation and the rivalries and tensions such contestation has produced within the states and societies of the LIO and contemporary world order. Specifically, it will note how the elite-led transnational 'hegemonic project' of post-Cold War liberalism has been challenged in recent years by an emergent transnational far-right governance model, with supportive networks of far-right collective intellectuals who are ambitious to provide leadership within the post-war historic bloc of the LIO (or 'Western civilization') and greater world order.

I will discuss the various discourse coalitions comprising of elite intellectuals for the two rivalling hegemonic projects for the LIO and world order: 1) "neoliberal cosmopolitanism" (Gowan 2001); and 2) "far-right civilizationism" (Stewart 2020, 2022). I will outline the core ideological aspects of each hegemonic project as well the transnational networks of politicians, institutions, and elite intellectuals attached to each project.

To illustrate the far-right social forces associated with this 'clash of hegemonic projects', I will discuss the National Conservatism Conference (NatCon) a major node within in a burgeoning transnational far-right 'collective intellectual' network with hegemonic ambitions in the field of global governance knowledge production within the LIO. Founded by political scientist Yoram Hazony in 2019, NatCon has sought to shift the liberal consensus amongst elites and professional managerial class(es) on questions of culture, identity, and public policy in the West. Attracting academics, activists, military figures, politicians, and capitalists from across the LIO, NatCon has created a venue for far-right elites to organize/harmonize the social forces opposed to some of the proposals, core principles, and influence of 'globalist' liberal elites and their collective intellectual institutions such as the World Economic Forum and Open Society Foundations.

This dissertation will then 1) examine the structural factors or contexts relevant to the rise of the contemporary far-right social forces within the LIO; 2) describe the ideological basis of the far-right's opposition to the ideas, institutions, and material capabilities associated with the 'left' and/or elite liberal 'establishment'; and 3) explore the case study of NatCon as an example of a transnational collective intellectual organization which represents a hegemonically ambitious far-right elite discourse coalition in the field of global governance. I will discuss how this emergent coalition, which I label as the Budapest Men, has designs for the transatlantic-bloc and world order. This bloc of social forces cannot be reduced to frequently used descriptors such as populist, nationalist, or illiberal.

Keywords: Far-right, neoliberalism, elite intellectuals, nationalism, populism, civilizationism, organic crisis, transnational capitalist class, hegemonic projects, liberal international order.

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List of Abbreviations

APACL - Asian Peoples Anti-Communist League

APTA - Canada–United States Automotive Products Agreement

BCCI – Bank of Credit and Commerce International

BDS – Boycott Divestment and Sanctions

BIS – Bank for International Settlements

CUSMA – The Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement

CRT – Critical Race Theory

CSP - Center for Security Policy

DEI – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

DHI - Dignitatis Humanae Institute

EBF- Edmund Burke Foundation

ECR – European Conservatives and Reformists

ECSC – European Coal and Steel Community

EDL – English Defence League

EEC – European Economy Community

EU -European Union

FSB – Financial Stability Board

FVEY – Five Eyes

G7 – Group of Seven

GATT – General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

ICC – International Criminal Court

ICJ - The International Court of Justice

IMF -International Monetary Fund

INTERPOL – The International Criminal Police Organization

ISSEP - The Institute of Social, Economic and Political Sciences

LIO – Liberal International Order

MCC - Mathias Corvinus Collegium

NAFTA – North America Free Trade Agreement

NatCon – National Conservatism Conference

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NORAD – North American Aerospace Defence Command

OCSE – Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PEGIDA - Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West

PMC – Private Military Contractors

SAS – Special Air Service

TPP - Trans-Pacific Partnership

TTIP - Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

UATX – University of Austin

UN – United Nations

WACL - World Anti-Communist League

WEF – World Economic Forum

Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, the states/societies that comprise the 'historic bloc' of the so-called 'Liberal International Order' (LIO) have undergone significant political transformations. Such transformations have been accelerated by various crises including those of US/NATO militarism following 9/11 and the global financial crisis beginning in 2007/08. The failure of current systems of global governance to address such crises was partly reflected in the 2016 Trump presidential election victory, Brexit, and a general rise in xenophobic far-right parties and social forces across the European Union since the 2010s. The events of 2016 signalled a challenge to the traditions of establishment political leadership within Western capitalist states, and the faltering ability for the US/EU alliance to retain its relative global hegemony. Moreover, the emergence of non-Western world order projects such as Chinese-led initiatives (e.g. BRICS, the new Silk Road and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank) challenge establishment 'neoliberal cosmopolitan' governance within world order.

This thesis will propose that the contemporary far-right movement within the LIO can be understood as a transnational and top-down response to various crises within world order, crises which threatens the power and position of the US and its major allies, and its institutions of global governance and societal interests of its dominant classes and fractions of capital. By investigating the elite social forces of the contemporary far-right movement within the LIO, this thesis will seek to evaluate this reactionary challenge. It will, moreover, explore the gradual rise of the transnational far-right movement in the postwar era, as a movement which transcends individual states/societies within the transatlantic bloc.

My case study will explore the National Conservatism Conference (NatCon) as a major hub for far-right intellectuals and collective intellectual organizations across the contemporary LIO. As the largest transnational far-right conference within the LIO, NatCon has sought to develop a new Judeo-Christian civilizational political identity and ‘common sense’, one which opposes the elite liberal consensus regarding culture, foreign policy, and various aspects of contemporary governance. NatCon and its members have also expressed a desire to counter the influence of so-called ‘woke’ or ‘globalist’ organizations such as the UN, EU, World Economic Forum and Open Society Foundations. An analysis into its membership reveals a transnational network of far-right actors and organizations supportive of what I have labelled “far-right civilizationism” (Stewart 2020, 2022) – an alternative ‘hegemonic project’ for governance within twenty-first century world order.

I) Key Hypotheses and Propositions

The rise of a transnational far-right movement has occurred amid a profound crisis within world order as well as the complete absence of a coherent and united transnational left hegemonic project. Even as the liberal hegemony of the LIO undergoes what many believe to be a period of precipitous decline, its elite social forces have pursued a strategy of divide and rule, rather than introduce necessary democratic reforms within the capitalist state and its institutions. It is a salutary reminder to note that in the past, especially during the Cold War period, liberal elites within the West were willing to make common cause with far-right forces and their use of violence in order to intimidate and marginalize opposition, as well as, on occasion, create a climate of fear, allowing them to press ahead with the more authoritarian elements of rule. Such forms of coercion and domination could

significantly resurface if intra-elite capitalist struggles intensify and also threaten social forces from below who challenge the dominant order.

Thus, it is the primary guiding hypothesis of this research that the contemporary far-right movement can be appropriately regarded as a competitive transnational hegemonic project within a Western dominant/centered capitalist world order. While this project has roots in the twentieth century, it has become increasingly competitive amongst the ruling classes in the midst of a profound ‘global organic crisis’ and is reflective of the long-term contradictions of ‘neoliberal cosmopolitanism’ within the field of elite global governance. Nevertheless, the success of this rising alternative far-right hegemonic project will be partly determined by how it appeals to other classes and groups which have traditionally been associated with the so-called liberal establishment ‘center’ – specifically the university-educated or ‘professional managerial class(es)’.

Rather than pursuing a politics of parochial or inward-looking nationalism, the contemporary far-right movement has actively pursued transnational campaigns against various (perceived) transnational threats to the position/authority of conservative culture in the so-called Judeo-Christian West, including (but not limited to): Marxism, feminism, social liberalism, or ‘woke’ ideology in the education system; multiculturalism; refugees and immigrants (specifically from Muslim majority countries); climate change activism; global institutions for public health (specifically after the Covid pandemic). Its challenge has included the dissemination of conspiracy theories of a global communist dictatorship, or one-world government, installed by the UN and other ‘globalist’ institutions or actors (e.g. UN, EU, World Economic Forum; Klaus Schwab, George Soros, Hilary Clinton, Justin Trudeau, and Bill Gates).

There are three secondary hypotheses that follow and will help guide this analysis. First, that there are two elite global governance frameworks connected to the making of and reshaping of world order in the post-Cold War period, these are the ‘hegemonic projects’ of neoliberal cosmopolitanism and far-right civilizationism. Both can be understood as the cumulative product of transnational elite intellectual discourse coalitions with roots in the early twentieth century. A deeper exploration into such comprehensive hegemonic projects provides a compelling window into the nature of political contestation within contemporary world order.

Second, the dominant hegemonic project neoliberal cosmopolitanism has been undermined by profound political, economic, and ecological crises involving contradictions of its governance model. The election of Trump, Brexit, and the rise in far-right politics across the EU signals growing contestation amongst elites within the LIO. Nonetheless, journalists and social scientists offered misleading and reductive descriptions and labels for this movement (e.g. populism, illiberalism, or nationalism). My thesis, however, suggests the professed economic nationalism, protectionism, and culturalism/civilizationism of the contemporary far-right movement is however complimentary to the deepening of Western geopolitical supremacy and neoliberalization during a period of profound crisis.

Third, I propose the nature, viability, and limits and contradictions of the hegemonic project of far-right civilizationism and its significance to the politics of LIO and global governance can be most usefully demonstrated by exploring the transnational collective organizations of elite intellectuals which are supportive of far-right civilizationism. In recent years, the far-right movement within the LIO has developed transnational collective intellectual organizations to

advance a rival elite ideology/consciousness regarding the direction of global governance and the nature/future of world order.

II) A Study of Political Contestation within the Liberal International Order

The historical context to be addressed in this thesis is concerned with the making of the post-1945 international system that produced a new global hegemony led by a bloc of Western capitalist states, marked by US-centrality, Atlanticism, transnational coordination, interdependence, a liberal market economy, and Cold War with Soviet communism. History shows that the establishment of the postwar LIO was dependent on both: 1) major political and economic transformations and reforms within the US—evident when one looks towards the internationalization of Fordism and the New Deal through the Marshall Plan (Gill 2008; Cox 1981, 1987, 1992; Van der Pijl 1998; Carroll 2013); and 2) the ideological entrepreneurship of elite transnational intellectuals on behalf of capitalist/corporate interests of transatlantic states. Hegemony is always a relative and somewhat exclusive concept, but in the postwar period of ‘embedded liberalism’ (Ruggie 1992), the majority of the global population outside the West were unable to participate in this new liberal order due to geopolitical strife and neo-imperialism. What was unique to neoliberal cosmopolitan ideology in the post-Cold War era, was the proposition that the inclusion of various new states/societies within the US-centered capitalist world economy (in lieu of Cold War divisions) could occur.

Since the 1970s, however, the LIO has undergone significant socio-economic transformations due to processes of neoliberal globalization—processes which have accelerated in the post-Cold War era. Transnational elites have reconfigured aspects of their ideology and governance strategies as a means securing a new basis for popular consent for post-Cold War

US/Western supremacy and a Post-Fordist ‘regime of accumulation’.¹ This project of neoliberal globalization has been articulated and directed by “globalizing elites”, corporate actors, intellectuals, and political leaders who have sought to advance the broad historical project of liberal global capitalism, with variances in strategy and interpretation (Gill 2008: 154). One key strategy to achieve this has been neoliberal cosmopolitanism—which has dominated within the LIO since the end of the Cold War. Nevertheless, the inability for this strategy to stabilize fracturing social relations during the period of neoliberal globalization has created space for certain segments of transnational elites to propose an alternative far-right civilizationist hegemonic strategy, challenging (often cynical) support for universal human rights, and to seek mass legitimacy through exclusionary and xenophobic forms of civilizational identity and supremacy.

The disruption of these developments on the supposed values, norms, and reputation of the LIO has created a frenzy among writers and scholars keen to weigh in on a set of circumstances which – much like the fall of the Soviet Union – caught most western observers by surprise. Nevertheless, conceptualizing the far-right phenomenon has divided social scientific scholarship for decades. For some, the far-right’s supposed populism, illiberalism, or nationalism represents the antithesis of Western liberal democratic governance, its ‘open societies’, and its ‘rules based international order’. Whereas for others, the rise of these reactionary tendencies underscores the innate contradictions/deficits of liberal democratic capitalism, or as Adorno (1967/2020: 9) once put it “the scars of a democracy that, to this day, has not yet lived up to its own concept.”

¹ Dunford (1988: 34) defines a regime of accumulation as: “[A] systematic organisation of production, income distribution, exchange of the social product, and consumption. With the materialisation of a regime of accumulation the process of economic reproduction is characterised by a relative stability: changes in the amount of capital invested, its distribution between sectors and departments, and trends in productivity are coordinated with changes in the distribution of income and in the field of consumption.”

This dissertation will therefore seek to explore aspects of the contemporary far-right movement with the LIO which transcend the borders of individual nation-states. It will discuss how the transnational far-right movement within the LIO contains: a shared political consciousness and civilizational worldview; transnational networks of elite organic intellectuals; and numerous transnational organizations/movements tethered to its political project. This exploration into the ideas, elites, and social movements affiliated with the contemporary far-right movement will then help explain to what extent its political program can be interpreted as nationalist, populist, or illiberal in its scope or purpose. Moreover, a stronger grasp of the transnational dimensions of the contemporary far-right movement is a useful resource for activists and politicians within the LIO seeking to counter this phenomenon.

Political contestation in our current moment perhaps requires first challenging the labels and ontological frameworks of both the far-right and liberal ‘center’, whilst acknowledging the complex history of symbiosis and cohabitation between the social forces of the far-right and elite liberal establishment since the postwar era. Despite the illiberalism or anti-liberalism of various far-right sub-ideologies, nonetheless far-right elites and movements played a role in solidifying the LIO as a unique ‘historic bloc’ during the postwar period – specifically in organizing and executing transnational efforts to counter communism, socialism, and anticolonial uprisings. Such efforts also included the development of elite “discourse coalitions” (Almiron 2017; Hajer 2002, 2005, 2016; Pautz 2011, 2018); indeed, through various collective intellectual organizations (e.g. think tanks, conferences, and publications) which served to unite/organize against revolutionary Marxism-Leninism.

III) Key Research Questions

Reflecting on the rise and history of far-right politics across the LIO since the Cold War era, this dissertation will seek to address the following questions: 1) What is the nature of contemporary social and political contestation dividing the state-societal structures of the LIO and world order? 2) How has this contestation been reflected (or projected) within the ideological and strategic rivalries between contending groups of elite actors/organizations/social forces/networks which are vying for political leadership and influence over the LIO's systems of national and global governance? 3) What does the far-right hope to accomplish if it achieves state-power or hegemony within the LIO and/or world order?

In evaluating these contesting interpretations/definitions in regard to populism, illiberalism, and nationalism within the LIO, I will propose a new critical vocabulary to describe/theorize the contemporary far-right phenomenon in the transatlantic bloc. The need for a critical approach, introducing such a vocabulary is to address political contestation within the LIO is often reduced to a politics of right vs left, liberal vs illiberal, populist vs. elite, nationalist vs globalist, as well as increasingly, the Manichean language of good vs evil. Such descriptions obfuscate important complexities of our current moment in world order. In addition, it will argue that meta-political ideologies, visions, or 'grand strategies' for global governance are best referred to as elite-led 'hegemonic projects'. Such hegemonic projects each contain contradictory ideologies and class forces; are articulated from the top-down by elites and their intellectual counterparts; represent disparate constellations of transnational cross-class social forces; and are designed to achieve a basis of public consent for capitalist hegemony. I suggest the outcome of this ideological 'clash of hegemonic projects' will impact the future of geopolitics/international relations, political economy, global culture, and biosphere.

With these issues in mind, this dissertation will: 1) identify the two primary rivaling ‘hegemonic projects’ for within the so-called West; 2) locate along which lines transnational elite class formations within the transatlantic bloc are divided (as well as their associated/aligned non-elite social forces); 3) explore the transnational/global networks of capitalist elites and their organic intellectuals which actively support the global far-right movement, contribute significant material resources towards its agenda, or intervene in political processes; 4) speculate on the far-right’s grand strategy for global governance in the twenty-first century and reflect upon its potential social, cultural, economic and geopolitical consequences; and 5) examine some of the key shifts in ruling class consciousness and the role of transnational elites within the far-right movement during the postwar period. It will contrast the worldview of dominant actors, organizations, institutions, and social forces affiliated with the LIO to the worldview of the far-right movement and its elite intellectuals.

This analysis of contending elite ideology and praxis in regard to global governance will challenge the notion that there is a singular ‘transnational capitalist class’ (Carroll 2010; 2014, 2018; Robinson 2007, 2016; Sklair 2000, 2009; Van der Pijl 1995, 1997, 2005) or ruling class ideology. To distinguish between the different transnational political projects pursued by contemporary elites, I will explore transnational intellectual collectives within LIO states. An analysis of such collective intellectual organizations/networks to help elucidate the far-right’s strategic blueprint and how it challenges the prevailing ‘centrist’ governance framework of ‘neoliberal cosmopolitanism’. I will discuss how far-right intellectuals, and their associated organizations, have critiqued aspects of liberal governance in recent years, specifically in regard to multiculturalism, immigration, secularism, and human rights.

IV) Key concepts

This thesis is concerned with analyzing of the politics of the LIO as a US-centered transnational **‘historic bloc’**, a comprehensive historical structure established to advance transatlantic capitalist integration and American geopolitical supremacy within world order. The LIO’s historic bloc was developed through various alliances and class-comprises within/across the state-societal structures of the so-called West during the post-war period. Robert Cox (1987: 105) defines a historical bloc as:

[T]he configurations of social forces upon which state power ultimately rests. A particular configuration of social forces [that] defines in practice the limits or parameters of state purposes, and the modus operandi of state action, defines, in other words, the *raison d'état* for a particular state.

The ‘social forces’ which I will analyze within this dissertation are those which seek to provide leadership/guidance for the historic bloc of the LIO. Such social forces are comprised of, and dictated by, certain ideas, institutions, and material capabilities, which orient – as well as put limitations on – systems of governance within a particular period. As such, this analysis is concerned with conceptualizing the ruling social forces within the state-societal structures of the LIO, as well as identifying areas of elite contestation within the LIO’s transnational historical bloc.

Antonio Gramsci (1971) used the term **“organic crisis”** to describe a comprehensive breakdown of political order which includes social, economic, political, and ideological dimensions. The contemporary organic crisis in world order refers to the inability for hegemonic political structures to resolve crises, contradictions and breakdowns posing a crisis of authority and rule. In short, the context for this research is the complex contemporary **“global organic**

crisis” (Gill 2011; 2015) of capitalist world order in the era of neoliberal globalization and American geopolitical supremacy.

In this analysis, I will discuss *both* aspects of continuity and change within the LIO, particularly in relation to the rise of far-right social forces supportive of leaders such as Donald Trump and his likeminded counterparts in Europe such as Nigel Farage, Marine Le Pen, Matteo Salvini, Giorgia Meloni, Andrzej Duda, and Viktor Orbán. As such, this research will reflect on the activities and political programs pursued by transnational elite actors and the **“organic intellectuals”** that shape their governance frameworks (Gramsci 1971), and seek to respond to, and shape the movement of political forces under conditions of organic crisis.

Since the end of the Cold War, the dominant world order ideology or *Weltanschauung* of political and economic elites within the West can be identified as that of **“neoliberal cosmopolitanism”**, a term initially coined by Peter Gowan (2001), a political ideology partly reflected in the election of Bill Clinton (1993-2001) in the US and Tony Blair (1994-2007) in the UK. Such a project is the cumulation of liberal ideas and forces since the early twentieth century. It combines Anglo-American style neoliberal economic assumptions with a proclaimed commitment to (some of) the progressive values associated with global citizenship, transatlantic cooperation, multilateralism, human rights, humanitarian intervention, immigration/refugee settlement and international law. For Samuel Huntington (2004: 8), advocates of this project are a group of transnational super-elites which can be described as “Davos Men” (named after the Swiss town that hosts the World Economic Forum). Huntington used this term to critique a group that he saw as discarding notions of national loyalty in its adoption of a new cosmopolitan identity. The intellectuals associated with this neoliberal cosmopolitan ideology are those supportive of a

centrist elite establishment, often associated with elite bipartisan think tanks, global forums, Ivy League universities, mainstream political parties and social science journals, giant media corporations, and corporate consultancy firms (Shoup 2015; Gill 2008).

By contrast, a criticism that is often made (e.g. by Donald Trump) is that there are apparent contradictions within this neoliberal cosmopolitan, or – in far-right lingua franca – the ‘globalist’ perspective associated with the Davos Men. Critics from the left and right have noted how this Davos worldview is explicitly hypocritical, that its principles are inconsistently applied, overly technocratic, and that it has been instrumentalized to protect ruling elites from alienated or dispossessed subordinates. Moreover, issues related to economic inequality, societal decline, and misdirected political anxieties linked to late modernity have created space for far-right social forces to emerge as a competitive political movement. Nevertheless, my research indicates that the recent surge in far-right social forces is not primarily driven by bottom-up nationalist or nativist impulses, but rather that this movement is transnational/globalist in nature. Rather than a populist or nationalist political project, the contemporary far-right movement contains its own transnationally oriented elites and a global vision which constitutes a rival grand strategy or ‘hegemonic project’ for the LIO, one of **“far-right civilizationism”**. Moreover, my research suggests far-right civilizationism combines theoretical justifications for authoritarian neoliberal governance and Western supremacy, with a basis of consent which involves exploiting the pre-existing sub-ideologies of xenophobia and reactionary forms of national/cultural/ethnic identity, which have become more manifest during periods of profound crisis.

V) Theoretical Approach and Methodological Considerations

Within the social sciences, various terms have been used to refer to those groups of intellectuals which seek influence or ideological hegemony over systems of power and governance. Concepts such as “knowledge regimes” (Campbell & Pedersen 2011), “thought collectives” (Sady 2001; Mirowski & Plehwe 2015), and “epistemic communities” (Haas 1992) have been used to describe groups of elite intellectuals who provide technical expertise to those who rule or govern modern society. Pierre Bourdieu (1991; 2002) used the term “collective intellectuals” to describe those who – despite their autonomous fields of expertise – collaborate with those outside their fields and participate in larger public debates regarding the nature of contemporary society, the issues which plague it, and its future. Similarly, the term “brain trust” has also been used to describe the elite intellectuals and their collective organizations which produce and proliferate ideas, strategies, research, and technical expertise for the purpose of advising/guiding the actors/institutions/systems of American imperialism (Shoup & Minter 1977).

The concept of a ‘field’ for Bourdieu refers to a “relatively autonomous social microcosm”, such as academia or law, which structures the habitus of those individuals experiencing the field and reproducing existing structures (Neumann 2017: xiv). Within the LIO, intellectuals compete for authority within a transnational ‘field of power’ concerned with the direction/strategy of Western hegemony and global governance. Discussing Bourdieu’s concept of the ‘field’ to IR, Pouliot and Mérand (2013: 34) note:

The number of fields that can exist within a given space is indeed potentially unlimited. Empirically, Bourdieu worked on the university field (1990), the field of consumption (1979), the scholarly field (2005), the bureaucratic field (1989, 1998), and so on; that there could be so many theoretically possible fields raises the question of their boundaries. Bourdieu and Wacquant’s answer to this question is that “the limits of the field are situated at the point where the effects of the field cease” (1992: 100). This is perhaps one of the most difficult points of the method that Bourdieu developed. It requires that one discover the *modus operandi* of the field before defining the actors involved in the game and their interest in playing. However, the *modus operandi* necessitates some interpretive work, a

task which rests upon a certain number of philosophical postulates. For Bourdieu, who in this regard is indebted to the French anthropological tradition (Durkheim, Mauss, and Lévi-Strauss), a field is generally structured according to a system of binary oppositions: dominant/dominated, orthodox/ heterodox, sacred/profane, to name a few examples.

Elite global governance can therefore be understood as a transnational *field of power*, one in which a variety of actors – including think tanks and elite conferences – are involved in a competitive process to monopolize authority and capital. Within this field are various (uneven) collective intellectual organizations which form elite networks that represent divergent – but sometimes overlapping – perspectives and interests regarding the future of geopolitics, political economy, culture, and democratic society.

In England, what can be described as a think tank dates back to the Industrial Revolution, with the Benthamite Philosophic Radicals of the nineteenth century being an early example. They were designed to cultivate utilitarian ideas in politicians and civil servants, partly through the printing press (Denham & Garnett 1999). During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the power and influence of think tanks within the LIO was greatly expanded, with such institutions playing a key role in shaping policy and governance strategy, alongside other collective intellectual organizations, including educational institutions, elite journals, and political media organizations. Thus, major political movements such as Anglo-American neoconservatism, or Third Wayism can be seen as representing “social movements from above”, with significant shifts in policy/ideology that were developed from the top-down through such elite collective intellectual bodies, including think tanks, journals, and media (Pautz 2012; Griffin et al. 2017).

Collective intellectual organizations can be conceptualized as what Medvetz (2012) calls “boundary organizations”, designed to mediate relations between various fields in ways conducive to the formation of a hegemonic coalition (e.g. religious field, scientific field, artistic field), as well

as recruit/organize support for a particular policy framework/initiative. Elite think tanks and their collective intellectual networks help construct the linkages between various classes, sectors of civil society, and the state which are necessary for the reproduction of hegemony. While some scholars have stressed the connection between 'knowledge regimes' and their national contexts (Menegazzi 2017, 2020), this research will show how elite intellectuals across the various states/societies of the LIO have effectively organized along transnational lines in order to create the foundations for authority within the *field* of elite global governance. Indeed, through my case study, I will show how elite discourse coalitions and collective intellectual organizations associated with the contemporary far-right movement within the LIO have to a certain extent emulated the transnational strategies of major collective intellectual organizations/networks associated with neoliberal cosmopolitanism.

The transnational historical materialist method I will adopt in my analysis assumes the various institutions and components of human history and social relations are to be analyzed as a totality in a process of modification/reconfiguration, where there is a constant contestation/struggle between the forces of order and dominant power and those which seek transformation/change. Thus, for Marxists, the social relations of production are the product of history and in all class societies, the division of labour is such that the forces which govern society live-off the wealth and surplus created by its labouring classes, who may struggle to transform that order and its governance.

Gill (2019: 373) notes there are both abstract and historical concepts of global governance; the abstract conception being those "ideas that justify or legitimate political power and influence, as well as the institutions through which that influence and power are stabilized and reproduced"

and are not bound to a particular historical period. He notes how such ideas and institutions of power transform/shape a historically created order, with contingent patterns that define a particular period of global governance. In other words, hegemonic ideas have a role in shaping class struggles and historical structures; and class struggles, and historical structures have a role in shaping hegemonic ideas. The historical concept relates to the prevailing form of global governance in particular periods, such as that which was central to the creation of the LIO after 1945. Thus, in this context, it is the task of the transnational historical materialists to describe processes of continuity and change in systems of global governance. Indeed, such an approach needs to be comprehensive and multidisciplinary, accounting for the role of ideas, institutions, and material conditions in the making of hegemony and world order, as well as identifying the various fractures, contradictions, and crises which undermine elite rule.

In the spirit of Antonio Gramsci's 'philosophy of praxis', Jorge Larrain notes (1983: 5): "The critical power of social science does not stem from an alleged - and certainly illusory - disinterestedness. Rather, the power of a social science derives from the use of critical concepts (such as ideology) which are capable of passing judgements upon social realities which are deemed undesirable or unjust." The normative purpose of my exploration into contemporary political ideology within the LIO, is thus to create a window for the reader into various influential intellectuals and ideas which currently shape the world order, so that the reader can make an informed judgment as to whether such ideas are just or desirable.

In so doing, this dissertation will adopt a conception of ideology which combines aspects of a Gramscian analysis which "accounts for the formation, articulation and transformation of discourses, currents of thought, [and] political ideas" (Larrain 1991: 21), with appreciation for a

more traditional Marxist conception of ideology which assumes that ideology represents a distortion/concealment of class contradictions within social reality and the material relations of production which benefits the ruling class. This analysis will then identify aspects of ideological plurality/contestation within these systems of bourgeois political thought, while also remaining rooted in a structural approach that acknowledges the role of contradictions/crises of contemporary global capitalism in the production of such contestation.

Thus, the scope of a ‘transnational historical materialist’(THM) approach to global politics is inclusive and methodologically eclectic, making use of both qualitative and quantitative research in its analysis of world order. THM is a Critical Theory approach to the study of IR which was pioneered by influential figures such Robert Cox (1987), Stephen Gill (1993a, 1993c), Kees Van der Pijl (1984), and others have followed (Ougaard 2004, 2013; Mittleman 1998; Van Apeldoorn 2004). It analyzes various components of political economy, ideology, geopolitical history, as well as the class struggles that emerge from above and below (amongst elites and non-elites). It can be described as macro-sociological approach that acknowledges a combined national/international political realm, transnational class formations, and the role of ideas/ideology in the making of world order. Transnational historical materialism is a remedy to narrowly state-centered, or economic and reductionist approaches regarding the far-right, which do not appropriately account for the ideological and transnational aspects of the far-right movement in the twenty-first century. Moreover, state-centric accounts of the far-right tend to emphasize particular national contexts; often failing to disclose the long history of far-right internationalism since the early twentieth-century. Indeed, in recent years, historians and journalists have discovered evidence of collaboration and common cause between social forces of the far-right and the institutions of the

so-called LIO during the Cold War; with security apparatuses being especially open to such collaboration (Bellant 1991; Ganser 2005, 2006; Bevins 2020).

The concept of a ‘hegemonic project’ used in this dissertation encapsulates an amalgamation of actors, ideologies, classes, social forces, institutional configurations shaped by the material conditions of a particular historical context. What emerges is a macrosocial and transnational analysis of political contestation in world order, that can analyze and contrast the ideological as well as organizational aspects of the two major hegemonic projects vying for world order within our contemporary moment. To evaluate such projects for coherence and viability, I will identify and discuss aspects of their geopolitical frameworks/theories/perspectives toward political economy, as well as their prescriptions for culture and ‘common sense’ in their social philosophy. I will locate and analyze major fault-lines or points of contestation between the LIO’s dominant projects for hegemony and visions for twenty-first century capitalist governance.

Such an approach is also cognizant of the fact that such hegemonic projects do not emerge in a vacuum, and that elite organic intellectuals and their organizations are products of ideas, class struggles, institutions, material conditions and other relevant factors which make up a historical structure in world order. As Karl Marx (1852/1994: 188) states in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*:

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionizing themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honored disguise and this borrowed language.

As such, this analysis of hegemonic projects will elucidate the nature of rivalry and philosophical/ideological divisions connected to: 1) macro-economic shifts in the LIO's 'regime of accumulation' (e.g. Taylorism to Fordism to Post-Fordism); 2) geopolitical developments which impact Western supremacy and the foreign policy doctrines/strategies of the LIO; and 3) forms of social decay/deterioration linked to late-capitalism, market civilization, and neoliberal globalization. In light of such transformations in world order, it will examine to what extent that each of the contending hegemonic projects provide a viable/sustainable "mode of regulation", i.e. the institutional and ideational structures that serve to temporarily stabilize capitalist social relations during periods of profound economic crisis/disequilibrium (Aglietta 1998, 2000; Boyer 2022).

VI) Chapter Outline

To pursue these objectives, research questions and hypothesis, the organization of this dissertation is as follows:

The first chapter will discuss the history of the far-right movement within the LIO and elaborate on the relationship between the ruling forces associated with the LIO and the far-right movement during the postwar period – underscoring aspects of continuity and change, as well as aspects of contradiction and congruence. In the wake of recent waves of far-right politics across the transatlantic bloc, liberal scholars have described a break/divergence from the dominant/establishment ideas and institutional norms of the LIO. The *longue durée* of twentieth-century history paints a more complex picture, with evidence of a long-term symbiotic relationship between transnational institutions affiliated with LIO leadership and far-right social forces during the postwar era. Specifically, I will underscore how the far-right movement has participated in

forms of ‘shadow governance’ and discuss the collaboration between LIO institutions and far-right social forces during the Cold War. I will discuss Stephen Gill’s concept of “global organic crisis” and G.M. Tamás’s (2000) term of “post fascism” and how these concepts provide useful starting points for an analysis of the far-right in the post-Cold War era.

The second chapter will discuss the current “interregnum” (Gramsci 1971: 276)² of leadership/hegemony within the LIO. It will critically evaluate the widely used concepts such as populism, illiberalism, and nationalism to describe/explain the recent rise of far-right politics. It will then elaborate on the Gramscian approach towards International Relations scholarship and its appreciation for the unique role of transnational elites and elite intellectuals in creating the foundations for consent for Western hegemony and capitalist global governance in the twenty-first century. I will discuss Poulantzas’ concept of ‘hegemonic crisis’ and how during such moments of intra-elite competition, vying ‘grand strategies’ or ‘hegemonic projects’ for capitalist world order emerge and/or compete or ‘clash’ within a ‘historic bloc’.

The third chapter will discuss neoliberal cosmopolitanism, a pre-eminent ‘hegemonic project’ within the LIO during the post-Cold War era; commonly associated with status-quo establishment liberalism, centrism, or ‘globalism’. It will discuss the context from which neoliberal cosmopolitanism as hegemonic project came to prominence within the elite institutions of the West; the beneficiaries of neoliberal cosmopolitan governance; its vision for world order; as well as the limitations/contradictions of this hegemonic project within the LIO. This chapter will then

² For Gramsci (1971: 276), an interregnum represents a moment in which the ruling class has lost their consensus, is relying increasingly on coercive force, and where the “masses have become detached from their traditional ideologies, and no longer believe what they previously believed.” It is during such a crisis that new “morbid symptoms” emerge.

outline its core geopolitical, cultural, and economic assumptions, and the elite discourse coalitions supportive of this hegemonic project.

Chapter four will provide an historical overview of far-right civilizationism within the LIO (Stewart 2020, 2022). Through an analysis of various far-right intellectuals (individual and collective) dating back to the postwar period, I will describe the cumulative social, cultural, economic, and geopolitical assumptions of the far-right civilizationism hegemonic project, and its (cumulative and overlapping) elite discourse coalitions. This chapter will then explore the limits and contradictions of the far-right's project, as well as distinguish how the far-right movement's worldview – and its interpretation of crisis – differs from neoliberal cosmopolitanism.

The fifth chapter will discuss NatCon as a transnational far-right collective intellectual network in the *field* of elite global governance. NatCon has sought to build a new transnational ruling class consciousness, one which is openly antagonistic toward neoliberal cosmopolitanism and its social forces within the LIO. This chapter will provide a historical overview of NatCon; its various affiliated actors and institutions, its aims/objectives, and it will speculate on its potential contradictions and ideological divisions. NatCon has sought to establish a broad new transnational platform for far-right intellectuals, activists, and politicians who seek to refurbish the “imperial common sense” of so-called Western civilization (Gill 2012b).

My final chapter will conclude by discussing the key contributions of this analysis. I will also end the thesis discussing the necessity for socialist and left-wing social forces to develop dense transnational networks and organizations to help build and articulate a socially progressive grand-strategic vision for twenty-first century world order in response to the contemporary global organic crisis, failing elite systems of global governance, and rise of far-right civilizationism. I will note

that each hegemonic project represents aspects of the “exhaustionism” (Stewart 2022) of contemporary global leadership and political imagination in regard to the future for world order (i.e. the inability for contemporary leadership from the ‘center’ and far-right to escape the paradigm of neoliberalism and imperialism). As a potential way over, I will discuss Stephen Gill’s (2000) concept of a ‘postmodern Prince’ as underscoring a necessity for collective progressive social forces to engage in a radical reconstruction of world order and develop a universal and global alternative.

Chapter 1

Adversary or Ally? The Far-Right and the Making of the Liberal International Order

Scholars and commentators across the transatlantic bloc and beyond have reflected on the UK's exit from the EU and Donald Trump's presidential election victory in 2016, with many arguing that such events represented a major turning point for the LIO and its supposed values, norms, and global significance. Such disruptive events would occur alongside waves and upsurges of far-right movements and political parties across Europe, which would further undermine decades of 'centrist' (neo)liberal governance within the LIO. This then begs the question: But what is the nature of the far-right movement's relationship with the so-called elite liberal establishment within LIO prior to this conjuncture?

To interrogate this supposed far-right 'break' from liberal norms and values in 2016, this chapter will begin by elaborating on the foundational ideas, institutions, and social forces which contributed to the construction of the LIO and liberal governance in the twentieth century, and the relationship between the so-called liberal establishment and far-right movement. To address more contemporary aspects of political contestation within the LIO, the second section will discuss the utility of concepts of 'global organic crisis' and 'post-fascism' as analytical starting points. This chapter will then discuss the *longue durée* of far-right politics within the LIO, and how far-right ideas and 'social forces'³ complement the historic project of liberal hegemony within the transatlantic bloc.

³ Robert Cox (1981: 141) notes: "Social forces are not to be thought of as existing exclusively within states. Particular social forces may overflow state boundaries, and world structures can be described in terms of social forces just as they can be described by configurations of state power. The world can be represented as a pattern of interacting social forces in which states play an intermediate though autonomous role between the global structure of social forces and local configurations of social forces within particular countries."

D) Elites, the Far-Right, and the Making of the Liberal International Order

I begin by briefly defining key terms and concepts used throughout this dissertation, including the liberal international order, elites, and the far-right. I will then discuss the origins of Western international relations thought/theory, its reactionary roots, and its role in the formation of the ideological pillars of the LIO. I will conclude with a discussion of the various ways in which far-right social forces have collaborated with the states and institutions of the LIO in the construction/reproduction of Western hegemony during the postwar period. I will argue that rather than the antithesis of liberalism, far-right politics are entrenched within various ideas and institutions associated with establishment Western liberalism. The purpose of this chapter is to elaborate on the complex (and often contradictory/hypocritical) relationship between the classes and social forces affiliated with the ruling institutions of the LIO and those associated with the far-right since 1945.

i) Defining Key Terms and Concepts

What I refer to as the LIO has gone by many different names, including: the liberal international economic order, the liberal order, the international order, the ‘free world’, the ‘rules-based international order’, the West, or the transatlantic bloc. All such terms refer to what can be described as the transnational ‘historic bloc’ of liberal democratic capitalist states which emerged in the postwar period — the integrated state-societal structures, social forces, institutions, ideas, and norms aligned/affiliated with Western liberal capitalism and the protectorate of US/NATO

military power.⁴ The LIO is often associated with a series of international institutions that emerged in the postwar era, including the UN, World Bank, IMF, G7, WTO, OECD, OCSE, FVEY, the EU and NATO. Name notwithstanding, membership within the historic bloc of the LIO *has not always* necessitated its members strictly adhere towards principles of social liberalism or even support for its international institutions – even core/leading states of the LIO have at various moments in history utilized extra-democratic or authoritarian methods to achieve their perceived interests within world order (often with the help of state security services). In recent years, examples of such abuses of power can be found in the so-called Visegrád Group, where post-communist states such as Hungary and Poland have flirted with authoritarian governance and are increasingly hostile to the stated values of the EU Charter – specifically as they relate to the treatment of (non-white) refugees, Roma, and the LBGTQ+ community.

After the cataclysm of the Second World War, what emerged in the wake of a (semi)defeated European fascism was an international system and global hegemony led by a bloc of geopolitically dominant Western capitalist states and characterized by transnational coordination, interdependence, and market dominance. The hegemony of the LIO and American leadership over the international system during the Cold War period required certain levels of public consent for liberal democratic capitalist governance; to achieve such consent, the dominant Western states relied on elite intellectuals to design and articulate a coherent vision for the

⁴ Robert Cox (2004:4) notes: “The building and disintegration of historic blocs is the process whereby class formation can transform both states and the organization of production [...] The study of emerging class structure is an exercise in social mapping at both national and global levels [...] It will also show tendencies toward an globalizing of certain classes or transcendence of their origins in national social formations. The importance of attempting this kind of social mapping is to better understand the composition of existing historic blocs and the elements made available for the formation of new historic blocs—and hence the potential for change in the form of state, in the interstate system, and in the future organization of production.” This research will largely focus on the LIO’s core transatlantic states/societies, however the LIO’s historical bloc extends beyond the Western hemisphere, to include states such as Japan, South Korea, Israel, New Zealand, and Australia.

politics/economics of world order and tailored for both domestic, as well as global consumption. The presence of such elite intellectual actors does not imply that the hegemony of the LIO and its leadership is ideologically static, rather the transatlantic historical bloc has undergone a series of crises, conjunctures, and transformations during the postwar period, each driven by domestic and international factors and intra-elite ideological contestation—with implications inside and outside the Western core of global capitalism.

Conjunctural moments, crises, or “shocks” within the state-societal complex(es) of the West have often been pivotal moments in which key influential actors/organizations have accelerated integration/consolidation within the West/US-centered liberal capitalist system and its global governance framework. For example, the turn towards neoliberal governance occurred alongside the end of the Bretton Woods system in 1971, the oil shocks of 1973 and 1979, as well as the rise of Augusto Pinochet’s authoritarian dictatorship in Chile, where the conditions of economic crisis were used as justification for a violent Western-supported military coup in 1973 to overturn the modest social democratic reforms of the democratically elected leader Salvador Allende. In more recent years, Naomi Klein (2007) has noted how the attacks of 9/11 leading to the global war on terror, Hurricane Katrina, and COVID-19 crisis were moments in which radical neoliberal reforms were implemented (often non-transparently) by elites from the top-down. Crisis and conjunctural periods within in a social order can then be understood as moments where ‘elites’ are able to exercise profound levels of agency in steering policymaking within a state/society.

But who are these elites with disproportionate political agency? Finding a universally accepted definition of an ‘elite’ within the social sciences is a difficult and contentious task, one which is even more tenuous when applied to a transnational historical bloc such as the LIO with a

multitude of states, institutions, and organizations. Moreover, determining the role/function of elites within systems of governance is similarly contentious, as the concept of governance in the abstract is multifarious and includes a constellation of interweaving institutions, relations, and practices within the state and society (Foucault 2003: 235). Despite this complexity, scholars and commentators across the political/ideological spectrum have used the concept of ‘elite’ to broadly describe those exhibiting various aspects or a combination of cultural, political, or economic power. However, to whom this power resides has been a source of debate during the twentieth century. For example, in the wake of New Deal legislation in the mid-twentieth century, American conservative political theorist James Burnham (1942) argued that elite power in the postwar-era had shifted to the control of a statist liberal managerial ruling class; a class concerned with control over the means of production but not necessarily its ownership. In contrast, critical sociologist C.W. Mills (1956) used the concept of a “power elite” to describe those within American society who occupy dominant positions within political, corporate, and military institutions – as well as their overlapping interests. Robert Putnam (1971: 651) offers a much broader and inclusive definition of “political elites”, noting: “Some people are much more interested, much more involved, and much more influential in public affairs than their fellows, and therefore, they merit the special attention of students of politics.”

For half a century, the LIO’s hegemony has largely been oriented toward mediating interests of various political elites and locating a ‘centrist’ and consensus-based politics, one which during the twentieth century was increasingly oriented towards the interests of liberal internationalists, or what Stephen Gill (2008: 154) calls “globalizing elites” – the intellectuals and political organizations that have sought to advance and articulate the broad historical project of Western leadership and liberal global capitalism; with certain variances related to strategy and

interpretation on how best to achieve this project. Historians and political scientists have noted the role of public intellectuals as “intellectual middlemen” who can transmit/translate ruling ideas for elite governance to the broader public (Kuklick 2006; Vitalis 2015).

In the era of neoliberal globalization, the most relevant subset of elite intellectual actors to our discussion of the contemporary transnational far-right movement and its proliferation, are such fractions of transnational or “globalizing elites” and their elite intellectual organizations which seek to lead/shape/manage the transatlantic historical bloc and global capitalism in the twenty-first century economically, culturally, and politically. In other words, the leading intellectual forces of what James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer (2001; 2011; 2015; Cox 1981; Petras & Morley 1980) have called “the imperial state system”, a complex and hierarchical system which transcends borders and includes a constellation of state and non-state entities which ensure the facilitation and governance of global capitalism. This subset of capitalist elites affiliated with a US-centered ‘imperial state system’ is sometimes labelled as the “transnational capitalist class” or “globalizing elites” (Gill 2001, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2008). For political scientist Leslie Sklair (2002: 145), this transnational capitalist class is made-up of four main overlapping groups: owners and managers of transnational corporations; bureaucrats and politicians; globalizing professionals; and merchants and media. In recent years, debates within this dominant class group have reflected the debates within the broader state-societal complex – with some even public support for ideas often affiliated with the far-right. Such divisions involve conflicting interests associated with particular fractions of elite capital and direction of US policy (e.g. extractivist energy sector vs Silicon Valley tech sector), as well as intra-elite debates regarding the aspects of what Putnam (1971: 651) refers to as “elite political culture” or “the set of politically relevant beliefs, values, and habits of the leaders of a political system.”

But what is the ‘far-right’ within the context of the LIO and its ruling class formations? Similar to the problem of defining ‘elites’, finding a shared definition for far-right politics has been a controversial subject of scholarly debate (Mayer 2020). Many social scientists have sought/advanced a new vocabulary to distinguish modern far-right politics from interwar fascism, using a range of terminology to describe this phenomenon, including, but not limited to: national populism (Eatwell & Goodwin 2018; Taguieff 1984); conservative nationalism (Dueck 2020); post-liberalism (Deneen 2023); new right (Streeck 2017); paleoconservatism (Kiely 2019, 2021); illiberal democracy (Zakaria 1997, 2007; Pappas 2015); neofascism (Giroux 2016; Foster 2017; Robinson 2019; Cox & Skidmore-Hess 2022); post-fascism (Tamás 2000; Traverso 2019); radical right (Neiwert 2017); populist radical right (Mudde 2010, 2017); Bonapartism (Riley 2018); authoritarian liberalism (Brown 2018, 2019); national capitalism (Petras 2017); authoritarian capitalism (Fuchs 2018); alt-right (Nagle 2017), or some combination of these terms. Moreover, certain intellectuals and intellectual collectives have opted for a narrow definition of far-right, such as Stanford University’s Mapping Militants Project, which focuses exclusively on violent far-right extremist organizations. Other institutions, such as the Southern Poverty Law Centre, have used the concept of far-right to describe a much wider range of actors and institutions.

The subject-matter of scholarship on the far-right ranges from an analysis of established political party structures to violent criminal organizations – leading some scholars to differentiate between different factions of the far-right movement, separating the ‘radical right’ (the more formalized and institutionalized faction) from the ‘extreme right’ (the informal, fringe, or ‘bottom-up’ tendencies within the movement) (Fekete 2018). Here, I will simply use the term ‘far-right’ in a more general manner to describe a politics associated with nativism, jingoism, rabid anti-communism, social Darwinism, traditional social hierarchy, as well as suspicion toward postwar

liberal institutions and cosmopolitan notions of human rights. I will use the term fascism when specifically referring to far-right state capture during the interwar period; the term post-fascism when underscoring the shared ideological aspects of contemporary far-right politics (in the era of neoliberal capitalism) and interwar fascism; and the term neofascism when describing actors, groups, or parties who share an explicit affinity with the fascist movements of the interwar period. In later chapters, I will expand on the term ‘far-right civilizationism’ (Stewart 2020; 2022), which I have developed to conceptualize the contemporary far-right movement’s transnational social forces, their shared vision for global governance and world order, and common opposition to certain aspects of modern liberal internationalism. Far-right civilizationism then refers to the far-right movement’s comprehensive ‘hegemonic project’ for the LIO, which emerged in the post-Cold War era and has surged in mainstream popularity since the so-called War on Terror, the 2008 global financial crisis, and the 2015 European Migrant Crisis.

ii) *International Relations as a Discipline in the Twentieth-Century*

Western scholarship on war, peace, geopolitics, and international relations at the turn of the twentieth century was born out of – and in many ways reflected – the long crisis of the twentieth century; namely the First World War, the Great Depression, the Armenian genocide, the fall of the Ottoman Empire, as well as elite anxieties regarding the implications of the Bolshevik revolution sweeping Europe and the world. In North America and much of Europe, the study of world order that dominated within academe during this period was overwhelmingly conservative, Orientalist, Laconophilic/Philhellenist, anti-democratic and elitist/aristocratic; shaped by figures such as Oswald Spengler (1926/1991) and Arnold J. Toynbee (1934/1987) pioneering an analysis that focused on the rise and fall of great ‘civilizations’. Also, Halford Mackinder (1904/2004) developing the ‘heartland theory’ which would come to shape a century of geostrategy, Fredrich

Nietzsche (1883/2008) and his anti-social *Übermensch*, Walter Lippmann's (1929/2017) pessimism regarding democratic governance, as well as the scientific racism and social Darwinism encapsulated within Vilfredo Pareto's (1935) 'circulation of elites', Herbert Spencer's (1873: 444) famous dictum "survival of the fittest" or Rudyard Kipling's (1899) "white man's burden". Indeed, T. Lothrop Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color: The Threat against White World Supremacy* (1920) which thinly veiled white supremacy in a politics of "difference" (Vitalis 2015: 177); and even on the so-called progressive left, the sociologist and eugenicist Edward Ross regarded immigration from East Asia into North America as "race suicide" (Bouwman 1975) as part of this early conservative "imperial common sense" (Gill 2012b) amongst elites. Many of the atrocities committed during the first half of the twentieth century (as well as earlier atrocities) reflected these dominant and common Western ideas/attitudes/notions/frameworks regarding the nature of humanity and the politics of world order.⁵ The rise of fascism during the interwar period – as well as popular consent for its imperialistic genocidal violence within the states it emerged – was in many ways a by-product of such socially ingrained and widely-held assumptions regarding the innate superiority of Western nations/populations and the believed moral/biological inferiority of 'non-Aryan' populations. Such notions were mobilized by Nazis into a murderously racist all-encompassing theory of human society, politics, and world order.

What is now regarded as 'international relations' (IR) as a discipline emerged in the Anglosphere during the immediate postwar period and was largely fixated on the various social,

⁵ Italian Marxist philosopher and historian Domenico Losurdo (2014) has elaborated in detail on how the philosophy of liberalism has been wedded to historically illiberal practices such as colonization, genocide, slavery, and racism. Similarly, Israeli historian Ishay Landa (2009) has noted how, rather than its antithesis, the praxis of twentieth century fascism is dialectically intertwined with, and indebted to, liberal ideas and practices; specifically, its philosophy of political economy.

geopolitical, and economic factors which contributed to the various horrors of previous decades.⁶ Foundational theoretical realist texts such as *Twenty Years Crisis* by E.H. Carr (1939/2001) and *Politics Among Nations* by Hans Morgenthau (1948) became canonical within the emergent discipline of IR scholarship; a field of study concerned with ‘human nature’, the ‘balance of power’, statesmanship, and the preservation of the West or ‘Free World’ in the midst of both (so-called) communist ‘totalitarianism’ and an international arena characterized as a Hobbesian ‘state of nature’. The set parameters for acceptable political debate were concretized during the Cold War’s red scare, and in a short time there was little discernable practical difference between the two dominant strands of thought within the Western IR theory, namely:

- 1) An idealist Wilsonian liberal internationalist strand supportive of the US-led LIO’s ideological war against the ‘totalitarian’ governance model of Soviet communism and promoting policies of ‘containment’ to counter the threat of communist revolution (Popper 1945; Brzezinski 1956, 1961, 1962, 1971; Friedrich 1954, 1968; Kennan 1960 Kolakowski 1983, 1984, 2017). Policies of containment were supported by numerous US Administrations and allied Western governments – often perceived to be a more prudent approach to managing US-Soviet relations in the nuclear era.

⁶ While developed within the Anglosphere, Kees van der Pijl (2017: 298) elaborates on the transnational foundations of IR thought and its development as a ruling class policy tool for transatlantic elites: “The infrastructure created for the different disciplines in many respects remained a lifeless organism until the exodus of German-speaking scholars from Nazi Europe breathed spirit into it. The refugees inserted into the indigenous utilitarianism, pragmatism, and inter-disciplinary policy orientation the legacies of neo-Kantian and Weberian thinking to which German-speaking social science had retreated in the face of the socialist labour movement. In IR especially this added the ‘realist’ counterpoint to Wilson’s world order idealism, as men like Hans Morgenthau and others imported the authoritarian, state-centric legacy of Weber and Carl Schmitt. Wilson’s project, the creation of a world of formally sovereign nation-states under liberal, Anglo-American supervision, arrayed against the spread of social revolution and open for business, has remained the implicit programme of IR till the present day—‘realism’ was and remains merely the bottom line of dealing with contender states resisting liberal global governance.”

2) The (equally anti-communist) realist strand stemmed from what was then called the conservative 'New Right'. These Cold War geopolitical realists were more agnostic towards universal notions of human rights or democratic governance and arguing for either a militarist strategy of 'rollback', clandestine interventions (e.g. CIA fostered coups), and/or (selective) 'détente' based primarily on realpolitik calculations of 'national interest'; often invoking theological/spiritual criticisms of atheistic Marxism as justification (Burnham 1954, 1962, 1965/2014; Kissinger 1955, 1958, 1962, 2014; Huntington 1967, 1975; Pipes 1968, 1984; Buckley Jr. 1979, 1986; Nitze 1976). Policies of military 'rollback' (synonymous with regime change) were advocated by various 'realist' intellectual elites during the Cold War, and such strategies were deployed by the US military in both Korea and Cuba.

Such elite ideological divisions regarding the strategy/direction for Western hegemonic global governance would permeate into the latter twentieth century, separating neoliberal theories of 'complex interdependence' (Keohane & Nye 1973, 1987) from neorealists concerned with the 'security dilemma' of rising powers (Waltz 1986, 2000, 2014, 2023; Gilpin 1981, 1984). Such debates/divisions in the field of global governance did not challenge Western geopolitical dominance or its anti-communism, but rather,, represented strategic variations for a US-centered global capitalist imperium. During the Cold War period, structural critique/discussion/debate regarding issues of US/Western imperialism or capitalist social relations were largely relegated as fringe, radical, or subversive within both elite academia and the mainstream political discourse; often pushed to the margins through direct forms of coercion (e.g. McCarthyism and other anti-communist purges).

Since the postwar period elite intellectuals concerned with issues of global governance within the West have transmitted their ideas/frameworks through various mediums and outlets to a wide range of audiences, including elite research institutes, think tanks, foundations, academic journals, print and television news media, as well as other organizational bodies. The most influential collective intellectual organizations often represent the interests of dominant class fractions within the LIO and during the twentieth century. During the twentieth century, a constellation of such elite intellectual organizations formed what has been described by Laurence Shoup and William Minter (1977) as an “imperial brain-trust”, a collective which has helped shape a shared elite perspective towards global politics and world order. Such organizations include (but are not limited to): The World Economic Forum, Council on Foreign Relations, Trilateral Commission, Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, Bilderberg Group, *The New York Times*, Open Society Foundations, and parts of Ivy League schools/institutes/journals. All such institutions have historically been regarded as highly-influential torchbearers for the mainstream ‘centrist’, ‘liberal’, or ‘establishment’ perspective within the West. As such, this ‘imperial brain trust’ of elite collective intellectual organizations seeks to set the parameters for acceptable political debate regarding issues of national security and political economy within the LIO’s ‘imperial state system’; often promoting a ‘problem-solving’ and consensus-based approach amicable to elite interests. Kees van der Pijl (2014) elaborates on how the role/nature of social science scholarship transformed during the postwar period and describes how the West’s “academic intelligence base” had abandoned the “scholarly aesthetic and affect characteristic of traditional intellectuals for the study of practical life” in preference for a positivistic “scientific approach to foreign policy” which was designed to meet the narrower interests/demands of the “Lockean heartland” i.e. the territories of US/Western Liberal hegemony.

iii) *Parapolitics, Shadow governance, and the Far-Right*

It is difficult to neatly parse the social forces of the far-right movement from those of the so-called ‘centrist’ liberal establishment during the postwar era. As discussed, many aspects of far-right ideology and supportive social forces have become normalized/institutionalized/entrenched within the state-societal complexes of the LIO during the twentieth-century; specifically, those ideas and organizations associated with anti-communism. In recent years a wide body of social science scholarship has discussed/analyzed various national far-right political party structures within the LIO, including their leadership structures, membership, content of its propaganda, legislative/electoral tactics, as well as the conjunctural moments in history which contributed to the ascent of this phenomenon. Such analyses often contrast the nationalist/populist politics of the far-right to the more moderate and cosmopolitan politics of the centrist liberal establishment. What such analyses often overlook is how the social forces of the far-right and the liberal establishment have regularly acted in conjunction in pursuit of common interests – namely, the undermining of the left. Before elaborating on the factional and ideological differences between the liberal elite establishment and the contemporary far-right movement, it is important to reflect on their cohabitation/collaboration during the twentieth century.

A challenge for scholars on the subject of far-right politics within the contemporary LIO relates to the difficulty of analyzing the often secretive and informal social networks of this movement. The nature of the relationships/connections between the LIO’s elite ‘establishment’ and the far-right movement is often vague and difficult to analyze through traditional social science frameworks. Furthermore, the history of the Cold War exhibits how the social forces affiliated with the far-right within the LIO have operated, at various instances, outside the realm of formal

party politics or the public-eye – a realm which is often difficult to analyse through traditional methodological approaches. As such, an analysis into transnational actors/networks has been a controversial area of academic specialization and scholarship on far-right politics and has often neglected certain transnational aspects of this movement and its ideology – leaving a lacuna within the available research on this phenomenon. Scholars affiliated with the subfield of parapolitical studies have filled a gap in this research by documenting/theorizing the role/activities of far-right movements both inside and outside historic bloc of LIO; with special attention paid to the nexus between the far-right, organized crime, transnational capitalist elites, and state-security/intelligence services.

Historically, powerful institutions within the LIO have interacted/collaborated/synthesized with the social forces of the far-right through various hidden or parapolitical channels. Scholarly research into the ‘parapolitical’ aspects of political history is often synonymous with an investigation into the so-called “deep state” or “the dual state”.⁷ Such a parapolitical analysis is concerned with exploring a plurality of powerful social forces/actors (including the far-right) which have contributed to the hegemony of the ruling classes of the LIO and their systemic reproduction – but whose activities often remain outside/invisible to checks and balances and constitutional authority. A parapolitical analysis then looks at the role/intersection of various actors and social forces often outside the scope of international relations or social science scholarship,

⁷ Peter Dale Scott (2007: 268) defines the dual state as: “A state in which one can distinguish between a public state and a top- down deep state. Most developed states exhibit this duality, but to varying degrees. In America the duality of the state has become more and more acute since World War II.” The term has often been appropriated by the far-right in recent years, often obfuscating the historic role of far-right social forces within the activities, organizations, and institutions often regarded as part of the ‘deep state’. Scott (2015: xvii) notes how the term ‘deep state’ is a translation of the Turkish term *derin devlet* “coined after the so-called *Susurluk* incident, a 1996 car crash whose victims included the deputy chief of the Istanbul Police Department, a Member of Parliament, and Abdullah Çatlı, an international heroin trafficker and killer recruited by the Turkish police for ‘special missions’ and paid in heroin while he was officially being sought by the Turkish authorities for murder.”

including secret intelligence/surveillance services, global criminal syndicates, political misinformation/propaganda organizations, non/semi-governmental organizations, vigilant, private mercenaries, militia/para-military groups, religious cults, terrorist organizations, as well as the secretive organizations of the transnational capitalist class.⁸

The study of parapolitics is methodologically eclectic, with researchers drawing from several academic disciplines. The purpose of such research is to identify and theorize the esoteric or hidden aspects of liberal governance which constrain democratic and counter-hegemonic social forces through subversive, informal, clandestine, deniable, and often unaccountable methods. It acknowledges that the so-called LIO has managed its liberal democracy through various anti-democratic mechanisms, which are often only revealed decades after the fact. It analyzes the formal, informal, and subversive systems and tendencies within twenty-first century world order, which are often driving human insecurity and ecological destruction. Parapolitical scholars have explored aspects of “criminal sovereignty” within pluralist liberal systems of governance, which includes: 1) the criminalization of the state and its institutions (in other words, the corruption or infiltration of corrupt/criminal elements within the state apparatus); and 2) the adoption (or tacit acceptance) of certain forms of crime, criminality, corruption, vigilantism, and anti-democratic authority regimes within a state-societal complex (Dale Scott 2007; Wilson 2009). Eric Wilson (2009: 29) elaborates:

Western European states have seemingly been characterised by the existence of a regular “democratic state”, on the one hand, and a “security state” on the other. The central analytical concept of ‘parapolitics’ is the notion of political pluralism: the fragmentation, by difference, of the nation-state into competing sub-statist entities that, under the

⁸ Political scientist Aaron Good (2018) has recently combined parapolitical investigation and ‘transnational historical materialism’, pairing the theories of both Robert Cox and Peter Dale Scott in discussion on America’s postwar hegemony and its exceptional “security state”.

appropriate local conditions, have been capable of serving as the bearer of a divisible sovereignty. Some of these entities originate from within the state apparatus; others began as their opponents. In the end, however, they may become states, quasi-states or 'shadow states' in themselves, exerting functions of governance even if devoid of the formal signs of the state. This is termed 'shadow governance', the acquisition of the functions of governmentality by sub-statist groups or structures by means both judicial and extra-judicial. The successful operation of shadow governance, in turn, provides scope for the establishment of 'criminal sovereignty', the investiture of extra-legal groups with a de facto autonomy through the acquisition of the requisite marks of sovereignty.

Rather than a study of so-called 'conspiracy theories', the field of parapolitical research seeks to identify reactionary authoritarian systems/networks as well as the structures within contemporary world order which enable such forms of diffuse and unaccountable systems of "shadow governance" to persist (Wilson 2009). It is during moments of profound crisis that hidden and unaccountable systems/social forces within liberal pluralist states have frequently engaged in radical anti-democratic measures to help preserve/reproduce capitalist hegemony and its beneficiary classes. A parapolitical analysis is then concerned with how such reactionary social forces operate during transformative/conjunctural "structural deep events" (Scott 2011, 2014) which mark significant turning points in character/scale/direction of empire, global political economy, and world politics – including the establishment or acceleration of war/conflict and/or authoritarian security-surveillance regimes. Some examples of 'deep events' include (but are not

limited to) the John F. Kennedy assassination,⁹ Watergate break-in,¹⁰ Iran-Contra Scandal,¹¹ the Gulf of Tonkin incident,¹² the Oklahoma City Bombing,¹³ the attacks of 9/11, the downing of

⁹ Peter Dale Scott (2015: 111) notes: “Both the JFK assassination and 9/11 were facilitated in part by the way the CIA and FBI manipulated their files about alleged perpetrators of each event (Lee Harvey Oswald in the case of what I shall call “JFK,” and the alleged hijackers Khalid al-Mihdhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi in the case of 9/11). Part of this facilitation was the decision on October 9, 1963, of an FBI agent, Marvin Gheesling, to remove Oswald from the FBI watch list for surveillance. This was shortly after Oswald’s arrest in New Orleans in August and his reported travel to Mexico in September. Obviously, these developments should normally have made Oswald a candidate for *increased* surveillance [...] A more ominous provocation in 1963 was that of Army Intelligence, one unit of which in Dallas did not simply withhold information about Lee Harvey Oswald, but manufactured false intelligence in a way that seemed designed to provoke a retaliation against Cuba.”

¹⁰ Fred Emery (1994: x) notes: “When five men hired by Nixon’s election committee and equipped with electronic devices were caught red-handed by police in the Democratic Party headquarters at the Watergate on June 17, 1972, it might have only been a ‘third-rate burglary attempt.’ But it was also the tip of an iceberg of lawless abuses of office on which the Nixon presidency was the founder. Nixon felt trapped and therefore tried to cover up. He dared not to turn on those involved because they were either close to him or had earlier been involved in secret illegal schemes done at his direction [...] To protect himself and his closest lieutenants, the president ran a conspiracy in which his oath and his office were abused and justice obstructed.” The Watergate break in then exposed the illegal and anti-democratic practices of the American executive branch. Moreover, this event triggered the emergence of new covert ‘dual state’ organizations such as the Safari Club which would conduct operations the CIA could no longer officially carry out following the post-Watergate reforms and hearings (Scott 2015: 91).

¹¹ Robert Perry and Peter Kornbluh (1988: 3) describe the logic behind illegal US weapons sales to an officially sanctioned Iranian government from 1981-1986 – in what would later be known as the Iran Contra Scandal: “President Ronald Reagan’s 8-year crusade to stop the spread of leftist revolution in Central America was always a two-front war. The president and his men realized from the start that to carry out their aggressive plans defeat Marxist rebels in El Salvador and to oust the Sandinista government in Nicaragua they would need to neutralize the post-Vietnam public opposition to U.S. intervention in the Third World. To win this war at home, the White House created a sophisticated apparatus that mixed propaganda with intimidation, consciously misleading the American people and at times trampling on the right to dissent. In short, the administration set out to reshape American perceptions of Central America; and the Orwellian methods employed could be one of the most troubling legacies of Reagan’s presidency. The congressional committees investigating the U.S. arms sales to Iran and the subsequent diversion of profits to the anti-Sandinista Nicaraguan rebels known as contras, as well as other congressional investigations, elicited thousands of pages of documents and testimony about different parts of this White House domestic campaign; but it has never been understood in its totality. Congressional investigators did draft a chapter about the domestic side of the scandal for the Iran-contra report, but it was blocked by House and Senate Republicans. Kept from the public domain, therefore, was the draft chapter’s explosive conclusion: that, according to one congressional investigator, senior CIA covert operatives were assigned to the White house to establish and manage a covert domestic operation designed to manipulate the Congress and American public.”

¹² Peter Dale Scott (2008: 5) describes how falsely reported attacks on US destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin contributed to the US invasion of Vietnam: “In 1964 Congress passed the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, in response to Secretary of Defense McNamara’s assurances that there was ‘unequivocal proof’ of an second ‘unprovoked’ attack on US destroyers [...] We now know from an recently declassified in-house NSA history that on August 4, 1964, NSA possessed 122 pieces of SIGINT (signals intelligence) which taken together indicated clearly that there was no second North Vietnamese attack on August 4.”

¹³ Aaron Winter (2010: 168) notes: “At 9:02 on the morning of April 19th, 1995, a bomb went off at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The bomb not only killed 160 people and injured over 650 more, but it also shook the illusion held by many Americans of a nation safe from the political unrest and terrorism outside its borders (an illusion that would be shattered for good on 9/11). In the hours and days following the bombing, the media and law enforcement authorities focused on the Muslim terrorists they believed were responsible, including a Muslim Oklahoma City resident detained at Heathrow Airport in London. On April 20th, one day after bombing, another Oklahoma City resident, Iraqi refugee Suhair al-Mosawi, was attacked in his home as retaliation for the bombing. When Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols – two white, Christian, home-grown anti-

Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17,¹⁴ and the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁵ The contributions of parapolitical scholarship to an analysis of the far-right are then two-fold. First, scholars researching parapolitics have discussed the transformative, but often unquantifiable, impacts of crisis on the body politic of Western states during the postwar period. Second, such scholars acknowledge the role of various unaccountable actors and networks of social forces, which are often outside the realm of traditional social science scholarship. Much like parapolitical organizations, collective intellectual bodies/networks have often operated without a formal audit of the actors and organizations supportive of their activities in the field of global governance. Moreover, many collective intellectual organizations associated with Western global governance strategy have also included actors associated with more opaque/secretive organizations.

government activists – were arrested, what became evident was that these were ‘American’ terrorists. In spite of the initial shock of the bombing and focus on Muslims, this was far from a new phenomenon [...] Throughout American history, both terrorism and extremism have been constructed, evoked or ignored strategically by the state, media and public at different points, in order to disown and demonize political movements whenever their ideologies and objectives become problematic or inconvenient – because they overlap with, and thus compromise, the legitimacy of the dominant ideology and democratic credentials of the state, because they conflict with the dominant ideology or hegemonic order, because they offend the general (voting) public, or because they expose the fallacies of national unity and bi-polar opposition in the face of foreign enemies or international conflicts, such as the war on terror.”

¹⁴ Kees van der Pijl notes (2018a: 1): “On 17 July 2014, Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17 was brought down over eastern Ukraine, a few minutes before it would have crossed into Russian airspace on its journey from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur. The incident, killing all on board, occurred six months after Ukrainian ultra-nationalists had seized power in Kiev (Kyiv) with Western support, triggering the secession of Crimea and a Russian-Ukrainian insurgency in the Donbass [...] There is no way that the disaster can be understood as an isolated incident, a matter of identifying the immediate causes of the crash, or who gave the order to shoot it down if it was not an accident [...] [T]he downing was, as one researcher phrases it, a *systems* event, involving a missile crew targeting Malaysia’s Boeing 777-200, intentionally or by mistake, as well as ‘policy decisions, including Ukraine’s decision to allow passenger aircraft to overfly a war-zone and Malaysia Airlines’ decision to take advantage of the Ukrainian authorities’ reckless permission [to do so]’. Thus, ‘the commercial aviation network space (governments, regulatory authorities, airlines, shareholders, customers, etc.) incubated the MH17 disaster until, on 17 July, 2014, a missile crew added [a] ‘trigger event’. In its turn, this trigger event was the likely result of conflict, which generates perceptions and actions across a further range of parties, each of which may contribute to activate the ‘trigger’.

¹⁵ Kees van der Pijl (2023: 434) notes: “In the recent decades, private planning groups have grown more confident that the public can be molded to serve elite interests. As a result, those groups are now in the process of moving toward direct control of events, bypassing the need to have governments mediate their actions. The WEF is the foremost example of a transnational planning group that is shifting toward direct action. The conditions surrounding SARS-CoV-2 enabled the WHO and the WEF to openly direct the actions of governments in locking down their societies and forcing citizens to accept vaccination.”

Major scholars, journalists, and researchers who have explored these shadowy social forces who have been foundational to an emergent field of parapolitics in the twentieth and twenty-first century includes (but is not limited to): Peter Dale Scott (1991, 1998, 2004), E.P. Thompson (1979), C.W. Mills (1956/2000, 1958), Seymour Hersh (1974), Alfred McCoy (1972, 1991, 1993, 2000, 2003, 2005), Gary Webb (2014), Cockburn and St. Clair (1998), Daniele Ganser (2005, 2006a, 2006b , 2014), David Talbot (2007, 2015), Christopher Simpson (2003, 2014, 2015), Eric Wilson (2009, 2015, 2016), Kees van der Pijl (2005; 2018a; 2022), Alan A. Block (1989, 1994, 2004), William Blum (1996, 2003), Douglas Valentine (2006, 2017), David Teacher (2015, 2018), Ola Tunander (2009, 2016). Each of the scholars and writers mentioned have analyzed and helped theorize the relationship between the far-right/fascist social forces, transnational elites, state-security services, and organized crime within the LIO during the postwar period. Compelling parapolitical case-studies which shed light on the nature of postwar far-right within the LIO include (but are not limited to):

- Operation Underworld, where from 1942-1945 US federal authorities cooperated with Meyer Lansky, Charles Luciano, and other organized crime groups to obstruct labour strikes and Axis spying along America's northeastern ports (Gigantino 2019; Block 1994).
- The presence of transnational far-right anti-communist groups and their nationalist émigré networks with close relations to the US government. For example, Russ Bellant (1991) notes how from the 1950s until the end of the Cold War, networks of Eastern European Nazis had become integrated within the US Republican Party through various organizations such as the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations and National Republican Heritage Groups Council.

- Operation Gladio, an informal codename for the ‘stay behind’ Western intelligence/state-security service operations after WWII. Such operations included collaboration with the far-right, organized crime, and elite transnational secret societies (e.g. P2 Freemason Lodge¹⁶) to counter the perceived threat of a Soviet invasion in Europe. The most infamous of its activities being in Italy, where during the so-called ‘years of lead’ in the 1970s, the mafia, the far-right, the Carabinieri, and the CIA engaged/colluded in a ‘strategy of tension,’ which included clandestine terror campaigns, kidnappings, and assassinations designed to crush, intimidate, and undermine forces associated with (or perceived to be associated with) the socialist-left (Anievas and Saul 2020; Ganser 2005, 2014).
- CIA MK ULTRA, as well as other illegal human experimentation programs (Project Bluebird and Project Artichoke) conducted by intelligence services through various front organizations between 1951-1973. Such experiments included the use of mind-altering substances on unwitting Canadian, Danish, and American test subjects within prisons, hospitals, and universities for the purposes of mind control, but under the formal guise of

¹⁶ Eleonora Lollo (2016: 62-64) notes: “P2 is a [Freemason] lodge originally operating under the jurisdiction of the Grande Oriente d’Italia (GOI), one of the most illustrious Italian masonic organizations. It was founded in 1877 in Rome by affiliate politicians of the Kingdom of Italy, under the name Propaganda Massonica (Arrigo 2011) [...] Starting from the end of the 1960s, P2 became an organization able to attract members from the private and public sectors that had both the need to network and the willingness to work for a conservative political agenda. P2 started to be very active after Licio Gelli, a businessman, took control of the lodge at the beginning of the 1970s and became its venerable master in 1975 (Commissione 1984). His leadership marked a turning point in the definition of P2’s aims and scopes as Gelli personally drafted the ‘Schema R,’ the political program of the lodge, in 1975. Among the principal objectives in this program were: rearrangement of the state apparatus, class organization of power, reform of the educational system, control of media, end of the Superior Council of the Magistrature’s autonomy, and breaking trade unions’ unity. During the 1970s, networking between P2 and other organizations developed dramatically. These networks involved: ministers; undersecretaries; deputies and senators (belonging to DC, PSI, PSDI and PRI); generals and officers belonging to the Italian police, the army, finance police, and air force; admirals; magistrates; public officers; journalists; businessmen; the pretender to the Italian throne; and all the chiefs of secret services. In 1981, the existence of the lodge finally became a public knowledge after the P2’s list of affiliates was found in Licio Gelli’s residence during a police raid. Gelli was then formally expelled from freemasonry by the GOI, and a parliamentary commission was established to shed light on the lodge’s activities. The commission released a report, documenting its investigations, and a law was passed that banned secret associations in 1982. Thereafter, the P2 was dissolved. This investigative parliamentary commission documented the involvement of P2’s members in a series of financial frauds, terrorist attacks, and a private use of public institutions (Commissione 1984, 1992, 2000).”

academic research. The methods of these programs can be traced to the torture methods used in Japanese prison facilities and Nazi concentration camps during WWII; techniques which were later learned/adopted/expanded by the US security-state during the Cold War to develop/enhance anti-communist interrogation (Kinzer 2019).¹⁷

- COINTELPRO, where from 1956-1979 the FBI under J. Edgar Hoover targeted the Black Panthers, the American Indian Movement, Communist Party USA, anti-Vietnam War movement, United Farm Workers, the Young Lords, as well as environmental rights groups and feminist organizations. Such operations by US domestic security services sought to disrupt, contain, discredit, infiltrate, surveil, and assassinate citizens participating in various left-wing activist organizations (Churchill & Vander Wall 1990).
- Secretive invitation-only anti-communist foreign policy organizations such as Le Cercle (Hänni 2014, Teacher 2015, 2018), the 61 (Michaels 2014, Teacher 2018), the Bilderberg Group (Kantor 2017, 2022), the Trilateral Commission (Gill 1991), the World League for Freedom and Democracy, and the Bohemian Grove (Domhoff 1974), which are funded/attended by politicians, the owners and corporate leadership of multinational corporations, and members of the Western intelligence community.
- Covert cooperation between the British security services and far-right Ulster protestant nationalists (so-called Orangemen) during The Troubles in Northern Ireland (Urwin 2016). Such activities included Clockwork Orange; a far-right ‘black propaganda’ smear campaign directed by UK intelligence agencies against British Labour politicians between 1974-1975 (Thomas 2016).

¹⁷ Infamous test subjects include the Boston organized crime boss, IRA collaborator, and FBI informant James “Whitey” Bulger, who was subject to MKULTRA mind control experiments using LSD and other mind-altering drugs while incarcerated at Atlanta Federal Penitentiary in the 1950s (Kinzer 2019: 157; Michael 2016).

- Domestic elite-led coup-plots/conspiracies within the LIO. For example, founder of the Special Air Service (SAS), David Stirling's secretive 'Great Britain 75' movement, which prepared and conditioned allies for an aristocratic right-wing military takeover if socialists within the Labour Party were to achieve political power in the UK during the 1970s (Moran 2013), as well as Junio Valerio Borghese who planned a neofascist coup in Italy in 1970 (Greene & Massignani 2004). More recently, factions within the US Republican Party and its supportive far-right social forces have sought to overturn the results of US presidential election by advocating for the storming of the US Capitol on January 6, 2020. Similarly, on December 7, 2022, the German government foiled a violent coup plot orchestrated by the far-right QAnon-inspired Reichsbürger movement. The movement is led by German aristocrat Heinrich XIII Prince Reuss and his co-conspirators include former MPs and several elite members of Germany's armed forces (Adler, 2022).
- The rise of far-right private military contractors (PMCs) such as WatchGuard International co-founded by David Stirling in 1965, as well as the Paladin Group founded in 1970 by former Waffen SS Colonel Otto Skorzeny (Brussell 2014, Krüger et al. 2015). Such companies were vastly expanded following the Cold War, the most notable example being Blackwater founded by Erik Prince in 1997 (Scahill 2008).¹⁸
- Western support/training of far-right criminal death squads abroad in Latin America (Operation Condor), Africa, and Southeast Asia during the Cold War, including US support for the Contras in Nicaragua, Suharto's 'New Order' in Indonesia, as well as anti-Castro

¹⁸ Blackwater was renamed Xe Services 2009-2011, Academi from 2011-2014, and Constellis 2014-present. These PMCs tied to Prince have provided various 'security' services for the US and UAE in theatres such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, and Somalia, and has been accused of various war-crimes and atrocities such as the Nisour Square massacre in 2007. Prince has had close links to the Republican Party as well as the George W. Bush Administration and Donald Trump presidential administrations. Moreover, Prince's sister, Betsy DeVos was the US secretary of Education from 2017-2021 where she was a staunch advocate for charter schools the privatization of the US public education system.

Cuban diaspora communities in the US (Cribb 2010; Bevins 2020; Burke 2018; Pratt 1987). The Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (formally known as the School of the Americas) located in Fort Benning Columbus, Georgia, has instructed an alumnus of dictators, far-right militants, and criminal organizations in the tradecraft of violence, torture, intimidation, and anti-democratic suppression.

- US/NATO support and cooperation with far-right social forces and criminals in active warzones, including opium producing war-lords in Afghanistan and the wider Middle East (McCoy 2000, 2003; Blum 2003; Scott 2003; Valentine 2017). More recent examples include the funding of neofascist militias in Ukraine (Foster 2022; Streeck 2022).

At first glance, it may appear to the reader that the far-right movement, its ideas, institutions, and social forces, were simply instrumentalized by actors associated with state-security services which were seeking to advance the interests of the Western liberal establishment during the postwar period. However, such forces *should not* be conceptually reduced to simply being the last-resort ‘shock troops’ that are deployed by military/intelligence apparatuses of dominant Western liberal states whenever advantageous to their core geopolitical/economic interests. Rather than simply being transplanted onto the states and societies of the LIO, far-right social forces and their ideological assumptions can be found within various allied states within the transatlantic bloc long before the formal establishment of many keystone institutions of the LIO, including its major intelligence services such as the CIA (established in 1948), as well as the EU (or its predecessor institution the ECSC founded in 1951), the UN (1945), the Bilderberg Group (1954), and NATO (1949). Perhaps the most explicit example of such collaboration between the far-right and the LIO in the postwar period was Operation Gladio, the code name for the multiple far-right/neofascist Western-backed ‘stay behind’ clandestine paramilitary operations across

Europe during the Cold War. Gladio was advanced by the CIA and cooperative Western security/intelligence services; however, what enabled such operations (including bombings and assassinations) to proceed were the long-existing networks of transnational far-right social forces across Europe. Such networks included former Nazi officers, the mafia, the Christian fundamentalist right, as well as reactionary aristocratic elites – social forces which have historically been both ideologically and materially supportive of fascism/far-right politics when threatened with mass democracy, atheism, or proletarian class struggle (specifically revolutionary Marxist-Leninism). The complex and opaque nature of such operations makes it difficult for social scientists to discern whether – or in which moments – the so-called liberal establishment was simply instrumentalizing the far-right movement, or if the social forces of the far-right had, in some capacity, wrested power from more moderate forces within the liberal establishment. The far-right then occupies a unique position within the politics of the LIO during the postwar period, which has made it difficult to determine whether it is: 1) an antithetical/counter-hegemonic force in relation to the LIO and its system of global governance; or 2) simply a tool which is wielded/controlled by ruling liberal states/elites to achieve political objectives whenever expedient. Alexander Anievas and Richard Saull (2019: 6) note:

In moments of crisis, then, the political bases of liberal orders have often relied upon far-right mobilizations to help *secure* them as far-right ideologies provide an important ideopolitical imaginary to compensate for the intense dislocations and sense of anomie characterizing such conjunctures. In this respect, the structural dynamics of capitalist development generate far-right forces as a kind of coercive “reserve army” that politicians and ruling class forces can draw on in times of crisis but can never fully control. This is not to suggest that far-right actors should be regarded as pawns of ruling class interests, parroting the crude Stalinist thesis on fascism, or that the far-right is *functional* to reproducing liberal (international) orders. Rather, it is to recognize the political role played by far-right forces in helping thwart revolutionary challenges to liberal-capitalist orders, including the authoritarian and antidemocratic elements within the “deep” state that tend to appear when the social regime of capital is most vulnerable. The far-right can do this by offering an *alternative ideological legitimation* of capitalist social orderings from that of liberalism

Parapolitical scholarship is informative to this analysis as it provides evidence that the postwar far-right cannot be reduced to being either simply a ‘fellow traveller’ to the dominant the ideas, institutions, social forces of Western political/economic hegemony, or as a ‘mad dog’ released by the power elite of the LIO when politically expedient. Rather, it is more accurate to say that the far-right has played a constructive/legitimizing role in building and moulding the LIO’s *systems of governance* (e.g. security establishment, transnational alliances between elites), while at times diverging from the centrist liberal establishment’s preferred *mode of governance* (e.g. social liberalism, rule of law). Parapolitical scholars have, however, provided documentary evidence of far-right social forces instrumentalizing crisis, as well as fomenting it. Moreover, in light of the complex and often opaque history of the far-right within the LIO, it *is not* particularly useful for critical theorists to take a firm position on whether contemporary far-right movement is: 1) an organ of the liberal establishment, or rather 2) a force which seeks to overthrow and replace the LIO. Rather, the far-right movement is better understood as a constellation of ideas and social forces that are symbiotic and embedded to many of the ideas, institutions, and social forces associated with the historic project postwar liberalism, while also simultaneously undermining *certain* hard-fought socially liberal democratic norms. Indeed, parapolitical scholars note how liberals and social forces associated with the far-right have operated through discreet (and often overlapping) elite social networks to evade democratic accountability/checks. Moreover, since the Cold War period, distinguishing elite ‘collective intellectual’ organizations (e.g. think tanks, conferences, discussion groups) from far-right parapolitical organizations is a difficult task. Acknowledging this history helps reveal the innate contradictions of the LIO itself – namely its often-proclaimed support for aspirational universalist principles, even as the historical activities of

its governing elites and their institutions has been marked by the pursuit of cynical, contradictory, particularistic, and reactionary interests.

II) The LIO in the Post-Cold War Era: Global Organic Crisis and Post-Fascism

The previous section explored the relationship between the far-right and the hegemonic ideas, institutions, and social forces of the LIO in the twentieth century. This section will discuss and elaborate on the aspects of crisis within contemporary world order which have contributed to both the resurgence and transformation of far-right politics at the turn of the twenty-first century. The contemporary far-right movement within the LIO has responded to various aspects of what can be described as a ‘global organic crisis’ in world order in the post-Cold War era. This crisis has created a novel set of social dislocations/subjectivities which have energized/expanded/shaped the contemporary far-right movement and its dominant ideology across the transatlantic bloc. As such, the far-right movement within the LIO has undergone observable transformations in the twenty-first century alongside broader transformations in world order, with shifts related to the general ideological content of its political program and social philosophy, its leading actors, institutions, and organizations, as well as the structure/composition of the classes/social forces it mobilizes. Such transformations reflect various dimensions of the over three decades-long global organic crisis related to neoliberal governance and the perceptions of decline of the LIO’s state-societal complexes and transnational institutions. I will discuss how the concept of post-fascism developed by G.M. Tamás (2000) describes and helps conceptualize the nature of far-right politics in the era of neoliberal capitalism.

i) The Far-Right as a Morbid Symptom of the Global Organic Crisis

The concept of ‘organic crisis’ was initially developed by Marxist thinker, linguistics scholar, and Italian Communist Party leader Antonio Gramsci (1971) to conceptualize the rise of fascism in Italy while he was imprisoned by Mussolini’s fascist regime. Gramsci used the concept to describe a comprehensive and multifaceted breakdown of a political order, including cultural, political, economic, social, and ideological components, with contradictions potentially resulting in a refurbishing or transformation of a particular hegemonic configuration (its ruling classes and historic bloc). For Gramsci, the use of the term ‘organic’ is meant to imply that which is not immediate, conjunctural or short-term—but rather to describe phenomenon which are slow-moving, structural, or long-term (Cox 1983: 130). The concept was also notably used later by sociologist Stuart Hall (1988) to describe the crisis of neoliberalism and Thatcherism within Britain during the late 1970s and 1980s.

The term “global organic crisis” was initially developed by Stephen Gill (2012, 2015, 2016) and applies Gramsci’s concept of ‘organic crisis’ to the study of IR and global politics during the neoliberal era. It is used by a relatively small body of critical IR scholars, all of whom reject philosophical/ontological state-centrism, and analyze the ideological, material, and transnational class dimensions of global governance; specifically, how such dimensions shape the contours of hegemony/supremacy, ecology, and profound social transformation within contemporary world order. This Gramscian or ‘transnational historical materialist’ approach to IR was pioneered by Canadian political scientist Robert W. Cox (1976, 1981, 1983, 1987, 1996), and further developed by Stephen Gill (1991, 1993, 1995, 2008), Kees van der Pijl (1978/2018, 1984, 1989, 2018b), Claire Cutler (2003, 2005), Isabella Bakker (2003, 2007), Henk Overbeek (1993, 2000, 2004, 2013), Bastiaan van Apeldoorn (2004, 2012, 2014), Morten Ougaard (1988, 2004, 2014, 2016),

William Carroll (2013, 2014, 2018), Adam Morton (2003, 2007), Owen Worth (2011, 2019), and Andreas Bieler (2000, 2014, 2015). Such scholars eschew the realist state-centrism and heroic liberal internationalism of mainstream IR theory in preference for an often-neglected structural analysis of global political economy, imperialism, transnational class formations, international bodies/global institutions – as well as an investigation into the ideas, classes, institutions, and social forces which created, shape and reproduce the hegemony of the US/EU, transnational elites, market civilization and capitalist world order. Inspired by figures such as Antonio Gramsci, Karl Polanyi, and Fernand Braudel, for some of these thinkers, this subdiscipline of IR theory seeks to evaluate the synchronic and diachronic aspects of world order(s), as well as provide a comprehensive and multidimensional analysis of the aspects of continuity and change. It is an analysis that is both bottom-up and top-down in its study of global leadership, profound systemic crisis/transformation, and the implications of related factors on the future of human society, the planetary security of the biosphere, and the life-worlds/social reproduction of its inhabitants, i.e. the social historical structures which separate types of civilizations and world orders (Braudel 1982, 2009).

The concept of ‘global organic crisis’ describes various transnational dimensions of crisis in world order, many of which are unique to the historical epoch of US-led capitalist globalization. While containing components of Gramsci’s original concept, ‘global organic crisis’ also describes more modern concerns such as the degradation of the biosphere as well as ongoing threats to global public health and social reproduction. The concept of ‘global organic crisis’ is also wedded to a praxis of progressive and counter-hegemonic social transformation that seeks to address the harmful processes of capitalist global political economy and empire—specifically the culture of what Gill (1995, 2019a) calls ‘market civilization’, authoritarian neoliberal governance, and

US/Western supremacism over the international system. An ‘organic crisis’, by definition, is comprehensive and represents a deep structural crisis within a state-societal complex and its systems of governance. It implies a multitude of factors threatening/decaying the cohesion of a particular social order, any of which could potentially spark a ‘hegemonic crisis’ (discussed in next chapter) over the direction/character/purpose of leadership unless the dominant classes can resolve/regulate the contradictions of their rule through the ideological or coercive apparatuses of the state. In Gramscian terms, the rise/resurgence of the far-right can be understood as “morbid symptoms” of the current interregnum “where the old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born” (Gramsci 1971).

The current crisis of neoliberal global political economy can be traced to the 1970s and 1980s, a period of significant transformations within the LIO linked to the marginalization of organized labour and processes of privatization, monetarism, deregulation, financialization, globalization, and public austerity. Gregoire Chamyou (2018) describes this period as the beginning of a ‘crisis of ungovernability’, one which would transform the state and systems of corporate governance within world order. The ‘crisis of ungovernability’ would not only occur in transformations in political economy but also transformations in international relations. The collapse of the Soviet Union did not foreshadow an era of market-utopia, rather one of expanding Western imperialism, where the consequences/contradictions of what Gill (1995, 2001) terms “disciplinary” neoliberal global governance would therefore become explicit to those on the margins of the ‘new world order’. The ‘global organic crisis’ of the post-Cold War era, including its various related political, economic and sociocultural crises, have forced transnational capitalist elites in the LIO and their intellectual counterparts to reconfigure the base of popular consent for its hegemony by integrating new sub-ideologies, and adopting a new ‘mode of regulation’ suited

for the dominant globalized/transnationalized ‘regime of accumulation’ of the new world order (Aglietta 1998, 2000; Durand 2017; Poulantzas 1978/2000).

Many of the issues related to geopolitical rivalry, global human insecurity and ecological collapse which are synonymous with the ‘global organic crisis’, are a by-product of a transition toward what can be described as US-led transnational hegemony in the post-Cold War era (Gill 1993b). Gary Gerstle argues that what is typically absent from an analysis of the rise of neoliberalism within world order is a full reckoning with the impact/importance of the Soviet Union, international communism, and eventual the collapse of global capitalism’s primary global rival in 1989. Gerstle (2022: 40) notes:

One consequence of communism’s fall is obvious: It opened a large part of the world—Russia and Eastern Europe—to capitalist penetration. It also dramatically widened the willingness of China (still nominally a communist state) to experiment with capitalist economics. Capitalism thus became global in the 1990s in a way it had not been since prior to the First World War. The globalized world that dominated international affairs in the 1990s and 2000s is unimaginable apart from communism’s collapse. Another consequence of communism’s fall may be less obvious but it is of equal importance: It removed the imperative in America (and in Europe and elsewhere) for class compromise between capitalist elites and working classes. From the 1930s through to the 1960s, communism was understood through the lens of totalitarianism, meaning it was regarded as a totalizing system of rule that once established could never be overthrown. A nation lost to communism would never be regained for the capitalist world (or so the influential theory of totalitarianism taught). Thus the specter of communist advance required from the United States a policy of military containment unprecedented in its history. It also impelled capitalist elites in advanced industrial countries including the United States, to compromise with their class antagonists in ways they would not otherwise have done. The fear of communism made possible the class compromise between capital and labour that underwrote the New Deal order. It made possible similar class compromises in many social democracies in Europe after the Second World War.

While many such class compromises had been largely undone decades prior, the fall of the USSR would then be the final nail in the coffin of “embedded liberalism” within the LIO (Ruggie 1997). In recent years the political parties which once represented social liberalism, social democracy, and democratic socialism within the LIO have largely purged leaders and social forces

which promote an alternative to neoliberal globalization. Intra-party smear campaigns conducted by neoliberal elites/institutions have been successfully applied to left-leaning US Senator Bernie Sanders in the US, left-wing leader of the Labour Party (UK) Jeremy Corbyn, and left-wing politician Jean-Luc Mélenchon in France. Such campaigns have successfully marginalized such progressive leaders and social forces from establishment political party structures. As such, a major socialist, social democratic, or working-class political alternative is largely missing within the LIO in the current juncture. In the absence of the USSR, the West in the post-Cold War era was suddenly 1) absent a unifying threat which invoked numerous class compromises which stabilized its hegemony; while 2) enabled socially disruptive neoliberal policy prescriptions and a pervasive market culture proliferated across territories and spaces previously cordoned by Soviet regimes. In the immediate post-Cold War era twenty-five years ago Stephen Gill (1990: 294) pleaded urgency for the left to begin to immediately address challenges related to the ‘new world order’:

The need for the left, and its allies, to move swiftly on the questions and challenges of the 1990s is indicated by the fact that the prevailing forces in the global political economy are already well aware of the potential of many counter-hegemonic movements, and will undoubtedly begin to develop strategies so as to co-opt them.

The hegemony of neoliberalism within political party structures and world order in the post-Cold War era would also have transformative effects on the far-right movement within the LIO, one which was now absent its primary global rival. In such circumstances, the far-right movement has become far less reliant on dictators, shock troops, or notions of racial purity/superiority to achieve its political objectives in the post-Cold War. Rather, in the context of a largely defeated organized socialist-left movement, the political parties and social forces of the far-right have been able to use the mechanisms of neoliberal governance to discipline/punish those heterogenous groups, both

foreign and domestic, viewed unworthy of sovereign rights or universal citizenship (Tamás 2000: 55). Ingar Solty (2011: 207) notes:

If right wing populism can be defined as the radicalization of economic liberalism propelled by (middle-class) authoritarianism mobilized during times of crisis, with its corresponding distributional struggles, the radicalized middle classes, in their fear of social decline, will turn the ideology of the producer against those groups that, according to them, should bear the costs, of the crisis, particularly those who have gained some social and economic protection from the state. Therefore, the aggression of the middle classes' core, such as the small-scale entrepreneurs, is usually directed against the bottom third or half of the society, which is portrayed as 'parasitic' and used as a scapegoat. Moreover, it would be wrong to assume that the right-wing populist ideology could not become generalized across many other social strata, including the (unorganized) working class as well: economic position and (objective) class interest are important, but not determining, factors of political behaviour. Therefore, right-wing populism could hold hegemonic sway across some elements of the working class, especially in situations in which no alternative left forces exist or emerge, as a result of the shift towards neoliberalism on the part of traditional social democratic parties and the more or less thorough demise of communist parties throughout Europe since the late 1980s.

Since the end of the Cold War, world order has experienced three decades of: 1) neoliberal governance; 2) Western supremacist/imperialist/colonial militarism domestically and within the international system, as well as 3) a constantly proliferating world culture of "market civilization" (Gill 1995, 2019a), all of which have set the groundwork for a multitude of unresolved crisis in world order. Global organic crisis then includes a multitude of conjunctural, cumulative, and interrelated sub-crises which serve to accelerated the ongoing global crisis, including: the 9/11 attacks and the 2003 US/UK invasion of Iraq; the 2008 global financial crisis; the European sovereign debt crisis; mass migrations since 2013 (often linked to Western-led military interventions); population decline in advanced capitalist states; increasing global inequality (Piketty 2014); irreversible destruction of the biosphere; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; invasive/panoptic surveillance and draconian/cruel policing practices; instances of far-right and Islamic fundamentalist inspired terrorism; the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic and its management and effects; rising geopolitical tensions between Russia and NATO following the

Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022; as well as the various societal harms created by the continued prevalence of racism (particularly in criminal justice), xenophobia, sexism and homophobia across various aspects of society.

Transformative technological advances have historically marked macro-societal shifts or turning-points within world order, such as the splitting of the atom in the mid-twentieth century which ushered in the Cold War era, as well as the rise of the internet and a “network society” (Castells 2000, 2010) of global communication in the 1990s, which coincided with the end of the Cold War. The internet age was initially met with optimism from political scientists, accentuating the liberatory and democratic aspects of this phenomenon, as well as the potential advantages for progressive forces of global civil society seeking to tackle global concerns such as climate change, authoritarianism, and the growing power of multinational corporations. In recent years, this optimism has been replaced with pessimism due to the emergence of these technologies alongside various new forms of pervasive/anti-democratic/militarized surveillance, the rise of a hyper-exploitative ‘neo-feudal’ gig economy, underregulated artificial intelligence, deep-fake propaganda, as well as its role in cultivating various novel psychological/social harms such as anxiety, social alienation, as well as violent far-right extremism (Bridle 2019; Dean 2021; Harari 2018; Morozov 2012; Nagle 2017; Zuboff 2015, 2023). In the Marxist tradition, such conditions have often been described as facets of alienation resulting from capitalist social relations (Musto 2010; Øversveen 2022). Following Durkheim, others have used the concept of ‘anomie’ to describe the profound social breakdown/uprooting (Ionescu et al. 2021; Blazak 2021). Zygmunt Bauman (2000: 14) uses the term “liquid modernity” to describe the social anxieties linked to modern technology, transformations in elite power in the twenty-first century, as well as processes of neoliberal globalization, contributing to the disintegration of social bonds and territoriality

which shaped the lives of individuals and society in previous eras.¹⁹ Bauman (2000: 184) discusses the alienating and anxiety-inducing impacts of such processes on individuals and communities in the era of liquid modernity:

Body and community are the last defensive outposts on the increasingly deserted battlefield on which the war for certainty, security and safety is waged daily with little, if any, respite. They need now to perform the tasks once divided among many bastions and stockades. More depends on them now than they are able to carry, and so they are likely to deepen, rather than to allay, the fears which prompted the seekers of security to run to them for shelter. The new loneliness of body and community is the result of a wide set of seminal changes subsumed under the rubric of liquid modernity. One change in the set is, however, of particular importance: the renunciation, phasing out or selling off by the state of all the major appurtenances of its role as the principal (perhaps even monopolistic) purveyor of certainty and security, followed by its refusal to endorse the certainty/security aspirations of its subjects

While ‘global organic crisis’ is a concept that emerges out of critical left scholarship, acknowledgement of a global crisis in world order has become a truism within the contemporary mainstream political discourse – with many liberal and conservative scholars also raising concerns about the precariousness of the current moment. During an extended press interview with *Le Grand Continent* November 2020, the characteristically optimistic liberal French President Emmanuel Macron lamented how the current global crisis of world order cannot be isolated to singular issues, such as global migration, the Covid pandemic, democratic backsliding, climate change, terrorism, or economic recession/stagnation; noting also how these multiple crises are systemically

¹⁹ Bauman notes: “The disintegration of the social network, the falling apart of effective agencies of collective action is often noted with a good deal of anxiety and bewailed as the unanticipated 'side effect' of the new lightness and fluidity of the increasingly mobile, slippery, shifty, evasive and fugitive power. But social disintegration is as much a condition as it is the outcome of the new technique of power, using disengagement and the art of escape as its major tools. For power to be free to flow, the world must be free of fences, barriers, fortified borders and checkpoints. Any dense and tight network of social bonds, and particularly a territorially rooted tight network, is an obstacle to be cleared out of the way. Global powers are bent on dismantling such networks for the sake of their continuous and growing fluidity, that principal source of their strength and the warrant of their invincibility. And it is the falling apart, the friability, the brittleness, the transience, the until-further-noticeness of human bonds and networks which allow these powers to do their job in the first place.”

intertwined. Within the LIO, the various national/localized crises intersect or amalgamate with the more globalized/transnational aspects of the present global organic crisis. Mobilizing political anxieties produced by crisis, or in anticipation of crisis, have always been a feature of far-right politics. Reflecting on the relationship between far-right politics and crisis, Theodor Adorno gave a speech at the University of Vienna in 1967 on “Aspects of the New-Right Wing Extremism” (2000) which he stated:

I think this reference to anticipating terror touches on something very central that, as far as I can see, is given far too little attention in the usual views about right-wing extremism, namely the very complex and difficult relationship with the feeling of social catastrophe that prevails here. One might speak of a distortion of Marx’s theory of collapse that takes place in this very crippled and false consciousness. On the one hand, on the rational side of things, they ask, ‘What will happen if there is a big crisis?’ – and that is where these movements are attractive. On the other hand, they also have something in common with the type of manipulated astrology one finds today, which I consider an extremely important and typical socio-psychological symptom, because, in a sense, they want the catastrophe, they feed off apocalyptic fantasies of the kind that, as it happens, could also be found among the Nazi leadership, as documents show.

ii) *Post-Fascism and the Future of Western Capitalist Governance*

A multifaceted global structural crisis in world order is widely acknowledged by the contemporary far-right movement within the LIO and is a persistent theme within the political messaging of far-right parties and transmitted across its various propaganda outlets online. Moreover, far-right movements within the transatlantic bloc have been forced to adapt their political ideology/strategy to address the transforming economic, social, and political landscape in the twenty-first century. The far-right has thus adjusted its political program to respond to various externalities created by: 1) the slow-moving crisis of neoliberal globalization, market civilization, and supremacist/imperialist geopolitics; as well as 2) the more immediate contradictions, crises, and conjunctural moments which have emerged out of such processes. The complex and

multifaceted nature of crisis and the profound shifts which occurred in the states-societies of the LIO in the post-Cold War period has often made it difficult for social scientists to identify – or agree on – common/consistent historical characteristics shared by the various far-right movements of the twentieth and twenty-first century. Moreover, the interconnected/multidimensional nature of the present crisis makes it difficult to draw a direct connection between a single aspect of crisis and the rise of far-right politics within the LIO.

Under such circumstances, an investigation into contemporary far-right political ideology and its proponents is revealing. Hungarian political philosopher G.M. Tamás notes how despite certain transformations/reconfigurations in world order, particular ideological assumptions and tendencies have remained consistent within Western far-right politics throughout the twentieth century. In spite of certain conjunctures or crises facing the states/societies (real or imagined) of the West, Tamás argues that the contemporary far-right has retained fascism's philosophic opposition to all forms of universal citizenship, as well as the belief that certain cultural groups, classes, nations, and racial/ethnic/religious communities are exceptional. Tamás then uses the term 'post-fascism' to describe the long-term aspects of far-right ideology which connects contemporary far-right politics to the fascist movements of the interwar period. In regard to the various political and economic systems of the contemporary LIO, Tamás (2000: 48) notes:

Post-fascism finds its niche easily in the new world of global capitalism, and does so without affecting or upsetting the dominant political forms of electoral democracy and representative government. What it does affect, on the other hand, is what I consider to be central to all varieties of fascism, including the post-totalitarian version—sans Fuhrer, sans one-party rule, sans SA or SS—to wit, the reversal of the Enlightenment tendency to assimilate citizenship to the human condition.

In regard to political economy, there remains a clear class contradiction between the material interests of far-right elites/leadership and the non-elite base of the far-right movement.

This is perhaps why the cultural terrain – or ‘culture wars’ – has been a much more convenient rallying point for far-right elites in the post-Cold War era. For the social forces supportive of the modern far-right, the Soviet red menace from abroad has largely been vanquished, whereas the cultural war against so-called globalism, liberalism, and ‘Cultural Marxism’ is one that continues to be at the forefront of the far-right’s political struggle. Despite this shift in rhetoric, the modern far-right movement does not advocate for a universal welfare state or major state interventions/regulations to protect citizens from the most deleterious aspects of the global liberal market economy (apart from perhaps some modest advocacy for protectionism²⁰). In lieu of providing substantive structural reforms within the liberal market political economy to resolve the current global organic crisis, the far-right has instead directed most of its information warfare against the *culture* of global liberalism; more specifically its (proclaimed/rhetorical) dedication to universalism, multiculturalism, and racial and gender equity/equality. The modern far-right has then advanced a reactionary and socially Darwinist social program to resolve the crisis in world order, one which is both critical of the liberal professional managerial class, as well as well cruelly targeting those deemed as ‘Other’ –an underclass comprised of various marginalized groups whose social locations have been demarcated by processes of global market capitalism and imperialism.²¹

²⁰ During his 2024 presidential run, Trump campaigned on 200% tariffs on automobiles and other goods from Mexico as well as corporate tax cuts to entice manufacturers to bring back production to the US (Wesrshkul 2024). Tom Wraight (2019) has argued that Trump’s protectionist trade policies, specifically his trade war with China, can be better understood as a form of “neoliberal protectionism” which initially began in the 1980s in response to a rising Japanese economy. Wraight argues that Trump’s statist protectionism (e.g. tariffs) is still fundamentally neoliberal, such policies are centered on forcing other states to embrace neoliberal reforms and market forces and end ‘unfair’ industrial policies, which give such states a competitive advantage vis- à-vis the US in international trade.

²¹ Nicola Short (2017: 770) notes: “As historical materialist analyses suggest, fundamental to the politics of the far-right is the scapegoating and persecution of ‘foreign’ or corrupted social groups who are held responsible for undermining an otherwise natural, national grandiosity. Put another way, the far-right sustains the fantasy of a stable, holistic community in which the ‘true’ members are always provided for by blaming an other for any failures to realize that ideal. On this level, the crisis-prone nature of capitalist accumulation and the alienated nature of market social relations are denied. Beneath this, however, there is the deeper psychological attachment to the social order: one that for the narcissistic character structure involves a highly vulnerable subject who experiences society through a profound fear of exclusion and a sense of powerlessness which is defended against through rage against

An example of such phenomenon is evident when one looks toward the far-right's attitudes toward refugees, despite their overt or tacit approval for military adventurism/supremacism in the global South or Western capitalist exploitation in the developing world. Tamás (2000: 54) writes:

Post-fascist movements everywhere, but especially in Europe, are anti-immigration movements, grounded in the "homogeneous" worldview of productive usefulness. They are not simply protecting racial and class privileges within the nation-state (although they are doing that, too). They are also protecting universal citizenship within the rich nation-states against the virtual and universal citizenship of all human beings, regardless of geography, language, race, denomination, and habits.

Rather than waning in the years following the electoral defeat of Donald Trump in 2020, the transnational far-right movement and its social forces have continued to surge and flourish across the LIO, specifically energized by the 'culture wars', immigration, and more recently the Covid-19 pandemic and the attempts of various liberal governments to mitigate the crisis through statist and internationally coordinated public health mandates/restrictions.²² Often resorting to fringe libertarian constitutional 'originalism' and anti-communist conspiracy theories, the business classes within the far-right movement during the Covid-era have argued that public health restriction/barrier to market consumption equates to a violation of fundamental/constitutional rights and freedoms, and is equated to totalitarian dictatorship. The Western anti-vax movement combined such liberal individual rights/individual autonomy claims with a resurrected decades-old far-right conspiracy theory involving a supposed communist/satanic global depopulation plot involving mass-vaccination programs at the direction of 'globalist' elites such as George Soros and Bill Gates, as well as liberal institutions such as the UN, WHO, EU, corporate media, big tech, the World Economic Forum, and the Open Society Foundations. Since the Covid pandemic, far-

the other and 'primary' identifications with grandiose, powerful figures. Thus there is another order of denial having to do with the subject's sense of vulnerability and marginalization with respect to the economic and the political."

²² The seriousness of the situation predates the pandemic, the BBC notes as of May 2019 it is estimated that over 24,000 far-right extremists were operating in Germany; with over half believed to be inclined towards violence.

right propaganda (largely online) has targeted centrist liberal government's public health mandates and the supposed 'totalitarianism' (synonymous with fascism and communism) of these policies. Paranoia regarding pandemic governance led to the far-right conspiracy belief-system in which a (oxymoronic) liberal elite-led 'Great Reset' towards totalitarian communism in contemporary world order. This ideology has contributed to various protests and occupations across the transatlantic bloc (e.g. Canada, Netherlands, Germany, US). Since 2020, such views have become a central rallying-point for the transnational far-right movement, even perhaps eclipsing the anti-refugee/anti-immigrant sentiments which fuelled various far-right political campaigns in the LIO over the last decade. The transnational anti-vax movement represents a molecular transformation in the far-right movement shaped by a conjunctural crisis within world order. While fundamentally it remains a jingoistic, xenophobic, and anti-universalist movement, the language of 'classical liberalism', populism, and 'freedom' during the Covid pandemic has pacified the racist/bigoted image of its movement and recruited various segments of Western populations with a range of grievances linked to Covid-era liberal governance, while also broadening the appeal of the movement's various sub-ideologies, including anti-statism, anti-communism (however misdirected), anti-intellectualism, Sinophobia, as well as a (proclaimed) anti-elite 'populism' or 'nationalism'.

Despite the populist rhetoric and aesthetics, the intellectual and political leadership of the contemporary far-right movement, the core tenets of its ideology, as well as its transnational networks, both mirror and intertwine with many of the 'globalist' transnational elite institutions that the movement publicly laments or lambastes in their political propaganda. In recent decades the so-called 'centrist' consensus within the LIO has been disrupted by a subset of elites who increasingly affiliate/identify with the contemporary far-right movement, support its

communicative networks, and add legitimacy to its reactionary political project. This vanguard of reactionary intellectual elites seeks an alternative to the status-quo elite liberal leadership within the LIO and provides an alternative *project* for capitalist governance, one which would preserve liberal political economy and market discipline, while dispensing many of the cultural and political rights affiliated with twenty-first century social liberalism (e.g. notions of global citizenship, human rights for refugees, racial/gender equity). An analysis of such social forces requires an investigation into ideology and the informal or parapolitical groupings of far-right elites and their intellectual counterparts. In later chapters I will investigate influential far-right elite intellectuals including (but not limited to) Samuel Huntington, Peter Thiel, Yoram Hazony, and Douglas Murray, all of whom have made deep inroads within the liberal establishment they claim to loath, while also contributing to parallel far-right organizations which seek to reconfigure various core aspects of contemporary LIO governance. The emergence of a new far-right intellectual elite underscores the necessity to move beyond the popular analytic/ideological framework which juxtaposes liberal ‘globalist’ elites against the so-called populists, illiberals, or nationalists of the far-right. Rather, an analysis of the contemporary far-right requires an analysis of the top-down and transnational dimensions of this movement.

Conclusion

Since WWII, the far-right movement – albeit in complex ways – has contributed to building, governing, and shaping the historical project of LIO – integrating its ideas and social forces (with varying degrees of success) into the systems/institutions associated with Western hegemony and global governance. Moreover, at various points during the history of the LIO, the far-right movement participated in numerous ways to what can be described as the ‘shadow governance’ of

LIO, often aiding in the reproduction of the capitalist class and Western hegemony during moments of profound crisis. There are then both synchronic and diachronic aspects of the far-right movement(s) over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first century, indicating that this movement is both adaptive/reflective to transformations/crises within the LIO and contemporary global capitalism, while also retaining certain characteristics in keeping with the *longue durée* of far-right politics in the West. The context of a 'global organic crisis' has accelerated/transformed certain aspects of the far-right phenomenon in the West – creating conditions in which the radical solutions of this movement become more palpable to those within the so-called liberal establishment and the populations of LIO states. While the far-right movement has adapted to changing conditions within world order, it has remained consistently dedicated to an anti-universalist politics and social philosophy, one which remains the most pronounced connecting tissue between the contemporary 'post-fascist' far-right movement(s) within the LIO and their interwar fascist predecessors.

An analysis of the transnational far-right movement within the LIO then requires one to address various factors simultaneously, specifically: 1) the structure of class-relations, political economy, and related contradictions; 2) the geopolitical realities of world order; 3) the ideological and cultural legacies within Western states/societies; 4) and the various elite actors, social forces, and networks of social forces which seek to reproduce or refurbish capitalist hegemony in the midst of structural crisis and waning public consent. The current global organic crisis is class-based, and as such, its impacts (unevenly) weigh on various vectors of world order. In response to a complex, uneven, interconnected, and multidimensional crisis in contemporary world order, the far-right has sought to mobilize various groups/classes around both (often contradictory) parcellated national/local grievances, as well as transnational/globalized grievances. The far-

right's articulation of such popular grievances (legitimate or otherwise) is tailored toward particular class groups as well as various local, regional, and global audiences—with the primary purpose of obstructing all attempts toward a more progressive universalist politics supportive of global citizenship and class solidarity. In the following chapter I will discuss how far-right elites and their transnational networks have proposed alternative forms of international or civilizational solidarities which can replace/refurbish those organizations/institutions of global cooperation typically associated with liberal internationalism. I will argue that, rather than simply a reactionary phenomenon, the contemporary far-right movement has developed what can be described as a transnational grand strategy or 'hegemonic project' to govern the LIO and world order, one which elucidates the 'hegemonic crisis' within the LIO's elite ruling bloc. Parapolitical scholarship informs us that the far-right's networks within the LIO are often informal and have in many instances, operated in the shadows. In light of such realities, an analysis of the contemporary far-right movement requires an investigation into the intellectual leadership of the far-right movement and their informal networks. The arguments and evidence presented in this chapter seek to disrupt and critique those perspectives that see a significant political and historical schism/contrast between so-called 'liberal' and right-wing, or reactionary social forces – they are, in a sense, uncomfortable bedfellows of the realpolitik of historical capitalist (global) governance.

In the following chapters, I will reflect on the far-right's 'hegemonic project'. Such an project capitalizes on widespread anxieties regarding US/Western decline, the current crisis in world order, and advocates to replace the hegemonic model of neoliberal cosmopolitan governance within the LIO with a far-right governance model that: 1) is suspicious of international institutions and their bureaucratic managerialism; 2) assumes the main contours of contemporary political contestation is cultural; 3) believes that the corruptive/totalitarian social forces of the left did not

subside with the collapse of the Soviet Union; and 4) argues that secession from certain liberal institutions is crucial for the reproduction of Western civilization.

Chapter 2

The Clash of Hegemonic Projects and the Interregnum of the Twenty-First Century

The 2008 global financial crisis, as well as the numerous failed Western military interventions in the global South, are often cited as evidence indicative of a deep and multidimensional political crisis – or “poly crisis” (Tooze 2022) – within governance structures of the LIO and greater world order; this could be interpreted as an acceleration of what is described in the previous chapter as the mounting and interconnected ‘global organic crisis’ of the post-Cold War era – a crisis which has fomented deep divisions amongst elite and non-elite groups/classes within the historic bloc of the LIO. This section will discuss the immediate implications of this crisis on the political structures of the LIO, specifically how such a crisis has contributed to the rise of Trump, Brexit, and a more general rise in far-right social forces across the transatlantic bloc.

This chapter will discuss the concepts of ‘hegemony’, ‘hegemonic crisis’ and ‘hegemonic projects’ and how such concepts contribute to an analysis of contemporary political contestation within the states/societies of the LIO as well as an analysis of the contemporary far-right. It will discuss how current political contestation/polarization observable within the LIO can be conceptualized as the result of duelling elite ‘hegemonic projects’; each containing its unique cultural, social, economic, and political content and seeking to steer its states/societies as well as greater capitalist world order in the twenty-first century. I will expand on how these ‘hegemonic projects’ are conceived and articulated by individuals or collectives of elite ‘organic intellectuals’, who seek to influence/shape/articulate aspects of political ideology within the party structures, international/transnational institutions, and broader state-societal complex of the LIO.

I will provide of an overview of various concepts, theories, and interpretations related to the current political juncture within the LIO. I will discuss notions of Western decline, the political rupture of 2016, and evaluate the utility of widely-used concepts such as populism, illiberalism, and nationalism used in social sciences to explain this phenomenon. I will then discuss the utility of Gramscian concepts in an analysis of both the rising transnational far-right movement as well as the politics of contestation within contemporary capitalist world order. A Gramscian analysis of organic intellectuals and hegemonic projects does *not only* look towards the localized, parochial, bottom-up elements of the modern far-right movement (so-called populism, illiberalism, or nationalism), but also opens a field of inquiry into the far-right's elite top-down transnationalism and the envisioned ideal-type geopolitics, culture, and political economy for the LIO and world order.

D) The Interregnum of the Twenty-First Century

Antonio Gramsci (1971) used the concept of interregnum to describe a crisis in which the “old is dying and the new cannot be born”. While the term was initially developed to explain the rise of authoritarianism and fascism in the context of the Italian state during the early twentieth century, the current crisis impacting the LIO can be described as an interregnum. This interregnum is one which transcends the nation-state and is dividing the states/societies of the LIO. This section will elaborate on this interregnum within the politics of the LIO and how the multifaceted organic crisis of the post-Cold War has impacted the institutions and ideology of contemporary global governance within world order. I will discuss the contours of the current political crisis within the LIO and how perceptions of crisis have challenged the centrist liberal political consensus and contributed to rise to far-right politics across its historical bloc. Specifically, I will discuss how

such political upsets within the LIO since 2016 are connected to long-term notions/anxieties of imperial/civilizational/hegemonic decline which have been prevalent within Western states since the late 1970s and have accelerated since the fall of the USSR. The 2008 global economic crisis, the Iraq War, and the numerous failed military interventions justified under the rubric of a so-called ‘war on terror’ have been said to indicate the terminal decline of US empire and the unravelling of its global hegemony once again (Arrighi 2005). In the political context of a defeated/weakened socialist-left, the far-right movement has mobilized popular anxieties of imperial decline and apprehension towards liberal politics and culture, to radically reshape key aspects of the governing ideology of LIO in the twenty-first century.

i) Interrogating Decline

For decades, scholars from across the political spectrum have weighed-in on the many crises facing the US and the states/societies of the LIO since the 1970s, debating to what extent such crises are indicative of hegemonic or ‘great power’ decline (Kennedy 1987; Todd 2003; Arrighi 1990, 2005, 2009; Wallerstein 2003, 2007). Periods of war and economic downturn often spur such discussions within academia and public discourse. Many scholars have linked contemporary political contestation and the rise of the far-right within the transatlantic states as connected to the hegemonic decline of the US, the West, or the LIO within world order. For realist scholars, it was liberal internationalism and the transnational historic bloc of the LIO which produced a decline in US hegemony – implying US participation in this failed project has contributed to decline (Mearsheimer 2019; Mead 2017, 2021). Alternatively, for liberal internationalists the rise of the LIO represented an extension of US power and hegemony, and as such, only the decline of the LIO and its institutions can be equated to a decline in US power and

influence (Ikenberry 2015, 2018, 2022; Haass 2008; 2014; 2018). In the previous chapter we discussed the current ‘global organic crisis’ of twenty-first century world order, noting how various dimensions of this crisis can be traced to the latter half of the twentieth century. However, global organic crisis and hegemonic decline are not analogous terms, as only the former is wedded to a praxis of human security and economic equality, whereas the latter is primarily concerned with the power/status/hegemony of transatlantic states and their institutions in world order. Our interest here is that notions of crisis and decline are foundational ideological elements of contemporary political contestation within the LIO and its states/societies – a key factor in the mobilization of so-called populist, illiberal, and nationalist social forces in recent years.

Much of the literature/debate on decline within the states/societies of the LIO since the 1970s has been centered on the US and the status of its relative dominance/hegemony over other states within world order. Often noting multiple factors contributing to such a decline, some scholars have discussed the military dimensions of US decline noting how American imperial power has waned as a result of the Vietnam War (Schurman 1971; Gray & Barlow 1985) and the War on Terror (Nye 2003; Galbraith 2007); noting a military industrial complex which is bloated, overstretched, no longer able to successfully project dominance abroad. Moreover, many have also elaborated on the economic factors of US decline, noting its mounting trade and fiscal deficits (Krugman et al. 1987), relative decline of its industrial/manufacturing sector (Waterhouse 2023), and declining unionization (Slaughter 2007) in the age of globalization. The rise of new economic and military powers has also contributed to such anxieties regarding the status of the US and transatlantic states within the LIO – with anxieties regarding the rise of Japan replaced in the late 1980s, with growing fears of a rising China (Nymalm 2020).

While one can point to various aspects of military, diplomatic and socio-economic crises within the US and the LIO, Stephen Gill (1988) notes how accounts of US decline within IR scholarship assume a world order system made up of parcellated antagonistic nation states – a realist notion in which the dominant state imposes direct structural domination. For Gill, both realist and world systems perspectives within IR, which have articulated notions of US hegemonic decline, are ontologically state-centric and assume a path-dependent and cyclical view of history. In contrast to realist accounts, liberal IR scholars such as John Ikenberry (1999; 2010; 2018; 2022) have made numerous interventions into the decline debate, arguing that the US, liberal internationalism, and the LIO remain durable and resilient structures within world order despite the twenty-first century challenges. Such a notion, however, fails to address the various crises of legitimacy that have undermined the centrist liberal consensus in recent decades. Gill notes how much of the discussion of imperial decline fails to acknowledge the unique nature of US structural power/dominance over the global political economy during the postwar period, as well as the “transnationalization of the state”, and the formation of a dominant US-centered transnational capitalist class element. Gill (1988: 4) notes three issues with assumptions of so-called American decline:

First, it is based upon an inadequate conceptualization of international structure, and of power and hegemony. This is partly because of a neglect of cultural aspects of American international power. Second, it undervalues aspects of post-war conditions, notably economic integration, alliances, and changes in identification and interest between nations. Third, its view of the consequences of changes in the American position is erroneous and exaggerated.

More recently, journalist and theorist Marco D’Eramo (2020) notes how the various prognoses of American decline have largely evaded an analysis into the unique aspects of American hegemony. He notes how US empire relies on its control of flows and procedure to

secure its dominion, for example by controlling capital markets flows rather than capital itself and relying on its clear comparative advantage in the realm of communications and information technology. D'Eramo argues that the “age of telematic globalization” requires a redefinition of economic power, one in which control over big data plays a crucial role in a state/society’s position within world order. He claims that the US remains hegemonic due to control over global flows/procedure, while also noting the hollowing-out of American empire at its core – being the first empire in history where the imperial citizens are worse off than its allies or subjects. Rather than a decline in its imperial status, we are witnessing deepening contradictions and class antagonisms emerging within the American body politic. D'Eramo (2022: 16) writes:

Here we come to the crux of the problem. America’s novel mode of dominion—not taking territory, or siphoning off capital, but controlling the networks and procedures that govern those territories and capitals, under the norms of the Washington Consensus—has been articulated since the 1970s in ‘globalization’, as a new set of power relations. The transformation became visible with the abandonment of the Bretton Woods accords; the ushering in of an aggressive politics of debt; the so-called ‘financialization’ of the economy; the imposition of structural- adjustment programmes followed by international trade agreements, under the WTO; the delocalization of industry; and—unsurprisingly, after the problems caused by young conscripts sent to fight in Vietnam—the end of military service, with its appeal to patriotism. But globalization has had unintended consequences. On the other hand, the stake the American working class holds in the US empire is not what it once was.

Rather than engage in a circular discussion on the dimensions of decline vs durability of various states, societies, or institutions of the LIO in the era of globalization – a transnational historical materialist perspective is clearer in recognizing the structural power of capital, the transnationalization of the capitalist classes and the state, as well as recognizing the contradictions and impacts of such macro-social processes on various classes and groups within state/societal complexes across world order. Beginning in the 1970s, what can be described as hegemonic transnational proto-capitalist class formation emerged, a network of social forces which is

connected to the rise of: new modes of accumulation, namely involving multinational corporations, globalized production, global/international institutions, transformations in communication and transportation technology, and the Americanization of global culture. The relative hegemony of this US-centered transnational capitalist class formation – and the forms of governance it has supported – has contributed to significant changes in the lifeworlds of individuals and populations within the states and societies of the LIO. From a transnational historical materialist perspective, these structural shifts/contradictions within world order and global political economy shape the contours of political contestation within the LIO. Assuming a global organic crisis and its impasses, questions/debates regarding the decline or durability of the US/West/LIO within the current moment are less important to this discussion on contemporary political contestation involving the political ideologies which shape the leading elite worldview(s) regarding twenty first century global governance, i.e. geopolitical strategy, political economy, human security, environmental sustainability, and social welfare. So, this analysis will instead discuss potential varieties of a decline in governance proposed by various elite intellectuals within contemporary world order.

In the previous chapter I note how since the end of the Cold War, the states/societies of the LIO have undergone significant transformations which have culminated/accelerated what certain critical IR scholars have called multifaceted ‘global organic crisis’ in world order (Gill 2012a, 2016, 2019; Parmar 2023; Manners 2020). I also note how this global organic crisis has been the cumulative outcome of decades long transnational processes/contradictions related to the rise of neoliberal governance in the era of twenty-first century globalization, a pervasive culture of market civilization, and a geopolitical environment shaped by US/Western imperialism/supremacism/unipolarity. Contemporary political contestation within the LIO is

shaped by the context of a global organic crisis, with various economic, cultural, and geopolitical dimensions which transcend the borders of the nation-state. It is in this context that pervasive notions of decline have emerged across the political spectrum within the states/societies of the LIO, contributing to new radical/reactionary political subjectivities. However, the concept of global organic crisis used in this analysis of political contestation within the LIO *is not synonymous* with the often-misleading exaggerated notions of a declining US empire, LIO, or Western civilization within the international system. An analysis of global organic crisis can be differentiated from a discussion on American ‘imperial decline’, as the former is non-reductive and underscores dimensions of risk and crisis that impact the totality of world order, including global human security and the survival of the biosphere. Moreover, unlike assumptions of decline, which invite a range of policy proposals and ideological interventions, the concept of global organic crisis is fundamentally linked to a praxis which seeks to mobilize progressive and counter-hegemonic social forces opposed to economic exploitation, inequality, and Western supremacy. The starting point of ‘global organic crisis’ rather than ‘decline’ produces an analysis which is non-teleological and acknowledges the complex class struggles occurring within the LIO, as well as the contradictions which impact the reproduction of capitalist class hegemony—or contribute to its refurbishing.

The era of ‘global organic crisis’ of the post-Cold War period has been marked by multiple interrelated conjunctural moments or crisis ‘events’ impacting the states and societies of the LIO – as well as global civil society and the politics of world order more broadly. Some examples of significant international ruptures during this period of global organic crisis include (but are not limited to): the Bosnian War in 1992, the Rwandan genocide in 1994, the attacks of 9/11, US-led military invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003, the 2008 global financial crisis, the

2011 NATO intervention in Libya, the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea, and the 2015 European migrant crisis. Such international crisis ‘events’ coincide and intersect with the slower moving aspects of the global organic crisis, such as mounting global inequality, the degradation of the biosphere, the commodification of culture and society, and simmering inter-imperial rivalries from states/societies resentful of the LIO’s unilateralism, unipolarity and exceptionalism within world order (specifically China and Russia).

Over the last half-century, the politics of world order has been partly shaped by the outcomes of various crises/conjunctures (economic and geopolitical) and the various attempts by the dominant states and class formations within the LIO to retain its hegemony and its regime of accumulation under increasingly precarious circumstances that might threaten the cohesion of this historic bloc. The actors and institutions which manage and provide leadership during moments of crisis play a fundamental role in the consolidation/refurbishing of hegemony in a post-crisis period. Wars, recessions, and regime collapse have been a conduit of transatlantic and European integration as well as the widening and deepening of its institutions; with the crisis of the Second World War being the impetus for the creation of the EU and NATO, as well as the collapse of the Soviet Union further contributing to the power/reach of such institutions. However, crisis has also, in many instances, threatened the cohesion of the LIO as a historic bloc. The failure of LIO leadership to remedy recent multiple crises has led some social forces within the transatlantic bloc to criticize many of the LIO’s core institutions, including the EU, with certain actors/organizations seeking to exit this institution and return to a more nationalist form of governance. Within the LIO, crisis is not necessarily interchangeable with decline. Rather, crisis can be understood as a moment in which hegemony is potentially threatened – while also creating an opportunity for certain ambitious elites (or factions of elites) to organize a new ideological basis for hegemony, one that

aligns with their interpretations of macrosocial transformations in global political economy and world order.

Critical left scholarship has used a framework of imperial decline as an explanation for a variety of different anti-democratic, imperial, or ‘exceptional’ actions taken by the US and Western states including neoliberal policies designed to enhance the competitive advantage of industry, or increasingly superfluous acts of military aggression and surveillance directed toward persons or states wary-of – or oppositional to – the US/Western imperium. However, framing major events as radical breaks from the norms of the LIO risks pacifying the image of the LIO as an entity – arguing that its superfluous acts of unipolarity, imperialism, and state-coercion are extraordinary events and deviations from the norms of Western liberal governance in the postwar period. In many critical accounts, decline is described as a self-imposed phenomenon where Western powers, through corruption or malfeasance, fail to superintend a complex geopolitical environment and a system of global capitalism – engaging increasingly high-risk policies of imperial supremacism and authoritarian neoliberalism to preserve status-quo US-led transatlantic capitalist hegemony within world order. For Giovanni Arrighi (2005) and David Harvey (2003), the US/UK invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the Project for a New American Century signified an unravelling of hegemony and the elevation of a ‘territorial logic of power’ where imperialist military intervention was used to resolve the issue of overaccumulation. Such a radical foreign policy is justified to the population within the imperial “core” under a rubric of ‘national interest’ and the preservation of freedom, with militarism and surveillance often proclaimed as necessary to counter or thwart the ominous and loosely defined threats of ‘terrorism’, ‘totalitarianism’, or an ‘axis of evil’, i.e. major geopolitical forces challenging the relative dominance of the US/West within world order (namely

China and Russia), or ‘rogue states’ viewed as disruptive to the regional ‘national security’ interests of Western powers (e.g. the Gaddafi regime in Libya or Putin in Russia).

ii) *Interregnum and the Patriotic Spring*

In the aftermath of 2016, many scholars and commentators would once again return to the subject of decline, arguing that Trump’s rise was tantamount to the fall of the LIO (Appelbaum 2016; Walt 2016). Largely unforeseen disruptive political occurrences would go beyond just the US presidential election victory of Donald Trump, namely the successful xenophobic campaign for British exit from the EU, as well the rising tide of far-right ‘populist’ political parties and social forces across Europe occurring against the backdrop of a major refugee crisis and crippling austerity measures. For liberal scholars, these events represented a sudden break from the norms and institutions which had long characterized Western governance during the postwar period. Whereas for realist scholars, the unravelling of the LIO was not the responsibility of Trump, but rather the product of its own naive and utopian project. There was a degree of consensus within Western IR scholarship that the events of 2016 represented a monumental turning point in the history of the LIO within world order.

In 2016, Geert Wilders, leader of the far-right Dutch Party for Freedom, proclaimed the dawn of a ‘Patriotic Spring’ following Brexit and the election of Donald Trump. The events which would follow the rupture of 2016 would only support Wilder’s claim: Matteo Salvini of Lega Nord was elected to Deputy Prime Minister of Italy in 2018; Marine Le Pen won 33.9% of the vote in the second round of French presidential election in 2017 (setting the stage to achieve 41.5% in the 2022 election); AfD won 12.6% of the vote in 2017 and attained 94 seats in the Bundestag for the

first time in its history; the Dutch Party for Freedom became the second largest party in the House of Representatives in the Netherlands; Fidesz led by Viktor Orbán won a supermajority in Hungary's 2018 election; Andrzej Duda and the PiS Party controlled both parts of Polish Parliament as well as the Presidency, causing the EU to attempt to invoke Article 7 and revoke its membership for attacks on the judiciary; Heinz-Christian Strache, leader of the far-right Freedom Party, served as Vice Chancellor of Austria between 2017 and 2019 and came in third in the 2017 national election; Swedish Democrats became the third largest party in Sweden, receiving 17.53% of the vote in the 2018 general election. This rising far-right phenomenon expands beyond Europe and North America and has spread in recent years to states outside the transatlantic bloc but aligned with the LIO. Between 2014 and 2017 major far-right victories even often preceded such rightward shifts within the core of the LIO. Examples include Shinzo Abe's landslide victory to a third term in Japan's 2014 general election, Benjamin Netanyahu winning a fourth term in Israel's 2015 general election, the success of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil's general election in 2017, and the 2014 election of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in India.

Such electoral ruptures are, however, only one of many such signs of a political fracturing in the LIO. In the years prior to Brexit and the election of Donald Trump transnational organizations, social forces and elite political operatives have aided in this process by weaving together likeminded reactionary movements across the state/societies of the LIO; uniting radical far-right forces around a shared set of grievances and interests regarding the politics of world order and the direction of twenty-first century governance. Contemporary far-right parties, organizations, and social forces have formed a shared political consciousness and ideology that cannot be reduced to a parochial inward-looking populism, illiberalism, or nationalism. Indeed, this movement has frequently articulated a vision for world order, which does *not only* invoke a

backwards or inward-looking criticism of globalization, but also contains a vision for the future of global politics; one which – despite endemic contradictions – seeks to reshape/refurbish the systems of capitalist governance within the LIO and world order.

Notions of civilizational collapse or decline within the LIO are not unique to the events of 2016, but as previously mentioned, have been a common fixture within media, academia, and popular culture since the 1960s, particularly following the end of the Bretton Woods system, the humiliating loss for the US in the Vietnam War, the May 1968 civil unrest in France, and the 1973 OPEC crisis. Since the end of the so-called ‘golden age’ of US/Western capitalist empire, scholars from across the political spectrum have warned/prophesized deep precipitous imperial decline and waning geopolitical power, which threatens the hegemony of LIO within world order – and more specifically, its most dominant transatlantic G7 states. In the immediate period following the Cold War the ‘declinistas’ quickly fell out of favour, largely replaced by liberal scholars and commentators who would optimistically laud the emergence of a ‘new world order’— an order characterized by US/NATO military supremacy, an American-dominated global market culture, as well as the further integration of states into the “Dollar Wall Street Regime” and its neoliberal development model (Gowan 2001). It would not be long before liberal euphoria regarding the America’s ‘unipolar moment’ was challenged by those who had long-warned of precipitous decline; with many vindicated by the various catastrophic US/UK invasions/occupations in the MENA region following the terrorist attacks of 9/11; the Great Recession produced by the 2007/08 global financial crisis; the further deterioration of US-Russia relations; and the meteoric rise of China as a major contender state.

Perception of decline and hopelessness across various levels of society are widely noted as factors contributing to a far-right politics of resentment/distrust directed toward both a ‘globalist elite’ (loosely defined) as well as aspects of the social formation deemed as ‘other’ (minority groups, immigrants/refugees, unhoused persons).²³ The rise of the new far-right movement has been described by intellectuals across the political spectrum as the social/political manifestation of social discontent on behalf of particular non-elite classes/groups (e.g. petit bourgeois, downwardly mobile) regarding: 1) the politics and culture of an increasingly concentrated centrist liberal elite (e.g. multiculturalism, feminism, institutional equity); 2) the societal consequences/externalities produced by liberal trade regimes and the so-called gig-economy (e.g. deindustrialization, urbanization, migration, precarious employment, dilution of unique national culture); as well as 3) the contradictions of endless war (e.g. inter-imperial rivalry, jingoism, veteran’s issues, refugees and displaced populations). Populism, illiberalism, and nationalism have been the primary terms used in scholarship and media to describe contemporary right wing political mobilization in response to such widespread notions of decline.

II) The Utility of Populism, Illiberalism, and Nationalism

Following the events of 2016, political science scholarship and journalism would experience another wave of (often romanticized) eulogies for a now bygone era of ‘checks and balances’, multilateralism/internationalism, liberal democratic norms, and bipartisanism; often resurrecting decades-old notions/debates of imperial decline. Many scholars and commentators would perform a post-mortem for the LIO following Brexit and Trump’s presidential victory in 2016; often

²³ Tom Engelhardt (2016) has said that Donald Trump “is the first person to run openly and without apology on a platform of American decline.”

underscoring the insecurities, anxieties, subjectivities, and forms of alienation produced during the era of capitalist globalization which in hindsight influenced these largely unforeseen events. In retrospect, many noted the socioeconomic effects of deindustrialization, liberal immigration policies, and the contradictions of Western military adventurism as contributing factors to the rise of far-right's so-called populism, illiberalism, and nationalism (or combination of such concepts). The rise of the far-right within the LIO is then widely described by scholars and commentators as a bottom-up political expression/reaction to various top-down social/economic/political pressures (real and imagined) inflicted by the macro-societal processes of globalization and its minority of elite beneficiaries. With these issues in mind, this section will discuss the concepts of populism, illiberalism, and nationalism, and evaluate the utility of these concepts in an analysis of the contemporary far-right and political contestation within the LIO.

i) Populism

The cause and nature of right-wing populist politics remains a controversial subject amongst political scientists. For example, Roger Eatwell and Matthew Goodwin (2018) have argued that what they have described as “national populism” is: 1) neither fascist or neoliberal²⁴; 2) not the product of economic crisis; and 3) primarily concerned with democratic issues of public trust, identity, and immigration. In contrast, Wendy Brown (2018: 8-10) has described the recent rise of right-wing populism as “neoliberalism’s Frankensteinian creation” that is the product of failed neoliberal policies, is “bled directly from the wound of dethroned privilege that whiteness, Christianity and maleness granted to those who were otherwise nothing and no one” and is fundamentally authoritarian and anti-democratic. Others similarly have described various

²⁴ Eatwell and Goodwin have a narrow conception of neoliberal governance which they equate with free-market fundamentalism.

expressions of far-right populism as a ‘morbid symptom’ (Worth 2019; Sassoon 2021) of a nihilistic neoliberal political economy and social order – an order with a historical legacy of racism, white supremacy, Eurocentrism, nativism, chauvinism, and imperialism.

There is a general consensus within the social sciences that various crises within the states/societies of the LIO have contributed to a general rise in a so-called ‘populist’ politics of ‘us’ vs. ‘them’, or the ‘everyman’ vs. ‘the elite’. This populist type of politics can be found across a spectrum of political ideologies and political party affiliations, each bemoaning the alienation of political/economic/cultural elites in response to the multiple crises impacting domestic politics and world order. In recent years examples of populist movements range from the ‘Multitudes’ of left-wing Occupy Wall Street protesters across the LIO in 2012, to the far-right English Defense League’s Islamophobic/anti-immigrant protests across the UK and EU during the 2010s. Identifying consistent connecting characteristics shared by an ideologically diverse mosaic of so-called populist movements/parties/leaders has been a challenge for scholars on the subject.

For post-Marxist scholars such as Chantal Mouffe (2018) and Ernesto Laclau (2005), populism represents a type of political discourse/logic which can be used by the social forces of the right, left, or center, and is based on a political frontier between elite and non-elite groups and/or classes. For Mouffe and Laclau, such an adversarial we/them distinction is a fundamental part of the political. Mouffe has argued that populism represents a framework/strategy which can benefit progressive social forces of the left, by drawing “chains of equivalency” between various left struggles and forging a new mass politics of solidarity. Mouffe (2018:10-11) defines populism as:

[A] discursive strategy of constructing a political frontier dividing society into two camps and calling for the mobilization of the ‘underdog’ against ‘those in power’. It is not an

ideology and cannot be attributed to a specific programmatic content. Nor is it a political regime. It is a way of doing politics that can take various ideological forms according to both time and place, and is compatible with a variety of institutional frameworks. We can speak of a ‘populist moment’ when under the pressure of political and socioeconomic transformations, the dominant hegemony is being destabilized by the multiplication of unsatisfied demands. In such situations institutions fail to secure the allegiance of the people as they attempt to defend the existing order.

In contrast to Mouffe, Cas Mudde (2004: 543) has defined populism as not only a strategy, but “an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people.” For Mudde “populism is moralistic rather than programmatic” (2004: 544) and as such easily combined with other ideologies (e.g. nationalism, communism, socialism, fascism); and while it is (in theory) pro-democracy, it is also ideologically anti-liberal democracy (2019: 8). It can then be said that the concept of populism then has three (often overlapping) definitions based on the context it is used: 1) a type of political strategy/style, one which is sincerely or cynically utilized by a range of leaders, political party structures, and social movements; 2) a framework to understand/theorize modern democratic political contestation; and 3) a political ideology which bifurcates the population into two opposing classes or camps. Enzo Traverso (2019: 32) notes:

Even the most nuanced, sharp, informed, and rigorous attempts to conceptualise populism inevitably fall into this epistemological trap. Populism becomes an abstract category formalised in a set of general features—authoritarianism, radical nationalism understood as a political religion, charismatic leadership, dislike for pluralism and the rule of law, a monolithic and homogeneous vision of the ‘people’, demagogic rhetoric, and so on—which certain far-right and leftist movements undoubtedly fit. In order to define this abstract category, however, one must ignore both their historical genealogies and their social and political aims, which dramatically diverge.

Other important contributions to populism studies in recent years include political economist Dani Rodrik (2017) who has argued that certain macro-economic factors determine the

aspects of the ideological content of so-called populist movements, noting how supply-side Western economies are prone to producing right wing variants of populism, whereas demand-side economies in South America are more prone to a left-wing variant. Similarly, Arthur Borriello and Anton Jager (2021: 299) have advanced a critical refurbishing of the concept of populism, arguing for “the adoption of a *thicker* notion of populism that purges its hypergeneralist deficit”. While all such analyses provide useful insights into varieties of anti-elitist politics within world order, I argue that labelling the contemporary far-right movement as ideologically ‘populist’ carries more risks than reward; prone to essentializing the lines of political contestation drawn by far-right elites themselves and potentially valorizing the politics of the movement by conflating its claimed/advertised project with what such politics actually seeks to achieve. Rather than concede that the far-right is, in-fact, a mass counter-hegemonic movement resisting a corrupt elite, I will argue that the far-right’s governance ideology is fundamentally top-down and grounded in a hierarchical social philosophy of authoritarianism, social Darwinism, and xenophobia/racism. The concept of populism is then unhelpful to a comprehensive analysis of the contemporary far-right movement and current political contestation within the LIO on two separate prongs:

- 1) The label of populist has been applied to a wide range of political actors, parties and social movements which share very little in common ideologically, strategically or in class composition. As Domenico Losurdo (2016: 337) notes: “In absolutizing the contradiction between masses and power, and condemning power as such, populism proves incapable of drawing a line of demarcation between revolution and counter-revolution.”

- 2) It often assumes/essentializes a framework of elite vs. non-elite which assumes the ideology and political strategy of the capitalist class within the LIO is static, organized,

and consistent. As such, a populist framework does not invite deeper inquiry into the various crises, contradictions, and conflict within the ruling class fraction, or its linkages to so-called ‘populist’ political movements ‘from below’.

For scholars and activists associated with both right populism and left populism, the concept of populism involves a cross-class coalition of social forces from-below advocating for what are often described as ‘common sense’ policies that are pitted against those ideas/interests of the ruling/establishment elite (a loosely defined coalition of alienated liberal politicians, transnational capitalists, corporate media, the entertainment industry, and intelligentsia). Whereas within centrist liberal scholarship and journalistic political commentary, populist movements are depicted as one or both: 1) an unfortunate product of backwardness, ignorance, and alienation produced by systemic issues related to modernity and political economy; and 2) the product of malicious foreign interference from an adversarial contender state (e.g. Russia, China). On all fronts, the use of the term rarely invokes a deep critical reflection regarding the structure of capitalist social relations, Western supremacy, or the role/agency of the transnational capitalist class fractions in the mobilization of so-called populist social forces.

It is clear that the contemporary far-right movement has benefited from ambiguity regarding the concept of populism and has readily adopted/cultivated a ‘populist’ image/label of a mass grassroots democratic movement in light of such mass confusion regarding the term. I propose that far-right elites have purposefully cultivated a ‘populist’ identity for the far-right movement to distance it (ideologically and culturally) from status quo centrist-neoliberal political party structures, ‘globalist’ elites, transnational liberal institutions, and cosmopolitan notions of human rights, universal citizenship, and class solidarity. Moreover, the far-right’s hijacking of populism

as a political identity has essentialized the relationship between transnational elites and all universalist political ideologies, which is why such global elites are often described/homogenized by the far-right as being simultaneously/equally liberal, fascist, socialist, and communist. For these reasons, I argue it is inappropriate to use the term populism to describe the contemporary political contestation within the LIO or the rise of the far-right movement; especially considering far-right ‘populist’ leaders/intellectuals have been revealed to be operating within various highly exclusive and opaque elite organizations/networks.

ii) *Illiberalism*

In recent years, the concept of ‘illiberal democracy’ has been utilized by both social forces of the far-right and so-called liberal center within the LIO to describe the contemporary fault-lines of political contestation. The concept of illiberal democracy was initially developed by Daniel A. Bell, David Brown, Kanishka Jayasuriya, and David Martin Jones in their book *Towards Illiberal Democracy in Pacific Asia* (1995), where it refers to the alternative path toward democracy outside of the optimistic liberal democratic model of Fukuyama’s ‘end of history’. A largely pessimistic account of Western liberal foreign policy, for Bell et al., the resistance of local communities to the norms and institutions of Western liberal democracy indicates that the liberal model is not responsive enough to local traditions and needs, and as such, liberal notions such as human rights, democracy and capitalism must be adjusted if they are to be adopted outside the West.

The concept of illiberal democracy was further elaborated by Fareed Zakaria in his influential *Foreign Affairs* essay “The Rise of Illiberal Democracy” (1995) and later in his book *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad* (2007). Zakaria provides a useful window into the dominant liberal interpretation of contemporary political contestation

within the LIO – as well as the shift toward post-Soviet forms of authoritarian governance at the turn of the twentieth century. Zakaria argues that constitutional liberalism is the ingredient which has historically contributed to the stability of the West’s political order, while also noting how this is only one of many paths towards democratization. The rise of so-called ‘illiberal democratic’ leadership is due to processes of centralization and the erosion of pluralist and constitutionalist liberal institutions. Illiberalism then inhabits a space between liberal governance and anti-liberal totalitarianism. In recent years, the label of illiberal democracy has been used to describe a wide range of regimes including Turkey under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Hungary under Viktor Orbán, the Philippines under Rodrigo Duterte, the US under Donald Trump, China under Xi Jinping, India under Narendra Modi, and Russia under Vladimir Putin.

The concept of ‘illiberalism’ has been used in recent decades to describe all forms of rule which stray from the apparent norms of Western liberal democracies. While initially developed by liberals to critique quasi-liberal postcommunist states, in more recent years, the term has been adopted in the political communications of far-right leaders such as Viktor Orbán. Orbán, a self-described illiberal democrat, has used the label to describe his ideal form of governance, one which he contrasts to the liberal internationalism or ‘globalism’ of the EU’s elite in Brussels or other transnational institutions. The liberal vs. illiberal cleavage, much like that of populism, serves to obnubilate the complexity of the current global organic crisis and the interplay of various social forces. Moreover, many of the leaders, political party structures and social forces which have been demarcated as ‘illiberal’ within our current moment, have readily adopted neoliberal economic policies and reforms; with their so-called ‘illiberalism’ often confined to the socio-cultural sphere (intolerance towards liberal norms/causes related to feminism, gender/sexual identity, environmentalism, multiculturalism, and notions of global citizenship). Much like populism, the

term illiberalism offers little to an analysis of political ideology and is selectively/strategically used to describe an array of actors, social forces, and regimes which deviate from US/Western interests. Moreover, the label of ‘illiberal democracy’ is often applied selectively to rivals of the LIO and sparingly used to describe nation-states within the West’s political orbit – despite such regimes fitting the illiberal description (e.g. Ukraine and Israel).

Perhaps the most fundamental issue with the concept of ‘illiberal democracy’ relates to how particular elites within the ‘national conservative’ political movement have also used the language of liberalism to promote anti-democracy, framing mass democracy as a form of political order which is contrary to the interests of a regime of economic governance that privileges private capital. For example, ‘national conservative’ tech billionaire Peter Thiel (2009) has challenged whether liberal freedom and democracy are philosophically compatible, instead arguing that it is desirable for the individual entrepreneur to escape a confining ‘world politics’ and venture into new freedom-enhancing technological frontiers (e.g. cyberspace, outer space, and sea stading). Indeed, for Thiel, liberal economic ideas are also much more compatible with nationalism and conservatism, rather than the more disruptive forces of democracy, which might seek to expand the welfare state or demand forms of social equity/equality that challenge or distort a liberal capitalist regime of accumulation. Moreover, for decades, ‘national conservatives’ and figures associated with the far-right within the US have grounded their criticisms of establishment liberalism on (perceived) encroaching forms of statism which violate liberal/individual rights and freedoms. As such, labelling the far-right as either liberal, illiberal, democratic, or undemocratic provides little clarity regarding more specific aspects of the contemporary far-right’s ideology and its supportive social forces within our contemporary moment.

As convenient as it is for liberals to claim that far-right ‘illiberalism’ represents a threat to a once pristine LIO and its institutions, I have noted in the previous chapter how such an account risks sanitizing decades of synthesized interests and cooperation between the Western liberal establishment and the social forces of the far-right. Scholars have also noted how the ideology of the far-right, and even interwar fascism, is intimately connected to liberal ideology, as Oliver Eagleton (2023) notes: “An avowedly “liberal” economic philosophy, fascism was concerned with shrinking the state to its repressive and ideological functions while clearing the way for private competition.” As such, only a highly reductionist, obscurantist, and ahistorical approach could describe political contestation within the LIO as between the institutions and social forces of liberalism vs. those of illiberalism.

iii) *Nationalism*

During a speech in Houston in October 2018, Donald Trump announced: “You know what I am? I’m a nationalist. OK? I’m a nationalist.” Trump’s proclamation reignited a decades-old debate in the social sciences regarding the nature of nationalism, and to what extent this term is coupled with – or plagued by – its historical connotations of racism, regression, tribalism, and fascism. Since nationalism is often associated in various ways with the social forces of the far-right, the utility of this concept in describing contemporary political mobilization and contestation should be examined. Scholarship on the subject has sought to categorize and define key terms, namely: nation, state, nation-state, patriotism, and nationalism.

Benedict Anderson (2006: 6) defines the nation as an “imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.” The age of nationalism in eighteenth century Europe would replace the previous religious and dynastic political orders. Anderson (2006: 44)

notes that a shared nationalist consciousness was developed alongside the printing press – what he calls “print capitalism” – which would lead to the emergence of literary communities and would also elevate and privilege particular languages/dialects into “languages of power” within a particular community. Anderson notes that the concept of nation imagines a horizontal comradeship between members and is not marked by a unitary moment of conception, however its emergence would fundamentally transform a society’s relationship to time. Moreover, Anderson notes how nationalism provides an outlet for questions of death, mortality, sacrifice, and immortality in a manner which is unique in political ideology (e.g. Liberalism, Marxism) and more akin to the role once filled by religion. A similar approach is found in the works of Ernest Gellner (1983: 1) who defines nationalism as “a political principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent [...] [A] theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones, and, in particular, that ethnic boundaries within a given state - a contingency already formally excluded by the principle in its general formulation - should not separate the power-holders from the rest.” Like Anderson, Gellner notes the role of standardized language, industrialization, the education system and bureaucratic control as core features of nationalism. Anderson and Gellner both share the notion that nationalism arises alongside the formation of the nation-state as a political unit.

A major debate regarding nationalism pertains to its relationship with processes of modernity and whether nations precede the arrival of the nation-state. Rather than a regressive, reactionary, or backwards-looking phenomenon, many scholars have argued that nationalism is fundamentally linked to processes of modernization (Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1992; Greenfield 1996; Anderson 2006). Other scholars have emphasized nationalism’s pre-modern origins and have argued that the modernizing theories are functionalist and technologically deterministic

(Gorski 2000; Connor 1970, 1978; Smith 1972, 1979, 1986, 1989, 1993, 1996). For Anthony Smith (1986), scholarship on nations and nationalism can be broadly divided into three broad camps: 1) those who view the nation as a primordial “natural unit of human association outside time” based on language, religion, race, ethnicity and territory; 2) those who view its emergence as occurring alongside modernity in the eighteenth century; and 3) what Smith describes as ‘perennialists’ who view the nations as an enduring phenomenon, with evidence of development occurring prior to the age of modernity.

Walker Connor (1978) notes how the term nationalism has conflicting definitions, an issue which he argues impedes a scholarly analysis of this phenomenon. For Connor, one definition denotes a loyalty to the state, and the other which denotes loyalty to ethnic group. To resolve this issue, Connor uses the term patriotism to describe the former and ethnonationalism to describe the latter. Moreover, Connor was critical of what he described as an intellectually elitist framework which views nationalism as a top-down enterprise; for him, a nation is when members of a given society have the subjective experience of being part of a nation (Conversi 2002: 11). For Connor, the structuralist theories of nationalism failed to properly account for the agency and worldview of nationalists from-below and its ethnic character.

Social psychologist Michael Billig (1995) uses the concept of “banal nationalism” to describe the everyday processes and structures which reproduce nationalism within a society. For Billig, in the 1980s and 1990s scholarship on nationalism over-emphasized/prioritized nationalism’s association with fringe extremist organizations and xenophobic politics, and as such, many have failed to recognize that nationalism is a fundamental component of contemporary political life – including our currency, popular terminology, sporting events and other civic

patriotic rituals/symbols. While Billig describes such forms of nationalism as banal, he does not mean they are harmless, as nationalism reproduces the identities, institutions, and patterns of social life which produce armies and armaments.

In light of the recent waves of far-right politics as well as the embrace of nationalism by political leaders and parties within various states/societies of the LIO, scholars and commentators have asked whether nationalism necessitates one to adhere to supremacist, exclusionary, or xenophobic politics. Yael Tamir (2019) has argued that nationalism is a crucial component of democracy; that states and their institutions are man-made entities, which are geographically anchored. Moreover, those who view nationalism as a potentially emancipatory/progressive phenomenon claim that those who participate in state institutions require a shared identity to invoke trust and demarcation (Tamir 2019; Judis 2018; Nairn 1975). Tamir (2019) notes how in recent years, liberal leaders such as French President Emmanuel Macron have sought to establish neat separation between a healthy universalistic civic patriotism, and a toxic particularistic nationalism, inconveniently discovering that untangling the two is both difficult as well as a disservice to progressive social forces who should reclaim nationalism from the far-right.

The self-described ‘national conservative’ scholar Yoram Hazony (2018) has argued that nationalism is a virtue and an antidote to what he describes as “liberal imperialism”, the force which seeks to codify universal liberal principles into law and undermine the sovereignty of the nation. An ardent Zionist, Hazony adopts what can be described as a primordial approach to nationalism, arguing that the nation-state is a form of government which best represents bonds of human loyalty shaped by history, language, and religion. For Hazony, the European Union is the paramount ‘liberal imperialist’ institution within contemporary world order, which seeks to

undermine the nation. Despite using the language of (ethno)nationalism, Hazony as well other so-called ‘national conservatives’ have increasingly articulated a project which invokes Western civilizational solidarity. Such solidarities often transcend the nation-state, invoking religious/spiritual and millenarian notions to support intra-civilizational international alliances for a multidimensional civilizational rivalry with Islam and China. Despite claiming a devotion to the nation-state, the project of ‘national conservatism’ is more akin to what Rogers Brubaker (2017) and others (Stewart 2020; Maher et al. 2021; Bassin 2022; Bettiza et al. 2023; Yilmaz & Morieson 2023) have called “civilizationism”, a transnational identity and political program mobilized around the perceived transnational interests and threats to the so-called Judeo-Christian West.

While the concept of nationalism and its use within the social sciences is contested, most scholarly accounts agree that nationalism has the capacity for malignancy, as well as the capacity to take a socially progressive form; perhaps why Tom Nairn (1975) likened the concept to the two-faced Roman god Janus. While structuralist and materialist scholarship notes contemporary nationalism’s relationship with eighteenth century processes of capitalist modernity, industrialization, and the development of the nation-state; historical ethnographic accounts provide compelling insights into the content of nationalism across time and space as well as the “ethno-symbolic” roots of the phenomenon (Smith 1995, 2009). Much of the scholarship and major debates in the field of nationalism studies predate the era of globalization, and as such they often fail to account for the cataclysmic transformations in world order, namely the collapse of the Soviet Union, globalization of political economy, the rise of transnational organizations, the proliferation of communication technology during the internet age, the transnationalization of the state, and the formation of transnational classes.

Rather than speak of nationalism or nation as a static category, one can only speak of types of nationalism which emerge within different historical structures. Moreover, the types of nationalism which emerge throughout history correlate to the type of state-regime, its institutions, class struggles, and world order. Even so-called ‘national conservatives’, with a primordial view of the nation-state, have sought to develop transnational alliances and networks of solidarity in the twenty-first century. Many of the current right-wing expressions of nationalism within the LIO during the era of neoliberal globalization have in various ways transnationalized alongside macrosocial processes in the state, society, and world order – with identities, cultures, institutions, grievances, and boundaries which transcend the nation-state. It can be said that we have entered an era of transnational far-right nationalism (or neo-nationalism), a circumstance in which political contestation from the far-right is increasingly expressed along civilizational lines over the future of global governance and what Immanuel Wallerstein (1991) calls ‘geoculture’ – the broad macro-cultural rubric for the entirety of the world system.

III) The Clash of Hegemonic Projects

This section will discuss the utility of Neo-Gramscian concepts in an analysis of contemporary political contestation within the LIO. I will discuss how contradictions linked to the current global organic crisis in world order have contributed to what can be regarded as a ‘hegemonic crisis’ within the institutions and ideological structures of contemporary global governance. Such a hegemonic crisis has created space for the far-right to emerge as a prominent force within the transatlantic bloc. Multiple crisis events during the post-Cold War period have conjured decades-old assumptions/perceptions regarding a declining US empire, LIO or ‘Western civilization’ and have laid the foundations for a far-right challenge to the status-quo centrist liberal political

consensus within the transatlantic bloc. The alienation of liberal elites and their failure to address such multiple aspects of the current crisis has elevated the status of far-right elites, movements, and parties within the LIO, despite what can be described as fundamentally anti-democratic and anti-social aspects of their political program. Within much of liberal scholarship and journalism, the modern far-right movement is viewed as a crude, incoherent and misdirected/bottom-up reaction to inevitable/naturalized processes of globalization and (believed) imperial decline. The externalities of such processes are said to contribute to a backwards looking ‘nationalism’ and an anti-elitist ‘populist’ rejection of establishment systems of governance; with a tendency toward support for authoritarian or illiberal ‘strongman’ leadership.

The bottom-up language and frameworks of populism, illiberalism, and nationalism often omits or obscures the top-down hegemonic designs of the modern far-right movement, which is supported and led by powerful elites within the LIO and is equipped with transnational networks of ‘organic intellectuals’ (individuals and groups) who exercise high levels influence and political agency during moments of ‘hegemonic crisis’ and epitomize the dominance of transnational elites over the politics of contemporary capitalist world order. During the era of ‘global organic crisis’, elite perceptions of imperial decline have accelerated the current ‘hegemonic crisis’ over the ruling ideology for the LIO and its systems of governance – contributing to radical prescriptions for elite governance in the wake of various (real and perceived) imminent challenges to the West’s relative dominance within world order. I will argue that the current ‘hegemonic crisis’ is one which has metastasized across the national borders of LIO states and can therefore be regarded as indicative of a transnational ‘clash of hegemonic projects’ which has further divided the class formations and states/societies of the LIO.

i) *Hegemony and Hegemonic Projects*

The concept of hegemony is contested within the social sciences and has been used by a wide range of scholars throughout history to describe various forms of rule. The term is derived from the Greek concept, and its use tends to denote both a position of leadership and of supremacy over territory, politics, culture, and ideology.²⁵ It describes a system of rule which incorporates aspects of both the capacity for violent domination as well as aspects of public consent. The balance of these two aspects of coercion and consent are fundamental to a hegemonic system. This balance is always uneven, and the concept has been applied to systems which are more reliant on coercion, domination, or supremacy to maintain power; other times, it is used to describe regimes which have achieved relatively high levels of popular consent. As such, the concept of hegemony is used to describe various forms of governance, institutions, actors, and regimes. For example, one might use the concept to describe the domestic/national hegemony of a particular political party structure (for example, the Liberal Democratic Party in Japan since 1955). Similarly, the concept can be applied to the international sphere and refer to the hegemony of a particular state or empire relative to others in the international system (e.g. British empire, US empire). Hegemony might also be used to describe the dominance of a particular linguistic group within world order, for example, the Anglosphere, its appendage institutions, and the use of the English language within transnational organizations and multinational corporations in the era of globalization. It might also be applied to a particular ruling class or ruling caste within the state or global political economy. Moreover, it might more abstractly refer to a particular governance ideology (e.g. liberal

²⁵ Perry Anderson's (2017) *The H-Word* provides a detailed political etymology of the term, detailing transformations in its use from ancient Greece to the modern day.

internationalism, neoconservatism) or a particular regime of accumulation or type of political economy (e.g. Fordism, Post-Fordism, neoliberalism, feudalism).

Antonio Gramsci developed a novel Marxist theory of hegemony, one which created a generalized sociological use for the concept as way to describe stable forms of rule by any social class and its balancing of coercion and consent (Anderson, 2022). For Gramsci, the formation of consent was a fundamental component of a hegemonic class rule, one which was achieved through cultural leadership. Raymond Williams (1980: 37) notes how for Gramsci:

[H]egemony supposes the existence of something which is truly total, which is not merely secondary or superstructural, like the weak sense of ideology, but which is lived at such a depth, which saturates the society to such an extent, and which, as Gramsci put it, even constitutes the limit of common sense for most people under its sway, that it corresponds to the reality of social experience very much more clearly than any notions derived from the formula of base and superstructure. For if ideology were merely some abstract imposed notion, if our social and political and cultural ideas and assumptions and habits were merely the result of specific manipulation, of a kind of overt training which might be simply ended or withdrawn, then the society would be very much easier to move and to change than in practice it has ever been or is. This notion of hegemony as deeply saturating the consciousness of a society seems to be fundamental. And hegemony has the advantage over general notions of totality, that it at the same time emphasizes the facts of domination.

Canadian political scientist Robert Cox was an early pioneer in applying Gramsci's concepts to the field of IR. Cox notes how hegemony is always unstable, and all universalizing tendencies produce contradictions and counter-hegemonic social forces. A static definition of hegemony or applying the concept narrowly to a particular realm (e.g. state, class, cultural/linguistic group) isolates the complex processes of transformation as well as the contradictions within a hegemonic system. The so-called Neo-Gramscian or transnational historical materialist approach to global political economy is crucially concerned with transcending the state in its analysis of power, hegemony, and class. The Neo-Gramscian approach to world order analyses 'state-society complexes' and seeks to uncover the synchronic and

diachronic aspects of profound socio-political transformation with a conceptual framework that looks to the changing nature of hegemony, ‘historic blocs’ and world orders (Cox 1981, 1987, 1992, 2001). Cox’s method looks to sets of social forces (ideas, institutions, material capabilities), forms of state and world orders – all of which characterize different long-term historical structures, some hegemonic, or relatively stable, and others relatively unstable or under conditions of crisis (Mittleman, 1998). The global organic crisis of contemporary neoliberal capitalism has contributed to the refurbishing or transformation the historical structures of world order, including its prevailing ideas, institutions, and class structure (Gill, 1995). Cox (1992: 146) notes:

Distinct historical phases, with their historically specific ontologies, are not sealed off from one another as mutually incomprehensible or mutually irrelevant constructs. Historical phases in our own current civilization are produced, one following the other, in a process of contradiction. The contradictions and conflicts that arise within any established structure create the opportunity for its transformation into a new structure. This is the simplest model of historical change [...] Knowledge of history, not just of events but of the regularities or general principles that help explain historical change, can, in turn, become a guide for action. History thus generates theory. This theory is not absolute knowledge, not a final revelation or completeness of rational knowledge about the laws of history. It is a set of viable working hypotheses. It is a form of knowledge that transcends the historical epoch, that makes the epoch intelligible in larger perspective – not the perspective of eternity which stands outside history, but the perspective of a long sweep of history.

A framing of political power as containing an ideological component is not entirely unique to Gramscian analysis, and similar themes have been advanced by contemporary liberal scholars in relation to statecraft. For example, Joseph Nye (1990, 2009) discusses the use of hard power, soft power, and “smart power” (the strategic balance of the two). Moreover, Structural Marxists such as Louis Althusser (2014) argued in the latter half of the twentieth century that the capitalist state requires both a ‘repressive state apparatus’ as well as an ‘ideological state apparatus’ to rule over a social formation. Neo-Gramscian IR, however, differs from such approaches in its analysis of hegemony, as it is less concerned with foreign policy strategy or static/structural categorizations. Rather, a Neo-Gramscian approach aims to provide a description of social transformation/crisis

within a historic bloc or world order(s) through a comprehensive/multidisciplinary analysis of ruling ideas, intellectual social forces, elite institutions, complex class struggles, and material/biological contexts/conditions. Moreover, a Neo-Gramscian-inspired Critical Theory is linked to a progressive and transformative praxis, one which seeks to elucidate the contradictions/implications/limitations of various top-down ‘ruling ideas’ regarding capitalist governance within the LIO and world order. William Carroll (2015: 714) notes:

Hegemonic knowledge is sedimented in a whole array of dominant institutions—the state, the economy, and mainstream media to mention the three most obvious ones. It comprises an ensemble of discourses grounded in historical relations of power—colonialism and racism, class relations of capitalism as well as precapitalist survivals, patriarchy and heteronormativity, the instrumental rationalities that prioritize profit and efficiency while marginalizing concerns for ecological sustainability and the quality of life.

Crucial to a Gramscian analysis of political power is an investigation into the intellectuals of the dominant class. While imprisoned by Mussolini’s fascist regime, Gramsci developed the term “organic intellectual” to conceptualize the role of intellectuals within a social order and specifically the part these actors play in the articulation and reproduction of ruling class hegemony. For Gramsci, it is the organic intellectuals of the dominant class formation who create a basis of consent for elite rule and shape the hegemonic ideological assumptions of a particular social order. As such, these elite intellectuals are ‘organically’ connected to the ruling class and their class interests, playing a crucial role in moulding the ingrained and broadly held assumptions of a particular social order, described as “common sense”. Gramsci (1971: 12) notes:

The relationship between the intellectuals and the world of production is not as direct as it is with the fundamental social groups but is, in various degrees, “mediated” by the whole fabric of society and by the complex of superstructures, of which the intellectuals are, precisely, the “functionaries”. It should be possible to both measure the “organic quality” of the various intellectual strata and their degree of connection with a fundamental social group, and to establish a gradation of their functions and the superstructures from bottom to the top (from the structural base upwards) [...] The intellectuals are then the dominant group’s “deputies” exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political

government [...] The democratic-bureaucratic system has given rise to a great mass of functions which are not all justified by the political necessities of production, though they are justified by the political necessities of the dominant fundamental group.

While not necessarily directly connected to the necessities of production, ‘common sense’, for Gramsci, is understood to be representative the interests/ideology of the ruling class segments of a particular social formation and part of the “superstructure” that supports its mode of production. Gramsci (1971: 10) notes how ‘organic intellectuals’ are developed within all social groups/classes, however, their development is most extensive within the dominant class segments of society. For Neo-Gramscian IR scholars, an investigation into ideological ‘superstructure’ and elite intellectuals is a crucial component to any analysis of hegemony within contemporary world order. For Gill (2012c: 30) it is the organic intellectuals within a social order that:

[A]rticulate the goals and legitimate the actions and institutions of the ruling elements of a given society, seeking to stabilize the basic relations between rulers and ruled, simultaneously marginalizing and incorporating opposition. One function of these organic intellectuals is to depoliticize fundamental questions relating to the nature of capitalism, transforming political debates into technical questions directed at appropriate means rather than at questioning the fundamental ends of the capitalist system; they represent accumulation through the commodity form and markets as if it were common sense.

Within the advanced Western liberal democratic states during the postwar period, all significant political initiatives have been the result of coordinated, organized, and well-funded collective elite projects. Such elite-led projects are forged through research and policy-planning, which involves collectives of organic intellectuals in the form of well-funded political parties, transnational forums, think tanks, Ivy League institutes, as well as the individual contributions of organic intellectual scholars (Gill, 2012b: 514; Shoup, 2015). Historically, such initiatives have played a major role the creation of the EU as well as processes of expanding/deepening European integration in the postwar period. European integration as well as the global liberal convergence around other major transnational organizations such as the WTO, UN, and G7 serve as key

examples of what can be described as the architecture of US-centered transnational capitalist hegemony. The top-down integration of Europe as a political formation through trade agreements, intellectual forums, and transnational organizations dedicated to continuing the project integration has been a hallmark success for liberal organic intellectuals during the postwar period. This is why a theory of ideology is crucial any critical material analysis of politics within contemporary world order, as Stuart Hall (1986: 29) notes:

The problem of ideology, therefore, concerns the ways in which ideas of different kinds grip the minds of masses, and thereby become a 'material force'. In this, more politicized, perspective, the theory of ideology helps us to analyse how a particular set of ideas comes to dominate the social thinking of a historical bloc, in Gramsci's sense; and, thus, helps to unite such a bloc from the inside, and maintain its dominance and leadership over society as a whole. It has especially to do with the concepts and the languages of practical thought which stabilize a particular form of power and domination; or which reconcile and accommodate the mass of the people to their subordinate place in the social formation. It has also to do with the processes by which new forms of consciousness, new conceptions of the world, arise, which move the masses of the people into historical action against the prevailing system. These questions are at *stake* in a range of social struggles. It is to explain them, in order that we may better comprehend and master the terrain of ideological struggle, that we need not only a theory but a theory adequate to the complexities of what we are trying to explain.

In an era of global capitalism, organic intellectuals do not only produce knowledge which informs and legitimizes neoliberal governance and aid in processes of LIO integration, but they also mobilize knowledge through extensive elite networking, thereby helping to form a strategic consensus within the dominant classes within world order (Carroll, 2013: 3). Such a transnational elite consensus/coordination is imperative during the contemporary global organic crisis, a circumstance where status-quo hegemony is being fragile/challenged, while LIO states/societies are locked into a system of complex interdependence. In his analysis of such transnational political projects during the period of globalization, Kees van der Pijl (1995: 107) recommends that researchers: "[V]iew these networks as channels of cultural synchronization and informal policy discussion and preparation [. . .] Transnational elite networks in this context play a role as

‘international political parties which operate within each nation with the full concentration of international forces.’”

The concept of ‘hegemonic project(s)’ is foundational to the analysis provided within this dissertation and will be used to theorize, categorize, and describe contemporary political contestation within the states/societies of the liberal international order and their institutions of governance. A transnational historical materialist analysis seeks to provide insights regarding transitions in a particular ‘historic bloc’ as well as ‘world order’. Such an analysis involves an investigation into the ideas, institutions, and material capacities which shape a particular ‘hegemonic bloc’, as well as an investigation into the social hierarchies and mode of political economy which serves to reproduce its ruling class power-bloc. The study of world orders is then concerned with long historic intervals, an analysis of slow-moving structures and trends, as well as moments and conjunctures, which may transcend the politics of the individual nation state. The concept of a hegemonic project as a unit of analysis helps capture/crystallize the forces of competition and rivalry within a complex globalized world order system. The concept of a ‘hegemonic project’ encapsulates the competing macro-social political designs or grand strategies pursued by elites and is articulated by their ‘organic intellectuals’. Use of the term ‘project’ assumes that hegemonic structures are not monolithic or static, but rather that one can identify plural ideal-types and strategies for elite governance within the LIO. Hegemony within world order and its systems of global governance requires a comprehensive strategy for rule, one which includes socio-cultural, philosophic, theoretical, economic, and geopolitical components. Here is where think tanks and other collective intellectual bodies play a crucial role, serving as “boundary organizations” (Medvetz 2008) that mediate and coalesce diffuse/disperate sub-ideological

orientations and fields of knowledge/expertise into a coherent coalition to champion a particular hegemonic project.

Due to the secretive nature of various elite institutions as well as their complex and informal role in the construction of state policy, a forensic analysis of elite intellectuals and their networks provides a window into the ideas shaping global governance. Within the field of IR, an analysis of hegemonic projects within contemporary world order requires an investigation into the diffuse forms of power/agency/influence exercised by elite intellectual networks in the twenty-first century, and how these intellectual social forces aid in the reproduction of global capitalism and Western geopolitical dominance. An examination of competing hegemonic projects and the role of organic intellectuals in shaping global politics helps contextualize and conceptualize the content and significance of contemporary far-right politics within the LIO and the threat it poses to state-societal complexes LIO and world order. Such a sociological exploration into elite organic intellectuals invites the critique that such an analysis is ‘elitist’ and/or ignores the agency of non-elites and complex class struggles from-below. Despite potential criticism in this regard, such a top-down analysis can be justified due to the highly unequal organization of politics within the states-societies of the LIO and the absence of “class politics” within many Western political systems – specifically the US (Riley & Brenner 2022: 9). Moreover, Gramsci recognized that such networks were most coherent at the top layers of the class hierarchy – a major issue for proletarian organization. In his analysis of the elite-dominated American political structure in mid-twentieth century, C.W. Mills (1958: 41) notes:

The top of modern American society is increasingly unified, and often seems wilfully coordinated: at the top there has emerged an elite whose power probably exceeds that of any small group of men in world history. The middle levels are often a drifting set of stalemated forces: the middle does not link the bottom with the top. The bottom of this

society is politically fragmented, and even as a passive fact, increasingly powerless: at the bottom there is emerging a mass society.

While relatively organized, the dominant class fractions within North America and Western Europe have undergone periods of division and rivalry at various points during the twentieth century, with competing elite strategies/visions for world order, or preferred 'hegemonic projects' for global governance. These various projects are often overlapping but also distinguishable by: 1) economic or sectorial differences that often divides fractions of capital (e.g. as linked to location of production and method of accumulation); and 2) strategies to wield and manage American/Western economic and military supremacy over the international system (e.g. liberal internationalism vs. *realpolitik*). Such differences include divergent programs related to social and cultural provisioning necessary to achieve public consent for elite rule and varying approaches to political economy, ranging from strict adherence to market fundamentalist principles to more compensatory Keynesian liberal frameworks. The turn towards Reaganite/Thatcherite nationalist neoliberalism within the LIO in the 1980s is indicative of a successful far-right 'hegemonic project' which emerged out of the crisis of the 1970s. Similarly, the liberal internationalism of the Western foreign policy establishment in the aftermath of the Cold War signals the rise of a neoliberal cosmopolitan hegemonic project, one wedded to notions of global human rights, multiculturalism, and American consumer culture. It is during moments of profound crisis that constellations of elite actors compete to steer and renovate the 'transnational power bloc' (Ougaard 2015), i.e. the dominant class fractions within a globalized capitalist economy. Leslie Sklair (2002: 145) defines these dominant class segments in the era of global capitalism as the 'transnational capitalist class', which refers to: (1) those who own and control transnational corporations; (2) globally oriented bureaucrats and politicians; (3) globally oriented professionals; (4) merchants and major media figures. The concept of TCC is often used broadly

to describe a hegemonic elite class stratum that has developed alongside accumulation processes during the period of neoliberal globalization. It is also sometimes used interchangeably with the term ‘transnational bourgeoisie’ (Robinson 2000, 15) or ‘globalizing elites’ (Gill 2008: 154; Van der Pijl 1995).

The concept of a ‘hegemonic project’ underscores the intersections of elite institutions, political party structures, collective intellectual communities in the formation of hegemony within a particular state-societal structure – as well as the contradictions of such arrangements/relationships as they respond to ongoing crises. Hegemonic projects are then elite-led political ideologies/strategies for leadership over a historical bloc developed with the coordination and consent from fractions of non-elite classes within a particular social formation; designed to either transform or reproduce the hegemonic structures of a particular social order during moments of stability or profound crisis. An analysis into the ideological aspects of a particular hegemonic project can determine whether it is: 1) revolutionary, fundamentally transforming a particular social order, its class composition, leadership, and historical structures; 2) passive revolutionary, where potentially revolutionary class forces from below are coopted, marginalized or neutralized through strategies of ‘transformismo’ designed to reproduce the hegemony of the bourgeoisie; or 3) Caesarian, an authoritarian form of rule, centered on charismatic leadership and petite bourgeois support which is not representative of the interests of the majority of the working class or preferred model of governance of the bourgeoisie elite.

An analysis of ‘hegemonic projects’ includes an exploration of crisis within a given social formation (e.g. economic, geopolitical, ecological) and the ideational variations or strategic divisions between factions of what most broadly can be described as the transnational capitalist

class in response to such crisis. Perspectives towards the transnational capitalist class as a concept within IR theory can broadly be divided into two camps: those who tend to view this elite group as somewhat homogenous and united around a similar political program (Sklair 2009, 2012; Robinson 2005; Huntington 2004a); and those who use this concept heuristically to analyze class conflict, crisis and dialectical resistance to universalizing projects for world order (Cox 1981; Gill 2008). This thesis adopts the framework of the latter and will argue that transnational elites within the LIO have been deeply divided regarding the direction of contemporary political leadership and public messaging necessary to achieve popular consent for policies that meet the core interests of the transnational bourgeoisie: transnational capitalist hegemony, a financial regime of accumulation, and the centrality the US/West within global capitalism as well as its military supremacy. Crisis (conjunctural or long-term) has a transformative effect on the ideological/strategic content of a given hegemonic project, as well as its position within the leadership structures of the LIO relative to other prospective hegemonic projects. So long as the states and societies of the LIO remain a major military contender and a major pole within global political economy, the rivalry between major hegemonic projects within the transatlantic bloc will shape political contestation within the LIO and world order. The outcome of such conflicts within the LIO will also guide the nature of the LIO's relationship with a rising Chinese state-led 'hegemonic project', a program with alternative transnational ambitions for world order (e.g. China's Belt and Road Initiative, Global Civilization Initiative).

ii) *Hegemonic Crisis in the LIO: A Clash of Hegemonic Projects*

Historically, it is during conjunctural moments of crisis that ambitious elite actors and intellectuals can most successfully act as entrepreneurs for a novel 'grand strategy' or 'hegemonic

project' within a particular world order. It is also during such moments of crisis when ideology and social forces of the far-right are most easily integrated in various systems of governance. Competing 'hegemonic projects' are representative of different interpretations regarding the nature of the crisis itself as well as the ideological and strategic content believed necessary for the reproduction of a particular social order in the wake of crisis. Crisis, as well as the various 'hegemonic projects' designed to alleviate crisis, involves aspects and prescriptions which are more immediate (policies/legislation) as well as those aspects which are cumulative, long-term, and structural (culture/ideology). Robert Cox (1987: 359) notes:

Being a member of a class does not mean submerging conflicts of interest with other class members—indeed, it is of the essence of a capitalist class that rivalries exist among capitalists. What it does mean is awareness of a common concern to maintain the system that enables the class to be dominant.

The concept of 'hegemonic crisis' or 'crisis of hegemony' has been used by various critical scholars including to describe the moment in which a profound crisis has challenged the ruling power-bloc of a particular social formation (Gill 1991; Ougaard 2016; Carroll 2006; Poulantzas 1975/2018). Such crises include the reordering of global capitalism in the aftermath of World War II as well as during transition to neoliberalism during 1970s. Moreover, influential elite configurations such as the Trilateral Commission have emerged out of and in response to such crises (Gill 1991). A hegemonic crisis then describes a more immediate disruption within the institutions and systems of governance of a state-societal complex, which sparks contestation within the leading capitalist classes over the composition of sub-ideologies and non-elite classes integrated into its hegemonic configuration, as well as the governance strategy that is best equipped to preserve or extend the power and influence of the dominant fractions of global elites and their regime of accumulation. A 'hegemonic crisis' can be described as a circumstance when a

hegemonic class fraction is unable to provide leadership or achieve the necessary level of legitimacy and consent to rule over a particular political order and is challenged by a contending hegemonic project. As such, a 'hegemonic crisis' threatens the composition of political leadership and the nature of hegemony within a particular social formation. It is within this context of profound crisis where an opportunity is created for ambitious elite intellectual entrepreneurs to propose an alternative 'hegemonic project', one designed to replace, or reconfigure the prevailing ideas of the existing order (Ougaard, 2013: 25). In recent years, the rise of far-right social forces in the transatlantic bloc of states represents growing cross-class discontent with the contemporary structures of political leadership. Multiple crises have created conditions for a refurbishing of the ideological basis of elite rule in the West, specifically the relative decline of the US since the 1970s; rising inequality linked to the global financial crisis in 2007–8 and the European sovereign debt crisis in 2010; the 2015 European migration crisis; and contradictions surrounding the numerous US/NATO military interventions across the MENA region following 9/11. Morten Ougaard notes (1988: 205):

Changes in the patterns of interests underlying a position of hegemony can occur in different ways. In principle we can identify at least three types of change leading to a declining hegemony, even if the distribution of power-resources is unchanged. First, changes creating difficulties could occur for the common interests binding the alliance together. Secondly, the hegemon's interests could become less compatible with the interests of the allies. Finally, changes could occur within the hegemon's own set of interests, developing a greater degree of internal incompatibility between the goals pursued by the hegemonic power. In each of these cases we should expect the changed pattern to create difficulties for the hegemon's ability to secure its own specific interests, which, given the definition of hegemony, implies a weakening of the hegemonic position.

Since the 1970s, the state-societal complexes of the LIO and its various classes have undergone a process of transnationalization alongside the rise of multinational corporations and regional/globalized trade regimes often associated with the rise of neoliberal political economy

within world order. A Neo-Gramscian or transnational historical materialist (THM) analysis in the social sciences has sought to identify/theorize the novel class formations, ideas, historical structures, and material conditions which have emerged adjacent to the LIO and US-led neoliberal globalization. Gill (1993c: 22) notes: “[G]ramsci's approach stands in contrast to abstract 'structuralism' in so far as it has a human(ist) aspect: historical change is understood as, to a substantial degree, the consequence of collective human activity.” THM scholarship has noted how political and economic power within LIO is increasingly concentrated and oriented towards the interests of a “transnational capitalist class” or “globalizing elite”, who participate in formal and informal networks, organizations, institutions, and “epistemic communities” (Adler & Haas 1992), which articulate ruling ideas, provide policy coordination, and shape/steer and the politics, economics, and culture of state-societal complexes within the LIO’s ‘historic bloc’. This is to say, the ruling ‘power-bloc’ within the LIO’s historic bloc of states includes networks of transatlantic transnational classes or ‘globalizing elites’, which includes: 1) leaders of major political parties and transnational organizations; 2) public intellectuals and major research institutes; 3) the beneficiaries of both a transnational regime of accumulation and the exploitation of international labour markets in the developing world; as well as 4) those connected to the military/surveillance industrial complex.

In 2016, the culmination of the various vectors of the global organic crisis laid the groundwork for a more immediate ‘hegemonic crisis’ which has divided the LIO’s transnational elite ‘power bloc’ over the nature, direction, and structure of global governance in the twenty-first century. This ‘hegemonic crisis’ represents a decaying consensus amongst the Western elite regarding the future of the LIO and world order. This ‘hegemonic crisis’ of global leadership has permeated throughout the broader state-societal complex and has divided state-societal complexes

across social, cultural and political fault lines circumscribed by contending factions of ruling elites. The numerous far-right electoral victories, the proliferation of transnational far-right networks and organizations, the growing popularity/normalization of so-called ‘national populist’ far-right politics across LIO states, as well as the increasing prevalence of far-right terrorism and extremism, is illustrative of this hegemonic crisis.

For capitalist elites to reproduce their hegemony in the midst of crisis, they must undergo periods of struggle and reorganization, as well as garner support from subaltern forces outside the core “power bloc” and form (often contradictory) alliances and compromises. It is during such periods of crisis that dominant classes must renegotiate and internalize the ideologies of subordinate class groups to sustain elite class dominance. The dominant class ideology is then forced to transform alongside the changing nature of capital, as it infiltrates and digests the ideologies of non-elite classes to consolidate consent for elite hegemony in a period of crisis. Twentieth-century Marxist political scientist Nicos Poulantzas (1979: 76) notes:

[W]ithin a social formation there exists not only a dominant ideology (i.e. an ideological discourse which the dominance of the dominant ideology makes relatively systematic), but also real ideological sub-groupings. These sub-groupings exist by virtue of the dominance within them of ideologies belonging to classes other than the dominant class – e.g. working-class, and petty-bourgeoisie ideology. Of course, the dominant ideology (i.e. the ideology of the dominant class) is effectively dominant within the ensemble of a social formation only in so far as it succeeds by various means in also permeating the ideologies belonging to the ideological sub-groupings [...] It therefore becomes clear that every crisis of the dominant ideology affects the ensemble of the ideological world of a social formation.

The current ‘hegemonic crisis’ is also reflected in the dichotomy of political activism within LIO states. The rise of transnational far-right activist movements/organizations such as Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West (PEGIDA) and Q-Anon have communicated their reactionary politics to global audiences of supporters. Such organizations can

be contrasted with the socially liberal transnational activist movements which have also emerged over the last decade, including Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, and the movement against Climate Change. It can be said that such transnational activist movements from-below are emblematic of the so-called ‘culture wars’ which is currently pitting the far-right against social liberals within the LIO during the period of globalization. The ‘culture wars’ is a reductionistic umbrella term used to describe a range of social and political debates regarding: the impacts of race and racism on society; immigrations and multiculturalism; the role/rights of women in society; the normalization/legality of 2SLGBTQ+ identities; public health measures; police and incarceration; as well as the education/interpretation/memory of historical figures and events. Such contestation from-below tends to be narrow in scope, targeting various externalities/grievances related to political globalization and late modernity, and largely void of any coherent/viable/structural alternative for progressive social forces seeking to confront the material inequalities produced by capitalism and market civilization.

Scholars have described world order as entering into a post-hegemonic or non-hegemonic paradigm following the 2008 global economic crisis. This post-2008 global order is sometimes described as one of inter-imperial rivalry characterized by the ascendance of China and the decline of the Western historic bloc (Overbeek 2023: 283). One can point to evidence of a declining American empire, Western civilization, or LIO, or, conversely, find evidence to support the resilience of its norms, institutions, and values despite various challenges. An investigation into hegemonic projects contextualizes such ideas/debates and provides an analysis of the molecular and glacial transformations in the ideological content and composition of hegemonic rule within a particular state-societal complex or world order. As such, an analysis into contemporary political contestation within the LIO demands close attention to macro-social shifts in the body politic due

to processes of neoliberal globalization and the collapse of the Soviet Union – as well as an analysis of how elite intellectuals respond to both long-term crises and conjunctural events. In contrast to both realist state-centric IR approaches which are overly concerned to the rise and fall of nation-states and ‘events history’, as well as a liberal internationalist approach which views history on a linear path towards liberal progress, a Neo-Gramscian perspective focuses on ideology, class formations, the synchronic and diachronic aspects of world history, as well as the crises/contestations which have transformed the organizational structure and ideological content of hegemony and historic blocs within world order.

Within the mainstream establishment political party systems of postwar Western liberal democracies, elite global governance strategies have typically been split along ideological/policy lines between so-called liberal internationalist/institutionalist factions and so-called conservative nationalist/realist factions. Party-line divisions/debate rarely invoke any deep structural critique of a capitalist global political economy or the logic of Western military supremacy; such is why governance characterized as consensus-based ‘centrism’ has often served as a means to reconcile the factional disputes between elites within the leading capitalist classes of LIO.²⁶ However, during moments of profound crisis, centrist compromise has been challenged by the social forces of the far-right. Indeed, mainstream political party structures have long utilized populist rhetoric to challenge the centrist liberal establishment within major LIO states; Richard Nixon’s “silent majority” of supporters in the US during the late 1960s and early 1970s a case example. The content of the ruling ideas within the LIO have transformed and evolved over the course of history alongside the various crises/conjunctures which have occur within its historic bloc and world

²⁶ While dissent has been rare, some notable exceptions to the rule have been realist IR scholars Robert Gilpin (2005), John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt (2003) who criticized America’s 2003 invasion of Iraq, as well as its broader Middle East policy and relationship with the State of Israel.

order. Hegemonic projects and their coalitions of support can be categorized/contextualized by certain observable ideological and organizational characteristics. Such hegemonic projects are not static but rather are also utilized/moulded/steered by elite collective intellectuals to garner public consent and demarcate the 'centrist' or status-quo politics of a particular state-societal complex. These hegemonic projects are often most explicit during conjunctural moments of crisis or deep social polarization, and it is during such moments that radical and/or revisionist approaches towards global governance become viable options for certain classes who wish to reproduce their position of power/privilege/influence within a particular state-societal complex or historical bloc.

Despite the optimism of some during the immediate post-Cold War period, the twenty-first century did not usher in a heroic new age of global consensus regarding US-led neoliberal cosmopolitanism. Similarly, during the era of globalization, a political project which supports regressing into a parcellated world order of essentialized cultural/civilizational identities is bound to face a series of challenges. Rather than an 'end of history' or a 'clash of civilizations', the current period of profound political contestation within the LIO, which was accelerated by Trump and Brexit, is best described as a period of clashing of hegemonic projects. This 'clash of hegemonic projects' can be observed by analyzing the discourse coalitions and their associated networks of 'collective intellectual' organizations, which differ in regards to: 1) the specific governance ideology and ideal-type leadership recommended for LIO states; 2) the character of their involvement within transnational liberal institutions/bodies; 3) the strategies and moral/ideological justifications for the maintenance Western geopolitical supremacy; as well as 4) the 'mode of regulation' necessary for the reproduction of the capitalist class and its regime of accumulation during a period of profound crisis within the LIO. I will note how elite transnational discourse coalitions have contributed to (and capitalized on) crises within the LIO during the postwar period

and have sought to acquire power/authority/autonomy over the field of elite governance strategy within this historic bloc. An analysis into such discourse coalitions will include: 1) identifying the elite intellectuals (individual and collective) in the field of elite global governance within the LIO during the post-Cold War era; 2) evaluating the ideas expressed by factions/networks of collective intellectuals associated with disparate elite discourse coalitions.

iii) *Discourse Coalitions, Collective Intellectuals, and Elite Flex Nets*

In the following chapters, I will explore the elite intellectual ‘discourse coalitions’ which have championed the major ‘hegemonic projects’ in *field* of global governance within core LIO states/societies. Maarten Hajer (2009: 60) notes how discourse coalitions are the “[T]he ensemble of particular storylines, the actors that employ them, and the practices through which the discourse involved exerts its power.” Stephen Gill (2008: 127) notes how the concept of a ‘historic bloc’ is in many ways consistent with Michel Foucault’s (1972) concept of a ‘discursive formation’ an assortment of institutionalized ideas and practices which may not be fully comprehended by its participants. Elite discourse coalitions provide leadership for a hegemonic bloc, are linked to a particular historical context, with social forces advocating for certain notions and interests which orient the behaviour of these coalitions as well as their prescriptions/strategies for hegemonic governance. Alan Müller (2015: 3) notes how an institutional discourse analysis is fundamentally qualitative, relying primarily on text and spoken word, and conceptualizes discourses to be both a “structural phenomenon” which “limits possible options for action by political actors” while also relying on the agency/skill of political actors to advance a particular discourse within a given context and during a specific historical moment. The discourse analysis deployed in this thesis is then concerned with identifying ruling ideas, the ideological actors which cultivate/reproduce such ideas, the contexts/circumstances in which ideas are advanced or contested, as well as the potential

contradictions or impacts of certain ideas within systems of power and governance. American historian William Appleman Williams (1955: 379) argued that in order to analyze foreign policy it is necessary to “reconstruct the reality with which given men were forced to deal, look at it through their eyes, interpret it with their ideas, and then conclude as to the consequences of such a world view.” A similar logic can be applied to elite discourse coalitions operating within/through influential collective intellectual organizations in the field of global governance. Hartwig Pautz (2011: 429) states:

A ‘discourse coalition is the ensemble of a set of storylines, the actors that utter these storylines, and the practices that conform to these storylines, all organized around a discourse’ (Hajer, 1993: 47) [...] It is a linguistic mechanism around which discourse coalitions assemble, a ‘generative sort of narrative that allows actors to draw upon various discursive categories to give meaning to specific or social phenomena’ (Hajer, 1995: 56). A discourse coalition is held together by its members’ shared belief in an interpretation of a threat, crisis or event which constructs ‘the nature of the policy problem under consideration’ (Hajer, 1995: 247). Because most political actors do not possess well-developed theories to make sense of the political or social world, a storyline simplifies a policy issue and creates a coalition as it ‘condenses large amounts of factual information intermixed with normative assumptions and values’ (Fischer, 2003: 87).

It is a truism that elite discourse coalitions within the LIO have operated within/through think tanks, conferences, academic journals, media organizations, and other collective intellectual organizations to advise the state on various aspects of policymaking including geopolitical strategy, domestic security, economic management, public health, education policy, and environmental regulation. Such collective intellectual organizations take on various forms, and as such, defining such institutions or measuring their impact on systems of governance remains a contested subject for the social sciences. Andrew Rich (2005) notes that think tanks first emerged as a prominent political force in American politics during early twentieth century Progressive Era, where such non-governmental institutions were initially designed shift the facilitation of public administration away from patronage and towards social scientific consensus and reason. After

aiding in military strategy during Second World War, think tanks rose to prominence in the field of global governance, with organizations such as the Rand Corporation receiving funding from the state due with the realization amongst policymakers that US hegemony required institutions to foster public consent (Günel & Ünlü Bilgiç 2021: 61). Since the 1970s, the volume and influence of think tanks has grown exponentially, with political party structures and policymakers throughout the LIO often consulting think tanks in order to help navigate and address the various complex issues facing states and societies in the twenty-first century.

While the introduction of think tanks into the ideological infrastructure of state governance was initially advanced by liberals in the early twentieth century, think tanks have also played a fundamental role in facilitating the rise of far-right politics and neoliberalism in the US and other LIO states. Organizations such as the American Enterprise Institute, CATO, and the Heritage Foundation in particular, have provided guidance to both political party structures and governmental administrations, contributing to what can be described as the ideological architecture of contemporary neoliberalism²⁷ and the US-centered transnational far-right movement. This is to say, while think tank organizations were initially defined by their proponents as pursuing non-partisan rationalism and objectivity – such characteristics are no longer synonymous with the activities of these organizations. While striving to appear as ‘traditional intellectual’ organizations imbued with universal forms of knowledge, think tanks are more accurately described as collective organic intellectuals which represent the particular class interests of dominant social groups. These hegemonically ambitious elite collective ‘organic intellectual’ organizations/networks often

²⁷ Historian Nancy MacLean (2017) and journalist Jane Meyer (2016) have each provided comprehensive investigations by far-right elite intellectual networks, including the efforts of Koch Family to promote neoliberal governance through dark money in the US.

include figures associated with traditional intelligentsia (scholars, artists, clergy) as well as technical functionaries (state bureaucrats, politicians, managers, industrialists). The compositional homogeneity of elite think tanks and other related collective intellectual organizations serves those elite groups and classes which require a broad social consensus rule – one which spans across the institutions of the state and civil society. Consequently, it is also such homogeneity which makes these organizations and their networks an elusive subject of social scientific inquiry.

A major challenge to an analysis of think tanks relates to finding a consistent/common definition of a ‘think tank’ in the social sciences (James, 1993; Abelson, 2006, 2018; Medvetz 2008; Campbell & Pederson, 2011). Broadly speaking, think tanks are just one of many like collective intellectual organizations which gain their legitimacy by appearing to float above interest-group based politics and political party allegiances to offer a form of informed, objective, professional opinion to help guide policymaking and democratic decision-making (Pautz 2011). However, such commitment to non-partisan objectivity can be interrogated through a critical analysis which looks to how these organizations have become deeply intertwined with deeply partisan political party structures in recent decades. As such, many organizations which are considered to be think tanks in the modern context have blurred the lines between objective social scientific research/analysis and political party propaganda. Moreover, think tanks also widely vary in the scale of their operations and the amount of financial and social capital they are able to mobilize – with some organizations comprising of just a handful individuals, while others are comprised of a vast network of scholars, bureaucrats, military/intelligence personnel, politicians, and business magnates. Moreover, the influence of think tanks cannot only be measured by the number of individual actors within a given organization or their finances; with certain

organizations providing a more complex intermediary role within a much larger network of ideologically allied organizations.

While think tanks pursue proximity and influence within systems of political power, they also rely on a particular distance from government and singular party structures to maintain formal independence and legitimacy. As such, it is difficult to locate with any precision the degree to which collective intellectual organizations steer – or merely reflect – the interests of governing institutions. For example, David Ricci (1993) notes there is no way in which to determine with precision the direct effect that major American think tank entities (e.g. AEI, Brookings) have over systems of governance. It is then all but impossible to determine definitively when collective intellectuals provide a leadership role over such institutions of governance versus other structural factors which might constrain/influence the agency of actors within such institutions (e.g. vulgar elite capitalist class interests, culture of the state bureaucracy, agency of other actors within the state). Moreover, it is difficult to determine in what instances collective intellectual organizations merely articulate the embedded interests of the status-quo elite hegemonic power-bloc of the state/society, or, to what degree the organic intellectual entrepreneurs operating within such collective intellectual organizations/networks have agency to direct or reorient state governance (e.g. by producing influential conceptual innovations or proposing novel alternative policy proposals).

Despite such issues or challenges, there are numerous ways in which one can analyse think tanks and collective intellectual organizations/networks as actors in the making of hegemony within the LIO and world order. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, researchers have analyzed the influence of individual think tank organizations over various aspects of governance;

categorized such organizations by orientation and type (Jacques et al. 2008; Feldman 2007); contrasted the membership of these organizations to other similar organizations (domestically and internationally) (Rich & Weaver, 2011; Zaytsev et al. 2022); discussed the relationship of such organizations with the state and corporate bodies (Miller & Dinan, 2015); analyzed the role of collective intellectual organizations in setting the policy agenda of governing institutions (McGann, 2016; Weller & Singleton, 2006); and compared the political/institutional contexts from which different collective intellectual organizations have emerged and operate (Abelson 2006; Abelson & Lindquist 2000; Braml 2006). In recent decades, think tanks and other collective intellectual research organizations have been created for the purpose of measuring and researching the influence of other think tanks over contemporary institutions governance. For example, since 1989 the University of Pennsylvania's non-profit Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program has produced the "Global Go To Think Tank Index", which in 2020 produced a think tank power ranking of 11,175 global think tanks based on survey data (McGann, 2011). Rather than analyze individual think tanks, the consultancy organization On Think Tanks, with support from the Open Society Foundations, has produced the Open Think Tank Directory and provides comprehensive reports on numerous factors impacting the think tank sector in various countries. Furthermore, the website AcademicInfluence.com has adopted a twenty-first century approach, ranking think tanks using machine-learning AI programs which analyze publicly available data on think tank organizations online (academic citations, attention from media outlets) (Barham 2023). What such analyses lack is comprehensive investigation into the ideology of such think tanks, the breadth of their organizational networks, the classes and social forces they represent, as well as the *field* in which they operate. Mérand and Pouliot (2013: 34) note:

Yves Chouala (2002) has argued that Bourdieu's notion of the field is the most promising one to analyze world politics. The number of fields that can exist within a given space is

indeed potentially unlimited. Empirically, Bourdieu worked on the university field (1990), the field of consumption (1979), the scholarly field (2005), the bureaucratic field (1989, 1998), and so on; that there could be so many theoretically possible fields raises the question of their boundaries. Bourdieu and Wacquant's answer to this question is that "the limits of the field are situated at the point where the effects of the field cease" (1992: 100). This is perhaps one of the most difficult points of the method that Bourdieu developed. It requires that one discover the *modus operandi* of the field before defining the actors involved in the game and their interest in playing. However, the *modus operandi* necessitates some interpretive work, a task which rests upon a certain number of philosophical postulates.

The *modus operandi* of the field of elite governance within the LIO is concerned with applying appropriate political strategies to achieve consent for elite rule over a particular social order. Within the leading states and societies of the LIO in the post-Cold War era, such a field has been centered on the legitimization and reproduction of structures of market civilization, capitalist class hegemony, and Western supremacy – especially during moments of profound conjunctural crisis (war, economic crisis, natural disasters). While the broad objective of this field is broadly defined by the core long-term imperial interests of US-centered transnational capitalist hegemony, various elite collective intellectual organizations and the groups/classes they represent have offered different strategies to create consent for hegemonic rule. For such reasons, an investigation into contending collective intellectual networks offers insights into the ideological fault-lines which divide elites in the field of governance within the LIO.

While think tanks and think tank networks have become integrated within systems of governance across the LIO, many scholars and organizations have noted how the *field* in which they operate, as well as the nature/character of their influence, varies across the various states within the LIO. Due to such factors, major scholars on the subject of think tanks have acknowledged that there is no standard definition for think tanks, and as such it is better to locate the typology of think tank organizations to better understand their influence/role (context,

ideology, objectives, membership). In this regard, one might first wish to broadly locate where think tanks are most competitive over systems of power, i.e. where such organizations do not merely reflect state power and consensus, but rather operate within an adversarial intellectual field of governance. John Campbell and Ove Pedersen (2011: 168) note:

[L]iberal market economies with decentralized, open states (the United States) tend to have market-oriented knowledge regimes that are highly competitive and often partisan and adversarial. Liberal market economies with centralized, closed states (Britain) also tend to have competitive knowledge regimes, but the level of partisan competition is tempered politically by public funding for knowledge producers in civil society and by the state's own in-house analytic capacities. Coordinated market economies with decentralized, open states (Germany) tend to have relatively more consensus-oriented knowledge regimes as a result of having political economies with strong associational and corporatist institutional arrangements, parliamentary systems that often produce coalition governments, and much public funding for knowledge producers. Finally, coordinated market economies with centralized, closed states (France) tend to have statist-technocratic knowledge regimes where much policy-relevant knowledge is produced in-house by the state. Of course, competition and conflict over ideas exist within all types of knowledge regimes. Our point is that the manner in which this is handled and whether it produces winners and losers or compromise and consensus depend on the institutional configuration of the political economy in question.

While finding a precise or indeed, universal definition of a 'think tank' remains a sticky challenge, it can be noted that the most competitive think tanks exist within more decentralized and open political ecosystems. The "2020 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report" indicates that the US leads the world in volume of think tanks, with 2203 think tanks identified by the report. It is then in the US, the core of the LIO, where think tanks and their associated collective intellectual networks are most extensive and contentious. Due to such factors, the collective intellectual networks analyzed within my case study are largely based within US and its key allies. Nevertheless, the reach/influence of this US-centered network expands across the LIO and its key allies – exporting the hyper-partisan frameworks found in the American think tank ecosystem to numerous states and societies both inside and outside the transatlantic bloc. In the twenty-first century, elite think tanks as well as other collective intellectual organizations within the LIO

(journals, academic conferences, private educational organizations) can be conceptualized as “boundary organizations” (Medvetz 2012, 2014) which unite/absorb various classes, social forces, and sub-ideological identities around a common hegemonic project for hegemonic governance. It is then through such organizations that discourse coalitions are formed. It is important to note how such collective intellectual organizations are constrained by structural factors (e.g. the unevenness of late capitalist development, material conditions of crisis, and the existing class struggles of a particular social container) while also exercising agency in delineating the ‘limits of the possible’ for political transformation in the *field* of global governance during a particular historic moment. Discussing the role of think tanks in the development contemporary capitalist governance ideology and the importance of confronting such networks, Bourdieu (2000: 42) notes:

A number of recent historical works have displayed the pivotal role played by think tanks in the production and imposition of the neoliberal ideology that rules the world today. To the productions of these reactionary think tanks, which support and broadcast the views of experts appointed by the powerful, we must oppose the productions of critical networks that bring together "specific intellectuals" (in Foucault's sense of the term) into a veritable collective intellectual capable of defining by itself the topics and ends of its reflection and action—in short, an autonomous collective intellectual.

Similar to the methodological challenges facing the subfield of elite theory (Semenova 2018), scholarship on the subject of think tanks and collective intellectual organizations has struggled with: 1) confusion regarding key terms (e.g. universal definition of a ‘think tank’ or ‘academic institution’); and 2) challenges related to measuring the influence/impact of these intellectual social forces on governance and policymaking. Considering various structural factors which weigh modern governance, it is difficult to neatly parse the agency of elite intellectuals and their campaigns from other factors which weigh on state behaviour. Moreover, a sociological analysis of the state might also reveal/emphasize various structural factors or certain unique/sticky institutional ideologies/legacies found within various sectors of the state bureaucracy (all of which

contain frameworks, interests, and cultures which weigh on the direction of governance during a particular moment). Rather than attempt to prove that a particular collective intellectual organization has direct influence over levers the state bureaucracy or contrast the influence/activities of a collective intellectual organizations to other like organizations, this analysis will discuss a constellation of collective intellectual organizations as components within a larger transnational collective intellectual network which seeks to shape/organize/consolidate support for a particular discourse coalition. Such an analysis will then elucidate the elite and transnational dimensions of the contemporary far-right movement within the LIO and identify its associated ideas, institutions, and social forces. Iver Neumann (2013: xiv) notes:

In order to put Bourdieusian insights to full use within the discipline of IR, however, we must re-conceptualise what a field looks like when it is transnational. How do the relations add up when they are hybridised? What difference does it make to the operations of the field that there is no clear-cut holder of meta-capital, a functional equivalent of the state, as it were?

C.W. Mills, author of *The Power Elite*, was perhaps the most prominent elite theorist of the latter half of the twentieth century. Mills famously argued that in the postwar American state, government officials, military leaders, and corporate capitalists constituted a ruling bloc which steered the politics and society. He claimed that such a ruling bloc was developed through the creation of informal social networks and educational institutions which produced cultural and ideological homogeneity amongst its membership. John Higley notes how even C.W. Mills who remarked on a centralized ‘triangle of power’ and the integration of military, economic, and political elites in America during the mid-twentieth century, later pondered whether there was in fact one ‘power elite’ or several, and how in different various contexts who is considered as elite may differ (Higley 2018: 29; Mills 1965: 163). An analysis of contemporary elites must grapple with the transnationalization of hegemony within the LIO and world order – a phenomenon which

further complicates an analysis of elites and their networks of ideological influence. As noted in previous chapters, in the era of US-centered transnational hegemony, elite networks have transnationalized in their power and influence, incorporating/coordinating elites from various states/societies within the historic bloc of the LIO.

Rather than treat elites as a fixed or homogenous group, Janine Wedel describes a new type of elite which has emerged in the context of fundamental shift in governance during the post-1980s era of neoliberalism, where traditional ‘command posts’ (e.g. elite families, elite institutions) have largely decayed. Defining a new type of elite responsive/adaptive to such changes, Wedel (2017:154) notes:

[I]nfluence elites are defined by (1) their flexibility, shifting and overlapping roles, and lack of fixed attachment to any particular sector or organization in pursuit of their strategic goals; (2) their informality and supplanting of formal structures and processes (while still using them when beneficial); (3) the entities they mobilize, including consultancies, think tanks, and nongovernmental organizations; and (4) their role as connectors, position in the official, corporate, private organizational ecosystem (including the above entities), and networks vis-a-vis each other. Because they have arisen to take advantage of a new institutional ecosystem and because they practice a distinctive *modus operandi*, a novel term is needed to describe them.

In the era of neoliberalism, influence elites have forged extensive networks involving exclusive forums, conferences, policy clubs, media organizations, think tanks, and other collective intellectual organizations. As discussed, it is through such (formal and informal) networks that elite ideological entrepreneurs are able to exert power both inside and outside traditional centers of power, in a manner which is unaccountable to democratic processes. Wedel (2009, 2017) uses the term “flexians” to describe those political actors which wield power and influence in often ambiguous ways through various overlapping roles, across various organizations/institutions both inside and outside the state. These ‘flexians’ are described by Wedel as being able to exercise both

material resources and social capital as well as operate within opaque, unaccountable, and often informal “flexible networks” or “flex nets”. The term flexian has been applied to liberal figures such as Jeffrey Sachs who has adopted various roles both within and outside the state, as well as George Soros, who has created spaces for the cultivation of liberal flexians (Stubbs & Wedel, 2015). Such ‘flex nets’ often lay outside the realm of democratic accountability or audit despite being influential over systems of governance. Collective intellectual organizations such as think tanks are one realm in which such flexians have operated. Through these organizations, transnational or “flex nets”, are able to expand their reach beyond the nation-state – a traditional container for political power – and operate extra-territorially, as intermediaries for numerous elite factions in the field of global governance. In many ways, think tank organizations embody the flexian ethos of providing strategies for governance without formal democratic accountability or transparency.

While think tanks have provided policy programs for various political organizations with divergent philosophic orientations, the character of such organizations makes them an attractive outlet for political programs which seek to obscure the class interests they represent. As such, a flexian form of governance is complementary to far-right social forces who have historically engaged in various forms of shadow governance within the LIO (i.e. forms of governance which lay outside transparent or democratic processes). Elite intellectuals in the field of global governance have often operated through such opaque collective intellectual organizations, as well as within opaque transnational networks, as a means of propelling their ideas into the realm of mainstream national political discourse and individual consciousness of citizens within the state/societies of the LIO.

The term flexians and flex nets help describe the ‘rhizomatic power’ of collective intellectual elites in the twenty-first century (Wedel 2017). Such flex nets are structured informally, based on shared convictions, form a resource pool, and develop a habitat for governance and policymaking which transcends bureaucratic and professional authority structures. Wedel (2017) notes how such flex nets can exert power within traditional ‘command posts’ while also exerting more informal influence outside such command posts. Such hybridity and flexibility make modern influence elites less apparent or accountable than American ‘power elite’ bloc discussed by C.W. Mills during the mid twentieth century. Modern intellectual elites within such collective intellectual networks are not simply atomized intellectual entrepreneurs promoting a particular set of ideas or policy frameworks to a receptive audience, but rather, can be more accurately described as nebulous intermediaries within a flex net. Their related collective intellectual organizations help bound political contestation within these networks and creating the foundation for crucial compromises, absorptions, or ‘fusions’ between various intellectual tendencies, orientations, or subgroups. Collective intellectual organizations then fulfill a range of necessary functions for a successful hegemonic project, including the introduction narrow policy prescriptions, attempts to shift the policy agenda of elite actors, as well as consolidating and expanding discourse coalitions around a particular worldview. An analysis of elite political contestation within the LIO requires an analysis which discusses the relationship between hegemonic ideas, flexible networks of elite intellectuals, collective intellectual organizations, and the discourse coalitions which seek influence in the field of global governance knowledge production during a particular historical juncture. (Figure 1 next page)

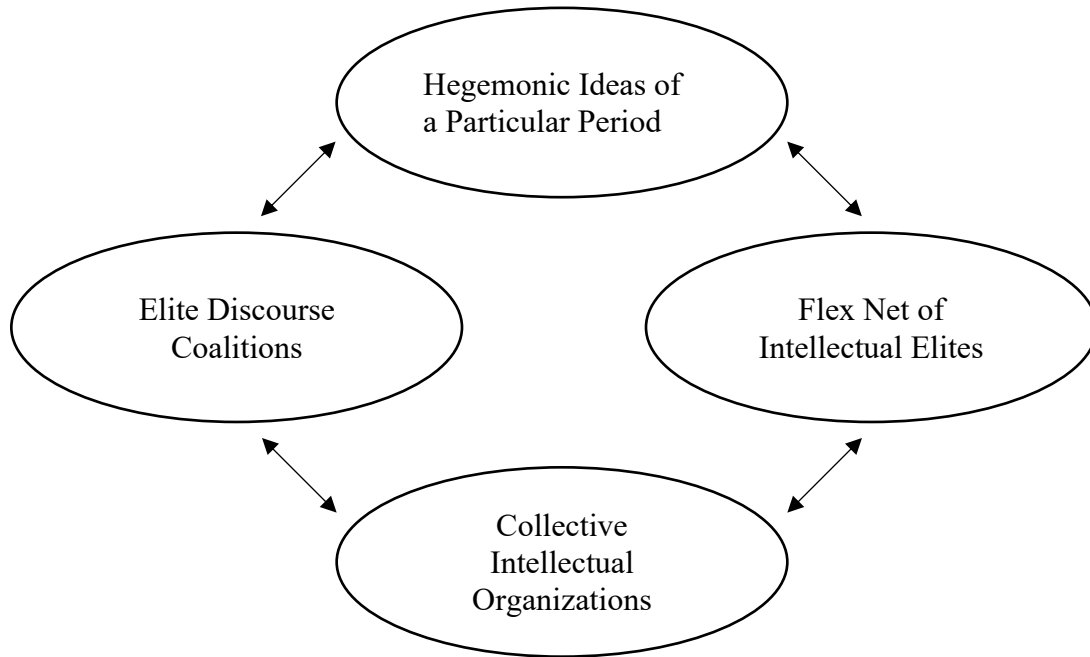


Figure 1: The Construction of Hegemonic Ideas in the Field of Global Governance

An analysis of the far-right’s collective intellectual organizations in the field of global governance helps elucidate the top-down organizational structure of the far-right movement as well as the broad interests and ideological imperatives which underpin its political project. Moreover, such an analysis can identify the ideological debates, rivalries, or contradictions which compromise the unity of this transnational movement within the states and societies of the LIO. Hegemony and political contestation within contemporary world order often transcends the individual party or nation state/society, and as such, an analysis of such phenomenon requires one to account for the transnational dimensions of governance ideology and the hegemonically ambitious transnational social forces operating within the states and societies of the LIO and its key allies. While such an analysis includes a vast array of elite intellectuals and collective intellectual organizations, a comprehensive investigation into these social forces elucidates dimensions of what can be described as an increasingly polarized elite power-bloc within the

states/societies of the contemporary LIO. Such an analysis provides insights into the current hegemonic crisis within leadership structures of the LIO and the elite ideological contestation pertaining *certain aspects* of twenty-first century global governance. Discussing a Gramscian approach to think tanks and their networks, Pautz (2011: 426) notes:

Think-tank analysts are best defined as part of the network of the ‘organic intellectuals’ of capitalism amongst whom civil servants, technicians, policy experts, or legal experts can also be found. They are ‘permanent persuaders’ (Gramsci, 1971: 334) and fulfil technical, directive and organisational needs of society (Showstack Sassoon, 1980). Based on such an understanding, Georgina Murray and Douglas Pacheco (2000) argued that think-tanks fulfil a role as gatekeepers in the survival of advanced capitalism which partly rests on its ability to legitimise itself discursively in the cultural, moral, ethical and intellectual spheres. Other neo-Gramscians analysed think-tanks as one actor among many in the discursive (re)production of the hegemony of neo-liberalism or Keynesianism (e.g. Parmar, 2004; Desai, 1994; Overbeek, 1990; Blank, 2003, Gamble, 1989).

In sum, hegemonic projects can then be understood as the strategies and ideological output of combined/cumulative elite discourse coalitions and collective intellectuals, which are shaped by historical structures, material conditions, class struggles, and institutions of particular historic bloc. Within the LIO, competing discourse coalitions vie for a hegemonic position within the field of governance and operate through opaque transnational networks of collective intellectual organizations (e.g. journals, think tanks, foundations). Such networks are often informal/flexible but serve as a means to proliferate and consolidate support for a particular hegemonic project. While these elite collective intellectual ‘flex nets’ are often informal or obscure, one can locate major sites/venues/nodes where transnational elite networks and their activities are observable. Indeed, journals, media organizations, and academic conferences, in particular, provide a unique platform for a collective intellectual tendency to expand its network and proselytize a particular hegemonic project for world order.

Conclusion

The far-right has often been described within contemporary social science scholarship and journalism as a grassroots and bottom-up rejection or reaction to (loosely defined) ‘globalist’ elites and perceived conditions of social, civilizational, and imperial decline. However, as I will explore in later chapters, the many gains made by the contemporary far-right movement within the states of the LIO during 2016 and the years which would follow would have been impossible were it not for the efforts of the elite intellectual social forces within the far-right movement who have articulated an alternative transnational ‘hegemonic project’ or grand strategy for the future of capitalist global governance. Such a project has top-down designs/aspirations that transcend the nation-state and responds to particular aspects of social, political, and economic crisis within world order. The social forces supportive of both liberalism and the far-right have historically sought to obscure the forms of top-down elite intellectual coordination which has contributed to the creation of such ‘hegemonic projects’ or their implications on public policy or governance within formally democratic states. Furthermore, the far-right has often sought to downplay/eschew all elite and transnational aspects of its movement, often prioritizing its nativism, populism, and nationalism.

It is in the context of a defeated transnational socialist-left during the post-Cold War era, that neoliberal cosmopolitanism and far-right civilizationism have come to represent the two dominant elite hegemonic projects within the LIO. The language of populism, illiberalism, and nationalism obscures/distorts the contours of contemporary political contestation and the ideological/strategic fault-lines both within and between the hegemonic projects vying for political leadership within the LIO. Moreover, each hegemonic project is not simply an ideal-type which is developed dictated from the top-down, rather it is a product of history, involving the hybridization

and reorganization of various ideas, grievances, worldviews from different groups and/or class fractions. A hegemonic project can then be described as an amalgamation of (often contradictory) class formations, general perspectives toward world order, and coalitions of intellectuals who seek hegemonic position within the systems of governance within a particular social order. I will explore to what degree both of these hegemonic projects distort the contradictions/crises of contemporary global capitalism and political leadership within the LIO.

The analysis provided in the following chapters will seek to define the primary elite hegemonic projects within the LIO, their intellectual counterparts, and the lines of political contestation which have divided the transatlantic historical bloc in the postwar period. I will critically explore ideas which can be associated with each hegemonic project and the collective intellectuals or ‘discursive coalitions’ supportive of each broad elite governance strategy. I will then evaluate the nature of contemporary political contestation within the LIO through the lens of competing collective intellectual networks of transnationally oriented elites. In the context of a global organic crisis, the outcome of such transnational elite ideological contestation has profound implications on the states/societies of LIO, the stability of international relations within world order, and the future of the biosphere.

Chapter 3

Neoliberal Cosmopolitanism as a Hegemonic Project

The term “neoliberal cosmopolitanism” was developed by IR scholar Peter Gowan in the early twenty-first century to describe this novel form of liberal internationalism, one which according to him “seeks to overcome the limits of national sovereignty by constructing a global order that will govern important political as well as economic aspects of both the internal and external behaviour of states” (2001: 79). For Gowan, this neoliberal cosmopolitanism is inseparable from what he called the “Dollar Wall Street Regime” and Western rule through its various intergovernmental and transnational institutions (e.g. UN, G7, EU, IMF, WTO, OECD, NATO). I will expand on Gowan’s concept of neoliberal cosmopolitanism, using it to describe various aspects of the LIO’s dominant ‘hegemonic project’ in the post-Cold War era and its combined economic, political, institutional, and cultural vision for the future of world order. In this chapter, I will identify the four core pillars of neoliberal cosmopolitan ideology through exploring the scholarly contributions of liberal ‘organic intellectuals’ within the LIO. The intellectuals and collectives of intellectuals which I will discuss articulate neoliberal cosmopolitanism’s broad grand strategy and ideal-type model for ‘moderate’, ‘centrist’, or ‘open’ liberal global governance in the twenty-first century.

This chapter will first outline the core ideological components of neoliberal cosmopolitanism’s hegemonic project expressed by its many organic intellectuals in the post-Cold War era;²⁸ and second, it will discuss the ideas, history, and composition of the elite social forces

²⁸ This chapter will primarily focus on the aspects of liberal ideology which are most relevant to contemporary political contestation within the LIO.

supportive of this project since 1945. Naturally, this summary of the postwar liberal internationalism is non-exhaustive; however, it will provide a thick description of various ideas and elite social forces which have played a major role in the construction of a transnational elite liberal hegemony within the states and societies of the LIO for decades.

I) Major Ideological Components of Neoliberal Cosmopolitanism

To provide a comprehensive overview of neoliberal cosmopolitanism as a hegemonic project, I will discuss major elite intellectuals who best articulate the principles, ideas, and assumptions of the highly-educated centrist liberal ‘establishment’ in the West, a political orientation which Thomas Piketty (2020) refers to as the “the Brahmin Left”. This section will outline the global governance ideology of neoliberal cosmopolitanism and identify the four core ideological tenets of its ‘hegemonic project’ for the LIO and world order. The four tenets which I identify include: 1) the open society; 2) the universal homogenous state; 3) networked global governance; and 4) stakeholder capitalism. These tenets address various aspects of social, political, and economic life in the twenty-first century. The elite intellectuals who are discussed within this section have participated in high levels in government, major transnational organizations, and elite intellectual collectives, often transcending the categories of scholar, policy maker, and public commentator in their professional lives. While such a list is arguably incomplete, or open to further refinement, the central ideas and assumptions which I discuss within this section have shaped various aspects of liberal governance in the post-Cold War era and represent an ideological approach toward world order which can be identified within various organizations and institutions of contemporary governance within the LIO.

i) *The Open Society*

The concept of an ‘open society’ was initially developed in 1932 by French analytic philosopher Henry Bergson as a way to differentiate between the two ways of creating social cohesion: magical and rational. For Bergson, magical thinking is closed to progress, innovation, and social change, whereas rational thinking is devoted to scientific discovery and reason; the latter representing the basic precepts of an open society. During the Second World War, Austrian-born British philosopher Karl Popper would vastly expand on Bergson’s concept and would become the open society’s foremost proponent within Western liberal academic circles. In his 1945 publication *The Open Society*, Popper critiques Plato, Hegel, and Marx, specifically for their ‘historicism’²⁹ and the ‘totalitarianism’ of historicist theorizations of society. Popper argued that the ideas produced by these influential historicists were directly related to the anti-democratic upheavals which would occur of the first half of the twentieth century – namely Soviet revolution and the rise of fascism. Samuel Moyn (2023: 65) notes:

Popper’s own notorious definition of “historicism” isolated one narrow version of it, the belief that there is a script of social evolution, equivalent to a law of nature, compulsively driving humanity from subjugation to emancipation. He then proceeded to dismantle this idea. In doing so Popper’s essential achievement was to persuade liberals to abandon the broad version of historicism, as if his critique of the narrow version disposed of it.

For Popper, the rigid dogmatism and totalizing nature of universal philosophies and their truth-claims are what makes such ideas so dangerous – specifically when applied to systems of governance. In contrast to universalizing/totalitarian theories of history, Popper argues for a society built around critical rationalism and scientific laws – which are hypothetical by nature, as

²⁹ Historicism dating back to German thought in the nineteenth century can broadly be defined as the theoretical perspective which views human society as chronological and with qualities that are relative to their context (Moyn 2023).

they cannot be proven, but only falsified through empirical testing. For Popper, the key to the success of the scientific method is that it can test generalizations of universal validity with the help of singular observations; one failed test is sufficient to falsify a theory, but no number of confirming instances is sufficient to verify it. As such, for him, essentialist generalizations about the nature of humanity or society that cannot be tested do not qualify as scientific.³⁰ For proponents of the ‘open society,’ static perspectives towards the organization of human society are invalid; rather human society can only flourish in an environment where perspectives towards its organization can be openly tested and scrutinized.

Popper’s notion of an ‘open society’ then advances a governance model which is ‘open’ to testing and change through open democratic institutions, where rational scientific consensus would steer society under everchanging historical circumstances. In contrast to ‘closed’ or ‘totalitarian’ societies, so-called open societies are then malleable and have the capacity to adapt to the changing conditions, circumstances, or desires of their participants. Popper (1957) argued that the historicist theories which contribute to totalitarianism (e.g. Marx) contained serious methodological and predictive flaws, claiming that the rigid application of such historicist theories to institutions of governance contributes to “utopian social planning”. For Popper, such forms of planning in-turn inhibits the capacity for future scientific or rational testing/experimentation/transformation. The concept of ‘totalitarianism’ was then used by Popper to broadly describe all enemies of the open society, homogenizing the disparate ideas and social forces of nationalism, fascism, and

³⁰ Soros (2019: 234) notes: “Any valid methodology of social science must explicitly recognize both fallibility and reflexivity and the Knightian uncertainty they create. Empirical testing ought to remain a decisive criterion for judging whether a theory qualifies as scientific, but in light of the human uncertainty principle in social systems it cannot always be as rigorous as Popper’s scheme requires. Nor can universally and timelessly valid theories be expected to yield determinate predictions because future events are contingent on future decisions, which are based on imperfect knowledge. Time and context-bound generalizations may yield more specific explanations and predictions than timeless and universal generalizations based on ungrounded assumptions.”

revolutionary communism; describing them all as systems which are ‘closed’ and oppositional to a free and democratic ‘open society’. Popper and the so-called Vienna Circle would also challenge the metaphysical analysis of influential thinkers such as the Frankfurt School’s Max Horkheimer; paving two distinct paths for the social sciences, one based on ‘logical positivism’ or ‘critical rationalism’ and another based in metaphysical critique and an exploration into ontology. Popper would, however, note that a scientific rationalist model also contains its potential contradictions, specifically related to its political ‘openness’ toward potentially totalitarian ideas. For example, Popper’s (1945) “paradox of tolerance” described certain forms of relativism or openness which he believed contributed to the ‘tolerance of intolerance’, creating a circumstance where open societies enable their enemies.

Since the end of the Cold War, billionaire financier, philanthropist, and social theorist George Soros has been the most prominent torchbearer for the ideas and assumptions of Popper’s open society in the post-Cold War era. Soros’s (2000, 2002, 2019) political writings on issues of world order are comprehensive, covering aspects of party politics, economy, culture, and geopolitics. While often the subject of right-wing conspiracy theories, there has been surprisingly little scholarship on the ideology of Soros, one of the most influential political voices in the post-Cold War era.³¹ In recent years, Soros has argued that it is not only closed or totalitarian systems that pose a threat to liberal democracies, but also a ‘market fundamentalist’ vision for capitalist

³¹ In a July 6, 2018 article in *The Guardian* titled “The George Soros Philosophy and its Fatal Flaw”, Daniel Bessner (2018) writes: “In spite of the obsession with Soros, there has been surprisingly little interest in what he actually thinks. Yet unlike most of the members of the billionaire class, who speak in platitudes and remain withdrawn from serious engagement with civic life, Soros is an intellectual. And the person who emerges from his books and many articles is not an out-of-touch plutocrat, but a provocative and consistent thinker committed to pushing the world in a cosmopolitan direction in which racism, income inequality, American empire, and the alienations of contemporary capitalism would be things of the past. He is extremely perceptive about the limits of markets and US power in both domestic and international contexts. He is, in short, among the best the meritocracy has produced.”

political economy – an ideology which he claims carries rigid claims to universal truth. Soros notes the differences between natural sciences and those of the social sciences, as in the latter, the act of thinking is part of the subject matter. This is to say, the social scientist has the capacity to transform the outcome of a particular social experiment. Soros notes how economists (social scientists) have been envious of physicists and seek a similar level of predictability and universality in their theorems. For Soros and proponents of the ‘open society’, this is a futile task, as social sciences can shift the outcomes of any social experiment or theory by transforming the minds of the participants, something that natural sciences cannot achieve. Rather than invoke a universal or permanent claim to truth about society and the human experience – as found within totalitarian and/or fundamentalist systems of governance – an open society uniquely has the foundations for social change and reflection embedded within its institutions, structures, and culture, unbound by orthodoxy. Recognition regarding incompleteness of all human knowledge must expand to various areas of public policy, and it is only an ‘open society’ which humbly acknowledges this incompleteness and creates a social environment where testing and scientific experimentation is not constricted by dogmatic thought (e.g. totalitarianism, religious fundamentalism). Expanding beyond just a criticism of non-liberal societies, Soros (2019: 231) notes how the global financial crisis in 2008 also underscored the consequences of applying faulty scientific claims to universal truth within a modern capitalist political economy:

President Obama managed to make the post 2008 recession shorter and shallower by asserting that the economy was fundamentally sound and promising a speedy recovery, but he paid a heavy political price when reality failed to live up to his promises. Fed chairman Alan Greenspan operated much the same way, but his Delphic utterances were more difficult to prove wrong [...] [A] false explanation can be subjectively more appealing than what I consider to be the true one. The efficient market hypothesis allows economic theory to lay claim to the status of a hard science like physics. And market fundamentalism allows the financially successful to claim that they are serving the public interest by pursuing their self-interest. That is a powerful combination that dominated the field until it caused a lot of damage in the financial crisis of 2007/2008.

Soros (2019: 232) argues that: “Popper did not go far enough: rational choice theory and the efficient market hypothesis are just as pseudo-scientific as Marxist and Freudian theories.” Soros’s approach is one of reflexivity, viewing the human uncertainty principle as a spoiler to any attempt towards universalism – including social scientific models based on ideas of rationality such as market fundamentalism. Such human uncertainty is the result of various participants with numerous subjective realities, each acting with incomplete knowledge of objective reality, act in ways which transform the social world through their participation, which is potentially fallible. The economic ideology of contemporary neoliberal cosmopolitans such as George Soros can be described as one of “compensatory liberalism” (Gill 1990: 292), one which is willing to eschew certain market disciplines if viewed as counter-productive to the long-term systemic interests of neoliberal governance and the open society. From such a perspective, liberal economic governance should not be economically dogmatic, but rather free to explore *certain* forms of social planning and insulation from market forces.

For decades, Soros has been villainized by the global far-right movement, a movement which organizes itself around a series of truth claims, for example, the omnipotence of religious authority, the naturalness of ethnonationalist solidarities and social hierarchies, as well the role of women in society. On the basis of his liberal worldview, Soros has become a vocal opponent of many aspects of Western far-right governance in the twenty-first century, including repressive ‘illiberal’ governments in the post-Soviet bloc, racist apartheid regimes allied to the West (e.g. Botha South Africa, Israel), as well as anti-immigrant nativist political parties and social forces

inside the US and EU.³² For Soros, the enemies of the open society are not only found inside the totalitarian systems such as the USSR or Hitler's Germany. Rather, for Soros, 'closed societies' can take many different forms while remaining locked into a global, transhistorical, Manichean struggle against liberalism, human rights, and scientific progress. Such 'closed societies' are then all driven by shared 'totalitarian' truth-claims which can be juxtaposed to the philosophy of an 'open society'. For Soros, the enemies of an open society can then come in the form of 'totalitarian' Marxists, nationalists/fascists, theocrats, or hyper libertarian market fundamentalists.

While the concept of totalitarianism has been developed and theorized by various scholars over the course of the twentieth century, its foremost champion within the imperial state was US National Security Advisor and IR scholar Zbigniew Brzezinski and his frequent collaborator Carl Friedrich (1969, 1965). In many ways Brzezinski was the American liberal establishment's most resilient Cold War theorist, a widely cited scholar, an intellectual leader within the Democratic Party, and the first director of the Trilateral Commission, his influence on the US foreign policy establishment is perhaps only comparable to his contemporaries Henry Kissinger and George Kennan. Brzezinski's scholarship throughout his decades-long academic and political career was broad in scope, ranging from Sovietology and geopolitics to an analysis of American democracy, economy, and culture. Even at the height of the Cold War, Brzezinski argued that geopolitical and socioeconomic problems facing the US, however acute, were less intractable than metaphysical problems of universal common purpose and meaning within society. Rarely giving precise

³² Within the far-right discourse, Soros is the embodiment of a multitude of often contradictory identities. For example, it is not uncommon that Soros is described as both a globalist capitalist and Marxist revolutionary. For the explicitly neofascist segments of the far-right, Soros is often described through various antisemitic tropes/caricatures prevalent during the era of Nazism, while also, ironically, accused (falsely) of being a Nazi collaborator as a young Jew living in occupied Budapest. In recent years opposition to George Soros and his political activism have moved from the fringe to part of the mainstream, with Elon Musk describing him as akin to the X-Men villain Magneto (Selk & Scribner 2023).

prescriptions for reform, Brzezinski often argued that what America needed above all was cultural reevaluation and philosophical self-examination, which could not be achieved through any particular policy, but rather only through a system which allowed for constant re-evaluation, i.e. an ‘open society’. This capacity to re-evaluate is implied to be a characteristic unique to liberal states, something which he argued was impossible under totalitarian regimes (Anderson 2013: 143). Faith in such liberal re-evaluation, even in the midst of crisis or international condemnation, would become a central component to the ideology of neoliberal cosmopolitanism. While proponents would acknowledge that Western societies face numerous internal and external crises, it is however described as gifted with a political system/ideology which allowed it to reform and adjust accordingly. Indeed, Brzezinski’s early writings on totalitarianism assumed that ideology was the most crucial factor of Soviet rule, noting the regime could not rely on the violence of Stalinism, but that its rule could only be sustained through social integration, harmonization, and organization and a transformation of disciplinary party power into unquestioned authority. For Brzezinski and other Cold War liberal scholars, it was this ideological domination that was the signature defining feature of totalitarianism (Brzezinski 1961: 360).

Naturally, the absence of a Soviet totalitarian regime following the collapse of the Cold War required shifting from a theoretical criticism of the communist socioeconomic and political system to a critique of dictatorial, autocratic, and imperial misuse of power, which would persist amongst non-communist states in the post-Cold War world order. Western liberals who had spent decades focusing on the unique dangers of communist ‘totalitarianism’ were required to refurbish their theory of global governance to serve American and Western interests in Eurasia and beyond in the post-Cold War era. Fortunately for Western liberals, many of the criticisms previously levied toward Soviet ‘totalitarianism’ could – with modest adjustments – be applied to the various ‘closed

societies' that would persist in the post-Cold War era. The continued use of terms like 'totalitarianism' (for example applied to modern Russia or China) is not a product of its elucidating theoretical qualities, but rather how this loosely defined label can be adapted to criticize various non-Western and non-liberal regimes, or so-called 'rogue states', opposed to Western hegemony (e.g. Iran). For post-Cold War neoliberal cosmopolitans, totalitarianism and the various 'closed' enemies of the 'open society' within the international system can only be defeated through integration into a globalized 'open society' system. Domenico Losurdo (2004: 28) notes that: "While Arendt insists on the novelty of the totalitarian phenomenon, Popper comes to an opposite conclusion. According to Popper, the conflict between the 'open society and its enemies' seems to be eternal: 'What we now call totalitarianism belongs to a tradition which is just as old or just as young as our civilisation itself'."

The so-called open society and its various intellectual champions have also demanded a transition into a multicultural and postnationalist³³ society, one in which national borders, race, ethnicity, or religion should not arbitrarily restrict one's access to citizenship or belonging. As such in an ideal-type open society, a multitude of cultures and ways of life are to be celebrated and represented within its various governing institutions and policies, and would seek to eliminate all barriers, inequities, or democratic exclusions rooted in birth-citizenship, race, religion, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. Moreover, the ideal-type for world order envisioned by proponents of the open society is one in which its individual members are able to live as global citizens, with the freedom to work, travel, trade, migrate, and live globally – unbound by closed systems which

³³ In 2015, Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau described Canada as the world's first postnational state in an interview with *New York Times Magazine*. He states: "There is no core identity, no mainstream in Canada. There are shared values — openness, respect, compassion, willingness to work hard, to be there for each other, to search for equality and justice. Those qualities are what make us the first postnational state" (Lawson 2015).

restrict human freedom. An open society is then opposed to restrictive border-regimes between nation-states and is philosophically supportive of global citizenship as an alternative to exclusive forms of national identity. For active proponents of the open society such as George Soros, the Berlin Wall between East and West Germany and the Hungarian border barrier (between Hungary and Serbia) serve a similar historical purpose – to limit the ability for individuals to liberate themselves from a ‘closed society’ and access basic liberal democratic human rights. While certain limitations might be permitted as reasonable, an open federalist model with universal access to citizenship is preferred to ‘closed’ unitary systems with exclusive nationalisms. This is perhaps why those who advocate for open societies are also major supporters of the European Union (EU), the most comprehensive and integrated transnational political organization in the world – one which has redefined national sovereignty and inscribed into law certain universal human rights.

The EU is in many ways the premier political achievement of postwar liberalism and the institutional embodiment of open society’s principles. Creating a continental free-trade regime, developing a framework for basic human rights (Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union), as well as concentrating political and economic power within transnational institutions which supersede those of individual nation-states, the EU has transformed sovereignty in the twenty-first century. For proponents of the EU, expanding European integration (e.g. into Ukraine or Georgia) is a necessary bulwark against so-called totalitarian regimes (specifically Russia) as well as other disruptive forms of nationalism which are historically typical to European politics. Integration or ‘widening’ EU membership the postwar period was designed to pacify nationalist/imperialist tendencies through greater trade and interdependence between Europe’s various states and societies. In the post-Cold War era, the character of such ‘widening’ has taken on a new form, integrating states within the post-Soviet bloc to promote ‘democracy’ and disrupt

Russian clientelism in the region. The Cold War however would turn out to be only a chapter in the eternal war between the open society and its enemies.

ii) *The Universal Homogenous State*

In 1989, political scientist Francis Fukuyama gave a presentation on behalf of the Rand Corporation at the University of Chicago titled “Have We Reached the End of History?” which would later be published in *The National Interest* under the title “The End of History?” (1989). Fukuyama would then expand on his predictions on global politics at the end of the Cold War in what would become his magnum opus *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992/2006). Fukuyama’s ‘end of history’ thesis would set the stage for what would become the most important question for international relations scholarship during the post-Cold War era: What is the future of world order at the turn of the twenty-first century?

Fukuyama’s ‘end of history’ first advocates for rescuing Hegel’s idealist philosophy from the (supposedly) tarnished legacy of Marxist materialism. As noted, liberals such as Popper rejected Hegel for his historicism and connection to Marxist thought, however, for Fukuyama, the epochal collapse of the Soviet Union warranted a reevaluation of Hegel’s theory of history. Following Hegel, Fukuyama notes how the material forces of history are of secondary importance to the ideas or the prior state of consciousness which precedes the material world. As such, Fukuyama’s essay concerns itself with the ideological aspects of world order, targeting the Marxist notion that consciousness is shaped by the material world, i.e., its mode of production, class structure, and contradictions. For Fukuyama, ideology and thinking precedes the material world, and the creation of a new world order in the twenty-first century would require imagining what such an order could/should look like. He notes (1989: 7) “Failure to understand that the roots of

economic behavior lie in the realm of consciousness and culture leads to the common mistake of attributing material causes to phenomena that are essentially ideal in nature.” Fukuyama’s forecast for twenty-first century world order is then also his ideal type, a world order which would be “boring” and characterized by American liberal democratic hegemony and market civilization. For Fukuyama, the ideology and principles associated with the open society in the postwar era were manifest in the unipolar moment of American culture, politics, and economy at the end of the Cold War.

From the perspective of American liberals in the late twentieth century, reports that Soviet youths coveted smuggled American consumer items was an indication that communism was a failing system, one which could not provide what it viewed as the basic necessities for a fulfilling life for its citizens. In this regard, American multinational corporations, and the consumer items they produce are framed as a revolutionary force for liberal democracy, exemplified in the East German population’s desire for Levi’s blue jeans and Walt Disney films. Assuming such, Fukuyama seeks to advance notions of a new “universal homogenous state” for the twenty-first century, one which would combine free-market consumerism and institutions of liberal democracy. While the ‘open society’ would provide a philosophy for liberal democratic governance, a global market civilization based on US consumption patterns would be the social fabric for this new world order. Access to Western consumer goods and culture would then create a basis of consent for the new universal homogenous state, which would arrive at the end of history.

As Fukuyama (1989: 8) argues:

[B]oth economics and politics presuppose an autonomous prior state of consciousness that makes them possible. But that state of consciousness that permits the growth of liberalism seems to stabilize in the way one would expect at the end of history if it is underwritten by the abundance of a modern free market economy. We might summarize the content of the

universal homogeneous state as liberal democracy in the political sphere combined with easy access to video cassette recorders and stereos in the economic.

The fact that the USSR collapsed without a major direct military confrontation with the West, but rather abruptly, has been a source of debate and confusion for many political science scholars during the post-Cold War era. The idea that such a monolithic historical bloc folded due to the superiority of Western liberal democratic capitalist model became an attractive explanation for liberals in the midst of such a unique circumstance. The notion of an ‘end of history’ was popularized during what was an unprecedented historical moment, one in which the forces of liberal open societies had seemingly defeated its two major ‘totalitarian’ (loaded concept) rivals in just half a century, that of European and Japanese fascism through direct military confrontation, as well as Soviet communism, the latter undermined by both its own structural contradictions and the universal appeal of Western liberal democracy. In contrast to the overwhelming military defeat experienced by the Nazis World War II and subsequent Nuremberg Trials, the fall of the Soviet Union would be first and foremost a metaphysical victory over the ideological forces of communism. Brzezinski (1991: 34) notes that the defeat of Soviet ‘totalitarianism’ was most irrefutable in the battlefield of ideas:

This is an outcome historically no less decisive and no less one-sided than the defeat of Napoleonic France in 1815, or of Imperial Germany in 1918, or of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan in 1945. Unlike the Peace of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years War in a grand religious compromise, *cuius regio, cuius religio* does not apply here. Rather, from a doctrinal point of view, the outcome is more similar to 1815 or 1945: the ideology of the losing side has itself been repudiated. Geopolitically the outcome is also more suggestive of 1918: the defeated empire is in the process of disentanglement.

Such circumstances were a cause célèbre for optimistic Western liberal intellectuals who had for years been overshadowed by pessimistic realist and critical social science scholarship which accentuated notions of terminal decline of the US/West and the contradictions of imperial military

adventurism. In the 1970s, so-called ‘declinistas’ (both of the left and right) had argued that the era of Pax Americana was coming to a close, with recurrent economic crisis, the humiliating loss in the Vietnam War, the OPEC oil shocks and the rise of Japan (and later China), as well as a sweeping crime and drug epidemics in major metropolitan cities, each contributing to the omnipresent notion that the US and the West more broadly was in an era of stagnation and civilizational downturn; creating a multidimensional crisis with aspects related to economics, geopolitics, and culture. For Western liberals in the post-Cold War era, the collapse of the Soviet Union and relative dominance of the Western liberal states within the international system solidified the Thatcherite assumption that ‘there is no alternative’ to liberal democratic capitalism. Such notions would justify the West’s advocacy for hyper-disciplinary market reforms in the former Eastern-bloc during the 1990s – reforms which may have contributed to exacerbating various other crises (e.g. rampant corruption, ethnonationalist disputes).

The Manichean ‘anti-communist/anti-atheistic’ ideological content used to legitimize LIO leadership during the Cold War would require adjustments to adhere to the realities of the new world order, one (seemingly) unburdened by the threat of state-sponsored revolutionary global communism. While the open society’s eternal war against its enemies would continue, the character of this conflict would be transformed Fukuyama notes (1989: 16): “at the end of history it is not necessary that all societies become successful liberal societies, merely that they end their ideological pretensions of representing different and higher forms of human society.” The ideological superiority of Western liberalism in this new world order was assumed for Fukuyama, and at ‘end of history’ all that would remain would be backward forms of religious fundamentalism and vulgar forms of nationalism, which – due to the exclusivity of their ideologies – cannot take a universalist form. While political contestation would continue along Popperian lines between those

progressive forces of liberal democratic modernity (open society) and those wedded to older forms of barbarism (closed societies), such forms of barbarism would not pose a significant ideological threat to the universal homogenous state. As Fukuyama (1989: 14) notes:

The vast majority of the world's nationalist movements do not have a political program beyond the negative desire of independence from some other group or people, and do not offer anything like a comprehensive agenda for socio-economic organization. As such, they are compatible with doctrines and ideologies that do offer such agendas. While they may constitute a source of conflict for liberal societies, this conflict does not arise from liberalism itself so much as from the fact that the liberalism in question is incomplete.

The neoliberal cosmopolitan worldview has been shaped by – and is inseparable from – the triumphant and euphoric conceptions of “capitalist realism” (Fisher 2009) and American unipolarity that emerged in the states and societies of the LIO following the collapse of the Soviet Union. As George Bush Sr. stated in his 1989 inaugural address: “For the first time in this century, for the first time in perhaps all history, man does not have to invent a system by which to live. We don't have to talk late into the night about which form of government is better. We don't have to wrest justice from the kings. We only have to summon it from within ourselves.” This exultant liberalism assumes that the collapse of the USSR was brought on by a swell of popular democratic social forces who were inspired by the superior political model of Western states, a revolution produced by the ideological penetration of universal liberal values and ideas into the Soviet sphere of influence. International rivals of the US/West, however, have voiced a more critical perspective towards this ‘unipolar moment’ at the end of the Cold War, connecting it to the contemporary crisis of world order, specifically the further deterioration of international relations between nuclear rivals. As Vladimir Putin stated in a 2014 interview with American film director Oliver Stone: “I think the United States felt they were at the forefront of the so-called civilized world, and when the Soviet Union collapsed, they were under the illusion that the U.S. was capable of

anything, and they could do that with impunity. That's always a trap, because in this situation the person or country begin to commit mistakes.”

For liberal internationalists such as Soros, Brzezinski, and Fukuyama, the ideological battlefield was a major theatre in the West's complex Cold War strategy. Ideas supportive of free-speech, market consumerism, private property, hyper individualism, and the so-called 'American Dream' provided consent for an unprecedented military industrial complex described as a necessary protectorate for a liberal international order. While the philosophy of the open society would create a framework for good liberal democratic governance in the mid-twentieth century, unipolar notions of a preeminent/inevitable universal homogenous state in the Post-Cold War era would help create the ideological scaffolding necessary for a twenty-first century US-centered capitalist world order in the twenty-first century.³⁴ The open societies of the LIO would continue to oppose social forces associated with 'closed societies' in the post-Cold War era, however, such threats would increasingly fray into various forms of opposition absent any coherent universalist project.

iii) *Responsible Webcraft*

Reflecting on the novelty of the post-Cold War political environment, various scholars and academics have reconceptualized the nature of power within the twenty-first century, often describing a world order which is increasingly characterized by complex social networks. At the turn of the twenty-first century sociologist Manuel Castells (2000, 2011) notes the rise of a

³⁴ Only a few years after publishing his 'end of history' thesis Francis Fukuyama (1995) would note the challenge of non-democratic capitalist governance, or what Robert Scalapino (1992) calls "soft authoritarianism" emerging in parts of Asia – which combines market principles with top-down, non-democratic, statist forms of governance.

“network society”, a society where information and institutions of governance are increasingly diffuse, decentralized, and globalized. Similarly, political scientist Joseph Nye (2009) would describe twenty-first century world order as increasingly shaped by transnational networks and “complex interdependence” – where successful liberal states and societies would be those which are able to harness the potential of such global networks, provide leadership within multilateral institutions, and combine their hard and soft power capabilities into “smart power”. One can find such notions echoed by scholars across the political spectrum. For example, conservative historian Niall Ferguson (2017) has also noted how the rigid hierarchies that characterized previous eras (feudalism, monopoly capitalism) have been largely replaced in the information age, transformed into a matrix of horizontal and vertical social networks, which have numerous nodes, varying levels of influence, often overlap, and include state and non-state actors. Liberal scholars have argued that in light of the existence of such networks, the behaviour and strategies of states must be modified to adapt to this new reality. Public intellectual, international lawyer, and former foreign policy advisor Anne Marie Slaughter (2016: 77) argues that an American foreign policy in the twenty first century demands strategies which “integrate statecraft with webcraft, the designing, building and managing networks.”

In the post-Cold War era, liberal intellectuals such as Nye and Slaughter have argued that the struggle for hegemony is one which occurs over a web of social networks that often transcend political party and nation state. While such networks date back to the early twentieth century, globalization and the advancement of communication technology has led to the exponential proliferation of such networks in recent decades. In our contemporary moment, political contestation and the actors involved are not necessarily confined to a particular national or local space, but rather various crises/conflicts/struggles often invite the participation of various social

forces within an increasingly networked and interconnected global society. Within what is described as an interconnected, networked, and globalized world order, neoliberal cosmopolitans have argued that national sovereignty should be divided amongst various levels and institutions of governance within a given state/societal complex, as well as subject to the institutions of international law.³⁵ Slaughter (2004: 266) argues that what can be described as ‘sovereignty’ in the twenty-first century should be reconsidered as the construct/expression of a network of social forces:

Theorists, pundits, and policymakers all recognize that traditional conceptions of sovereignty are inadequate to capture the complexity of contemporary international relations. The result is a seemingly endless debate about the changing nature of sovereignty: what does it mean? Does it still exist? Is it useful? Everyone in this debate still assumes that sovereignty is an attribute borne by an entire state, acting as a unit. Yet if states are acting in the international system through their component government institutions—regulatory agencies, ministries, courts, legislatures—why shouldn’t each of these institutions exercise a measure of sovereignty as specifically defined and tailored to their functions and capabilities?

For Slaughter, a transnational system of overlapping networks would govern the new world order rather than a system of sovereign nation states, and that dominant states/societies of the LIO should pursue leadership over those existing networks. Network governance or ‘webcraft’ is described as diffuse, transparent, participatory, and able to respond to a large constellation of risks affecting modern states/societies – risks that would require a paradigm shift in foreign policy and global governance. Indeed, the concept of a ‘risk society’ would become a popular concept amongst liberal scholars during this period. The concept of the ‘risk society’ was initially developed in the late twentieth century by sociologist Ulrich Beck (1992) – and later elaborated on by Anthony Giddens (1999) – to describe how in the future, human society would be

characterized by an increased preoccupation with various risks linked to some processes of modernity (e.g. environmental disasters caused by man-made climate change; fourth industrial revolution and the rise of AI/automation). Within a contemporary context of complex, overlapping, and multidimensional risks, horizontal networked forms of governance, which incorporate a wide range of organizations/institutions/actors with expertise within multiple social and scientific fields, are framed by liberals as more effective/responsive structure of governance than a rigid top-down centralized statism.

The triumphant post-Cold War liberal idealists within the various political establishments of the West would quickly come to realise that genocide, famine, terrorism, and other threats to global ‘human security’ provided new opportunities for a largely directionless military industrial complex as well as many of the transnational organizations previously dedicated to anti-communism. Liberal scholars and commentators would use the existence of such human security ‘risks’ within world to reorient US/Western foreign policy towards upholding (selectively) the right for global citizens to have ‘freedom from fear’ and ‘freedom from want’. In the post-Cold War era, Liberal states, civil society organizations/movements, and transnational institutions, would then coalesce around this new global ethos based in humanitarianism, human rights, human security, horizontal networks, and international law.³⁶

Risks within the new world order would not emerge *only* as a meta-ideological or imperial threat to the LIO’s dominance, but rather, would be produced by various vectors of modernization

³⁶ Perry Anderson notes (2023: 23): “For the most formidable of international jurists today, the Finnish scholar Martti Koskenniemi, international law is best termed a hegemonic technique, in the Gramscian sense. For Gramsci, he notes, the exercise of hegemony always involved the successful representation of a particular interest as a universal value.”

(e.g. wars, climate change, crime, AI) and the incompleteness of the liberal project. Within such a context, threats and risks must be measured and managed by cooperative pluralistic networks of liberal actors, organizations, and states which can exercise sovereignty over the various forces of the ‘closed society’. Slaughter notes (2016: 77): “The essential fault line of the digital age is not between capitalism and communism or democracy and autocracy but between open and closed [...] Openness encapsulates the distinctive logic of networks.” The closed society is then oppositional to an open society governed by networks. For post-Cold War liberal internationalists – which I refer to as neoliberal cosmopolitans – sovereignty is to be divided or pooled amongst the various institutions within a state/society and world order. As such, when particular social forces or institutions within a state/society/world order fail to adhere to the norms/demands of the LIO and its various networks of governance (legitimate or otherwise), it is described as the duty of the dominant liberal states within the international system to sanction or revoke the state sovereignty of that belligerent state and uphold international law, democratic norms, and universal human rights – namely the human security of civilians. In numerous instances neoliberal cosmopolitans within the LIO have used such a framework to sanction, invade, or undermine the legitimacy and sovereignty of particular political organizations, parties, or leaders within world order, describing such rogue actors/structures as ‘closed’, dictatorial, anti-democratic, or totalitarian.³⁷

³⁷ In 2017, political representatives from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, and Peru met in the city of Lima to discuss what would be framed as a crisis of political legitimacy for the Nicolás Maduro government in Venezuela. This meeting would lead to the creation of the so-called Lima Group, a multilateral anti-Bolivarian coalition which sought to aid and abet social forces within Venezuela and beyond for the purpose of ‘peacefully’ overthrowing the Maduro/PSUV government. Then Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland would become a leading voice in the group, describing Maduro as a dictator and recognizing US-backed Juan Guaidó as the legitimate interim president of Venezuela in 2019. Despite having achieved support and legitimacy from various Western states, Guaidó lacked a popular mandate amongst the Venezuelan population and eventually fled to Miami following a failed coup attempt.

Processes of integration into Western systems of global capitalism would occur alongside new violent nationalist conflicts and well-publicized human tragedies that could no longer be framed through a Cold War narrative. At the so-called ‘end of history’, extrajudicial killings in Kosovo, starvation in Ethiopia, Islamic inspired terrorism in the West, and apartheid/dictatorship in Africa and the Middle East could no longer be blamed (or justified) by the existence of the Red Menace. The failure of hegemonic Western states to address major humanitarian catastrophes in the more immediate aftermath of the Cold War – perhaps most notably the Rwandan genocide – would cement the notion amongst many Western liberals that the failure of the international community to uphold basic human rights through humanitarian military intervention, would only serve to enable further atrocities. This is to say, for many liberals, global horizontal liberal governance would necessitate a commitment from the US/West and its military apparatus(es) to create the minimal security conditions for such networks to emerge and flourish. Moreover, the rise of tyrannical regimes and various instances of state-failure in the post-Cold War era further underscored the incompleteness of the ‘universal homogenous state’ and the ideological vacuum left within many of the state-societal complexes linked to the former Eastern-Bloc – a vacuum often filled with vulgar forms nationalism and religious fundamentalism.

In the 1990s, networks of social movements, NGOs, capitalist elites, state officials, and intellectuals would contribute to the reorientation of the LIO’s grand strategy within world order, as well as a novel ideology/doctrine to support the activities Western militarism and supremacism in a transformed geopolitical environment. Mitigation of ‘risk’ and opposition to what can loosely be defined as ‘closed societies’ would serve as the ideological basis for the reproduction of Western military supremacism in the post-Cold War era; a new heroic myth for the LIO which would replace the Manichean struggle against global communism. Closed societies would be

framed a risk to global peace and security which requires networks of liberal institutions and actors. While the use of military force and geopolitical supremacism would remain a crucial component of Western hegemony in the post-Cold War era, such a force would be framed as globally sanctioned post-nationalist and post-ideological form of militarism, one which would be framed by liberal commentators and politicians as fundamental for the preservation of international law, universal human rights, and the ‘open society’ more broadly. Such a model assumes a context in which the ‘free world’ is no longer constrained by an antagonistic imperial power equipped with both a nuclear arsenal and an alternative universalizing ideology for world order. In the post-Cold War era so-called failed states (rather than revolutionary governments) would become the most likely candidates for military intervention, where Western troops (cautiously and supposedly against their own interests) intervene in a surgical and depoliticized manner as a last resort to create the foundations for stability/security and humanitarian assistance. Modern military intervention would then become synonymous with state charity, a reluctant and last resort action by Western powers who could no-longer rightfully be ‘bystanders to genocide’. Such a strategy has been described by realists such as Barry Posen (2013) as an “activist foreign policy” – one which is unrestrained and largely void of hardnosed realpolitik or narrow conceptions of national interest. However, for neoliberal cosmopolitans such a Western foreign policy is non-imperialist, but rather a benevolent act to counter/contain the human tragedies wrought by the enemies of the twenty-first century open society.

For neoliberal cosmopolitans within major LIO states, a humanitarian foreign policy also requires a more humanitarian domestic policy – specifically regarding refugees and other displaced persons. In the post-Cold War period, neoliberal cosmopolitans have advocated for a more welcoming or ‘open’ regime of immigration and refugee settlement within the states/societies of

the LIO, one which would both be open to those living in the global South, as well as responsive to those living in warzones or enduring other threats to human security. Such a perspective would involve the participation of transnational organizations as well as often counter certain institutions of the state. For example, many neoliberal cosmopolitan individuals and organizations in the US would become critical of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) for their excessive/authoritarian practices – practices which were accelerated during the Trump Administration.³⁸ Moreover, neoliberal cosmopolitan actors and social forces have organized in opposition to particular states within the LIO which have enforced oppressive anti-immigrant policies. For example, George Soros and the Open Society Foundations have funded various activist networks in the US and EU which have sought to criticize, circumvent, and reverse laws/policies designed by governments to deter and punish undocumented immigration. For neoliberal cosmopolitans, the welcoming of refugees is a fundamentally liberal praxis, the practical implementation of its core universalist principles. Michael Ignatieff (2017: 225) notes:

A liberal politics is, in moral principle at least, a universalist politics. By moral universalist, I mean a politics that assumes that there is no “other.” In the liberal conception, there is only “us,” agents like ourselves entitled to respect and equal treatment. The moral force of liberalism—and its chief historical achievement—has been to discredit all forms of exclusion, whether justified by race, religion, sexual orientation, or gender. Liberalism’s core moral premise has been to claim that difference itself is morally irrelevant. The chief subject of politics is the human agent, the universal individual. Liberalism’s most hopeful insight is that human beings are tied to others by a primal human bond, and when we accord rights to refugees we are recognizing our common humanity.

Neoliberal cosmopolitans have advocated for Western states and leading international institutions to transcend traditional limitations/norms regarding state-sovereignty within the international system. In its place, therefore, these actors have sought to create of a new mode of

³⁸ George Soros wrote an op-ed in *The New York Times* on March 16, 2017 with the title “When Hate Surges” criticizing Donald Trump’s proposed expansion of ICE and criminalization/demonization of refugees.

global governance based on what can be described as ‘responsible webcraft’, a diffuse transnational network of institutions which can regulate the internal and external activities of states for the purpose of making the world safe and free for human beings, finance, trade, and capitalist development. Under such a global governance rubric, those outlier ‘rogue states’ which fail to uphold Western liberal ‘open society’ norms, would risk/surrender the sovereignty of their state institutions and the future of their national government/regime. Just as the European Union would transform/redefine national economic sovereignty in the post-Cold War era, the ‘responsibility to protect’ or R2P would serve a new foreign policy doctrine which would deputize the US/NATO as the global protectorate of the universal homogenous state in the twenty-first century. Neoliberal cosmopolitans would also support liberal institutions/networks domestically, including the efforts of progressive NGOs which seek greater openness in the states/societies of LIO to policies supportive of immigration, refugee settlement, and multiculturalism.

iv) *Stakeholder Capitalism*

In recent years, through various institutions of the state and civil society, the hegemonic project of neoliberal cosmopolitanism has advanced what can be described as an ideational and cultural shift in the various institutions associated with contemporary capitalist governance within LIO. Proponents of what has been labelled as ‘stakeholder capitalism’, a concept initially developed by the founder of the World Economic Forum (WEF) Klaus Schwab in his 1971 text *Modern Company Management in Mechanical Engineering*, which seeks to develop a new form of socially responsible capitalism, one which is not solely concerned with maximizing shareholder profits, but rather acknowledges the externalities of capitalist accumulation as well as the various stakeholders within a given social order, including governments, civil society, companies, and the

international community (Schwab 2021). Advocates of stakeholder capitalism acknowledge that in order to establish a stabilized universal homogenous state in the post-Cold War era, the states, and societies of the LIO would require a new capitalist governance model which can pacify potentially disruptive class rivalries and cultural/racial divides (often overlapping) which pose significant challenges to the long-term prospects of open societies within world order. Similar to how policies/compromises associated embedded liberalism (e.g. Keynesian Welfare State) were tailored to pacify potentially revolutionary tendencies within postwar Europe (specifically those associated with the USSR), a new governance model of ‘stakeholder capitalism’ has sought to establish a more inclusive and socially conscious capitalism for twenty-first century global capitalism. Stakeholder capitalism seeks to manage/placate (to some degree) the various disruptive subaltern or ‘populist’ social forces that have emerged within the LIO in recent years in response to what has been described as a “fourth industrial revolution” – a technological shift in world order with profound socioeconomic implications (Schwab 2016). This suggested model for socioeconomic governance would seek to incorporate aspects of environmentalism, multiculturalism, as well as socially progressive theories regarding race and sexual orientation into the managerial structure of contemporary capitalism within the LIO. As Klaus Schwab (2021) elaborates:

The world currently knows two prevailing and competing economic systems: shareholder capitalism, which is dominant in the United States and in many other countries in the West, and state capitalism, which is championed by China and is gaining popularity in many other emerging markets. Both have led to tremendous economic progress over the past few decades. They left us with a world that is more prosperous than ever before. But each has equally brought about major social, economic, and environmental downsides. They led to rising inequalities of income, wealth, and opportunity; increased tensions between the haves and the have-nots; and above all, a mass degradation of the environment. Given the shortcomings of both of these systems, we believe we need a new, better global system: stakeholder capitalism. In this system, the interests of all stakeholders in the economy and society are taken on board, companies optimize for more than just short-term profits, and governments are the guardians of equality of opportunity, a level-playing field in competition, and a fair contribution of and distribution to all stakeholders with regards to the sustainability and inclusivity of the system.

Stakeholder capitalism invokes a ‘third way’ for capitalist development, between a state-led economy and a “pure liberal” shareholder-oriented capitalism. This stakeholder model argues for private actors to maintain a central role within the economy, but is steadfast in acknowledging social injustices as well as a range of actors and interests within society. In the early twentieth century formal and informal social hierarchies and exclusions based on race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation were omnipresent within the states and societies of the West. It was not until the period following World War II that the deep-seated notions of white supremacy and patriarchy began to undergo significant reforms within the institutions of global governance – largely due to various domestic civil rights movements in major Western states as well as anti-colonial uprisings in the global South. In 1950 UNESCO would publish “The Race Question”, a scholarly repudiation of the so-called biological fact of race. While this document would be debated, revised, and expanded-upon at various times throughout the second half of the twentieth century, the core statements would become largely hegemonic within the elite liberal discourse of Western states. It was during the postwar period that liberal scholars began to recognize (to various degrees) that the twentieth century provided explicit case studies which showed that the pseudo-scientific models of racial and patriarchal supremacy were both falsifiable, prone to horrific forms of violence, and were not believed to cultivate the transnational business relationships crucial to the creation of a hegemonic transatlantic capitalist class, or a global regime of accumulation. Elite liberal democratic social forces in the postwar period would begin to distance themselves formally/rhetorically from notions of scientific racism and organic ethnonationalism; notions that were just decades prior prevalent and normalized throughout the West. However, such a shift in discourse was not solely the product of humanism or altruism but rather also motivated by economic and geopolitical interests; with the view that in a global market economy, closed

ideologies and forms of discrimination potentially formed an artificial barrier to capital accumulation and to strategically useful international partnerships. In recent years, a socio-economic model of stakeholder capitalism has sought to foster a culture of openness, one which prioritizes (to various degrees by various actors and institutions) inter-community dialogue, multiculturalism, as well as embracing policies designed to expand diversity, equity and inclusion within the state and civil society.

Following this ethos of stakeholder capitalism (sometimes referred to as the “spirit of Davos”), billionaire founder of the software company Salesforce and WEF board of trustee member Marc Benioff (2004) has argued for a so-called “compassionate capitalism”, a model which incorporates a culture of openness, social responsibility, community service, diversity, and philanthropy into the corporate structure. For proponents of stakeholder capitalism, combatting racial discrimination, global poverty, and climate change are framed as crucial to successful entrepreneurship in the twenty-first century. Moreover, the cultivation of expansive and inclusive global networks is understood by proponents of stakeholder capitalism as a practice which is beneficial to capitalist accumulation. Benioff et al. (2004: 113) note:

In today’s increasingly integrated, multicultural world, you lose competitive advantage by not entering every possible market. The same reasoning extends to philanthropy: In defining your community, you can’t confine your service merely to the United States or North America or other cultures with which you’re comfortable. “Community” expands to encompass locations where you have plants or sales outlets, or maybe where you just have customers.

Klaus Schwab argues that a major aspect of so-called stakeholder capitalism relates to environmental, social and governance considerations (ESG) – a loosely defined term which acknowledges, to some degree, the various externalities of a shareholder-oriented market-led capitalist development. Rather than “pure liberal” economic governance model which prioritizes

the interests of the firm and immediate returns on capital, what is advocated by Schwab can be described as a form of “compensatory liberalism” (Gill 1990: 292), a model which would allow for certain interventions into the economy if such interventions benefit – or are perceived to benefit – various ‘stakeholders’ and the long-term sustainability of capitalist social relations. Such an approach assumes that a network of institutions and social forces participate in contemporary capitalist governance and acknowledges/legitimizes a plurality of interests. Incorporating aspects of environmentalism and public health, stakeholder capitalism argues for a holistic approach to the problems of world order, where entrepreneurs, producers, consumers, states, and citizens all recognize the interconnectedness of economy, ecology, and individual health and well-being (Schwab 2020). In other words, stakeholder capitalism is about: 1) strengthening the linkages between the numerous social networks which currently govern the LIO and world order; and 2) further expanding the role of a range of stakeholders and their responsibilities within contemporary capitalist governance. Schwab (2016: 100) notes:

It is only by bringing together and working in collaboration with leaders from business, government, civil society, faith, academia and the young generation that it becomes possible to obtain a holistic perspective of what is going on. In addition, this is critical to develop and implement integrated ideas and solutions that will result in sustainable change [...] Boundaries between sectors and professions are artificial and are proving to be increasingly counterproductive. More than ever, it is essential to dissolve these barriers by engaging the power of networks to forge effective partnerships. Companies and organizations that fail to do this and do not walk the talk by building diverse teams will have a difficult time adjusting to the disruptions of the digital age.

Under a model of stakeholder capitalism, supportive neoliberal cosmopolitans have advocated for a more liberal/progressive shift in corporate culture/practice as well as advocated/lobbied for certain reforms/regulations at both the national and international level, specifically in regard to the environmental protections as well as other humanitarian and social

justice-oriented causes (animal welfare, refugee settlement, inequities within the criminal justice system). While rhetorically supportive of various progressive causes supported by non-profit organizations, social forces connected to the ideology of neoliberal cosmopolitanism often argue that the engine for social and political change/reform necessitates partnerships between private actors (or collectives of private actors) alongside state institutions. Within a world of a multitude of interconnected existential threats, it is then assumed by neoliberal cosmopolitans that philanthropists and private philanthropic organizations are indispensable allies for democratic states to effectively direct/distribute resources in a cost-effective manner as well as help prioritize multiple progressive causes which cannot be addressed through the state alone.³⁹

One issue which has been prioritized by liberal elites in the postwar period is the issue of climate change, with the realization that the current climate crisis poses a unique cross-class challenge for the future of world order. In 1972, the elite discussion group the Club of Rome commissioned a report from a collective team of academics called *The Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al. 1972). This document represented an early acknowledgment amongst elites of an interconnected world system, as well the necessity of maintaining a sustainable equilibrium for demographic and industrial growth so as not to deplete the earth's natural resources or other threatened/scarce necessities for human survival. While often criticized for its Malthusian frameworks, *The Limits of Growth* represents an early attempt toward raising elite consciousness regarding global systemic issues and ecology. In the post-Cold War era, this ethos of

³⁹ In 2010 neoliberal cosmopolitan billionaires Bill Gates and Warren Buffet campaigned for what they called The Giving Pledge, an informal/unbinding commitment for wealthy global elites to donate a minimum of fifty-percent of their net wealth to charity before death. Since being established hundreds of wealthy global elites have signed on to the pledge, with each member retaining the individual freedom to choose how they will redistribute their wealth from beyond the grave.

environmental responsibility/stewardship has become a hallmark of elite neoliberal cosmopolitan ideology within the LIO, one which has sought integrated market-based solutions to pollution and climate change by working with states, corporations, and international organizations to reduce fossil fuel consumption and emissions. The Kyoto Protocols and Paris Climate accords are examples of such regulatory ‘green capitalist’ initiatives which acknowledge the limitations of the biosphere and the seriousness current climate crisis, but do not seek to fundamentally transform/reform social relations of global capitalism or inequality.

Neoliberal cosmopolitan proponents of stakeholder capitalism often describe an ideal economic governance model which is diverse and inclusive, one which incorporates a wide range of actors into policymaking/governance, creating an environmentally conscious society where ‘global citizens’ are able to live, travel, produce, trade, and consume globally without arbitrary discrimination, and rhetorically rejecting exclusions within this system based on grounds of race, ethnicity, nationality of birth, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. Moreover, in recent decades neoliberal cosmopolitans have often argued in favour of efforts toward even greater diversity, inclusion, equity, and multiculturalism within the LIO – viewing such efforts as complementary to a competitive, innovative, and robust liberal capitalist economy. As such, the organic intellectuals which can be associated with the hegemonic project of neoliberal cosmopolitanism and its socioeconomic model of ‘stakeholder capitalism’ have often raised concerns regarding issues of systemic/institutionalized discrimination within the Western states/societies of the LIO, often supporting (certain forms of) civil society activism that advocates for social justice and various institutional reforms, including (but not limited to) affirmative action policies in university enrollment, criminal justice reform, and anti-discrimination training for private and public sector workers. Rather than provide a clear blueprint for state/societal reform, stakeholder capitalism

provides a broad description of the various crises of contemporary world order and offers a series of unbinding suggestions for economic governance in the modern age. The following section will explore how such suggestions have been adopted and advocated (to various degrees) by political parties, non-governmental organizations, corporation, state actors, and public intellectuals within the LIO.

II) The Extreme Centre

This section will discuss the hegemonic project of neoliberal cosmopolitanism as the combination/cumulation of four overlapping US-centered liberal internationalist elite ‘discourse coalitions’ which emerged in North America and Western Europe during the early twentieth century. Such elite discourse coalitions identified include: the Atlanticists; the Trilateralists; the Third Wayists; and the Davos Men. These ‘discourse coalitions’ are cultivated and expressed through formal/informal networks of influential elite intellectuals in the field of global governance. The figures and institutions associated with these four discourse coalitions would create the foundations post-Cold War hegemonic project of neoliberal cosmopolitanism, a project which would seek to facilitate universal human rights or ‘human security’ through the combined power of the US state, global civil society, major corporations, international institutions, as well as the collective security/surveillance apparatuses of the primary Western allies (e.g. Five Eyes, NATO, Interpol). Supporters of neoliberal cosmopolitanism range from mainstream social democrats to liberal conservatives – seeking a broad consensus around a certain set of assumptions and principles regarding the governance of the LIO and world order. These various actors and organizations are broadly representative of what has been described as the “extreme centre” (Ali

2018) of the political spectrum, laying the foundations for what can otherwise be described as ‘moderate’ or establishment liberalism in the West.

i) *The Atlanticists*

On March 5, 1946, Winston Churchill delivered his Sinews of Peace speech at Westminster College in Fulton Missouri (often referred to as the ‘Iron Curtain Speech’), where he acknowledged that the US was “at the pinnacle of world power”, emphasized the ‘special relationship’ and fraternity between English speaking countries, and he discussed the threat of the ‘iron curtain’, comparing the USSR to Nazi Germany, and warning that there is “nothing which they [USSR] admire so much as strength, and there is nothing for which they have less respect than for military weakness.” His speech is often regarded as marking a major conjuncture in world order – the beginning of the Cold War. However, in the speech Churchill also declared his optimism in regard to the building of a postwar liberal international order, one which would be based on the principles first articulated by the League of Nations and backed by Anglo-American dominance. For Churchill, a responsible transatlantic Anglo-American-led world order could (and must) *contain* the threat of Soviet expansion. Similarly, George F. Kennan (1947/1960) would anonymously publish “X Article” in *Foreign Affairs* magazine in 1947 (an expansion of his long telegram to the State Department written in February 1946) where he would echo the urgency of transatlantic cooperation to contain and pacify the USSR.

The earliest transnational elite discourse coalition that directly relates to this conceptualization of neoliberal cosmopolitanism as a ‘hegemonic project’, are the Atlanticists, those actors and organizations which helped forge the ideological foundations for Anglo-American hegemony in the latter half of the twentieth century i.e. the Wilsonian internationalists affiliated

with the League of Nations and New Deal democrats in the US. This group was foundational to the construction of the LIO across the transatlantic bloc, specifically North American and European integration – as well as later the integration of Japan – through building of transnational institutions, a shared common market, and an integrated security umbrella. A priority for this project since its inception has been the containment of the Soviet Union and the threat of global communism, and as such inclusive to other social forces from the right. Inderjeet Parmar and Thomas Furse (2023: 802) note:

The US' New Deal historic bloc was composed of a variety of social and economic forces, including banks, industrial firms, agri-business, and organized (mainly white male) labour, the leading elements of both main parties, an array of liberal internationalist think tanks, foundations, and universities. It was always hierarchical and unequal in relation to the power of each force and rewards and costs. That coalition was effectively embedded after World War II into the LIO through systems of regulation at home and attempts at regulation of world affairs and processes under US leadership (Ferguson, 1984). Yet, a liberal anti-communism always underpinned it (Schlesinger, 1949), even before the cold war began, retaining political space for the far-right in both major parties (Anievas & Saull, 2020).

In the early twentieth century, Anglo-American elites began to form transnational intellectual networks supportive of the Wilsonian principles of liberal internationalism, i.e. self-determination, collective security, diplomacy, democracy, free-market capitalism, and the freedom of movement. Rockefeller and Carnegie fortunes funded various public and private organizations such as the League of Nations, World Affairs Council, Council on Foreign Relations, Foreign Policy Association which all sought to promote a new anti-isolationist political consensus. While such elite networks were unable to prevent the outbreak of World War II, a so-called 'rules-based order' would be embraced by Western states after 1945, realizing the objectives set out in the 1941 Atlantic Charter, and contributing to the establishment of major intergovernmental liberal institutions dedicated to liberal internationalism. The Atlanticists can then be regarded as an elite

liberal-internationalist intellectual tendency which contributed directly to the building the LIO and its 'open societies' in the immediate postwar period – fostering forms of international cooperation and collective security which would both help rebuild Europe and shield it from Soviet invasion/revolution.

The primary concern for Atlanticists in the postwar period was creating an institutional architecture for a transatlantic bloc, one which would shape/foster European integration to serve as a bulwark against communist revolution in the West. To remedy the issues of monetary speculation which plagued states during the prewar period, liberal internationalists established the Bretton Woods system in 1944, creating a regulated/coordinated monetary order based on convertibility to gold. Moreover, Atlanticists sought to internationalize the economic governance frameworks of the American New Deal through the Marshall Plan, policies which included deeper European and transatlantic political, economic, and military alignment. This period of so-called “embedded liberalism” (Ruggie 1997) from 1945 until the 1970s was marked by various class compromises and social programs including concessions to labour and non-capitalist entities as well as tailoring the expansion of free-market capitalism to the localized governance practices and unique cultural contexts of European states. Resembling the New Deal reforms, the rebuilding of Europe would include various ‘compensatory liberal’ policies supportive of (to certain degrees) Keynesian state-interventions, social welfare, and collective labour rights – with the underlying belief that such concessions were necessary to contain the threat of communist revolution. In Europe, so-called Christian democratic parties were the preferred political vehicle for liberal internationalists, whereas in the US – lacking a formally Christian democratic party for various historical/constitutional reasons – the Democratic Party would be the favoured political organization.

When discussing the postwar elite within the transatlantic bloc it is important to acknowledge the role of elite colleges and universities – the educational habitus which cultivated and consolidated the shared class consciousness of the Atlanticists. In the US, champions of the ideas associated with Atlanticism were largely formed within Ivy League schools such as Yale, Harvard, Cornell, Columbia, Brown, and Princeton, forming what can be called the WASP establishment; in the UK, elite schools such as Oxford, Cambridge, Kings College, and the London School of Economics would create a habitus for the bourgeoisie elite; and in France, the *grande écoles* would mould leaders of the future. Within such institutions, so too existed more exclusive clubs, which would further refine those who would be destined for public service and leadership within industry. Fraternities and secret societies, such as the Skull and Bones Society at Yale University, as well as the Bullingdon Club at Oxford University, were often restricted to legacy ‘blue blooded’ white males, forming dense social networks for the parties of ruling classes within the transatlantic bloc.

It was during the postwar period that much of the subfield of International Relations theory was developed largely within US Ivy League system. It was here that the intellectual networks for an era of Pax Americana were initially cultivated – often in close collaboration with the US state and its capitalist elites. The making of the US-led LIO as a historic bloc in the postwar period would have been impossible were it not for a group of liberal politicians, scholars, and bureaucrats who both imagined and developed the institutions and social networks necessary for this era of transatlantic integration and Wilsonian internationalism. The ideology of Atlanticism would become synonymous with various state actors and intergovernmental organizations broadly supportive of transnational institutions and agreements since-1945, such as NATO, INTERPOL,

NORAD, FVEY, EU, UN, World Bank (former GATT), IMF, ICC, ICJ, OCED, OSCE, BIS, FSB, Treaty of Rome, ECSC, EEC, Canada–United States Automotive Products Agreement (APTA), CUSMA (former NAFTA), Basel Accords, and the proposed TTIP, TPP. Moreover, influential private foundations, think tanks, and forums would also play a crucial role in establishment of a US-centered liberal international order, including, but not limited to, the Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Round Table Movement, Pilgrims Society, the Club of Rome, The Business Council, The Business Council for International Understanding, The German Marshall Fund, The Atlantic Council, and the Bilderberg Conference. Certain notions and principles, such as the right to self-determination, individual liberty, and collective security would become synonymous with these institutions and organizations, creating an ideological basis of consent for these Atlanticist liberal leadership structures within the state-societal complexes of the LIO.

The emergence of an Atlanticist discourse coalition in the field of global governance occurs concurrently with the expanding influence of think tanks over American foreign policy. Political scientist Richard Haass (2002) notes how the rise of think tanks has also historically corresponded with the rise of US hegemony in the twentieth century. Haass asserts that in the American context such think tanks began as largely ‘apolitical’ with the purpose of professionalizing governance and offering what he describes as impartial advice to policymakers. The Brookings Institution, founded in 1927, and the Carnegie Endowment for Peace, founded in 1910, are perhaps the earliest examples of think tanks oriented toward global politics, which have sought to inform domestic audiences about the necessity for international engagement in the years surrounding the First World War. In 1921 Woodrow Wilson’s elite intellectual collective of over 150 intellectuals known as “The Inquiry” would transform into the private entity The Council on Foreign Relations,

a think tank, publishing house and networking forum which would unite prominent scholars, financiers, lawyers, elites, and statesmen dedicated to a philosophy of Atlanticism and liberal internationalism. Haass (2002) notes how during the postwar period of Pax Americana, the character of such think tanks would change, becoming much more integrated within the institutions of the American state, with organizations such as the Rand Corporation playing a direct role in Cold War strategy. It would not be until the 1970s that think tanks would become highly competitive and politically partisan, with the rise of major 'conservative' think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation and the Cato Institute, which strayed from the decades-long elite liberal orientation of these institutions.

Allied victory and the relatively auspicious position in which the US found itself after the Second World War would allow American Atlanticists and their various organizations to exert historically unprecedented levels influence over the politics of Western Europe. As the leading state in world order, the US would have the power to dictate European integration and the relative homogenization of Western states and their leading class elements into what can be described as the transatlantic historical bloc of the LIO. However, such a project was a transnational activity, with key actors across various states and societies of North America and Western Europe working alongside each other to consolidate the transatlantic hegemonic bloc. A notable example would be the cooperation between American diplomat and banker George Ball and French diplomat and banker Jean Monnet, founder of the ECSC. Sometimes referred to as the Father of Europe, Monnet played a major role in forging the liberal internationalist networks across the transatlantic that were necessary for the construction of the modern institutionalized LIO. Monnet (1976) famously wrote: "Nothing is possible without men, but nothing is lasting without institutions." While individual actors such as Monnet helped create such lasting institutions, such institutions are not simply the

manifestation of ideal types produced by such elite actors, but rather the ideas and agency of such actors and institutions of governance is constrained by the class struggles and material conditions of a particular historical period.⁴⁰ As Marx (1852/1994: 188) states in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please, they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past." In this regard, the unique historical circumstances of the Cold War and the period of postwar decolonization played a major role in shaping the ideas, institutions, and social forces which can be associated with the postwar Atlanticists.

During the immediate aftermath of WWII, an elite consensus regarding Keynesian economics, anti-communism, and Christian Democracy would unite various Atlanticist intellectuals, political factions, and social forces across the LIO, becoming the touchstone principles of an integrated transatlantic liberal internationalism. Indeed, Christian democratic governments and politicians played a foundational role in the creation of the European Union in the postwar period, and until the 1970s, Christian democracy was the standard bearer for centrist liberal governance in the LIO. Christian democracy can be described as a loose ideological affiliation assigned to politicians and political parties in the postwar era which combined notions/values associated with Christian humanism (related to civil rights and charity) with support for various institutions of liberal democratic governance and Keynesian economics. Unlike Europe, the US did not officially develop a formally Christian democratic political party due to its

⁴⁰ Kees van der Pijl (1998: 120) notes: "[C]entrifugal tendencies surfacing in the wake of the Marshall Plan were reactivating the forces which in the 1930s and 1940s had sought to integrate the German bourgeoisie. Jean Monnet's considerations in launching the Coal and Steel Community included not only playing off German and French workers against each other (Kolko and Kolko 1972: 468), but also, as he notes in his memoirs, fears that overproduction of steel would lead to a return of protectionism and cartels, 'and perhaps an reorientation of the German expansion to the east, prelude to political agreements' (Monnet 1976: 346 [])."

strict constitutional separation of church and state, it nonetheless supported Christian democratic governments abroad as well as celebrated religious political leaders including Reverend Martin Luther King and various popes. It can be said then that so-called Christian democracy was (formally) opposed to both: 1) the authoritarian forms of leadership associated with both the interwar far-right/fascist movements; as well as 2) the so-called totalitarianism of socialist/communist political projects.⁴¹

Many of the ideas and institutions championed by Atlanticists in the early-mid twentieth century retain high levels of public support within the states/societies of the LIO in the post-Cold War era. Such support has not been exclusive to any single party or political identity within the West, with supporters ranging from liberal conservatives to liberal social democrats. In the midst of numerous domestic and international crisis during the 1970s/80s, various figures associated with elite power-bloc within the LIO would refurbish their global governance model to address the challenges of a transforming world order.

ii) *The Trilateralists*

While deeply supportive of transatlantic integration with Europe, many American Atlanticists in the postwar period would also seek to formally distance themselves from various

⁴¹ While often synonymous with postwar liberal internationalism, critics have argued that Christian Democratic governance in practice has in fact often contradicted the principles of its so-called rules-based order and collaborated with illiberal/fascist social forces. During the so-called ‘years of lead’ renowned Italian filmmaker Pier Pasolini argued the Christian Democratic Party was a continuation of Mussolini’s fascism, and accused it of (through ignorance and malfeasance) serving as a midwife for a new form of fascism, one which included the participation of technocratic transnational armies. He (2019: 91) states: “Thus, we cannot make a true comparison ‘chronologically’ between ‘fascisms’ – between Fascist fascism and Christian-Democrat fascism – but instead between Fascist fascism and the radically, totally, unpredictably new fascism which was born out of that ‘something’ that happened a decade ago.” Pasolini fell victim to an unresolved murder in 1975.

unravelling European colonial regimes in the Global South (despite often simultaneously supporting the repression anticolonial movements in the name of ‘anti-communism’). During a speech in Philadelphia on July 4, 1962, John F. Kennedy would state: “We shall support vigorously the principle that no country has the right to impose its will or rule on another, and every people should be free to shape its own destiny.” Kennedy’s rhetorical critique of European colonialism would echo previous postwar Administrations which sought to lay foundations for a new US-centered informal empire – one less burdened by the history of European racism and paternalism in Asia and Africa. Beyond the realm of foreign policy, various figures associated with Atlanticism within the LIO would also support the creation of socially/culturally inclusive forms of domestic liberal governance, a form of governance which would be more consistent with the values of an open society, global capitalism, and demographic changes within the LIO. Perhaps most notably, in 1971 Canadian Liberal Party Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau would officially adopt multiculturalism as official state policy – a policy (and broader social ethos) which would be mirrored by other LIO states such as the UK, Australia, and the Netherlands.

Throughout the postwar period, Atlanticists would often organize privately, without the transparency or democratic checks which one might associated with an open society. With the interest of enhancing transnational coordination beyond trans-Atlantic states, in 1973 David Rockefeller founded the Trilateral Commission, a tripartite discussion group which would foster dialogue and common-cause between elites from North America, Western Europe, and Japan. The purpose of such meetings was to integrate Japan – then the preeminent East Asian economic power – and transform the Atlanticists into what can be described as a Trilateralist elite discourse coalition. In his comprehensive analysis of the Trilateral Commission, Stephen Gill (1991: 143) notes:

[T]he Commission set daunting tasks for itself, namely to oppose a return to the mercantilist policies of the 1930s, to integrate Japan into the core of the American alliance system, and to change the orientations of the foreign and domestic policies of the major capitalist powers so that they might become more congruent with a globally integrated economic structure. It involved, as the Japanese Secretary of the Commission, Tadashi Yamamoto, put it, an effort to ‘internationalise’ the outlook of the ruling elements of the three regions.

This Trilateralist tendency sought a broader political consensus amongst major capitalist states and their political elites in the context of a global Cold War.⁴² Partially as a result of Trilateral Commission meetings, during March of the same year, the Nixon White House would host an informal gathering of finance ministers from the US, West Germany, France, and UK. This informal meeting, referred to as the “Library Group”, would evolve into the intergovernmental G7 forum – with Japan, Italy, and Canada joining the years which would follow. Moreover, in 1978 with support from the Rockefeller Foundation, economist Geoffrey Bell founded the Group of Thirty (G30), a meeting of elite academics and financiers, with the goal of expanding economic coordination/integration between core capitalist states as well as various states in the global South. Beyond such think tanks and forums, informal organizations and clubs have also contributed to the construction of major transatlantic institutions. For example, The Crocodile Club was founded in 1980, where a group of members of the European Parliament (MEP) collectively advocated for deeper European integration, the development of a European federation, and a powerful European Parliament (Cardozo & Corbett, 1986).

The Trilateralists sought to develop and widen the transnational partnerships, networks, and institutions to lay the foundations for what would become a US-centered transnational

⁴² Reports produced by the Trilateral Commission include the now infamous *The Crisis of Democracy* (Crozier et al., 1975) which warned of various threats posed by the “excess of democracy.”

capitalist class hegemony in the post-Cold War world order. Since the end of the Second World War, Atlanticist designs for greater world order have combined basic norms of liberal governance with a collective security umbrella which was specifically tailored to confront all major geopolitical threats to transatlantic hegemony. Such designs since the Cold War have included strategic interdependent trilateral cooperation between North America, Europe, and East Asia. Early attempts by the LIO toward integrating the global South was partially driven by fears of Soviet revolution – or the so-called ‘domino theory’ – but also by fears regarding an independent Non-Aligned movement contributing to the creation of an even more complex or ‘multipolar’ world order in the wake of processes of decolonization. Examples of an emergent transnational post-colonial movement include the April 1955 first Bandung Conference, where newly independent states in Africa and Asia met to discuss/strategize in the context of a bipolar and Eurocentric Cold War paradigm; articulating an alternative hegemonic project for the global South. Subverting, coopting, absorbing and managing such disruptive forms of sovereign political Third-Worldism would then become a crucial activity for the Trilateralists during the postwar period (Sklar 1980: 8). The Trilateralists then sought to expand the Atlanticist political project beyond the core states of the LIO was driven by economic interests, perceived shared values/principles, but also major geostrategic/security interests which go beyond just North America and Western Europe. As Brzezinski (2004: 131) notes:

The strategic scope of the Atlantic agenda extends further east than the Middle East itself. The new Global Balkans—the arc of crisis ranging from the Persian Gulf to Xinjiang—will become less explosive if the resources of the three most successful regions of the world—the politically energetic America, the economically unifying Europe, and the commercially dynamic East Asia—are harnessed in a joint response to the security threat posed by turmoil in that large region.

iii) *The Third Wayists*

The third elite discourse coalition in the field of global governance relevant to an analysis of the hegemonic project of neoliberal cosmopolitanism are the so-called Third Wayists. During the 1980s and 1990s this collection of elite social forces strived to combine sharp neoliberal reforms, modest government support for (broadly defined) social justice initiatives, and further non-Western integration into the LIO – specifically through liberal policies of free-trade and immigration. In regard to foreign policy, Third Wayists helped merge the initiatives of two (often indistinguishable) elite ideological sub-ideologies, that is the so-called ‘liberal hawks’ and the so-called neoconservatives. These two sub-ideologies each promoted an interventionist foreign policy and a limited welfare state, with differences often related to political party affiliation and perspective towards various domestic policy debates (e.g. same-sex marriage, abortion, religion in public life). The Third Way then represents a novel post-Cold War transnational political orientation, one which reflected American unipolarity in a world order absent any coherent/organized/viable left alternative to global capitalism or US supremacy.

Much like its Atlanticist and Trilateralist predecessors, the Third Wayists pursued consensus and compromise between different political factions, and attempted to harmonize often contradictory ideas, institutions, and social forces. Rather than a governance program based in anti-communism, religious morality, and embedded liberalism, the Third Wayists pursued a political program of universal human rights, celebrity/popular culture, and a pragmatic/gradualist social (neo)liberalism. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Christian democratic parties of the Cold War era began to wither in popularity, and various populations within the LIO inclined towards a more ‘open’ and secular alternative to the Cold War’s conservative liberalism. What emerged in its place was a Third Way politics, one which was increasingly progressive on various cultural matters, while remaining staunchly supportive of free market capitalism. Various

influential think tanks like the Progressive Policy Institute, New Democrat Network, and Democratic Leadership Council would play a key role in popularizing the Third Wayism within the LIO; propelling Bill Clinton to the White House as well as Tony Blair to 10 Downing Street.⁴³

British New Labour under Blair sought to replicate in the UK what Clinton and the New Democrats were able to accomplish in the US, creating various linkages between the two movements and their political party elites.⁴⁴ The so-called Third Way then emerged out of these transatlantic networks/solidarities, soon becoming the standard-bearer for a centre-left politics within the LIO in the post-Cold War period. This Third Way political orientation associated with Blair and Clinton can be described as a novel form of politics-from-above, one which was dependent on celebrity and spectacle rather than a dedicated base of support – as well as the Americanization of election campaigning, with centralized and media-driven campaign hubs referred to informally as the ‘war room’. While often supportive of various neoliberal assumptions in regard to public policy Clinton and Blair would distance themselves from the cultural conservatism of Reagan and Thatcher. Discussing the post-political nature of the two leaders, Campbell and Rockman (2001: 38) note:

Both leaders have perfected the new art forms of politics (the perpetual spin) and tried to demonstrate their compatibility with popular culture—‘Cool Britannia’ being a label

⁴³ David O’Reilly (2007: 128) elaborates on the deep Clinton-Blair connection going back to the early 1990s: “British New Labour took much from the experience of the New Democrats and other policy innovators in the US. Michael Foley went as far as to suggest that under US influences a ‘British presidency’ was created with Blair (Foley, 2000). Particularly through Philip Gould and Peter Mandelson, the British appropriated campaigning techniques, such as the ‘war room’ installed at the Labour party’s London base at Millbank. On the policy side, Gordon Brown became fascinated with US economic thinking and was influenced by American tax and welfare ideas. As up-and-coming MPs Blair and Brown had irritated then leader John Smith by their insistence that there was much to learn from the US. As shadow ministers in January 1993, the two went to the US to see why Clinton had won the previous year while Kinnock failed (Naughtie, 2001, 212) [...] To look back upon the rhetoric of the New Democrat period is to appreciate just how much Blair drew on Clintonite sentiment in framing his political pitch.”

⁴⁴ As noted, Blair would also model his political platform after that of Australian politician Paul Keaton and New Zealand’s Roger Douglas who were early adopters of various market-oriented policies and reforms which would later be associated with the third way (Mann, 2013: 159).

frequently associated with Blair's efforts to deflate the pomp and perceived stuffiness of traditional Britain and replace it with empathy toward the popular culture of modern Britain. Blair courted rock stars in a fashion similar to Clinton's courting of Hollywood. The 'Third Way' is, in fact, replete with symbolic politics since, by definition, it lacks the mobilisation that comes from political commitment.

Perhaps the most influential organic intellectual connected to the Third Way was Cambridge University sociologist Anthony Giddens, who authored numerous books which articulated the politics of this new post-Cold War radical-centre, and became the Director of the London School of Economics. Giddens (1998) advocated for what he called a 'new mixed economy' and argued that "the economy can be effective only if existing welfare institutions are thoroughly modernized. Third way politics is one-nation politics. The cosmopolitan nation helps promote social inclusion but also has a key role in fostering transnational systems of governance." Giddens (1998) also proposes that this 'new mixed economy' seeks a "synergy between public and private sectors, utilizing the dynamism of markets but with the public interest in mind. It involves a balance between regulation and deregulation, on a transnational as well as national and local levels; and a balance between the economic and the non-economic in the life of the society." Critical of such flowery descriptions, sociologist Norman Birnbaum (1999: 446) argued that the Third Way "is not a modernisation of American social reform and European socialism; it represents their liquidation."

In 1990, the Fourth Annual Conference of the Democratic Leadership Council in New Orleans would deliver a statement which would come to be called The New Orleans Declaration. This declaration would become a manifesto for the so-called Third Way, articulating a vision for US politics in the new world order; advocating for the expansion of various state institutions and promoting "a more dynamic, democratic capitalism", one which that seeks to make "strategic

investments in [our] public infrastructure and human capital”. In the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 terror attacks, UK PM Tony Blair would deliver a speech to the Labour Party conference where he would similarly outline what can be described as the Third Way’s governmentality at the ‘end of history’. In this speech Blair (2001) states:

People ask me if I think ideology is dead. My answer is: In the sense of rigid forms of economic and social theory, yes. The 20th century killed those ideologies and their passing causes little regret. But, in the sense of a governing idea in politics, based on values, no. The governing idea of modern social democracy is community. Founded on the principles of social justice. That people should rise according to merit not birth; that the test of any decent society is not the contentment of the wealthy and strong, but the commitment to the poor and weak. But values aren't enough. The mantle of leadership comes at a price: the courage to learn and change; to show how values that stand for all ages, can be applied in a way relevant to each age. Our politics only succeed when the realism is as clear as the idealism. This party's strength today comes from the journey of change and learning we have made. We learnt that however much we strive for peace, we need strong defence capability where a peaceful approach fails. We learnt that equality is about equal worth, not equal outcomes. Today our idea of society is shaped around mutual responsibility; a deal, an agreement between citizens not a one-way gift, from the well-off to the dependent.

The Third Way approach to UK politics can be regarded as explicitly post-political, one which is dependent on appeals to morality and rational ‘common sense’ rather than strict adherence to ideology; a values-based approach of shared responsibilities between various stakeholders, rather than class solidarities. Moreover, Third Wayists acknowledged a multitude of risks within world order, as well the importance of managing a modern ‘risk society’ through transnational institutions, multilateralism, and strategic use of political messaging. Despite such acknowledgement of crisis and support for broadly social democratic principles, this group was also steadfast in the belief that ‘there is no alternative’ to capitalist political economy, and that deeper US and European cooperation – specifically in regard to matters of global security – is indispensable to a flourishing liberal order in the twenty first century.

Bill Clinton would famously declare in his 1996 State of the Union Address that “the era of big-government is over” and articulated a desire to decrease public dependency on state services. Third Way politicians such as Clinton often communicated with an empathetic tone and expressed rhetorical solidarity with the poor and marginalized, they also introduced bold policy proposals and government reforms which would often appeal to notions of self-reliance, further entrench a market-logic within the state, as well as introduce new bureaucratic complexities for citizens receiving social services. Such Third Way policy proposals were closely aligned with what has been called New Public Management, a paradigm shift in the basic logic of state institutions which seeks to ‘modernize’ public services, i.e. make them more businesslike. While New Public Management is often associated with the neoliberal turn under Thatcher and Reagan in the 1980s, politicians associated with the Third Way were perhaps the most successful at implementing neoliberal policies, due to the unique historical moment in which this tendency obtained political power.⁴⁵ Chief amongst the economic reforms of the Third Wayists was a shift toward conditional rights based in the ‘responsibility’ of citizens, as well as deep cuts to the welfare state. Michael Mann (2013: 159) notes:

In Clinton’s welfare reform, work was made compulsory even for single parents in return for temporary cash assistance, which could not last longer than two years (five years during one’s lifetime). This plus stringent eligibility requirements halved the welfare rolls, though most pushed off them remained in poverty, beset by chronic problems of childcare, access to health care, low-wage casualization, and hasty classification by overworked case workers into worthy and unworthy cases (Handler, 2004). Blair’s New Labour depoliticized state regulation so that new rules seemed to result from market pressures. The Bank of England set high interest rates and high sterling values to please the markets, and the government could not be blamed for the consequent downward pressure on wages, while the public sector was run by impersonal cost-accounting methods (Burnham, 2001).

⁴⁵ Gary Gerstle (2022: 10) notes how the end of the Cold War: “[R]emoved what had been an imperative in America (and in Europe and elsewhere) for class compromise between capitalist elites and the working classes [...] the fear of “communism made possible the class compromise between capital and labor that underwrote the New Deal order. It made possible similar class compromises in many social democracies in Europe after the Second World War. The collapse of communism, then, cleared the world of capitalism’s most ardent opponent.”

In light of the decline of the global left in the post-Cold War period, leaders like Clinton and Blair were able to present themselves as a more realistic, pragmatic, technocratic, and ‘gradualist’ approach to progressive social transformation; one which (perhaps most importantly) welcomed a cooperative relationship with business as well as the various institutions connected to the security state and greater military industrial complex. In fact, so-called Third Way politicians were often so hawkish in regard to their foreign policy that their policies would align or become indistinguishable from those of various conservatives or so-called neoconservatives within the LIO. Such similarities would go beyond just foreign policy, discussing the 2000 George W. Bush presidential campaign, Birnbaum (1999: 442) would note:

[T]he 'compassionate conservatism' voiced by the leading Republican candidate for his party's presidential nomination, Governor George Bush Jr of Texas, is difficult to distinguish from the project of the New Democrats. The latter avoid discussions of the control of the economy and the distribution of national income. They prefer to talk about 'community', 'individual responsibility' and the 'work ethic'—and to deplore the mention of themes of class as in bad taste, or worse.

The so-called War on Terror and 2003 invasion of Iraq are often associated with the ideology and political project of neoconservatism. However, interventionist military policies have found many champions outside conservative party structures, with the so-called liberal hawks being an influential force within the US Democratic Party going back decades with influential figures such as US Senator Henry “Scoop” Jackson and writer Paul Berman. Moreover, language which can be associated with liberalism and cosmopolitanism has often been deployed in support of so-called neoconservative initiatives to support/defend of policies of military intervention and the expansion of Western surveillance architecture. During the Clinton era, the Third Wayists were staunchly supportive of humanitarian intervention in Yugoslavia. Such interventions in support of human rights however would soon create a pretext for future military intervention in support of

broader liberal democratic values. It would not be until after the terror attacks in New York on September 11, 2001, as well as the July 7, 2005 bombings in London that the so-called centre-left political party structures within the LIO (primarily the US and UK) would become entranced with the foreign policy project of neoconservatism, i.e. support for military intervention to achieve a broader range of foreign policy objectives – specifically in the Middle East. In the years that would follow, the liberal hawks associated with Third Way social democrats would become almost indistinguishable from so-called neoconservatives (neoliberal conservatives, New Right, Wilsonian conservatives etc.).

The rise of so-called neoconservatism has been associated with a range of influential scholars and writers across the LIO including (but not limited to) Max Boot, David Brooks, Nick Cohen, David Frum, Francis Fukuyama, Frank Gaffney, Marko Atilla Hoare, Alan Johnson, Robert Kagan, Herman Kahn, Oliver Kamm, Charles Krauthammer, Irving Kristol, William Kristol, Eli Lake, Walter Laqueur, Michael Ledeen, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Douglas Murray, Martin Peretz, Paul Piccone, Daniel Pipes, Norman Podhoretz, Ronald Radosh, Bret Stephens, Leo Strauss, Francis Wheen, Paul Weyrich, David Wurmser, Meyrav Wurmser, as well as other intellectuals aligned with the 2006 Euston Manifesto Group. It has also been associated with numerous influential foreign policy think tanks and discussion groups such as the American Enterprise Institute, Heritage Foundation, Hudson Institute⁴⁶, Henry Jackson Society, the Project for a New American Century (PNAC), and actors associated with the 1996 “Clean Break” report.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ According to Influence Watch, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation donated \$294,368 to the Hudson Institute in 2017 and Silicon Valley Community Foundation donated \$1,174,122. Moreover, the Hudson Institute would advise members of the Trump administration as well as host European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen’s address following the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack on Israel.

⁴⁷ In 1996, the policy document *A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Security the Realm* (The Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies, 2009) was developed for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Likud Party by an Israeli-based think tank led by Richard Perle. It offered an alternative approach to the Middle East which was opposed to Labour Zionism, the Oslo Accords, and a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. The

Moreover, various publications have also been associated with the so-called politics of neoconservatism, perhaps most importantly *Commentary Magazine* and *The Weekly Standard*. Major US politicians and state officials have also been associated with the implementation of neoconservative policies including George W. Bush, Joe Biden, Dick Cheney, Lindsay Graham, John McCain, Nicki Haley, Mike Pence, Paul Wolfowitz, John Bolton, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, Condoleezza Rice, Mike Pompeo, and Victoria Nuland, as well as various UK politicians including Tony Blair, Michael Gove, Iain Duncan Smith, and Canada's former Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

A clear set of principles which unites these various actors and institutions is often difficult to locate. For example, the more 'moderate' or 'centrist' neoconservatives such as Francis Fukuyama and Tony Blair would articulate their support for Western military intervention in a manner which can be regarded as synonymous with what might be described as Hawkish Wilsonian Liberalism – supportive of certain 'neoconservative' interventionist policies, while also *rhetorically* supportive of certain liberal internationalist causes (e.g. a two-state solution in Israel Palestine). A closer analysis makes it clear that the philosophic/ideological commitments of such liberal hawks would differ in particular ways from the more 'hardline' neoconservative national chauvinists associated with the movement, who have advocated for support for far-right Zionism and a more unrestrained policy of Western exceptionalism and regime change, specifically in Iran (e.g. Norman Podhoretz, Douglas Murray).⁴⁸ Certain so-called liberal hawks associated the

"Clean Break" report argued for a more aggressive strategy on the part of Israel, which would forgo peace negotiations with the PLO/Palestinians, and instead, push for more aggressive Israeli policies of overwhelming force, pre-emption, and rollback against (perceived) hostile Arab states in the region (e.g. Saddam Hussein's Iraq).

⁴⁸ Speaking at the Freedom of Zion Conference in Jerusalem in 2024, Murray (Issac 2024) states: "My hope is that whatever the Israeli military and political leadership can do, the endgame should be that the virus that has ruined Iran ... is gone." And telling two Israeli soldiers "You are the tip of the spear for the entire free world."

neoconservative camp would eventually distance themselves from the movement as it progressed in the early twentieth century (Boot 2023; Fukuyama 2006a). For example, the failures of the Iraq War would lead Fukuyama (2006b) to express regret for his affiliation with neoconservatism and would attempt to separate himself from the movement in a February 19, 2006 *New York Times* Op-Ed:

The End of History," in other words, presented a kind of Marxist argument for the existence of a long-term process of social evolution, but one that terminates in liberal democracy rather than communism. In the formulation of the scholar Ken Jowitt, the neoconservative position articulated by people like Kristol and Kagan was, by contrast, Leninist; they believed that history can be pushed along with the right application of power and will. Leninism was a tragedy in its Bolshevik version, and it has returned as farce when practiced by the United States. Neoconservatism, as both a political symbol and a body of thought, has evolved into something I can no longer support.⁴⁹

It is then likely that Fukuyama's justification for signing the founding statement of principles of PNAC in 1997 (as well as its various subsequent documents produced by the neoconservative think tank) was based on a Wilsonian liberal internationalist interpretation of the stated principles, an interpretation which likely differed from other co-signers – specifically, individuals such as Frank Gaffney, a deeply Islamophobic far-right conspiracy theorist and prominent figure within the so-called 'counter jihad' movement. One can then posit that such 'neoconservative' alliances during the Bush-era were not entirely based on shared ideological and philosophic foundations, but rather, were based around support for a set of interventionist foreign policy prescriptions, articulated in a manner which could galvanize broader bipartisan support for Western militarism from both hawkish liberals and nationalists.

⁴⁹ Fukuyama would further separate himself from Bush-era neoconservative policies in his 2006 book *America at the Crossroads*.

The question of whether neoconservatism can be regarded as a liberal ideology or contrary to the principles of liberalism, has led to considerable debate amongst political scientists. Some have argued that such individuals and organizations associated with neoconservatism represented a radical ideological faction which sought to radically reshape US/Western foreign policy, whereas others have argued that neoconservatism was in fact an outgrowth of a conservative liberal establishment – expressing the consistent long-term interests/designs of American empire. While the definition of neoconservatism has changed over time, since the 1970s, neoconservatism has represented an attempt to fuse the ideologies of Wilsonian liberalism with nationalist jingoism. Emerging as a major political force during the 1980s under Reagan and Thatcher, the term neoconservatism has been applied to various so-called centre-right conservatives and centre-right liberals who have a shared interest in promoting policies of Western military intervention and free-market neoliberal economics. The association of so-called neoconservatism with both neoliberal economics and Wilsonian liberalism has contributed to a great deal of confusion regarding the orientation and character of neoconservatism as a political ideology. Rather than representing a ‘centre-right’ compromise, or a midway between the far-right and liberalism, it is best to understand neoconservatism (to the limited extent in which it can be regarded as an ideology) as a fluid, highly adaptable, ‘big tent’ ideology, one which carries different connotations for associated actors, parties, and organizations. Jean-François Drolet notes how ambiguity regarding the ideology of liberalism has opened the door for a ‘neoconservative’ interpretation which undermines and misrepresents core liberal principles. He notes (Drolet, 2010: 91):

Liberalism, of course, is a broad church constituted by many contending variants—classical liberalism, New Deal liberalism, pragmatic liberalism, neoliberalism, Rawlsian liberalism, etc. In the US, this ideological contest has generated a liberal tradition notorious for its tendency to evade a precise definition in favour of manifestly vague descriptions: ‘American liberalism has been defined as much by its champions as by its critics, each having absorbed something of the other’s perspective’. Neoconservatism thrives on this

muddled ideological terrain. And its claims to the tradition of liberal democracy must be assessed in the light of the broad and imprecise meaning of liberalism in American public discourse [...] [S]ituating neoconservatism within the broad church of liberal political theory tends to eclipse all that is specific to neoconservatism as an ideology. It endows this militaristic approach to social order with a progressive ethical gloss that it does not deserve, and it consequently muddles debates over the limits and desirability of liberal values and practices in world politics.”

So-called neoconservatism emerged alongside the rise of institutionalized far-right think tanks in the US during the 1970s, a phenomenon which further underscores the complexity of disentangling certain ideas and social forces which can be associated with far-right politics from those actors and institutions typically associated with the centrist ‘liberal establishment’ within core LIO states (US in particular). Amongst both affiliates and critics, there remains a high-degree of confusion over what neoconservatism is and its relationship to other ideas which have shaped the postwar liberal international order. For example, critical political scientist Giovanni Arrighi (2005) would argue that PNAC and the neoconservatives of the Bush Administration represented a high risk “new imperial strategy” being pursued by a declining American hegemony. Moreover, John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt (2007) would argue the policies advocated by various American neoconservatives represent (in-part) the interests of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and other actors and organizations associated with the so-called pro-Israel Lobby, a loose configuration of social forces which have successfully steered US foreign policy in the Middle East toward unflinching support for Israel – despite such support being at times contrary to long-term US ‘national security interests’. Rather than a coherent/static political ideology, Anatol Lieven (2006: 125) has argued that it is better to regard neoconservatism as a “para-bureaucratic grouping” – one which is “made possible by the American system’s blurring the lines between government, pseudo-academia, the media and business.” What is clear is that a range of social forces associated with the jingoist ‘centre-right’ and hawkish ‘liberal-centre’ would

find common cause in support for so-called neoconservative policies of US militarism in the Middle East. For Inderjeet Parmar (2008: 48) this cosmopolitan-imperial nexus should not have been surprising, noting how liberal internationalist global governance ideas/frameworks such as ‘democratic peace theory’ as well as notions of ‘conditional sovereignty’ neatly dovetailed with the unilateral and nationalistic foreign policy of the Bush Administration post-9/11. In fact, many Third Way think tanks such as the Progressive Policy Institute supported the US invasion of Iraq, along with various liberal politicians in the US and greater LIO including Diane Feinstein, Adam Schiff, Hilary Clinton, John Kerry, Rahm Emanuel, Joseph Lieberman, and Michael Ignatieff.

Despite its inclination to support policies of Western supremacy/unilateralism in global affairs, it is important to note that Third Way governance did also give rise to various new liberal internationalist institutions, namely the G20, which was born out of the economic crisis of 1999. Moreover, the Third Way formally maintained elite support for the major transnational multilateral institutions of the LIO (EU, UN, NATO, NAFTA) as well as a growing global network of humanitarian or ‘pro-democracy’ NGOs designed to lift the burden of government in addressing the various risks or crises within contemporary world order. While maintaining the status quo of neoliberal governance and Western supremacy, consent for Third Way leadership was partially achieved through its support for a more fair and ‘open’ policy of immigration from the global south into the core Western states of the LIO. Multiculturalism and other policies tailored toward greater representation/equity within the various institutions of state and society were also championed by Third Way politicians, including policies of official recognition and affirmative action for various disadvantaged/disenfranchised groups or identities – successfully combining compensatory neoliberal governance and muscular Wilsonian internationalism, with certain ideas and initiatives often associated progressive social activism. The Obama Administration would continue the

legacy of the Third Way, championing tepidly progressive reforms (e.g. Affordable Care Act); continuing the War on Terror and spearheading NATO new regime change operations in the global South (e.g. the 2011 overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya); as well as providing a \$800 billion tax-funded bailout for Wall Street following the 2008 economic collapse. In the immediate post-Cold War era, the Third Wayists were largely successful in marginalizing more socially democratic forces within the broad left movement; rebranding neoliberal reforms as ‘moderate’ political proposals; and finding common cause with various social forces aligned with Western militarism – all while retaining a veneer of social democratic liberalism and centrism. As such, the Third Wayists would rebrand radical ideas and policies associated with neoliberalism and ‘neoconservatism’ as synonymous with centrist politics in the ‘new world order’. Describing the Third Way political orientation, Tony Judt (2005: 794) notes:

Ever since the 1980s there had been various attempts to resolve the choice between European social solidarity and American-style economic flexibility [...] The effort to combine the best of both sides overlapped, not coincidentally, with the search for a project to replace the defunct debate between capitalism and socialism that had formed the core of Western politics for over a century. The result, for a brief moment at the end of the 1990s, was the so-called 'Third Way': ostensibly blending enthusiasm for unconstrained capitalist production with due consideration for social outcomes and the collective interest. This was hardly new: it added little of substance to Ludwig Erhard's 'Social Market economy' of the 1950s. But politics, especially post-ideological politics, is about *form*; and it was the form of the Third Way, modeled on Bill Clinton's successful 'triangulation' of Left and Right and articulated above all by New Labour's Tony Blair, which seduced observers [...] The Third Way was marketed as *both* a pragmatic solution to economic and social dilemmas *and* a significant conceptual breakthrough after decades of theoretical stagnation.

iv) *The Davos Men*

The final neoliberal cosmopolitan discourse coalition – which corresponds most directly with the recent rise of ‘populist’ far-right politics within the LIO – are the so-called Davos Men. The Davos Men are the class conscious and cosmopolitan “globalizing elites” who provide

leadership within transnational institutions and represent transnational forms of capital accumulation in the era of neoliberal globalization. The term Davos Man is colloquially used to describe a class of transnational capitalists as well as their political and intellectual counterparts, which conform to a particular worldview. This tendency is comprised of neoliberal politicians, politically influential multi-millionaires, and billionaires, including the CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, hedge-fund managers, media elites, and members of various highly exclusive clubs and organizations which influence and command the structures/institutions of contemporary global governance. The concept of the Davos Man refers to: 1) liberal internationalist leaders of LIO states who promote various global initiatives related to democratization, liberal economic governance, geopolitical multilateralism, climate change management, health, human rights, and humanitarian relief; 2) those who operate within the nodes or “superhubs” (Navidi, 2016) of contemporary global financial networks, including figures such as Bill and Melinda Gates, Marc Benioff, Ray Dalio, Larry Fink, Jamie Dimon, Bob Iger, and George Soros; and 3) the various intellectual counterparts of such elites, including influential journalists, scholars, and collective intellectual organizations who help foster greater coordination between such elites and garner public consent for certain leadership strategies within the field of global governance.

The term “Davos Man” is often associated with political scientist Samuel Huntington (2004a: 8; 2004b: 268) who discusses a subset of ‘gold collar’ elites who attend the exclusive WEF conference each January in the Swiss Alps.⁵⁰ The over 2500 attendees include CEOs representing over 1000 multinational corporations, global leaders, celebrities, elite academics from major universities, and trillion-dollar investment fund managers who collectively can be described as the

⁵⁰ Critical scholar Susan George (2015: 3) has used the term “Davos Class” to describe this cluster of transnationally-oriented oligarchic elites who meet at the WEF.

“transnational capitalist class” (Robinson 2005; Sklair 2000, 2002; Carroll 2018), “super-bourgeoise” (Cousin & Chauvin), “superclass” (Rothkopf, 2008), or “globalizing elites” (Van der Pijl, 1983; Gill 1996, 2002a). The WEF then represents just one organization/venue for such global elites to construct a new transnational political consciousness which corresponds to their transnational regime of capital accumulation. Phillips (2017: 25) notes:

The global circulation of capital is at the core of an international bourgeoisie, who operates in oligopolistic clusters around the world. These clusters of elites form strategic transnational alliances through mergers and acquisitions with the goal of increased concentration of wealth and capital. The process creates a polyarchy of hegemonic elites.

Scholars and analysts have used the term Davos Man to distinguish this “separate species” (Goodman, 2022) of polyarchic hegemonic transnational elites who occupy the “stratosphere of power” (Navidi, 2018) within contemporary capitalist world order. The WEF, however, is only one of such exclusive transnational elite organizations, with other notable examples dating back to the mid-twentieth century, including to (but not limited to): Club of Rome, Bohemian Grove, the Bilderberg Group, International Business Council, and Trilateral Commission. As previously noted, not all billionaires, politicians or members of the capitalist class are part of this global power elite, rather the term Davos Man refers those within the contemporary ruling class – largely centered within the LIO – who seeks steering power over politics of world order. Such elites are described as having adopted a cosmopolitan culture or transnational political subjectivity, which is compatible with a system of global capitalism. The development of this transnational elite liberal subjectivity is viewed as efficacious to the cultivation of international relationships/partnerships/solidarities of what has become a globalized capitalist class in the twenty-first century.

The ‘masters of the universe’ who convene in Davos have been the foremost champions of what I describe as neoliberal cosmopolitanism, embracing the open society, the universal homogenous state, responsible webcraft, and stakeholder capitalism. Building-on the ideas and institutions of the Atlanticists and the Third Way, the Davos Men within contemporary world order are the intellectual coalition which directly corresponds with what I describe as the hegemonic project of neoliberal cosmopolitan within the contemporary LIO. In 2017 the US Business Roundtable, a body made up of America’s most influential and powerful CEOs, displayed openness to legislative reforms consistent with a doctrine of ‘stakeholder capitalism’, acknowledging that a narrow microeconomic prioritization shareholder value has produced certain negative outcomes for societal/environmental welfare since the 1970s (Stiglitz, 2019). Expanding notions of social responsibility beyond the borders of the nation-state, the neoliberal cosmopolitans at Davos have increasingly adopted the language of global citizenship, multipolarity, as well as promoting even greater integration with the Global South – most notably with China. Similarly, the Davos Men have sought to reconcile the interests of those social forces aligned with contemporary Western militarism with those social forces concerned with liberal global philanthropic/humanitarian initiatives – specifically in the Middle East and Ukraine.

The power, wealth, and prestige of the Davos Men has greatly expanded in the twenty-first century. According to Oxfam, the wealth of the billionaire class has more than doubled since the 2008 financial crisis, a historical conjuncture in which the majority of the populations within the LIO began to experience a steep economic downturn. Similarly, the COVID-19 pandemic has only further enhanced the economic power and influence of this elite intellectual tendency over the

institutions of contemporary global politics.⁵¹ Not only has the quantity of wealth accumulated by this group expanded in recent years, but also how this wealth is obtained has also undergone a significant transformation – with inheritance increasingly overtaking entrepreneurship as the most significant factor in billionaire wealth creation.⁵²

For such reasons, this group has come under scrutiny in recent years for their opulence, paternalism, and alienation from the interests and life-worlds of non-elites within the states-societies of the LIO – with many on the far-left and far-right lamenting their power and influence. Within the imaginations of many ordinary citizens within LIO states, these Davos Man or ‘globalists’ operate under a veil of secrecy, concealing their political objectives and activities from the larger demos. Moreover, the influence of such institutions in global initiatives regarding climate change and public health (specifically after the Covid 19 pandemic) has also contributed to such widespread public scrutiny. The secretive nature of various elite institutions has evolved into a broader criticism/skepticism of transnational institutions associated with global governance in the postwar period (e.g. EU, UN). Political elites have often dismissed such skepticism as ‘conspiracy theory’ or have downplayed the impact of such attitudes on politics within the LIO. However, elite naivete – or arrogance – has directly contributed to the contemporary crisis in world order. One example being PM David Cameron’s decision to call for a referendum for the UK to Leave the EU in 2016.⁵³ Cameron’s misplaced confidence in public support for the elite liberal

⁵¹According to Oxfam’s 2023 report *Survival of the Richest* (Christensen et al. 2023), since 2020: “this wealth grab by the super-rich has accelerated, and the richest 1% have captured almost two-third of all new wealth. This is six times more than the bottom 90% of humanity. Since 2020, for every dollar of new global wealth gained by someone in the bottom 90%, one of the world’s billionaires has gained \$1.7m.

⁵² The *UBS Billionaire Ambitions Report 2023* notes that the majority of billionaire wealth created in 2023 was achieved through inheritance rather than entrepreneurship. The report notes that there were 84 new self-made billionaires in 2023 who made a total of USD 140.7 billion, while just 53 heirs made a total of USD 150.8 billion.

⁵³ While a member of the Conservative Party, journalist David Osborne (2015) has described Cameron as an heir to Tony Blair who governed as a Third Way politician.

consensus within the UK would spur what would become a major political and economic conjuncture within the LIO. Despite the ongoing ramifications of Brexit impacting the UK, at WEF in 2018 Cameron would make the case that Brexit was just “a mistake, not a disaster.”

While often criticized for comprising a class of lotus-eaters increasingly insulated from various issues which shape human existence within contemporary society, Davos Men have attempted to absorb, acquiesce, and manage the more organized social forces of the anti-globalization movement through their involvement in the leadership and funding structures of liberal research institutions and global NGOs. From anti-racism to climate change the elites at Davos have sought to integrate (or coopt) certain left critiques regarding the culture and politics of contemporary world order into the new elite ‘common sense’. For example, in recent years elite organizations such as the WEF as well as major corporations represented at Davos have expressed support for major social justice movements within the LIO, including most notably Black Lives Matter and #MeToo. Moreover, in more recent years the ideas/theories of critical historians and economists such as Yuval Noah Harari and Adam Tooze have been embraced by these elite networks, with Harari speaking at the WEF in 2021 as well as Tooze speaking in 2022. Rather than directly stifle critical intellectuals, the Davos Men have preferred strategies of pacification and integration – transforming *potentially* counterhegemonic social forces on the left into stakeholders. Peter Phillips notes in *Giants: The Global Power Elite* (2018: 147) how out of a sample of 199 leading corporate managers

[A]t least 69 have attended the World Economic Forum, where they often serve on panels or give public presentations. They mostly attended the same elite universities and interact in upper-class social settings in the major cities of the world. They all are wealthy and have significant stock holdings in one or more of the financial Giants. They are all deeply invested in the importance of maintaining capital growth the world. Some are sensitive to environmental and social justice issues, but they seem to be unable to link these issues to global capitalism.

The Davos Man embodies the consolidation of an ‘extreme centrist’ political bloc in the twenty-first century. While associated with the membership of the WEF, the Davos Man can be more broadly understood as the product of a political compromise which was established by the Third Wayists at the turn of the century. The Third Wayists would successfully marginalize the more critical/progressive aspects of the social democratic left, while also invoking a hawkish liberal foreign policy which would satisfy the interventionist aspirations of liberal conservatives (neoconservatives). For the Davos Man, ‘there is no alternative’ to either Western military supremacy or neoliberal globalization, but rather the risks/externalities produced by such policies are to be managed by a responsible global elite, who can wield their effective altruism towards achieving political and economic stability.

Partner of the WEF, George Soros and his Open Society Foundations have championed to a certain extent the ideology and ethos of the contemporary Davos Man. Soros’s political activism and philanthropic pursuits in the early 1990s were dedicated to build and expand on a project of creating ‘open societies’ in the newly capitalist Eastern Bloc and beyond. In doing so, Soros came upon a major obstacle: social forces which neither viewed their national/ethnic self-determination as synonymous with universal liberal human rights, and/or who had internalized Thatcher’s (in)famous anti-collectivist quip: “There is no such thing as society.” Various far-right social forces within the transatlantic historic bloc and within its sphere of influence (e.g. newly integrated Eastern Bloc, Israel) have framed the activities of the Open Society and Soros as the antithesis of their political project. As a result, anti-Soros conspiracies have become canon within the global far-right movement. For the far-right, the liberal transnationalism (or ‘globalism’) of the Soros

Open Society network is indicative of an agenda which transcends the nation-states and operates as a form of post-nationalist elite liberal imperialism.

In 1993, Soros and his Open Society Foundations inaugurated the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest. The CEU was developed by Soros after the collapse of the Soviet Union to foster a new hub for progressive liberal thought in a region he viewed as plagued by decades of ‘totalitarianism’, as well as under threat from a rising tide of radical nationalism sweeping post-communist societies. Since then, the CEU has been an intellectual hub for neoliberal cosmopolitan thought within the LIO. While initially designed to counter regressive forces seeking to re-establish Soviet-style communist rule, the explicitly liberal orientation of the Central European University and its leadership made it the target of far-right leader Viktor Orbán, his Fidesz party, and fellow travellers within the transnational far-right movement. Those within the global far-right movement would find in Soros an arch ‘globalist’ from which they could mobilize disdain. Due to far-right reforms in Hungary’s education system under the leadership of Orbán, the CEU was forced to exit Budapest, and on November 15, 2019, George Soros cut the ribbon for the relocation of the Central European University from Budapest to its new home in Vienna, marking a major defeat for neoliberal cosmopolitanism in Eastern Europe.

The Davos Men associated with ‘globalist’ institutions such as the World Economic Forum and Open Society Foundations represent an elite intellectual discourse coalition which has organized ideas and social forces in pursuit of political objectives opposition to *certain aspects* of far-right governance ideology in the post-Cold War era. Funding various liberal political programs supportive of refugee settlement, press-freedom, the EU, euthanasia, reproductive choice, women’s rights/education, and other minority rights, the Open Society Foundations and World

Economic Forum can be said to be supportive of a neoliberal cosmopolitan or ‘globalist’ elite intellectual configuration which is understood by the transnational far-right movement as undermining the sovereignty of the nation state and the cultural values of Western civilization. As a result, various elite and non-elite social forces supportive of political leaders such as (but not limited to) Trump, Le Pen, Netanyahu, Bolsonaro, and Orbán have lamented the power and influence of the liberal nonagenarian financier and his transnational Open Society networks across the LIO. More importantly, elite social forces within the contemporary far-right movement have sought to mimic the strategies and organizations of neoliberal cosmopolitans to construct their own elite collective intellectual networks for the advancement of their hegemonic project for the transatlantic bloc.

Conclusion

Since the end of the Cold War, the hegemonic project of neoliberal cosmopolitanism has been embraced by a wide range of establishment political actors and institutions within the LIO. While there is a certain degree of consensus regarding core ideological tenets regarding governance, the inclusion of neoconservative ideas and social forces within the hegemonic project neoliberal cosmopolitanism has garnered criticism from certain liberal elites for deviating/defying the stated norms, institutions, and principles of the so-called rules-based international order. For example, Blair’s partnership with the Bush Administration during the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, as well as the support the invasion received from liberal politicians within the LIO, underscores the potential for neoliberal cosmopolitan ideas/assumptions regarding democracy and human rights to evolve into what Amy Bartholomew (2004) describes as “swords of empire”, used to justify acts of Western imperial aggression in the global South. Despite certain criticisms of Bush-era policies

of the US – specifically related to torture and actions taken during the occupation of Iraq – neoliberal cosmopolitans can be regarded as overwhelmingly supportive of forms of US military interventionism framed as benevolent or conducive to ‘human rights’ and ‘collective security’, namely the expansion of the NATO security umbrella in Eastern Europe as well as military support for major non-NATO allies such as Ukraine, Taiwan, and Israel.

In regard to political economy, the socially conscious forms of capitalism advocated by the WEF and aligned neoliberal cosmopolitan thinkers/organizations in recent years has contributed to various criticisms from both the political left and right – from above and from below. Commentators on the socialist-left have often noted how the recommendations of figures which can be associated with neoliberal cosmopolitanism are ultimately toothless or a half-hearted approach to systemic issues related to political economy and class exploitation. Moreover, those on the far-right have criticized neoliberal cosmopolitan politicians and institutions for seeking to limit free-speech and expand the powers of the so-called managerial state – often equating the WEF’s proposals for a post-Covid world order or ‘Great Reset’, to a ‘globalist’ communist plot for world domination. Both the left and right have then questioned the nature of citizenship/rights under a neoliberal cosmopolitan governance model, as well as the capacity for neoliberal cosmopolitan institutions to distribute such rights fairly/equitably. And as such critics have argued that neoliberal cosmopolitanism as championed by the Davos Men is emblematic of an alienated global elite, with interests/concerns which differ from those of the overwhelming majority of persons within the LIO and world order. While the average citizen remains tethered to their national or local community, the contemporary global elite have been described as having a loose/fleeting relationship with their countries of nationality, while promoting policies which deeply impact or even transform such states/societies.

The increasingly contrastable lifeworlds of elites and non-elites in the context of a global organic crisis have contributed to what is often described as a ‘populist’ anti-elitism, both on the political right and political left. Indeed, it can be said that the dissonance between the hegemonic ideas of neoliberal cosmopolitan rulers, and those of the ruled masses, has been a major factor in various political miscalculations of liberal elites in recent years – evident in the failure to prevent the Brexit decision and a Trump presidency. Such miscalculations have also threatened the political and ideological homogenization of the transnational capitalist class within the LIO. Journalist Gideon Rachman (2011) notes, that the 2008 financial crisis represented a profound legitimacy crisis for the globalizing elites who attend the WEF, a structural crisis that has endangered the ideological unity of this class group and cut across sectoral lines – specifically between state elites and investment bankers. The failures of neoliberal cosmopolitan governance to mitigate/manage various crises have contributed to the hegemonic crisis impacting its associated elite social forces, creating space for an alternative hegemonic project to emerge.

Chapter 4

Far-Right Civilizationism as a Hegemonic Project

This chapter will elaborate on the world order ideology of the contemporary far-right movement as expressed by its elites and organic intellectuals. I will demonstrate how the ideas and social forces associated with the contemporary far-right movement have transnationalized in the postwar period and have formed a new political subjectivity. This chapter will discuss and outline the core ideological components of the far-right movement's transnational hegemonic project for world order, what I label as 'far-right civilizationism' (FRC). I will discuss the transnationally oriented social forces, networks, and elite 'organic intellectuals' (individual and collective) which have in various ways contributed to this far-right global governance framework since the postwar era. I will argue that the intellectuals of the transnational far-right movement have articulated a (semi)coherent narrative framework and vision for the future of world order – a vision which can be contrasted to the neoliberal cosmopolitan vision for the post-Cold War era. This analysis of the far-right as a 'hegemonic project' differs from mainstream liberal theories/interpretations, which often describe (or reduce) the far-right's political program as a reversion towards populism, illiberalism, and nationalism, and/or prioritizes the more extremist or fringe elements of this phenomenon. This chapter will also elaborate on the *longue durée* of far-right thought within transatlantic core of the LIO (primarily the US and Western Europe) since the early twentieth century. What has emerged in our current moment as a competitive far-right hegemonic project for the LIO has achieved the support from major politicians as well as elite transnational social forces, forging cross-class social networks and alliances supportive of this alternative grand strategy for global governance in the twenty-first century.

D) The Major Ideological Components of Far-Right Civilizationism

This section will discuss the core theoretical/philosophic assumptions which are conveyed to various groups/classes/populations of the LIO through the contemporary far-right's elite organic intellectuals (collective and individual). Far-right civilizationism is a hegemonic project which has emerged in the context of 'global organic crisis', is underpinned by a post-fascist anti-universalist political ideology, combines various twentieth century far-right sub-ideologies, and seeks to steer various institutions of governance (domestic and international) in the twenty-first century world order. In recent years scholars have deployed various terms to describe the social forces and ideological architecture supporting the transnational far-right movement's vision for world order, including (but not limited to): reactionary internationalism (De Orellana & Michelsen 2019), neo-fascism (Robinson & Barrera 2012), neo-nationalism (Bergmann 2020), global right wing (Bob 2012), and nationalist internationalism (Motadel 2019). Scholars on both the right and left have used the term 'civilizationism' to describe a macro-social shift from nationalist forms of political identification to other transnational forms of political/cultural identification (Stewart, 2020, 2022; Brubacker, 2017; Bettiza, 2020; Marchetti, 2009). Civilizationism underscores the contradiction of contemporary or 'neo-nationalist' far-right politics, which is both tethered to the nation-state, but requires transnational forms of solidarity to compete with the forces of contemporary liberalism.

In my previously published work, I used the term 'far-right civilizationism' to describe an alternative far-right hegemonic project for the states and societies of the so-called LIO and world order. I noted how this project is comprehensive and has domestic, international, and global dimensions/ramifications which are tailored to address contemporary circumstances within the

states/societies of the so-called West as well as world order more generally. Whilst the roots of far-right civilizationism go back to the early twentieth century, key aspects of this world order ideology reflect on circumstances which are unique to the post-Cold War period and the ‘global organic crisis’ of contemporary world order. In other words, its historical context is a moment in which the social forces of the left have been effectively marginalized; and where, absent the Soviet Union, the far-right must expand its ideology beyond a narrow opposition to global communism in order to mobilize the classes and social forces necessary for an effective far-right hegemonic project within the LIO. The two major transnational far-right movements in the twentieth century – interwar fascism and Cold War anti-communism – each emerged as a response to the ascent of a revolutionary global communist/socialist alternative to Western-led capitalist world order. In contrast, the hegemonic project of far-right civilizationism discussed here emerges in the context of a decades-long neoliberal cosmopolitan hegemony within the LIO and a largely defeated transnational socialist-left movement. The hegemonic project of far-right civilizationism seeks to reorient the lines of political contestation within the states and societies of core LIO states around certain (perceived) crises, contradictions, or threats related to neoliberal cosmopolitan governance, including: mass immigration into North America and Europe from the Global South; left ‘entryism’ or so-called cultural Marxism within liberal institutions; rise of Islamic extremism; racial antagonisms; ‘as well as the rise of major non-Western contender states such as China and Iran. This section will discuss four core aspects of contemporary far-right ideology and how such ideological frameworks address real or perceived crises in world order since the postwar period.

i) The Global Managerial Revolution

There are many points of departure for an analysis far-right ideology within the LIO. For example, one might locate the roots of this movement in the post-Nietzschean German Conservative Revolution in the early twentieth century, with thinkers such as Spengler, Junger, and Houston Stewart Chamberland articulating a combination of modernist and traditional political ideologies (as well as bigotries) which would later evolve into European fascism. Others have noted the influence of various interwar fascist occultists such as Julius Evola, René Guénon, and Ananda Coomaraswamy and their influence on various far-right actors and social forces within the West (Teitelbaum, 2020; Green, 2017). However, within the Anglosphere, the far-right worldview can be regarded in the first instance as a fundamentally counter-revolutionary phenomenon. As such, Edmund Burke's (1790) 1979 *Reflections on the Revolution in France* is perhaps the least controversial choice as the foundational text for the contemporary far-right, laying out a framework which would shape the conservative movement for centuries. Burke warned of the dangers and excesses of revolution, namely that such a revolution in the name of abstract rights (liberty, equality, fraternity) would produce a profoundly negative societal outcome, upending more stable traditional hierarchies – namely that of religious authority. Such ideas broadly resonated amongst anti-communist thinkers during the Cold War, who argued that communists sought to implement dangerous social changes around abstract universal rights – akin to those demanded during French Revolution (liberty, equality, fraternity). For postwar counter-revolutionaries, such notions were at best naïve and absent any practical means of implementation, and at worse, prone to extreme forms of violence (Reign of Terror, Great Terror). For the postwar counterrevolutionaries, the ‘revolution’ – as expressed through major state reforms such as the New Deal and Great Society – would need to be countered at home, just as policies of rollback and containment would need to be applied to communist revolutionaries abroad.

American theorist James Burnham can be regarded as perhaps the most influential counter-revolutionary intellectual in the transatlantic bloc during the postwar period. Son of a railroad executive, Burnham attended Oxford and Yale before eventually settling into professorship in NYU's philosophy department. Burnham began his complex political career as an active communist, spearheading a break with the Socialist Party of America in support of the Socialist Workers Party – a faction supportive of Leon Trotsky (then a friend of Burnham) and deeply critical of Stalinism. Following various disputes within the socialist movement, in 1939 Burnham would begin to become disenchanted with the Marxism of his peers – specifically their support for the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and dialectical materialism. Burnham's rejection of teleological theories of communist revolution and the inevitability of an eventual classless society would come to shape his theory of a so-called twentieth century 'managerial revolution' that was unfolding within the states/societies of the post-New Deal US, Nazi Germany, and Stalin's USSR.

Taking a leave from a professorship at NYU, Burnham would go on to lead the "Political and Psychological Warfare" division within the Office of Strategic Services (precursor to the CIA) during WWII. In the years which would follow Allied victory, Burnham would become an active Cold Warrior and radical anti-communist ideologue, contributing to the overthrow of Mossadegh in Iran in 1953 as well as various other countermeasures against communism in Latin America.⁵⁴ Following his tenure with the security services, Burnham joined conservative scholar and former CIA agent William F. Buckley, and in 1955 they created the *National Review*, a publication which

⁵⁴ Paul Le Blanc (1995: 70) notes: "Burnham was employed by both, serving as a consultant to the CIA's covert-action staff from 1948 to 1952. In early 1953 he was brought in "to assist with AJAX, Kim Roosevelt's operation to save the Shah of Iran from Dr. Mossadegh and his Tudeh (Communist) supporters," recalls CIA veteran Miles Copeland. "Frank Wiesner, our boss, decided it needed 'a touch of Machiavelli' to ensure what emerged in Iran *after* the [US-sponsored] coup would make some kind of sense."

would seek to marginalize/coopt various existing tendencies on the American right – namely those related to non-interventionism, protectionism, anti-Catholicism, and antisemitism – as well as mobilize popular support for anti-communism as a strategy to undermine certain fractions of the liberal elite establishment.⁵⁵ Burnham’s integration into the ‘fusionist’ New Right and the influence of his theories on both so-called neoconservative scholars (Irving Kristol) as well as anti-Soviet socialists (George Orwell and Daniel Bell) cemented his status as a more mainstream conservative figure who has transcended various factional disputes within the right-wing movement. Nevertheless, the ideas promoted by Burnham have become canonical within the contemporary far-right movement.

Despite the various internal ideological disputes within the broad American right-wing movement during the postwar period, a generation of so-called conservatives within the US would draw inspiration from Burnham’s bestselling book *The Managerial Revolution: What is Happening in the World* (1942). In this text Burnham developed his theory of managerialism, arguing that in the twentieth century a new technocratic elite made up of corporate executives, government bureaucrats, and experts would seize the means of production and come to replace a capitalist class, who would retain ownership/control in name only. For Burnham, the result of such a turn toward managerialism in the West would not lead to a socialist/communist revolution on

⁵⁵ David Sarias Rodríguez (2022: 8) notes: [A]nti-communism—specifically the apparent criticism of Cold War policy by the same *National Review* intellectuals who, on the whole, supported its practice—was efficiently used by conservatives to further their political agenda, and how liberal progressive intellectuals’ engagement backhandedly reinforced the conservative strategy. From the outbreak of the Cold War and into the 1960s, anti-communism provided a useful populist argument employed by the conservative movement to reach an accommodation with a significant (and growing) segment of the Republican party also engaged in short-term partisan struggles against a common foe (liberal Democrats, rather than communists). Fanning the anti-communist passions of the nation also provided conservatives with an efficient vehicle in which to travel from pre-war ‘market royalist’ isolationism to post-1945 anti-elitist conservative populism that caricaturised liberal progressivism as the product of an aloof, knee-jerk, if not treacherous, elite.

behalf of the working-class masses (e.g. eradication of private property), rather what would occur would be a top-down revolution dictated by a new corporatist state bureaucracy. Burnham would claim FDR's US, Stalin's Russia, and Hitler's Germany can each be described as broadly supportive of this new social structure, one which is dominated by an unaccountable class of managerial state bureaucrats; arguing that major statist policies/reforms such as the New Deal indicated a shift away from both socialism and capitalism, and towards a technocratic form of liberal governance which serves bureaucrats, managers, and their various institutions.⁵⁶ In the American context, Burnham (1942: 176) describes such a development as indicative of an ideological/cultural shift away from liberal capitalism and popular notions of constitutional freedom, individualism, free-enterprise, and private property rights, and towards statist, bureaucratic, and managerial forms of economic governance. Conservative writer Julius Krein (2017) notes how during the era of neoliberalism since the 1970s, this managerial revolution in the US has depoliticized society, weakened their national sovereignty, and financialized the regime of accumulation – reorienting it towards the interests of fund managers, rather than (hypothetically) productive forms of capitalist entrepreneurship. Reflecting on the differences between managerialism and capitalism, Krein (2017: para. 21) states:

Ownership as managerial control, however, is radically different from capitalist ownership. In managerialism, ownership [is] not conceived of as an individual right, as in capitalist property. It is a function of a managerial position, independent of the individual holding it. “The managers will exploit the rest of society as a corporate body,” said Burnham, “their

⁵⁶ The influential economist and political philosopher Friedrich von Hayek would similarly develop a critique of fascism, communism, and social democracy in *The Road to Serfdom* (1944) – an embryonic text for both liberals and conservatives in the postwar period. Like Burnham, Hayek would homogenize disparate forms of statism and argue that all such forms government intervention in the economy or central planning creates the foundations for a tyrannical rule. Hayek would instead advocate for limited government based on classical liberal values such as individualism and free-markets, and in 1947 he founded The Mont Pelerin Society, a neoliberal thought collective which would frame the postwar period as being produced by various failed attempts toward collectivism in the early twentieth century. While advocating for ‘freedom’, during his lifetime Hayek supported various forms of repressive right-wing authoritarianism when believed by them to be conducive to economic liberty.

rights belonging to them not as individuals but through the position of actual directing responsibility which they occupy.” The managers thus gain all the powers of ownership but not the same sense of property or responsibility. They are owners without being full stakeholders. When managerial control replaces individual property as the basis of “ownership,” production and consumption are necessarily separated. Both the bourgeois and the proletariat rely upon the managers to provide for their increasing consumption. Organizing production becomes the exclusive province of the managers; everyone else is reduced to a consumer, dependent upon the managers. It is status as a member of the managerial class, not as an individual property owner, that determines economic and political power.

Such critiques of the liberal state have been supported by various actors and institutions associated with a variety of (often overlapping) right wing factions or sub-ideologies, including the so-called Old Right, New Right, far-right, centre-right, alt-right, neoconservatives, libertarians, paleoconservatives, paleolibertarians, traditional conservatives, Christian conservatives, national conservatives etc. While these political self-identifiers/categories represent certain strategic and ideological divisions within America’s broad right-wing movement (e.g. regarding military intervention, immigration policy, perspectives toward contemporary cultural norms), Burnham’s influence has often transcended such factional differences/disputes. Despite his affiliation with more so-called ‘moderate’ or ‘centrist’ right wing factions, many so-called Old Right paleoconservative intellectuals such as Paul Gottfried (1984) and Sam Francis (1982) – who are often characterized as far-right of the mainstream conservative establishment – have also noted the influence of Burnham’s theories on their scholarship. However, while sharing various Burnhamian assumptions, one point of contention between right wing factions relates to the definition of the ‘managerial elite’, with some viewing corporate capitalists as integrated within this new managerial elite class, while others viewing corporations as (in theory) a countervailing force to the bureaucratic state. For example, neoconservative factions (neoliberal conservatives) have been

supportive of corporate power as a positive check/influence on managerial state-power, whereas paleoconservatives have criticized corporate power as a component of the managerial state.

Rather than contributing to the development of a free and ‘open society’ in the postwar period, for many of Burnham’s disciples within the far-right movement, the application of contemporary liberal or progressive principles to governance and policymaking can be regarded as a new form tyranny, one with roots in the rise of a managerial elite going back to the early twentieth century. In 1992, Sam Francis – the influential paleoconservative writer, white nationalist, and admirer of James Burnham – developed the term of “anarcho-tyranny” to conceptualize what he describes as a tendency towards new forms of totalitarian statism within Western liberal democracies. For Francis, ‘anarcho-tyranny’ describes a system which is overly invasive and punitive to ordinary law-abiding citizens, while simultaneously enabling an anarchic social environment which tacitly permits various forms of criminality and disorder which primarily impacts ordinary law-abiding citizens. In recent years, Francis’s theories have been adopted by far-right politicians in the US such as Blake Masters and Joe Kent, as well as conservative intellectuals such as David Azerrad, Michael Anton, and Matthew Schmitz. On the concept of ‘anarcho tyranny’ Francis (1994: para. 3) notes:

Probably no other society has failed as dismally as the United States in the late 20th century to meet the basic test of any civilization: to enforce simple order and protect the lives and property of its members. History knows of many societies that have succumbed to anarchy when the central government proved unable to control warlords, rebels, and marauding invaders. But anarchy is not quite the problem here [...] The result is what seems to be the first society in history in which elements of both anarchy and tyranny pertain at the same time and seem to be closely connected with each other and to constitute more or less opposite sides of the same coin. This condition, which in some of my columns I have called "anarcho-tyranny," is essentially a kind of Hegelian synthesis of what appear to be dialectical opposites, the combination of oppressive government power against the innocent and the law-abiding and, simultaneously, a grotesque paralysis of the ability or the will to use that power to carry out basic public duties such as protection of public safety.

But who are the so-called ‘managerial elite’ who are at the helm of this tyrannical system? The so-called managerial revolution helps explain the broad conceptualization of the ‘elite’ within the contemporary far-right lexicon – a definition which differs in many ways from the elite theories produced by critical sociologists in the mid-twentieth century (e.g. Mill’s concept of the ‘power elite’). In light of various traits associated with this new elite within the LIO, many scholars and writers within the contemporary right-wing movement have expressed deep reservations toward what is described as a new liberal elite. Michael Lind’s *The New Class War* (2020), Matthew Goodwin’s *Values, Voice, and Virtue* (2023), Yoram Hazony’s *The Virtue of Nationalism* (2018), Douglas Murray’s *The Strange Death of Europe* (2017), Patrick Deneen’s *Regime Change* (2023), and Tucker Carlson’s *Ship of Fools* (2018) are just a few recent texts which specifically target the alienation (and naivety) of the contemporary liberal elite. For many intellectuals on the far-right, a (loosely defined) liberal elite political class – with interests and values which are contrary to those of the masses – should be regarded as largely responsible for the current crisis within the LIO and world order.⁵⁷ Such ‘elites’ are then not necessarily capitalists, political leaders, or military officials (although they may be). Rather, for the contemporary far-right movement, so-called ‘elites’ are more often defined by their political orientation. The rise of nationalism and right-wing populism within the LIO is framed by far-right intellectuals as a natural/justified response by non-elites to the top-down forms of liberal governance which have fundamentally transformed the societies of the West; specifically, as it relates to emergent trends in mainstream culture (e.g. secularism, multiculturalism, feminism, liberal perspectives toward gender and sexual orientation) and demographic changes due to immigration from countries outside the so-called

⁵⁷ While some may regard the label of ‘far-right’ to describe such figures controversial given: 1) the mainstream popularity of such figures; and 2) the continued existence of much more extreme forms of far-right ideology (e.g. neo-nazi gangs), the term ‘far-right’ is used here to underscore dissimilarity with the social forces and ideology associated with moderate or centre-right ‘establishment’ conservatism.

West. A new wave of far-right scholars and writers have implied that the conditions of decline experienced within the West are then connected to various anti-democratic institutional processes which are orchestrated by a transnationalized, cosmopolitan, or ‘globalist’ managerial liberal elite which has become insulated and estranged from ‘the people’ within their respective states/societies.

Burnham’s theory of the managerial revolution helps shed light on the contemporary far-right’s theorization of the elite in our current era. Right wing intellectuals have used a variety of terms to describe such an elite in the twenty-first century, with conservative scholar Charles Murray (2012) using the term “new American upper class” and columnist David Brooks (2000) lamenting the rise of an “educated class” comprised of “bourgeois bohemians”. For the far-right, liberal elites are described as a group distinct from feudal aristocratic elites or even the ultra-wealthy monopolists in the twentieth century. Rather, this new managerial elite, who Michael Lind (1995; 2020) labels as the “overclass” and Matthew Goodwin describes as “the new elite” (2023) is made-up of salaried professionals from an upper middle-class stratum, who attend the same institutions of higher learning and have been acculturated into the progressive (or ‘woke’) norms of such socially liberal environments. Lind argues that such an overclass is not meritocratic but rather the result of corruption and credential-based gatekeeping by an overclass which seeks to block ‘normal people’ from entering the corridors of power. For Goodwin (2023), this cultural revolution in the UK began with the New Left liberation movements in the 1960s, movements made up of university students/graduates adversarial to the traditions, values, and norms of the so-called West. Since this time, it is said that these technocratic liberal elites have overtaken the institutions of state governance and corporate powers, consolidating themselves as a new elite stratum within Western states and societies. While descriptions of this managerial usurpation vary,

the intellectuals of the contemporary far-right movement have often targeted the ideas, institutions, and social forces which I associate with the hegemonic project of neoliberal cosmopolitanism in the previous chapter. For intellectuals associated with far-right movements, these cosmopolitan ‘globalist’ elites have pursued a political project that seeks to transform the ideology of the leading institutions of the West as well as the historical structures which underpin Western society. Far-right intellectuals use various often-overlapping and interchangeable terms to describe this liberal elite (e.g. deep state, globalists, progressives, Cultural Marxists, postmodernists), which they describe as operating within various occupations and sectors of the state/economy, such as the public sector, academia, media/entertainment, NGOs, and healthcare.⁵⁸

In contrast, the creation of open societies as described by postwar liberals, the managerial revolution of the twentieth century is described as producing a non-reflexive form of bureaucratic governance which is steered by a power-hungry and self-interested elite. For the far-right intellectuals of the so-called ‘national conservative’ movement, it is the so-called (white) working class or ‘little guy’ that has become marginalized due to this new globalized managerial world order, where the state, liberal institutions, major corporations, and their affiliated elites (cynically and/or self-servingly) privilege minority groups, immigrants/refugees, and professional urbanite peers within major metropolitan centres. For self-described national conservatives, the cataclysm

⁵⁸ Burgeoning at the turn of the twenty-first century, various counter-historical perspectives and conspiratorial theories regarding liberal elites, global institutions, and conjunctural events have become synonymous with a far-right worldview within the transatlantic bloc. In the American context, examples include antisemitic Rothschild-Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy theories espoused by American capitalist Henry Ford, as well as the Cold War conspiracy theories regarding the Eisenhower administration and an incipient ‘one world government’ espoused by anti-communist organizations such as the John Birch Society which emerged in the late 1950s. Reflecting on the 1964 Barry Goldwater presidential campaign, Liberal historian Richard Hofstadter (1964/2012) noted the ramifications of this “paranoid style” in American politics and the demagogic post-McCarthy far-right movement. Conspiracy theories regarding the nefarious ideas/objectives/activities of the liberal elite or ‘globalists’ has become an useful recruitment tool for the far-right, which has applied this framework to a range of political debates including (but not limited to): climate change, the role transnational institutions, immigration, gender equity, multiculturalism, public health guidelines/restrictions, content of academia and public education, major geopolitical events, democratic institutions, and state-corruption.

of Trump, Brexit, and the rise of far-right ‘populist’ parties in Europe is then directly linked to the various contractions/failures of globalization, modernity, and contemporary political leadership.

A critique of the bureaucratic managerial state has not only been directed towards elites within world order, but also to the so-called underclass, who are described as a parasitic and delinquent segment of society that has become dependent on the institutions of the welfare state.⁵⁹ For British far-right cultural critic Theodore Dalrymple (2003, 2004; 2005), the welfare state robs individuals of meaning and creates a permissive environment for the underclass to thrive. For Dalrymple, it is neither poverty nor material need which is the primary factor in modern social problems such as crime, addiction, and other self-destructive lifestyles, but rather the root of the issue can be found in a misguided elite liberal ideology regarding human nature, and the regime of ‘rights’ created by such elites. For Dalrymple, the bureaucratic managerial state is responsible for creating a system of dependency which relieves the individual of responsibility and spiritual meaning. Moreover, he argues that the modern state in providing the provisions for basic welfare creates an incentive for destructive and anti-social behaviours. Describing the moral hazards created by the modern British welfare state, Dalrymple notes (2004: para. 34):

Just as the IMF is the bank of last resort, encouraging commercial banks to make unwise loans to countries that they know the IMF will bail out, so the state is the parent of last resort—or, more often than not, of first resort. The state, guided by the apparently generous and humane philosophy that no child, whatever its origins, should suffer deprivation, gives assistance to any child, or rather the mother of any child, once it has come into being. In matters of public housing, it is actually advantageous for a mother to put herself at a disadvantage, to be a single mother, without support from the fathers of the children and

⁵⁹ Far-right elites such as Peter Thiel and his fellow ‘PayPal Mafia’ peer Elon Musk have also expressed a scathing critique of progressive tax-reform and have argued against the expansion of the welfare state and other social programs designed to protect citizens from various forms of harsh market disciplines/externalities. While highly suspicious of progressive forms of statism, both of these figures have profited from massive tax-funded investments into their private enterprises. For example, Thiel’s Palantir was awarded a \$823 million contract with the US government in 2018 and in 2021 Musk received a \$1.8 billion contract for his SpaceX company from the National Reconnaissance Office—a major American intelligence agency.

dependent on the state for income. She is then a priority; she won't pay local taxes, rent, or utility bills. As for the men, the state absolves them of all responsibility for their children. The state is now father to the child. The biological father is therefore free to use whatever income he has as pocket money, for entertainment and little treats. He is thereby reduced to the status of a child, though a spoiled child with the physical capabilities of a man: petulant, demanding, querulous, self-centred, and violent if he doesn't get his own way. The violence escalates and becomes a habit. A spoiled brat becomes an evil tyrant.

Burnham's critique of the so-called managerial revolution in the West since the New Deal has become a rallying point for the social forces of the far-right which are increasingly skeptical of a vastly expanded bureaucratic state apparatus which dictates the so-called political 'centre' of Western politics and is perceived as actively pursuing a project of state control (Gottfried 2001) and dependence (Dalrymple 2003, 2005). For the far-right, a range of mainstream political party structures, organizations, corporations, and state/supra-state institutions have sought to implement various cultural, political, and economic reforms in-line with managerialist forms of governance. The managerial revolution and the contemporary 'managerial state' are then described as a threat to the West, as such state institutions are understood to be: 1) unresponsive or glacial; 2) expansionist and increasingly unrestrained by legal/constitutional checks on their jurisdiction/power; and 3) arbitrarily distributing 'rights' to certain individuals or groups to achieve relationships of dependency and consent to rule.

While often discussed in the context of the nation-state and its evolving powers in the twentieth century, the geopolitical aspects of Burnham's critique of the so-called 'managerial revolution' also provides important insights into the worldview of the contemporary transnational far-right movement within the LIO – a constellation of social forces which have displayed skepticism toward transnational liberal organizations and supra-state entities such as the UN and EU. For the far-right, institutions such as the EU represent the dangers of a global managerial

revolution which threatens to dilute the cultural uniqueness and sovereign power of individual nation-states. Burnham (1941: 282) notes:

The comparatively large number of sovereign nations under capitalism is being replaced by a comparatively small number of great nations, or "superstates," which will divide the world among them. Some of the many nations which are eliminated in fact may be preserved in form; they may be kept as administrative subdivisions, but they will be stripped of sovereignty. Sovereignty will be restricted to the few superstates. It might seem rash to try to predict just how many of these superstates there will be. Certainly we cannot be sure just how long it will take to consolidate the world political system of managerial society or just what stages will be gone through. Nevertheless, the main outlines and the sketch of the final result are already clear.

ii) *Civilizationism*

While opposed to liberal superstate institutions and deeply suspicious of their aims and activities, the far-right is not opposed to transatlantic or even globalized forms of cooperation/solidarity. However, rather than embrace liberal cosmopolitanism and complex interdependence, the far-right movement has promoted a much looser configuration of state/societal alliances; one which is rooted in a common civilizational identity (often rooted in ethnicity and religion) as well as a (often contradictory and vulgar) *realpolitik*. Rogers Brubaker (2017) notes how the far-right movement has undergone a “partial shift” from vulgar nationalism towards what can be described as civilizationism – one where civilizational-belonging helps shape the character of the nation-state. Others have similarly noted the far-right movement’s turn toward ‘civilizationism’ (Bettiza et al; 2023; Maher et al. 2021; Cerrone 2023; De Groot Heupner 2023). This shift towards civilizationism within the far-right movement is the product of both the deeper forms of social homogenization and integration of transatlantic states during the period of late-capitalism, as well as decades of ideological conditioning efforts by elite intellectuals who have sought to cultivate a transnational Judeo-Christian Western political identity as a means to

undermine modern cosmopolitan notions and principles regarding global citizenship, human rights, and democracy. It should be noted that the concept of civilization itself is not bound to a right-wing approach toward politics – which is why I specifically discuss the far-right’s civilizationism, without discounting the potential for a progressive form of civilization to emerge in the future. For Robert Cox (2000), civilization invokes notions of culture and identity which shapes consciousness and the ‘common sense’ of those within a particular social order. Cox (2000: 229) notes how civilizational entities represent a multitude of social “processes or tendencies”, and requires pluralism, dialogue, reflection, and progressive institutional reforms to ameliorate its various contradictions. This can be contrasted to the far-right, conceptualization of world politics which views civilizations as more organic entities, with a “fixed and bounded essence”, tethered to competing interests, geography, and claims to universal truth.

The earliest record of a ‘clash of civilizations’ being invoked by a major public intellectual was by Bernard Lewis during a 1957 Middle East conference presentation at John Hopkins University. It was here that Lewis first used the phrase to describe what he viewed as the more entrenched aspects of political contestation in the Middle East. This phrase and similar themes would continue to be espoused by Lewis in 1990s and 2000s in publications such as his *Atlantic* magazine article “The Roots of Muslim Rage” (1990), his *The New Yorker* article “The Revolt of Islam” (2001), his book *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* (2003). However, it was the political scientist Samuel Huntington who most famously transformed Lewis’s phrase into a comprehensive theory of International Relations in the post-Cold War period. Despite being a life-long Democrat and advisor to the Jimmy Carter Administration, it was Huntington who detailed what would become the civilizational worldview that is now an omnipresent feature of the contemporary far-right movement. Huntington’s (1993a) *Foreign Affairs* article “The Clash of

Civilizations?” emerged as an alternative explanation for continued global disarray in the post-Cold War era, one absent the optimism of a liberal ‘end of history’. The thesis of Huntington’s article – which later expanded into a book in 1996 – was that the conflicts of the twenty-first century would be carved along cultural/religious/civilizational lines; arguing that such cultural/religious/civilizational divisions are much more immutable variables when compared to the ideological divides which defined the Cold War paradigm.⁶⁰

Huntington describes civilizations as durable social constructs which resist homogenization, even under conditions of global market capitalism. A key aspect of Huntington’s civilizational perspective is related to his theory of modernization. Huntington (1996: 28) was adamantly opposed to the ‘Coca-Cola thesis’, noting that “drinking Coca-Cola does not make Russians any more American than eating sushi makes Americans think like Japanese.” Critical of the so-called ‘modernization thesis’ which assumes economic modernization contributes to the development of liberal democratic institutions, Huntington argued that modernization takes on various forms which correspond to the society/civilization, which it occurs. For Huntington, Western civilization is then not synonymous with modern civilization, as progress in industrialization, education, healthcare, wealth, and class structure does not necessitate homogenization into the Western model. While Huntington notes that civilizations may rise and

⁶⁰ Such a culturalist perspective to world order was shared by Huntington’s notable contemporary the US Senator, presidential advisor, UN Ambassador, and liberal public intellectual Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Like Huntington, Moynihan was a member of the Democratic Party who became associated with the politics of so-called of neoconservatism, specifically for his critiques of the Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society programs, his staunch support for Israel/Zionism, his stalwart anti-communism, and his culturally/racially essentialist explanations for poverty and conflict within world order. Mirroring many themes discussed in the *Clash of Civilizations*, Moynihan’s 1993 book *Pandaemonium: Ethnicity in International Politics* would also argue ethnicity would be the primary driver of conflict in the post-Cold War era – an element of political contestation rooted Moynihan describes as part of human nature, and often overlooked over-looked by idealistic and short-sighted liberals and Marxists. While a committed anti-communist, Moynihan would argue for a more restrained approach during the final years of the Cold War, believing that ethnic discord was likely going to tear apart the Soviet Union despite outside intervention; arguing that an “ethnic perspective can lay claim to some predictive power” which is too often ignored by Realists, liberals, and Marxists (1993: 32).

fall, he remains tethered to an essentialist, realist, and static theory of civilization. This perspective differs from conceptualizations of civilization advanced by critical theorists such as Cox (2000) and Gill (1991b, 2019b), who, following Braudel, describe civilizations as complex, porous, and mutable entities which transform alongside material conditions, class dynamics, and inter-civilizational contact.⁶¹ At the dawn of the twenty-first century, Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' thesis and its far-right conception of 'Western Civilization' and 'Islamic Civilization' has been discussed in the background of America's post-9/11 War on Terror – where Huntington was viewed as an early seer in the global war which was then unfolding. In his book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Huntington (1996: 209) notes:

The twentieth-century conflict between liberal democracy and Marxist-Leninism is only a fleeting and superficial historical phenomenon compared to the continuing and deeply conflictual relation between Islam and Christianity [...] The causes of this ongoing pattern of conflict lie not in transitory phenomena such as twelfth-century Christian passion or twentieth-century Muslim fundamentalism. They flow from the nature of the two religions and the civilizations based on them.

⁶¹ For Cox (2000: 220), the concept of civilization is defined as: “[A] fit between material conditions of existence (in which I include human organization of an economic and political character) and intersubjective meanings. I do not advance this in a 'vulgar Marxist' sense in which the material base would determine the intersubjective superstructure. Rather I am suggesting something more like Max Weber's notion of elective affinity—different sets of intersubjective meanings might fit with similar material circumstances. The important thing is that the relationship conveys a sense of reality to the people concerned. Of course, there is nothing fixed or immutable in this fit. Material conditions change. So do the meanings that people share intersubjectively. Civilizations are thus in slow but continuing development. Change is of their essence. Change comes about both from internal contradictions and from encounters with other civilizations. Geography has been at the foundation of civilizations—the ground upon which the material structure of civilization was erected and the site of the myth and poetry that gave it meaning. But historical development loosens the determining influence of geography. As civilizations encounter one another and as peoples migrate, meanings mingle and are discordant. Different peoples in the same geographical site come to perceive reality differently. First nations people in Canada do not see the same reality as middle-class urban Canadians. The same goes in France for Islamic North African inhabitants of the urban *banlieux* and graduates of the *Grandes Ecoles*. Civilization is something we carry in our heads which guides our understanding of the world; and for different peoples this understanding is different. The common sense of one people is different from that of another and their notions of reality differ. It may even be that a single individual has to reconcile within him or herself the perspectives and the claims of two different civilizations—the Indian or the Japanese executive of a multinational corporation, for example, or the Central American immigrant in Los Angeles. This is what has made the drawing of geographical boundaries around civilizations in our own times an exercise in futility. We need to know more about the modes of thought characteristic of different civilizations, how these modes of thought came about, and how they may be changing.”

While warning the West of an imminent confrontation with so-called ‘Islamic civilization’, Huntington – unlike many Bush-era architects of the Iraq War – often displayed pessimism in regard to ‘liberal democratic’ state-building as a political enterprise, and argued: “An extended war against one or more hostile states that had not attacked America directly and yet which did require high levels of motivation could generate disunity and opposition” (2004b: 362). Moreover, as late as summer 2001, Huntington was optimistic about the West’s capacity to contain the threat of Islamic extremism; much more worried about the threats to “cultural integrity” caused by non-Western immigrants and their lack of assimilation into American, European, and Japanese societies.⁶² Huntington’s thought can then be regarded as more relativistic, more nativist, and less idealistic than many of the more liberal or Wilsonian ‘neoconservatives’ associated with the Project for a New American Century.

In the early days of the War on Terror, the Bush Administration explicitly denied any ‘clash of civilizations’ as a motivating factor in its Middle East policy; even going so far as to publicly stating that the US was not in a conflict with the Islamic world, but rather was specifically targeting the ‘tyrannical’ regimes within the ‘axis of evil’, which ranged from Hussein’s rule in Iraq, Hugo Chavez’s Venezuela, and Kim Jong Un’s North Korea. For Huntington (2004b: 263), small time dictators and ‘rogue states’ did not represent a threat to US national security comparable to the dictatorships of Stalin or Hitler. Rather, after 9/11, a diffuse ‘militant Islam’ was in fact “America’s first enemy of the twenty first century”, a war which was reinforced by the threat of terrorism and the cultural cleavage between American Protestantism and Islam. Some ‘neoconservative’

⁶² Just months before 9/11 Huntington wrote (2001: 263): “So far, the West has done reasonably well containing terrorist threats. A year ago, Osama bin Laden had a very elaborate plan to cause trouble in various places across the planet, but he was mainly stopped. The high level of vigilance in the West against this threat seems to have paid off.”

politicians and intellectuals, who took a more universalist line during the ‘war on terror, would criticize Huntington’s ‘clash of civilizations’ thesis (e.g. George Bush, Colin Powell, Daniel Pipes), while also simultaneously being embraced by others (e.g. Frits Bolkenstein, Ayaan Hirsi Ali). Some neoconservatives would try to find a middle ground between Huntington and hawkish liberal idealism. For example, in a letter written to Amartya Sen in *Slate* on May 3, 2006, arch-neocon Robert Kagan acknowledges the limitations of the ‘clash of civilizations’ thesis and how it fails to acknowledge the multitude of identities lodged within a given civilizational entity – but then goes on to write (2006: para. 4):

Certainly, one problem we face is that there often seems to be so little evidence to contradict the “clash of civilizations” explanation of our era. Why, for instance, do we not see more Muslims publicly insisting that their other identities be given greater prominence? If it is true that liberalism is not a Western phenomenon—and I agree that it is not—why don’t we see more Muslim leaders, intellectuals, and opinion-makers pressing for it? You offer a good explanation for some of this reticence: The non-European world, after a long history of colonization, harbors resentments and “anti-Western” sentiments that tend to shape identity. But when will we see more people break out of this straitjacket? Or is that already happening, and I’ve just been missing it? [...] And in the Muslim world more generally, who is standing up and demanding to be seen as more than simply a Muslim?

One can locate a deep contradiction between certain ideological assumptions often associated with the far-right movement (isolationism, nationalism, anti-universalism) and the idealist and interventionist ‘neoconservative’ policies. If one accepts the political proclamations of certain post-9/11 Anglo-American neocons as sincere, and that the issues in non-Western civilizations are to be resolved by a combination of militarism, state-building ‘liberal democratic’ institutions of governance – this would imply that civilization as a category is far less rigid than Huntington or others on the far-right would assume. For Huntington – as well as many within the contemporary far-right movement – culture and civilization are essential, static, entrenched,

bounded, and all-encompassing forces which shape domestic and global politics, and therefore should guide US foreign policy. Huntington (1999:49) notes:

Most of the world, as Mandela said does not want the United States to be its policeman. As a multipolar system emerges, the appropriate replacement for a global sheriff is community policing, with the major regional powers assuming primary responsibility for order in their regions [...] American intervention could then be restricted to those situations of potential violence, such as the Middle East and South Asia, involving major states of different civilizations.

Such notions contradict many of the ideas/assumptions that have underpinned support for policies of regime change in the post-Cold War era, which prioritized ‘democracy’, ‘human rights’, and long-term US-led political/military projects to address the issue of totalitarianism and ‘islamist terrorism’, including the removal of Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi , as well as Anglo-American imposed state-reforms (e.g. so-called ‘de-Ba’athification’ in post-Saddam Iraq).⁶³ For Huntington, US foreign policy should then prioritize more narrow national/civilizational interests, and be suspicious of universalist liberal objectives, as well as the particularistic interests of domestic ethnic groups or other foreign actors seeking to influence state behaviour.

To the extent that neoconservatism represents a political orientation or (sub)ideology within the broader right wing movement, it is important to note the transformations which this supposed political orientation has undergone since its emergence in the 1960s and 1970s. Distinguishing between historical factions and intellectual tendencies associated with neoconservatism, Greg Weiner (2016: 167) notes: “There is also no question that the second

⁶³ Interestingly, Huntington’s anti-communist realpolitik led him to support the Ba’athists during the Cold War. He argued (1965: 429): “Instead of relying on the military, American policy should be directed to the creation within modernizing countries of at least one strong non-Communist political party. If such a party already exists and is in a dominant position, support of that party should be the keystone of policy. Where political life is fragmented and many small parties exist, American backing should go to the strongest of the parties whose goals are compatible with ours. If it is a choice between a party and a personality, choose the party: better the Baath than Nasser.”

generation of neoconservatives is less Burkean and more Wilsonian than the first.” One can regard neoconservative ideology (to the extent it represents a coherent/consistent ideology) as highly adaptable and fluid throughout its history; able to utilize, incorporate, absorb, or marginalize various sub-ideologies whenever expedient – including both liberal internationalism and nationalist/civilizational realism – with the core interest and purpose of maximizing the military supremacy of the US and its allies over world order. Indeed, even Huntington’s more supposedly liberal-minded ‘neoconservative’ critics in academia would largely come to accept his ontological framework which conceptualized culture and civilization as the driving factors in the conflict(s) in the post-Cold War era. For example, neoconservative scholars and writers such as André Glucksmann (2007), Norman Podhoretz (2007), and Daniel Pipes (2002)⁶⁴ would argue that the West was in-fact *not* in a war with ‘Islamic civilization’, but rather at war with sub-group within that civilization which is both the enemy of the West as well as of moderate social forces within the ‘Islamic world’. Rather than a clash between civilizations, these authors would argue that they were also concerned with Muslim populations who are the most likely victims of ‘militant Islam’, ‘Islamists’, ‘islamofascists’. In his article “Who is the Enemy?”, Pipes (2002: para 38) argues:

If the earth-shaking clash of our time is not between two civilizations, it is and must be a clash among the members of *one* civilization - specifically, between Islamists and those who, for want of a better term, we may call moderate Muslims (understanding that "moderate" does not mean liberal or democratic but only anti-Islamist). Just as the deviant Western ideologies of fascism and Communism challenged and shook and had to be expelled from the West, so it is with militant Islam and the Muslim world. The battle for the soul of Islam will undoubtedly last many years and take many lives, and is likely to be the greatest ideological battle of the post-cold-war era.

⁶⁴ In a 2016 interview, Daniel Pipes notes: “Huntington made some very major mistakes which have become increasingly evident in the two decades since he aired his thesis. For example, he thought U.S. tensions with Japan in the 1990s resulted from civilizational differences; a decade later, those tensions disappeared, replaced by far more severe problems with Europe, even though the United States and Europe form part of the same civilization. The real divisions, as always, remain political, not civilizational” (Ralph Ostner: 2016).

The question of neoconservatism and its relationship to the contemporary far-right movement and its current civilizational worldview is complex, especially given the various instances where neoconservative intellectuals have emerged from liberal party structures or have offered liberal justifications for their various policy proposals. As noted in the previous chapter, the language of neoliberal cosmopolitanism has been used by various liberals and centrists in the early twenty-first century to defend policies often associated with neoconservatism. The political alliances with liberals and the incorporation of certain liberal ideas in the propaganda of the Bush Administration has then led to scholarly debate regarding neoconservatism and its relationship to liberal/neoliberal ideology. Moreover, the role of so-called neoconservative intellectuals on foreign policymaking during the Bush Administration has also been contested within scholarship. For example, some scholars have argued that a group of influential neoconservative ideologues hijacked/usurped America's Middle East policy during the War on Terror – representing a deviation from liberal principles or even American national security interests (Walt & Mearsheimer 2007). In contrast, other scholars have argued that the major think tanks associated with Bush-era neoconservatism such as PNAC and AEI and the ideology and policy proposals they espoused can be associated with (or are the product of) the conservative right wing liberal state-establishment – and as such did not represent a major historical deviation or represent usurper vanguards (Parmar 2008). Nevertheless, it can be stated that many of the ideas espoused by so-called neoconservatives in the post-9/11 environment, corresponds in various ways with a civilizational worldview.

While Huntington's influence and relationship to contemporary conservative thought is complex – specifically his relationship to neoconservatism – it is clear that Huntington's civilizationism has been echoed by a myriad of cultural chauvinists and orientalist across the

West. While liberals, following Fukuyama, would homogenize the multiple enemies of ‘open society’ as fringe barbaric elements or isolated authoritarians that were indicative of the incompleteness of the liberal democratic capitalist project in the ‘new world order’ – for far-right civilizationists, the fault-lines of global conflicts in the post-Cold War period can be interpreted as symbolic of the continuation of a deeply ingrained historical civilizational/cultural paradigm in world order.⁶⁵ For the contemporary far-right movement, twenty-first century world order has become increasingly parcellated across racial, ethnic, and/or religious lines and as such, the foreign policy of so-called Western states is ideally conducted with an adherence to what can be described as a form of civilizational realism – a “mode of foreign relations” (Van der Pijl 2014) which is based on civilizational solidarities and interests. This civilizationism can be contrasted to the romantic and utopian notions of liberal internationalists regarding universal human rights, multiculturalism, and global citizenship.

In many ways, a Huntingtonian perspective towards world order is more alive today than it was during Huntington’s time. For many far-right intellectuals, a civilizational reorganization of global politics after the Cold War was not only a sober observation or prediction, but rather, could be regarded as a component of an ideal-type model for Western primacy in the post-Cold War era. In our current moment, far-right leaders and intellectuals have explicitly expressed support for a revitalized Judeo-Christian Western civilizational political subjectivity often articulating a far-right critique of official liberal multiculturalism and immigration from the global South, one which equates such policies with capitulation to the ‘globalist’ elite, China, Islamic civilization, and/or

⁶⁵ Huntington notes (2000: xiv): “Perhaps the wisest words on the place of culture in human affairs are those of Daniel Patrick Moynihan: ‘The central conservative truth is that it is culture, not politics, that determines the success of a society. The central liberal truth is that politics can change a culture and save it from itself.’”

Cultural Marxism. It is however important to note that such an orientalist framing of Islam and Muslim majority countries is not unique to the post-9/11 far-right movement. For example, during the Cold War the German neoliberal economist Wilhelm Röpke found it useful to frame the supposed threat of global communism as comparable to a maximalist Islamic religious doctrine, one which he describes as radical and knowing no rational bounds to its imperium. Röpke (1959: 59-60) notes:

[T]his empire which unrelentingly strives for world domination is a pseudo-religion within the shell of the Russian State, a sort of secularised Islam, a social creed which is militant to the highest degree and which therefore advances on two fronts at once, the military and the ideological [...] Anyone who today considers that a policy of containment alone can suffice shows that he has not yet grasped the gigantic *motive power of the Communist Pseudo-Islam*.

The contemporary far-right's orientalist framing of the 'Other' replaces overt racial animus with the more 'politically correct' civilizational bigotries which utilize caricature descriptions of non-Western civilizations. However, topics regarding more essential differences between races and ethnic groups have not evaporated within far-right scholarship and political commentary in the post-Cold War period. For example, Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray's research into race and IQ in their controversial book *The Bell Curve* (1994) remains one of the most widely discussed examples of positivist research within the far-right movement. Herrnstein and Murray's anti-historicist thesis argues that the unequal social outcomes are the product of biological differences – applying such frameworks as an explanation for the socioeconomic circumstances of various ethnic/racial groups in the US. Similar ideas have been echoed outside the US in recent years by Dominic Cummings, special advisor to former Prime Minister of the UK Boris Johnson, who claimed that a child's performance is overdetermined by genetic makeup rather than access to educational resources (Wintour 2013). Some on the far-right have sought to pacify taboo far-

right theories regarding race (e.g. biological racism) by fusing notions of race and civilizational belonging into their theory of global politics and contemporary crisis within the West. Samuel Francis (1995: para. 19) notes:

The skeleton of race acquires concrete meaning and generates concrete loyalties only as it takes on cultural and political flesh, as race becomes tied up with community, kinship, nationality, territory, language, literature, art, religion, moral codes and manners, social class, and political aspirations. It is precisely such accretions that convert the biological abstraction of “race” into the concrete category of a ‘people’ [...] [W]hites did not descend to their present pitiable condition because their racial purity was somehow diluted but because they conceptually surrendered their will and identity [...] The conceptual surrender is leading to a situation where the biological survival of the race is threatened, and if that occurs, then — because race is necessary, because no other race or people seems able to replicate or adopt the concepts on which white civilization is based — the conceptual surrender will not be remedied, and white civilization, the whole conceptual corpus, will die with the race.

In recent years, many political figures and intellectuals associated with the far-right movement have argued that liberal governments and social forces supportive of immigration and multiculturalism are attempting to undermine/destroy Western civilization by ‘replacing’ its traditional majoritarian ethnic populations, culture, and religion. While the so-called ‘Great Replacement theory’ was coined by French novelist and white nationalist Renaud Camus in 2011 to describe this supposed ‘replacement’ in the West. Camus’ theory, and his subsequent text *Les Grand Replacement* (2017), had many precursors, including UK MP Enoch Powell and his infamous 1968 ‘Rivers of Blood Speech’, as well as French author Jean Raspail’s 1973 apocalyptic novel *The Camp of the Saints* – a sensationalistic fictional account of a ‘third world’ invasion of the West through mass immigration. Such notions of immigration-driven ‘replacement’ and ‘white extinction’ have inspired various anti-immigrant far-right movements and political parties across the LIO, with proponents arguing that ‘open border’ immigration policies are a trojan horse implemented by liberal elites with the cynical purpose of sowing chaos and increasing the number

of voters for ‘left wing’ political parties in the West (e.g. the US Democratic Party, UK Labour Party).⁶⁶ To address a perceived crisis of ‘replacement’, many on the far-right have argued for pro-natalist policies/strategies within the West to reverse demographic changes linked to immigration and negative birth-rates in the West. Such notions have been echoed by various mainstream intellectuals, commentators, and elites including: Elon Musk, Tucker Carlson, Matthew Goodwin, Douglas Murray, and Ann Coulter.

While the Great Replacement theory broadly targets all non-Western immigration into the transatlantic bloc, the writings of Egyptian-born British-French writer Bat Ye’or (real name Gisèle Littman) focuses on what she believes to be the specific threat posed by Islam and immigration from Muslim majority countries. Ye’or has become the most prominent champion of what has been called the Eurabia conspiracy theory. Since the publication of Ye’or’s book *Eurabia: the Euro Arab Axis* (2005), her theory of an imminent Islamic takeover of the Judeo-Christian West has gained popularity within the xenophobic Western far-right movement. Ye’or’s *Eurabia* builds on themes present in her previous writings on Islam and the West, including *The Decline of Eastern Christianity Under Islam: From Jihad to Dhimmitude* (1996) and *Islam and Dhimmitude: Where Civilizations Collide* (2002), underscoring a series of imminent threats facing Europe due to both immigration from Muslim majority countries and the contradictions linked to the integration of Europe and Arab states since the Euro-Arab dialogue was established during the 1970s oil crisis. Since then, Ye’or (2005) argues that there has been a gradual and incremental process of “islamization” and cultural submission by the states-societies of the Judeo-Christian West (specifically Europe) – a phenomenon which she refers to as ‘dhimmitude’. Ye’or describes this

⁶⁶ Politicians and political operatives such as Steve Bannon, Stephen Miller, Steve King, and Marine Le Pen have cited Raspail’s 1973 novel as inspiring their philosophy towards the issue of immigration and refugee settlement in the West (Alduy 2017; Peltier & Kulish 2019).

process of dhimmitude (forced submission) as a product of jihad, which she narrowly defines as a part of an ideological and geopolitical war by Muslims against non-Muslim nations. The culturalist Eurabia theory has found support from more elite intellectual segments of the far-right movement or the ‘radical right’, specifically amongst orientalist so-called ‘counter-jihadists’ such as Robert Spencer, Daniel Pipes, Mark Stein, Melanie Phillips, Geert Wilders, Niall Ferguson, Oriana Fallaci, and Ayaan Hirsi Ali. Furthermore, incorporating various themes from Ye’or’s Eurabia Conspiracy, acclaimed French author Michel Houellebecq’s (2016) dystopian novel *Submission* depicts a totalitarian Islamic revolution in France. Matt Carr (2006: 3) notes:

The Eurabian notion of cyclical civilizational decline is not new. In 1918, the German writer and philosopher Oswald Spengler captured the mood of an exhausted and war-torn continent in his portentous best-seller *The Decline of the West*, in which he predicted the coming collapse of a decadent European civilisation that had supposedly exhausted its creative capacity. There is more than a touch of Spenglerian pessimism in Eurabian narratives but the contemporary vision of Europe’s down-fall is often reinforced by sensationalist science fiction scenarios that meld *El Cid* with *Bladerunner* and G. K. Chesterton’s satirical novel *The Flying Nun* [...] In the nightmare world of Eurabia, the future will become the past once again and Christians and Jews will become oppressed minorities in a sea of Islam; churches and cathedrals will be replaced by mosques and minarets, the call to prayer will echo from Paris to Rotterdam and London and the remnants of ‘Judeo-Christian’ Europe will have been reduced to small enclaves in a world of bearded Arabic-speakers and burka-clad women. This final triumph of Islamic barbarism will lead inexorably to the obliteration of secular society as homosexuals and adulterers are stoned to death in public and writers, liberal humanists and multiculturalists find themselves hoist by their politically correct petards and subjected to harsh repression.

The far-right’s anxieties regarding closer European/Western integration with the states and societies of the global South long-predates the so-called Eurabia theory. Economic historian Quinn Slobodian (2018: 156) notes how Wilhelm Röpke also cautioned about the integration of African states with European states, arguing that such integration would contribute to the creation of ‘Eurafrica’ and the expansion of the European welfare state to formerly colonized states. Moreover, for decades intellectuals associated with the so-called European New Right such as Guillaume Faye, Alain De Benoist described their political project as one of cultural preservation

– claiming that nativism and restrictive immigration policies ensures a more diverse international community – one based on “ethnopluralism” or “cultural differentialism” rather than multiculturalism (Spektorowski 2003; Havertz 2023; Rueda 2021). The cordoning of civilizations then has cultural, economic, and geopolitical dimensions for the far-right movement. The post-Cold War far-right movement within the transatlantic bloc has articulated its belief that the meta-social transformations/crises/conflicts within world order are culturally driven; linked to intertwining phenomena of mass immigration, multiculturalism, Islam, and demographic change in the West. In the post-9/11 era, the Eurabia and Great Replacement conspiracy theories have become increasingly popular within more mainstream conservative circles throughout the West, despite the fact that such theories have also inspired numerous violent extremists within the far-right movement, including the Norwegian terrorist Andres Brevik, New Zealand Christchurch mass-shooter Brenton Tarrant, as well American mass-shooters Patrick Crusius and Payton Gendron.

In more recent years – especially in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic – the far-right’s civilizational prejudice has also been applied to the Chinese state/civilization, often involving various Sinophobic tropes, caricatures, and fearmongering regarding Chinese people, China’s governance, culture, and society. Such notions have been championed by various figures associated the Trump Administration, including Steve Bannon and Frank Gaffney who in 2019 revived the Committee on the Present Danger to confront the supposed threat of China, as well as Peter Navarro who has written numerous anti-China books including (but not limited to) *The Coming China Wars* (2006), *Death by China: Confronting the Dragon* (2011), and *Crouching Tiger* (2015). For the far-right movement, the most important driving force behind such threats has been an irresponsible elite establishment, which has adopted a ‘globalist’ liberal internationalist

ideology that runs counter to both the material, philosophic, and cultural interests of Judeo-Christian Western civilization.

iii) *The Woke Conspiracy*

The issue of supposed left-wing radicalism on university and college campuses is not a modern grievance for the far-right movement, but rather topic discussed frequently during the Cold War period. Beginning in the 1950s, a range of progressive ideas and intellectual tendencies associated with the New Left would create social panic amongst conservatives within the LIO. This new youth counterculture was linked to a range of disparate social forces linked to perceived revolutionary progressive social change (an anathema for the far-right), including the US Civil Rights Movement, the 1968 protesters in France, the antiwar movement, feminism, and the Hippie subculture. As such, it was during this period that far-right intellectuals would begin to express disdain toward this new progressivism emanating from the college campuses – a movement which they claimed was dangerously close to revolutionary communism. For example, CIA agent and far-right public intellectual William F. Buckley Jr. (often regarded euphemistically as a ‘New Right’ thinker for his openness to dialogue with elite liberals and progressives) would write *God and Man at Yale* in 1951, where he would describe the Ivy League institution as supplanting the values which underpin Western civilization – namely individualism and Christianity – with the collectivist and godless ideologies of socialism and atheism. In this text, Buckley (1951/1986) would recommend the firing of ‘socialist professors’ and argue that the university should not be wedded to ‘academic freedom’ if such ideas are harmful to civilization. Alternatively, he would propose what he called “value orthodoxy” and suggest that the knowledge produced within the university should adhere to the interests of “the educational overseer who is paying for the

transmission of knowledge and values”, i.e. the consumer. It was also during this period that numerous Soviet dissidents from the Eastern-bloc would emigrate to the West and critique the ideas of communism as well those in Western liberal societies who they perceived as sympathetic to its totalitarian ideology. Leszek Kolakowski (1974), Alexander Soltzenitzen (1976, 1980), and Yuri Bezmenov (1984) would warn about the activities of the Western ‘New Left’, often framing campus radicals as agents of “ideological subversion” (Bezmenov 1984) working (directly or indirectly) to further the interests of the USSR.

Such conspiracies regarding supposed left-wing radicalization have percolated for decades within the far-right movement and would outlast the collapse of the USSR. In the post-Cold War era, various influential elite intellectuals on the far-right have critiqued what they believe to be a divisive liberal culture, which they argue has festered on college campuses across the transatlantic bloc. Rather than being (witting or unwitting) agents of Soviet-led global communism, the new campus left at the dawn of the twenty-first century were argued to be imposing a radical form of social progressivism within the states and societies of West. In the mid-1990s Peter Thiel and David Sacks wrote *The Diversity Myth: Multiculturalism and Political Intolerance on Campus* (1995) which warned of the growing embrace for multiculturalism and political correctness on university campuses – a phenomenon which is now referred to by the authors as ‘woke’ ideology. Similar to Cold War critiques of the New Left and its supposed totalitarian Marxist-Leninist political ideology, Thiel and Sacks argued in the *Diversity Myth* that beginning in the 1980s a new revolutionary anti-Western monocultural doctrine had emerged within America’s Ivy League institutions, one which demands conformity and seeks to stifle political, economic, intellectual,

cultural, gender and racial diversity within the institutions of higher education.⁶⁷ Similarly, Samuel Huntington (2004b: 141) described the elite proponents of multiculturalism in the US academia, media, and the corporate world as the “deconstructionists”, who since the Civil Rights Movement have sought to undermine the traditional cultural, ideological, and ethnic fabric/homogeneity of American society (or “American creed”) and replace it with a mosaic of “subnational identities”. For Huntington, the pursuit of subnational group-based rights by this “deconstruction coalition” within the US has contributed to policies such as Affirmative Action, which he argued threatens the American Creed of individual rights and risked the balkanization of American society (2004b: 143-145). For Huntington (1997: 40) multiculturalism and demographic changes in the US shifted its foreign policy away from the pursuit of national interest, and increasingly toward the particularistic interests of minority ethnic diaspora groups within the US (as well as commercial interests). Huntington (1993b: 190) warned of a ‘de-westernizing’ civilizational paradigm inside the US, arguing that, beginning in the 1950s and 1960s:

[I]ntellectuals and politicians began to push the ideology of "multiculturalism," and to insist on the rewriting of American political, social, and literary history from the viewpoint of non-European groups. At the extreme, this movement tends to elevate obscure leaders of minority groups to a level of importance equal to that of the Founding Fathers [...] In the past the United States has successfully absorbed millions of immigrants from scores of countries because they adapted to the prevailing European culture and enthusiastically embraced the American Creed of liberty, equality, individualism, democracy. Will this pattern continue to prevail as 50 percent of the population becomes Hispanic or non-white? Will the new immigrants be assimilated into the hitherto dominant European culture of the United States? If they are not, if the United States becomes truly multicultural and pervaded with an internal clash of civilizations, will it survive as a liberal democracy?

Contemporary left wing campus radicalism and so-called ‘woke’ ideology is often described by critics as promoting a range of ideologies and countercultures which undermine

⁶⁷ Thiel’s opposition to institutions of higher education has led him to create the Thiel Fellowship, which offers students 22 and younger \$100,000 to drop out of school and enter the labour market or private entrepreneurship.

Western civilization from within. For the far-right, the social forces associated with climate change activism, democratic socialism, decolonization, feminism, LGBT-rights, racial equity, and global human rights are implementing what can be described as a ‘woke’ political program; with many describing such forms of left-wing ideology and activism as top-down and orchestrated by influential liberal elites or ‘globalists’. Such a perspective assumes that those advocating for various diffuse left-wing ideologies (feminism, socialism, environmentalism, multiculturalism, racial equity, LGBTQ+ rights) within the state and society are actually pursuing a program of totalitarian regulatory capture and cultural hegemony, one which is designed to undemocratically (or unconstitutionally) transform the ‘traditional’ or ‘natural’ social hierarchies and structures of the West. As such, many influential figures within the contemporary far-right movement have argued that ‘woke’ leftists have successfully undergone a long march through the institutions of the West – with notable impacts on education, media, and popular culture. In Gramscian terms, this is what the far-right describes as a successful ‘war of position’ for the left – one which has created the foundations for the currently unfolding ‘cultural revolution’ of ‘wokeness’.

The concept of ‘woke’ is often difficult to define. For some, it is synonymous with political correctness and liberal social progressivism, for others, it implies a much more all-encompassing cultural revolution, one which seeks to radically transform the state and society. In recent years influential writers and intellectuals including James Lindsay (2022a, 2022b), Douglas Murray (2019, 2022), Jordan Peterson (2024), Christopher Rufo (2023a), Gad Saad (2020), and Bari Weiss (2021) have argued that totalitarian ‘woke’ ideology is often disguised as support for: multiculturalism, human rights, environmentalism, feminism, gender rights, and antiracism. While often advocating for various progressive causes which appeal to morality and social justice, the social theory behind such concerns is often argued to be much more nefarious. For example, it is

argued that those involved in scholarship on race and gender have used the educational bureaucracy to expand their power with the intention of eventually implementing a more profound social transformation, as Rufo (2023a: Ch. 11, para. 42) states: “The ideology is the weapon, the bureaucracy is the authority, and the revolution is the goal.” In recent years, numerous far-right intellectuals have critiqued various liberal institutions of higher education for being a central locus of ‘woke’ politics in the twenty-first century; with universities in particular being described as largely responsible for cultivating dangerous new theories regarding race, gender, and class. Such critical theories produced within academia are described by the far-right as antithetical to the traditional touchstones of Judeo-Christian Western civilization – specifically, nation, church, and family.

For the far-right, the impacts of ‘woke’ ideology are at the root of numerous governance failures as well as various crises within the LIO. This ‘woke’ ideology is often described as directly influencing the misguided policies of major liberal institutions, deteriorating meritocracy, undermining support for Western cultural traditions and motifs, and violating individual rights/freedoms – specifically, freedom of speech and the freedom of religion. For its critics, the impacts of ‘woke’ ideology varies, some note this ideology has contributed to increasingly lenient approaches to criminal justice and border protection, some argue it has led to economically consequential policies of environmental protection, and for others it has contributed to cultural concerns/anxieties through the social inclusion/representation of minority populations and LGBTQ+ community. Indeed, far-right intellectuals have argued that many of the ideas and assumptions associated with woke ideology can be contrasted to what they describe as rational and common-sense views widely held by those within broader society outside the elite liberal stratum. Former Navy Intelligence Officer and far-right activist Jack Posobiec with professional

ghostwriter Joshua Lisec (2024: Ch. 12, para. 6) defined ‘woke’ ideology as part of an “Irregular Communist Revolution”, stating:

In the United States and throughout the West, the Cultural Marxist mental model of oppressor versus oppressed has separated the sociopolitical haves from the have-nots. This effort was begun in the 1960s in academia and has proven successful in all mainstream institutions. The dominant decision-making process of every major organization, public and private, now demands elevation of the alleged oppressed with subjection of the accused oppressor. This is what it means to be “woke,” by the way. *Woke* is shorthand for this lens through which you view: that all interactions, from everyday relationships to passing encounters to any conflicts along the way, are all intersections between someone of an oppressed class and someone of an oppressor class. Like classical Marxism, which cast *any* proletariat individual as a representative of *all* proletariats and *any* bourgeois as a representative of *all* bourgeois, woke unhumans the soul, turning people into labels with inherent value or disvalue. But it does so in a cultural rather than socioeconomic context—Cultural Marxism. By the way, “oppressed” and “oppressor” are misnomers, as actual evidence of oppression is not a prerequisite to wearing the label with pride. If someone of your race, gender, orientation, nationality, or other group experienced prejudice at some point in the past, then the “benefits” of that oppression are bequeathed to anyone taking up that label with pride (or comedic irony, hence the occasional obviously white person who identifies as black). Claims of that identity are enough as are assertions of oppression.

Some critics of so-called ‘woke ideology’ have pursued a deeper forensic analysis of its social theory to locate the intellectual roots of this phenomenon. For example, far-right author/activist Christopher Rufo of the Manhattan Institute has investigated various critical theories/fields/perspectives within the social sciences and humanities supportive of policies geared toward diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and the teaching of Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT and other critical theories regarding gender and sexual orientation are described as flowing downstream from Marxism and seeping into the cultural fabric and institutions of Western civilization. In his 2023 book *America’s Cultural Revolution* Rufo outlines his theory regarding the ‘cultural revolution’ and the institutional capture of the systems of higher education by Marxists and other critical theorists – including those inspired by figures such as Herbert Marcuse, Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Gary Peller, Angela Davis, Paulo Freire,

Franz Fanon, and Derrick Bell. For Rufo (2023a: Introduction, para. 20) the impacts of left-wing ideas within the educational system have potentially catastrophic impacts:

America's cultural revolution has culminated in the emergence of a new ideological regime that is inspired by the critical theories and administered through the capture of the bureaucracy. Although the official political structures have not changed—there is still a president, a legislature, and a judiciary—the entire intellectual substructure has shifted. The institutions imposed a revolution from above, effectuating a wholesale moral reversal and implementing a new layer of “diversity, equity, and inclusion” across the entire society. Nobody voted for this change; it simply materialized from within. The ultimate goal is still revolutionary: the activists of the radical Left want to replace individual rights with group-identity-based rights, enact a scheme of race-based wealth redistribution, and suppress speech, based on a new racial and political calculus. They want a “total rupture” with the existing order.

For James Lindsay (2022a; 2022b) and Chris Rufo (2023a), the roots of the current woke revolution within the West's educational institutions can be found in the pedagogical theories of Brazilian philosopher and educator Paulo Freire. For Lindsay and Rufo, the ideas advocated by Freire in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/2000) were designed with the purpose of invoking communist revolution. For Freire, the objective of education should be towards the liberation of the oppressed from systems of oppression. For Rufo, Freire was a fanatical revolutionary, one who followed in the footsteps of Mao, Lenin, and Che. However, unlike his revolutionary peers, Rufo argues that Freire successfully exported his idealist cultural revolution to the US – the core of global capitalism – by infiltrating the education system through ‘critical pedagogy’. For the intellectuals of the contemporary far-right, ‘woke’ ideology is an outgrowth of Marxist ideology, which, much like transnational communism, requires a collective response from the state and civil society. It should be noted that framed opposition to Marxist ideology has historically served as a useful tool for far-right social forces, used to justify various explicitly xenophobic/racist policies throughout the postwar period (e.g. occupation, apartheid). For example, in 1987 former Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith argued he was not a racist but rather a defender of Western

civilization, telling an interviewer: “it was Marxism I fought, not blacks” (Knight Ridder News Service 1987).

For critics of DEI and other ‘woke’ strategies, critical theory driven attempts toward greater equality and representation within the education system represent a dangerous utopian project which seeks to distort natural/beneficial hierarchies throughout wider society. The far-right Canadian evolutionary psychologist Gad Saad argues in his 2020 book *The Parasitic Mind* that ‘woke’ left wing ideologies in the university system (postmodernism, multiculturalism, radical feminism, and identity politics) can be equated to a ‘mind virus’ which threatens “the death of the West by a thousand cuts” by supposedly undermining rationality, reason, and the scientific method. For Saad, reforming the education system requires grappling with what he describes as a natural and necessary human tendency towards competition and social hierarchy. For Saad and others on the far-right, DEI and other ‘woke’ policies attempt to distort such natural inequalities, which leads to more social harms than benefits. Saad (2020: Ch 8) notes:

Universities need to return to the meritocratic ethos they once had and to resist commodifying education and lowering academic standards [...] Humans are both cooperative and competitive, and any group—from a clique of awkward teenagers to a professional soccer team to a military organization—will establish clear hierarchies. Humans are not indistinguishable and equal worker ants. E. O. Wilson, the Harvard entomologist and evolutionary biologist, is reputed to have said of socialism: “Great idea. Wrong species.” Any system that is built on a false understanding of human nature is doomed to fail. Building a society where the primary objective is to protect one’s fragile self-esteem from the dangers of competition will only lead to a society of weakness, entitlement, and apathy. Life is necessarily competitive; society is necessarily hierarchical. It does no one any favors to pursue a utopian vision of society where no one’s feelings are hurt.

Similar notions can be found in Douglas Murray’s *The War on the West* (2022) and *The Madness of Crowds* (2019), where he claims that CRT and ‘woke’ ideology represents a political movement rather than simply a set of theoretical propositions. According to Murray, along with

many of his far-right peers, the culture of wokeness which has proliferated throughout the West represents a form of warfare on its civilization - a refurbished form of Marxism which is cynically and imprudently destroying the legacy institutions while chasing a utopian dream for humanity and world order. In recent years, various writers and scholars on the far-right have described – through various methods – how ‘woke’ ideology was hegemonic within elite liberal universities and colleges within the LIO with downstream impacts on the institutions of governance within the state and civil society. The influential far-right ‘dark enlightenment’ blogger Curtis Yarvin (pen name Mencius Moldbug) has argued that institutions of higher learning and media have been consumed by evolving “bad ideas” created in the arts and humanities departments of major universities.⁶⁸ Yarvin (2021) uses the term “the cathedral” to describe these various media and education systems which: 1) provide intellectual leadership for contemporary liberal society; and 2) represent a managerial bureaucratic system which gives preference to an ever-evolving set of ideas which are designed to service the power of the so-called cathedral.

For the contemporary far-right movement, ‘wokeness’ represents a multitude of top-down ‘globalist’ ideologies which seek to fundamentally alter the Western civilization and its ‘traditional’ or ‘natural’ social hierarchies. For the far-right, such ‘woke’ ideologies are described as paving the way for various policies which the right surmises as contributing to various deleterious social outcomes (e.g. feminist ideology → sexual revolution → degradation of the ‘traditional’ patriarchal Judeo-Christian hierarchy → expansion of the social welfare state →

⁶⁸ The ideology of the so-called ‘dark enlightenment’ (sometimes referred to as the neo reactionary movement) combines futurism, neoliberalism, authoritarianism, and social Darwinism. The ideology and movement were developed in the late 2000s based on the writings of Yarvin as well as the British philosopher Nick Land. The ideas of Yarvin and the dark enlightenment have attracted a large following online, even being endorsed by far-right elites such as Steve Bannon and Peter Thiel – who funded Yarvin’s computing platform Urbit.

collapse of the nuclear family → rising crime, addiction, poverty, and other forms of perceived social decay etc.). The far-right argues that such pathologies have become omnipresent within the LIO in-part due to the ideological infiltration of ‘woke’ leftists within the institutions of higher academia, state bureaucracy, corporate governance, and popular culture. Intellectuals within the contemporary far-right movement have argued that the institutions of higher learning within the LIO must immediately reform, and if not, new institutions must be built, in order for Western civilization to overcome the “idea pathogens” of the woke “mind-virus” (Saad 2020), which are produced by social liberals, Marxists, post-structuralists, and feminists.

iv) *The Sovereign’s Right to Secede*

When analyzing the ideology of the far-right movement, one soon finds that it is difficult to locate a singular shared economic model or preferred foreign policy amongst the various thinkers and movements associated with the movement. For example, certain theorists and leaders associated with the modern far-right movement have espoused protectionism and forms of welfare state chauvinism, whereas others have displayed support for extreme forms of anti-statism and libertarian economics. These divisions often overlap with particular attitudes towards geopolitics; for example, between paleoconservative isolationists and Wilsonian neoconservatives. Such differences might be understood as the product of distinct political histories across LIO states. For example, neofascist political parties and movements associated with the French or Italian far-right are more often open to certain (anti-universalist) forms of state intervention within the economy than their Reaganite/Thatcherite Anglo-American counterparts, which seek to implement a more disciplinary neoliberal regime. However, even within the US – the premier Lockean state within the LIO – there exist two divergent socio-economic perspectives held by those associated with the

far-right, one which is more protectionist or nationalist-capitalist, and another which is more faithful to the invisible hand of the free-market, and suspicious of both mass democracy and government intervention. Oftentimes, such perspectives overlap; for example, some have supported a disciplinary neoliberalism in domestic labour markets, while also advocating for statist forms of national protectionism to shield certain industries from a globalized market.

Since the Cold War there have been cases in which certain segments of the far-right movement within the LIO has exhibited a theoretical critique of capitalism. For example, various neofascists have often described themselves as representing a ‘Third Position’ of political economic organization which differs from both the communism of the former Eastern Bloc and Western liberal capitalism – often synthesizing aspects of far-left and far-right ideology (sometimes referred to as ‘red-brown alliance’) (Bastow 2002; Gattinara et al. 2013). The so-called ‘Third Position’ has been supported by various extreme far-right parties and political movements within the LIO such as Italy’s CasaPound, the UK’s National Front, the actors associated with the *Nouvelle Droite* and its journal GRECE, as well as various neo-nazi and white nationalist organizations in the US. In contrast, far-right ideology has also been shown to be highly compatible with neoliberal governance, with numerous instances in which far-right political leaders have implemented sharp neoliberal reforms. Moreover, one can point to numerous examples in which capitalist elites and neoliberal economists have displayed support for far-right authoritarian statism. For example, scholars and journalists have mentioned the mutual admiration between Friedrich von Hayek and dictator Augusto Pinochet in Chile (Selwyn 2015), as well as Wilhelm Röpke’s ardent support for apartheid South Africa (Slobodian 2014) as examples of mutual compatibility between neoliberalism and far-right authoritarianism and institutionalized racism.

Within the postwar LIO, one can then observe stark differences of opinion within the far-right movement regarding a preferred or ideal-type global governance model. While anti-communism is clearly a universally held notion amongst those associated with the contemporary far-right movement, locating a consistent prescriptive program for international relations or socio-economic governance shared by various factions of the movement is a far more difficult task. Acknowledging complexity as well as the often-contradictory ideas espoused by various factions of far-right actors, there is in fact one governance philosophy which unites various factions of the movement: the notion that the sovereign entity (loosely defined) has the right to secede from forms of social organization (economic, political, cultural) that are viewed as contrary to the interests of that sovereign. For the far-right, sovereign rights are multidimensional; however, the right to declare sovereignty in any instance is determined by realist factors (relative agency within existing societal hierarchies) and often involves overlapping forms of fealty (e.g. individual, family, corporation, racial/ethnic/religious community, nation-state, civilization).

For the contemporary far-right movement, sovereignty can be expressed in a multitude of ways. For example, there are highly atomized forms of sovereignty expressed by certain segments of the far-right movement, with some arguing for the inalienable right to withdraw or even resist – what is believed to be – totalitarian or tyrannical forms of statism which undermine individual liberty or private property. Libertarian intellectuals within the American far-right movement have often expressed a critique of the federal ‘managerial state’ and a desire to withdraw from its authority. Furthermore, the pro-Second Amendment movement in the US has often described its *raison d'être* as being the last resort mechanism for the individual/militia to ward off (perceived) threats to individual liberty, including: 1) state authorities acting in an extraconstitutional manner; or 2) the failure of the state to provide protection for its citizens and their private property. Far-

right politicians outside the US, such as Matteo Salvini in Italy and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, have similarly advocated for gun rights and supported vigilante groups/movements as a means to provide security for citizens/communities in the context of a deteriorating social order (Johanningsmeier 2018; Otis 2022).

For far-right billionaire Peter Thiel, it is capitalists and their firms that should seek to secede from market competition and certain forms of statism which impede business productivity and/or drain resources from the firm. In 2014, Thiel wrote an article in the *Wall Street Journal* called “Competition is for Losers” (2014), where he challenged certain mainstream conceptions of capitalist competition and market equilibrium, and advocated for the what he calls “creative monopoly” a crucial component of an efficient ideal-type form of capitalism.⁶⁹ A creative monopoly/monopolism would describe a capitalist entity which dominates an area of the market and is able to prioritize socially beneficial innovation and long-term profitability rather than being stifled by competition. Monopolization and elite secession from certain forms of inter-capitalist competition are framed by Thiel as to the benefit of the capitalist, who can set their own prices to maximize profits – as well as to the benefit of society – by allowing monopolies to “transcend the daily brute struggle for survival”, and pursue objectives which transcend profit-seeking, and offer a wider range of quality consumer items (Thiel and Master 2014: 32). Thiel’s advocacy for corporate secession/sovereignty, as well as his intricate private pursuit of crisis prepping⁷⁰, has

⁶⁹ It should be noted that the most pre-eminent forefather of neoliberal thought, Friedrich von Hayek, similarly was suspicious of notions of equilibrium or perfect markets, and believed in a chaotic and spontaneous market order, one which he describes as a catallaxy. Hayek’s belief in a spontaneous free market order however *did not* lead him to support actions toward the disciplining or regulating private monopolies and large enterprises through the state (Hayek 1960: 265; Moore 2016: 54). Much like Thiel, Hayek viewed monopolies as 1) an unavoidable or naturalized fact of life—akin to scarcity; and 2) the product of success in a competitive market environment forged by naturally occurring scarcity and what he believed to be the simple truth that some big businesses have niche competitive advantages, practices, and cultures which cannot (and should not) be duplicated.

⁷⁰ Journalist Marc O’Connell (2018) notes: It was in 2011 that Thiel declared he’d found ‘no other country that aligns more with my view of the future than New Zealand’. The claim was made as part of an application for

been connected to ideas expressed by his peer Curtis Yarvin and the so-called ‘dark enlightenment’, an accelerationist far-right movement which advocates for the establishment of a monarchical technofeudal system which can replace/escape ‘the cathedral’ i.e. the liberal managerial bureaucracy (O’Connell 2018; Pogue 2022).

For certain fractions of contemporary capitalist elites, there is a clear desire to secede from certain inconvenient forms of market discipline and regulatory state institutions, while simultaneously their economic activities imply a business model reliant on undemocratic, untransparent, and asymmetric public-private-partnerships with the state which secure long-term profitability for corporations and their fraction of the capitalist class. It is in this sense we might describe advocacy for ‘creative monopolism’ as indicative of a desire of certain major capitalist elites and their firms to: 1) establish corporate sovereignty within a particular market and state-society; as well as 2) secede from forms of market competition/discipline and certain forms statism (e.g. laws, regulation, taxation) which limit private capital accumulation and corporate power. Quinn Slobodian (2023: Ch. 5, para. 22) notes how the cultural aspects of the far-right secessionism often distract from the economic dimensions/interests behind this phenomenon:

We often speak of secessionist and Far Right movements such as the neo-Confederates in purely political or cultural terms, as symptoms of a sometimes pathologized fixation on ethnicity that crowds out all economic concerns. But this is wrong. We should also think of the radical politics of the 1990s in terms of capitalism. Rothbard and Rockwell’s own reasoning began with economics. As adherents of the gold standard, abandoned by the United States in the 1970s, they felt that the fiat money system was doomed to a coming period of hyperinflation. Breaking up large states was a way to get out ahead of the pending monetary meltdown and create smaller states more able to reorganize after the crash. Ron Paul spoke of his conviction that change would come “with a calamity and with a bang.” “Eventually the state disintegrates under the conditions we have today,” he said, comparing

citizenship; the application was swiftly granted, though it remained a secret for a further six years. In 2016, Sam Altman, one of Silicon Valley’s most influential entrepreneurs, revealed to the *New Yorker* that he had an arrangement with Thiel whereby in the eventuality of some kind of systemic collapse scenario – synthetic virus breakout, rampaging AI, resource war between nuclear-armed states, so forth – they both get on a private jet and fly to a property Thiel owns in New Zealand.”

the United States to the Soviet Union. He described his daydream of a Republic of Texas with “no income tax and a sound currency and a thriving metropolis.

A form of economic/financial secessionism has found support from the far-right movement in recent years pertains to cryptocurrencies and blockchain. In 1997, private investor James Dale Davidson and journalist and *The Times* editor William Rees-Mogg (father of far-right UK MP Jacob Rees Mogg) published *The Sovereign Individual*, which predicted the rise of cryptocurrencies in the twenty-first century and praised the potential for such forms of ‘cyber money’ to eventually evade state regulation. Writing the preface of the 2020 republication *The Sovereign Individual*, Thiel makes note of the impact that Rees-Mogg’s writings had on his own worldview. The value of cryptocurrencies is predicated on the belief that mismanaged central banking institutions and wasteful government spending have contributed to rising public debt, an irresponsible, inflationary, and unpredictable monetary regime, a circumstance which was preceded by the termination of the gold standard and will end with the collapse of traditional fiat currency. In recent years, far-right elites such as Thiel and Musk have publicly advocated for the expanded use of cryptocurrencies and have reaped significant profits off the boom in crypto trading. During a 2018 Hoover Institute debate, Thiel claimed that “crypto is libertarian and A.I. is communist” and A.I. is inevitably a tool for the bureaucratic managerial state – which is why, he argues, it has been embraced by ‘totalitarian’ centralized states like China.⁷¹ Similarly, far-right propagandist and political operative Steve Bannon has backed the use cryptocurrencies, even developing his own cryptocurrency which is currently being investigated by US Federal

⁷¹ Journalist Sonya Mann (2018) notes how numerous contradictions in Thiel’s political ideology were revealed by audience questions following the debate. Specifically, she notes one audience member who probed Thiel’s declared libertarian critique of the centralized bureaucratic managerial state, while at the same time his company Palantir engages in mass data collection for the US surveillance state.

prosecutors. Davidson and Rees-Mogg (1997: 197) describes the supposedly liberatory aspects of ‘cyber money’ and how it empowers individual and corporate sovereignty:

Now the advent of the Information Age implies another revolution in the character of money. As cybercommerce begins, it will lead inevitably to cybermoney. This new form of money will reset the odds, reducing the capacity of the world's nation-states to determine who becomes a Sovereign Individual. A crucial part of this change will come about because of the effect of information technology in liberating the holders of wealth from expropriation through inflation [...] Inevitably, this new cybermoney will be denationalized. When Sovereign Individuals can deal across borders in a realm with no physical reality, they will no longer need to tolerate the long-rehearsed practice of governments degrading the value of their money through inflation. Why should they? Control over money will migrate from the halls of power to the global marketplace. Any individual or firm with access to cyberspace will be able to easily shift out of any currency that appears in danger of depreciation.

For certain intellectuals associated with the contemporary far-right movement, the right of sovereign succession also involves metaphysical or psychological secession from what are perceived to totalitarian forms of liberalism, leftism, and/or socialism within world order. Critical of libertarian and hyper-individualist forms of secession, the American far-right writer and Hungarian-based expat Rod Dreher has advocated for what he has labelled as “The Benedict Option”, a communitarian form of secession. Dreher’s so-called ‘Benedict Option’, which he developed into the book *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation* (2017), argues for the development of an alternative Christian counterculture which can insulate communities from the repressive/imperialistic liberal secularism of mainstream Western society. Dreher argues that conservative Christians should acknowledge the hostility they receive from the mainstream liberal society and focus instead on the rejuvenation of traditional institutions such as the Church, religious community, and family. For Dreher (2017), conservative Christians should accept their ‘exile’ and build parallel institutions which can resist secular liberal modernity, or “the new dark ages”. He notes (2015):

The “Benedict Option” refers to Christians in the contemporary West who cease to identify the continuation of civility and moral community with the maintenance of American empire, and who therefore are keen to construct local forms of community as loci of Christian resistance against what the empire represents. Put less grandly, the Benedict Option — or “Ben Op” — is an umbrella term for Christians who accept MacIntyre’s critique of modernity, and who also recognize that forming Christians who live out Christianity according to Great Tradition requires embedding within communities and institutions dedicated to that formation.

Beyond such individual or community-based forms of secession, what can be referred to as neo-nationalist secession has been a central concern for the contemporary far-right movement. For example, so-called ‘national conservatives’ have argued that German Nazism was not an extreme nationalist project, but rather was at its core an imperial program, one with a universal ideology for world order that was premised on globalized aspirations for the so-called Aryan race, as well as a belief in the absolute geopolitical supremacy of Germany (Hazony 2018). Yoram Hazony, a major figure within the ‘national conservative’ movement, has posited that liberal internationalism and supranational liberal institutions (specifically the EU) are imperialist entities, which – like Nazi Germany – threaten the plurality and sovereignty of nation-states within contemporary world order. In-turn, such national conservative thinkers have made the case that Western societies should not ‘throw away the baby with the bathwater’ when it comes to nationalism implying that nationalism is akin to a form of anti-imperialism and arguing that the ‘national’ in German ‘national socialism’ was a misnomer – placing much more emphasis on the apparent socialism of the Nazi political project. Speaking at the 2023 National Conservative Conference in London, Douglas Murray (National Conservatism 2023, 10:17) stated: “I don't see why no one should be allowed to love their country because the Germans mucked up twice in a century.”

The far- right’s vision for the EU is absent a cosmopolitan or pan-European vision for political and economic integration, which could potentially transform the European economy along social democratic or anti-imperialist lines. As such, secessionist forms of anti-EU far-right nationalism undermines – and seeks to roll-back – the (limited) universalist and/or social democratic policies championed by the EU and certain EU member states; replacing such policies with a more particularistic and disciplinary neoliberal ‘competitive federalist’ regime, one in which weaker European capitalist states would attract foreign investment through hyper exploitative corporate tax rates, the deregulation of collective labour rights and the environment. Adam Harmes (2012: 70) notes: “From a public choice view, international tax competition enhances welfare by constraining government from growing inefficiently large. Whether implemented at the regional or global levels, the neoliberal case for internationalism justified the same way as market-preserving federalism.”

For national conservatives, a form of neo-nationalist secession from certain liberal institutions such as the EU would not disintegrate partnerships between various nation-states currently within its union, but rather, would contribute to the revitalization of a more pluralistic Judeo-Christian Western civilization. Scholars, writers and politicians associated with far-right Euroscepticism have criticized the contemporary EU for: 1) its glacial, unresponsive, undemocratic, and unrepresentative bureaucratic managerial institutions; 2) the perceived cultural/civilizational harms caused by liberal policies supporting immigration, refugee settlement, and a global human rights regime; and 3) its support for ‘woke’ ideology – what is often framed as an elitist, top-down, left wing, ‘globalist’ social theory/philosophy which has led to various imprudent policy prescriptions – as well as compromising numerous traditional social structures (e.g. the hetero-normative family, religious observance, self-reliance).

For Hazony as well as others within the so-called ‘national conservative’ movement, nations are fundamentally tied to ethnicity and historical cultural ties which bind certain individuals to both each other and a particular territory. However, for Hazony, the right of self-determination or national independence is not necessarily universal, but rather, also based on relative power relations and the realist geopolitical calculations of other state actors. For such reasons, Hazony has rejected calls for Palestinian statehood made by international institutions and the international community, while personally supporting the sovereignty of illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied territories of the West Bank, which are enabled by Israel’s powerful international partners (namely the US).⁷² This is because, for Hazony (2022), nation-states are not based on self-evident ‘natural right’ but rather are an extension of familial or clan loyalties/responsibilities which exist within a natural hierarchy – which he describes as akin to family structure. Far-right notions of secession and sovereignty are then fundamentally linked to the power to exclude and create cultural and institutional boundaries to forms of universality which are perceived to challenge existing traditional hierarchies – specifically liberalism, Marxism, or Islam. For the contemporary far-right movement, in order to preserve the collective civilizational identity of the West, it is necessary that certain individuals, community and nation-states be able to secede from the authority of various liberal managerial institutions which undermine liberty and Western civilization. Such a philosophy underpins the far-right critique of liberal society and statism, as well as major transnational institutions such as the UN and EU – believed to be both alienated and unrepresentative of national communities in the West. In the post-Cold War era, cosmopolitan neoliberals perceived the emergence of a homogenized world order based around horizontal global institutions, whereas adherents of the contemporary far-right movement have

⁷² Hazony’s support for ethnonationalist Israeli sovereignty led him to move his family to an Israeli settlement community in illegally occupied East Jerusalem.

instead viewed such a governance framework as synonymous with the rise of an alienated globalist managerial regime, one which has sought to undermine the sovereignty of the individual, the community, and nation-state as well as fundamentally transform Western civilization.

II) The Reactionary International

In this section I will isolate four (often overlapping and cumulative) elite transnational tendencies which can be associated with the far-right movement within the LIO since the mid-twentieth century. The elite fractions of the far-right movement which are the focus of this dissertation can be described as part of what Liz Fekete (2018) calls the “radical right”, an elite subset within the broad far-right movement which seeks to operate and achieve public recognition/legitimacy through mainstream political channels and institutions. I will provide a brief history of the radical right fractions of the far-right movement within the LIO during the post-Cold War period. I will discuss how far-right elites have sought to harmonize/combine/fuse bureaucratic statism (e.g. communism, ‘wokeness’) with xenophobic forms of ethnonationalism and civilizationism. I will organize the far-right’s elite discourse coalitions since the postwar period into four categories: 1) the anti-communist ‘rollbackers’ of the Cold War period; 2) the nativist ‘revanchists’ of the immediate post-Cold War era; 3) the imperialist ‘counter-jihadists’ which shaped the ‘war on terror’; and 4) the Budapest Men – the elite far-right social forces which support the transnational hegemonic project of far-right civilizationism in the era of Brexit, Trump, and the ‘patriotic spring’.

i) The Rollbackers

Constructing a linear history of the transnational far-right movement within the LIO is a difficult and highly contentious task, as each state/society contains unique features related to its culture, geopolitics, class struggles and material conditions, all of which often predate the LIO itself. Moreover, the far-right movement often portrays itself as organically nationalistic or even ethnonationalist, and as such, frequently downplays the role of internationalism in its political messaging. If one seeks to locate the origins of right far-right transnationalism, there exist various starting-points. As noted, one might locate the roots of this movement in the post-Nietzschean German Conservative Revolution in the early twentieth century, with thinkers such as Spengler, Ernst Jünger, Houston Stewart Chamberland articulating a combination of modernist and traditional political ideologies (as well as bigotries), which would later evolve into European fascism. Again, others have discussed the activities of fascist internationalists during the interwar period, such as Giuseppe de Michelis (Steffek 2015), as well as the influence of fascist occultists such as Julius Evola, René Guénon, and Ananda Coomaraswamy on various far-right actors and social forces within the West (Teitelbaum 2020; Green 2017). Acknowledging various points of departure, perhaps the earliest and most prominent elite transnational political discourse coalition relevant to an analysis of the contemporary far-right movement within the LIO, are those actors and organizations who sought to establish an outwardly hostile global anti-communist movement since the mid-twentieth century – one which was explicitly geared toward direct forms of confrontation with so-called ‘communists’ within the West and beyond.

While many political actors and institutions in the West during the Cold War can be rightly considered as ‘anti-communist’, the elite actors which I label as ‘rollbackers’ can be seen as the most maximalist and uncompromising in their approach to the supposed Soviet/communist threat. Despite certain factional divisions within the right-wing movement during this period, for instance

in the 1960s between Old Right (e.g. John Birch Society) and New Right (e.g. those ‘fusionists’ associated with William F. Buckley and the *National Review*) in the US, the far-right within the LIO (and its allied states) would align around their opposition to the ‘global communist conspiracy’. These actors who I call ‘rollbackers’ promoted the most extreme anti-communist policies implemented during the Cold War, including McCarthyite witch-hunts against perceived communist sympathizers within the states of the LIO (e.g. House Un-American Activities Committee in the US and the Information Research Department in the UK), as well as various international interventions designed to reverse the global communist threat abroad, through various the use of both overt and covert means.

While often described in the American context, the actors and organizations which can be associated with the rollbackers were not only confined to the US but rather required transnational partnerships across the LIO and beyond. These transnational social forces sought to engage in a political project of counter-revolution – one which was global in its scope and opposed to various actors and social forces broadly associated with the political left, including Soviet Bolsheviks, New Deal social democrats, Civil Rights activists, labour unions, the protests of 1968, and various postcolonial uprisings in the Global South. This transnational anti-communist movement incorporated a wide range of actors, including (but not necessarily limited to) intellectuals, artists, state officials, state institutions, as well as émigré nationalist organizations from various socialist/communist states. Those who I refer to as the ‘rollbackers’ are then the most vigilant subset of Cold Warriors, a group which did not only seek to contain the communist threat – but sought to extinguish it by any means necessary. Within the US, this group can be regarded as synonymous with what Nick Fischer (2016: 80) has labelled this network as the “anti-communist

spider-web,” a far-right formation⁷³ with roots dating back to the interwar period, which benefited from (and capitalized on) the left’s lack of ideological cohesion during the Cold War. Fischer (2016: 84) states:

The Spider Web was an informal network whose members shared information in their frequently overlapping but distinct spheres of interest and influence. This approach ensured that messages spread far beyond the reach of any individual or group. While they could cooperate effectively to pursue such large goals as immigration policy reform, the members of the Spider Web generally pursued their objectives on their own or in concert with a few kindred spirits. Only on very rare occasions did they demonstrate the efficiency with which they credited the communist spider web, and they gained no insight from this fact, never questioning the human capacity for prolonged multilateral cooperation regardless of political belief [...] The informality of the Spider Web was a logical outcome of the purposes and financial and institutional bases of its constituent organizations, which its members usually strove to obscure. The great majority of these organizations were publicly disingenuous about their aims and methods. Whether they were state and military intelligence arms that concealed and disavowed their illegal political surveillance and strikebreaking or commercial lobbies that cloaked themselves in Old Glory and the Constitution, Spider Web organizations operated on the basis of conspiracy. They functioned internally as rigidly hierarchical autocracies and externally as secretive, shadowy groups, refusing to divulge their financial affairs and principal sources of income even to their own members.

Policies of ‘rollback’ are often associated with certain influential American Cold Warriors, including scholars such as James Burnham and Richard Pipes, as well as politicians and state officials such as Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, his brother CIA director Allen Dulles, and perhaps most noteworthy, the US Secretary of Defence Paul Nitze and US Secretary of State Dean Acheson. Nitze and Acheson the two primary authors behind NSC 68, a policy paper submitted

⁷³ On the far-right nature of this anti-communist network, Fischer (2016: xvii) notes: “Spider Web members such as Military Intelligence captain John Bond Trevor and Representative Albert Johnson, a Republican from Washington State, connected eugenics, immigration restriction, and anti-communist movements, seamlessly weaving ethnorracial and political objectives into doctrine and policy. The Spider Web also melded anticommunism and evangelical Christianity, seeding the modern Religious Right. And elements of the Spider Web helped found the American Nazi movement and perpetuate racist eugenics research into the twenty-first century. But perhaps the greatest achievement of the interwar anti-communist movement was to keep the fires of right-wing countersubversion burning during the discouraging years of the Great Depression and the first half of Franklin Roosevelt’s presidency. The commitment and in many instances fanatical passion of Web members helped to ensure that the forces of the Right were ready and able to reassert their political agenda from the late 1930s, especially in the favorable climate of the Cold War.”

by the Department of Defense and Department of State in 1950 to US President Truman. NSC 68 would become declassified in 1975 and would reveal the authors contention that – unless checked through military means – the Soviet Union’s strategy of global domination would lead to the “destruction not only of [the] Republic but of civilization itself”. The propositions made by the NSC 68 document would be supported by the first Committee on the Present Danger (CPD), an anti-communist pro-rollback foreign policy interest group supportive of US intervention in Korea. Its membership comprised over fifty members, including (but not limited to): capitalist elites (e.g. William Clayton, Frank Altschul, George Bingham Sr., Harry Amos Bullis, Paul G. Hoffman), scientists and intellectuals (e.g. James Phinney Baxter III, Robert Oppenheimer, Vannevar Bush), statesmen (e.g. Arthur Goldberg), militarists (e.g. Tracy Voorhees, William Donovan), religious leaders (e.g. Daniel A. Poling, Edmund A. Walsh), journalists (e.g. Edward R. Murrow), artists (e.g. Robert E. Sherwood), labour organizers (e.g. David Dubinsky) and lawyers (e.g. Samuel Rosenman, Laird Bell).

The differences between rollbackers and those social forces associated with détente, isolationism, and narrow forms of containment, can be observed in divisions within the American security establishment. In 1974, group of analysts and scholars were commissioned by then CIA director George H.W. Bush with the stated purpose of gauging the scale and scope of the Soviet threat. While the commission included a range of selected ‘outside experts’, the perspectives offered by the members of commission were inevitably coloured by their preconceived perspectives and philosophies. For example, the commission included figures such as historian Richard Pipes, an ardent anti-communist and public critic of the Soviet Union. Team-B claimed that the Soviet threat was being downplayed by the US intelligence and foreign policy establishment and argued that the US unwisely projected its own strategic calculations on a Soviet

state/society. Team-B would argue that the USSR did not adhere to the rationality of ‘mutually assured destruction’ (MAD) but rather displayed a clear willingness to use nuclear weapons to achieve certain political objectives. Team-B then represented a rebut of :1) the strategy of containment as expressed by George Kennan’s “X Article” in 1947; 2) the SALT II arms negotiations between the US and the USSR in 1979; and 3) a philosophic challenge to the realpolitik strategy of détente advocated by the Nixon and Ford Administrations. The analysis provided by Team B would imply that a more aggressive US policy of deterrence would be required, arguing that status-quo policies of containment and détente relied on faulty rational actor models such as MAD, which ignored various sociological factors driving Soviet decision-making.⁷⁴ While the Team B report was later widely criticized for vastly overestimating the economic and military capabilities of the Soviet Union, the drafting of the report and its participants displayed the staying power of a more assertive rollbacker coalition following the Nixon years of *relative* détente.

While often associated with American Cold War strategy, what would soon emerge would be a vast (US-centered) transnational far-right network that was consistent with the recommendations of Team B and dedicated to policies designed to undermine and reverse global communism. This network would include various politicians, capitalist elites, émigré

⁷⁴ Anne Hessing Cahn (1998:4) notes: “Every year the intelligence community produced many assessments of possible threats to U.S. national security. The most important of these dealt with Soviet strategic forces, and it was this assessment that came under attack. In 1976 an alternative to that assessment was prepared by a group of very influential outsiders, who came to be known as Team B to differentiate them from the regular intelligence analysts who were preparing yearly assessments of Soviet capabilities. Team B asserted that the Soviet Union surpassed the United States in overall military strength and was bent on a first strike policy.” Team A would comprise of members of the intelligence community (CIA, National Security Agency, State Department, Army, Navy, and Air Force Intelligence) who drafted the original 1976 National Intelligence Estimate document; Team B would comprise of outside ‘experts’ critical of Team A’s assessments, accusing the intelligence agencies of a flawed “mirror imaging” and “attributing to Soviet decision makers forms of behavior that might be expected from their U.S. counterparts under analogous circumstances” (Cahn 1998: 164).

organizations, and intellectuals who were broadly supportive of a more confrontational posture against the Soviet Union and global communism, with overlapping memberships and varying levels of influence within the LIO and world order. The ‘rollbackers’ were represented in domestic civil society organizations such as the John Birch Society and the Joint Committee Against Communism; international groups including World League for Freedom and Democracy, Aginter Press, American Committee for Liberation from Bolshevism, and the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations; in numerous anti-communist publications such as *Counter Attack* and *Plain Talk*; as well as various parapolitical organizations seeking to implement or prepare for regime-change in the West as well the Eastern-bloc and global South, including (but not limited to): David Stirling’s Great Britain 75, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), the anti-Castro organization Alpha 66, and the Contra death squads in Nicaragua.

One notable elite transatlantic far-right institution which can be associated with the ‘rollbackers’ was the CIA-backed Le Cercle organization – sometimes referred to as Cercle Pinay after its co-founder, French Prime Minister Antoine Pinay as well as Cercle Violet after its other co-founder French intelligence agent Jean Violet. Le Cercle was founded in 1952-1953 and continues to operate as an invitation only think tank meeting twice a year in Washington DC and Europe.⁷⁵ It has been described as an “clandestine forum of European leaders who aimed to oppose

⁷⁵ Describing Le Cercle and its operations, journalist for the *Independent* Chris Blackhurst (1997) notes: “Formed in the Fifties, Cercle was intended to cement Franco-German relations, as a buffer to Soviet aggression during the Cold War. Down the years, however, it has become much more, advocating right-wing causes round the world and growing into a confidential talking shop for about 70 politicians, businessmen, polemicists and personnel from the diplomatic and security services. Members are invited to attend its meetings; they cannot ask to be admitted, and as a condition of attending they agree to keep all sessions secret [...] In 1979, Mr [Brian] Crozier presented a ‘planning paper’ to the group. Among its aims was to secure changes of government in the UK and Germany. Mr Crozier noted that in the UK, with the accession of Mrs Thatcher, this had been achieved. Other listed objectives were: ‘Undercover financial transactions for political aims’; ‘International campaigns aiming to discredit hostile personalities or events’; ‘Creation of a (private) intelligence service specialising in a selective point of view’;

the threat of communism and promote the vision of a Catholic and conservative Europe” (Leeson 2018: 65). While Christian Democracy and Catholicism would remain a crucial part of Le Cercle’s identity (with key members from Opus Dei and the Knights of Malta), in the 1970s, the Cercle Pinay network would become increasingly Atlanticist. Le Cercle can then be described as a transnational network organization of elite far-right anti-communists (or ‘counter-terrorists’) in Europe and North America, with select members from select states/societies across the LIO, including various political elites, state bureaucrats, bankers, and figures linked to the security establishments of Western and Western-allied states (e.g. German CSU leader Franz Josef Strauss, South African Prime Minister John Vorster, Italian Prime Minister Adreotti, French Diplomat Jean Monnet, French propagandist Raymond Bourguine, Spanish politician Manuel Fraga, UK Conservative Party politicians Julian Amery and Margaret Thatcher, M16 operatives Brian Crozier and Anthony Cavendish, CIA agents William Colby and William Casey, as well as prominent American statesmen and intellectuals such as Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, as well as business elites such as David Rockefeller). Cercle Pinay was primarily funded by its members, German political party foundations (CDU’s the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung), European businesses (Alphons Horten, Valmonde, SEL, Phillips), and the South African government – often through front organizations (Hänni 2014: 166).

In the context of the Cold War, members of Le Cercle helped advance various far-right causes around the world aiding the repression of left social forces,⁷⁶ providing material and

‘Establishment of offices under suitable cover each run by a co-ordinator from the central office. Current plans cover London, Washington, Paris, Munich and Madrid.’”

⁷⁶ David Teacher (2018: 248) notes: “Following the rise of student counter-culture in the 1960s, the Cercle focused on domestic subversion, using its network of media assets and intelligence operatives to attack left-leaning politicians such as Harold Wilson (British Labour Prime Minister, 1964–1970 and 1974–1976), Willy Brandt (West German Social Democrat Chancellor, 1969–1974), Jimmy Carter (United States Democrat President, 1977– 1981) and François Mitterrand (French Socialist President, 1981–1995), and to promote their favoured candidates: Giscard d’Estaing (French Independent Republican/Republican President, 1974–1981), Margaret Thatcher (British

diplomatic support for rollback policies (including psychological operations), as well as collaborating with various anti-communist governments including the Franco regime Spain, the Salazar regime in Portugal, the Shah of Iran, apartheid South Africa, and Israel (Hänni 2014; Teacher 2017, 2018). In the 1960s and 1970s, Le Cercle used its media arm (e.g. Aginter Press and Valmonde) and intelligence resources to respond to the rise of the student ‘counter-culture’ movement and to attack left or left-leaning politicians opposed to South African apartheid and dictatorial regimes in Portugal and Spain (Teacher 2018: 248).

Le Cercle and its activities would blur the lines between elite ‘collective intellectual’ organization and parapolitical or ‘dual state’ forms of organization. In 1976, a smaller power bloc or “Inner Circle” (also referred to as the Pinay Group) was developed by Italian capitalist Carlo Pesenti within the broader Cercle Pinay organization. This Inner Circle would include intelligence operatives from the CIA, BND, and MI6 who sought to implement Cercle Pinay’s prescriptions/ideas regarding Western governance through more direct forms (Hänni 2014: 162-164). Key members of this Inner Circle would include intelligence operatives such as Brian Crozier (MI6), Nicholas Elliot (MI6), Richard Stilwell (CIA), and Donald Jameson (CIA). At this time, Crozier, Elliot, and other fervent British elite anti-communists such as Norris McWhirter, would also set up the Shield Committee, an advisory group which would counsel Margaret Thatcher on subversive political matters (Michaels 2014: 156). In 1977, Crozier would develop “the 6I”, an even more surreptitious organization, founded by Crozier, which would circumvent domestic regulations and engage in covert funding, intelligence gathering, and psychological warfare. 6I would engage in propaganda campaigns against progressive causes such as nuclear disarmament

Conservative Prime Minister, 1979–1990), Ronald Reagan (United States Republican President, 1981–1989) and Bavarian leader Franz-Josef Strauss (West German CDU/CSU Presidential candidate, 1980).”

(Teacher 2017: 172). On the activities of the Cercle's 'inner circle', David Teacher (2017: 176)

notes:

One early task for the 6I was to recreate the ISC's liquidated research library by compiling "a reference archive of quotations from the already published words of hundreds of extremist politicians and trades unionists, as raw material for analytical reports in the Shield manner [...] Crozier records that two early operations for the 6I were in Latin America and in Iran prior to the 1979 revolution. In Argentina, Uruguay and Chile, the 6I advised the armed forces and the security services in "the use of some of the non-violent, psychological techniques with which we had been experimenting in Europe" (366). Crozier also spent several days closeted with General Pinochet, drafting fourteen articles of the new Chilean Constitution. Apart from supporting Pinochet and other Latin American regimes, the 6I was also increasingly concerned by the instability of the Shah's regime in Iran in the months preceding the Islamic revolution. Here again, the 6I's experience in psychological warfare techniques was needed; the brutal repression by the Shah's secret service SAVAK and the armed forces served only to feed the rising tide of Islamic fervour.

While largely organized within the transatlantic states of the LIO, transnational networks which can be associated with rollbackers were not confined to Western Europe and North America. Moreover, hardline Cold War rollbackers did not exclusively promote policies of direct military rollback.⁷⁷ Rather, during the Cold War, various partnerships were forged between Western anti-communists and anti-communist social forces within the Global South involving a spectrum of activities (overt and covert) designed to thwart the global communist threat.

One major example of a transnational far-right 'rollbacker' collective during the Cold War was the World Anti-Communist League (WACL).⁷⁸ In the wake of various communist insurgencies and political victories in China and Indochina, transnational anti-communist social forces in Asia – in coordination with the CIA, the China Lobby in the US, and other anti-communist groups in Europe – formed the Asian Peoples Anti-Communist League (APACL).

⁷⁷ One example being Radio Free Europe, created by then CIA director Allen Dulles in 1949 as non-kinetic anti-communist psychological operation designed to sow dissent amongst the civilian populations of the Eastern-bloc.

⁷⁸ The WACL would be renamed World League for Freedom and Democracy in 1990 following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

During the APACL's annual conference in Seoul in 1966, the decision was made to create the World Anti-Communist League. This organization would unite disparate far-right organizations in Latin America, Asia, Europe, and the US – with regional chapters sending representatives from various domestic anti-communist organizations, holding its first conference in Taipei from September 25 – October 1, 1967, with 170 participants from 60 countries. The WACL would bring together intellectuals, religious leaders (e.g. Sun Myung Moon), establishment politicians (e.g. Larry Macdonald, John Ashcroft, Robert Dornan, John McCain), former Nazis (e.g. Otto Skorzeny), crime lords (e.g. Yoshio Kodamo) and far-right paramilitaries, and unite such actors around the shared transnational ideology of militant anti-communism.⁷⁹ Many members of Le Cercle also attended the WACL, and much like the former mentioned institution, the composition of the WACL membership would further underscore the complexity of disentangling the ideas and social forces of the far-right from those of the Western liberal state establishment. Such complex partnerships have come to light in recent decades, sometimes becoming a scandal for politicians once associated with radical rollback organizations such as the WACL. For example, then US House Representative John McCain served as an advisor to the US branch of the WACL which was directly aiding radical right wing Contra death squads to overthrow the left-wing Nicaraguan government; coming to light during the Iran-Contra Affair, which exposed the illegal sale of arms

⁷⁹ Describing the WACL, Scott Anderson and Jon Lee Anderson (1986: 12) note: “The League was founded in 1966 as a public relations arm for the governments of Taiwan and South Korea. It has since grown to be something far more important: an instrument for the practice of un conventional warfare-assassinations, death squads, sabotage throughout the world. There is nothing new about the World Anti-Communist League. Its stated purpose, to form a unified front against communism, was first expostulated in Hitler's anti-Comintern policy. Likewise, the means it has chosen to fight communism-unconventional warfare, counterterror, political warfare, it goes by a variety of names-were first employed by the Nazis [...] The World Anti-Communist League hasn't merely borrowed these concepts or tactics from the Nazis; it has incorporated the Nazis themselves as well. Many of the major figures behind the creation and promotion of the League are men who first practiced their brand of warfare in the streets, ghettos, and concentration camps of World War II Europe [...] Today, their rhetoric is different; they no longer talk very much about the "Communist, Jewish, Freemason conspiracy for now they have allies who need them to be more discreet than that. In 1986, as in 1936, they hide behind the buzzwords anti-Bolshevism and anti-communism to further their goals and to forge links with others.”

to Iran and the funding of radical anti-communist groups in Central America.⁸⁰ The WACL would then further expand the elite network of elite anti-communists across the global South, particularly within dictatorial regimes antagonistic to both the Soviet Union and the domestic left social forces within their states/societies. The transnational anti-communist discourse coalition, which I label as ‘rollbackers’, would use such collective intellectual organizations to integrate various sub-ideologies and social forces which can be associated with the fascist ‘extreme right’ with those which can be described as part of a more formalized/institutionalized ‘radical right’ politics within the West.

The rollbackers within the LIO would support a range of strategies which blur the lines between policies of rollback and policies of containment, as well as the lines separating the State and civil society. Such strategies would include explicitly parapolitical operations, including European initiatives such as Operation Gladio, where ‘stay-behind’ Western intelligence services would coordinate with far-right social forces across Europe (as well as with organized crime and secret societies such as the Freemasons and Opus Dei) to undermine the socialist/social democratic left. US-centered rollbackers would also provide support for various far-right South American dictatorships through Operation Condor, which backed violent anti-communist repressions (or ‘dirty wars’) carried out by the military juntas in Argentina, Chile, and Brazil.

In 1976, a clandestine CIA-led anti-communist ‘rollback’ organization called the Safari Club (named after a resort in Kenya) was formed to directly counter Soviet/Marxist influence in Africa and the Middle East, aiding anti-Soviet mujahedeen fighters in Afghanistan, Somalian anti-communists during the 1977-1978 Ogadan War, and Mobuto during Shaba I conflict. The Safari

⁸⁰ McCain’s connections to the far-right WACL and the Contra paramilitaries again came to light during his presidential campaign in 2007.

Club was an intelligence outfit which would run parallel to the CIA, created to circumvent the post-Watergate reforms which constrained CIA activities following the Church Committee hearings in 1975 (Scott 2015: 26). The Safari Club was funded by a network of semi-secretive banking institutions – specifically the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) – and included the intelligence services of the key Western allies such as France, Saudi Arabia, Iran (under Pahlavi), Morocco, Egypt, as well as informal forms of coordination with South Africa, Rhodesia, and Israel (Good 2018: 20, 2020: 159; Scott 2015: 25-30).⁸¹ The activities of elite rollbackers at the height of the Cold War, and the vastness of the networks they produced, then underscore the complex transnationalism of far-right anti-communism.

During the Reagan Administration in the US and the Thatcher government in the UK, the social forces, which I label as rollbackers, would find an even more supportive leadership structure within the transatlantic bloc, a structure that would help further expand their global war against

⁸¹ US Senators John Kerry and Hank Brown would co-author a report to the Committee on Foreign Relations titled *The BCCI Affair*. The report would discuss the public and private components of the BCCI, its connections to the CIA, and its role in the Iran-Contra scandal and the illegal funnelling of money to Nicaraguan death-squads. Kerry and Brown (1992: 4) note: “BCCI’s unique criminal structure -- an elaborate corporate spider-web with BCCI’s founder, Agha Hasan Abedi and his assistant, Swaleh Naqvi, in the middle -- was an essential component of its spectacular growth, and a guarantee of its eventual collapse. The structure was conceived by Abedi and managed by Naqvi for the specific purpose of evading regulation or control by governments. It functioned to frustrate the full understanding of BCCI’s operations by anyone. Unlike any ordinary bank, BCCI was from its earliest days made up of multiplying layers of entities, related to one another through an impenetrable series of holding companies, affiliates, subsidiaries, banks-within-banks, insider dealings and nominee relationships. By fracturing corporate structure, record keeping, regulatory review, and audits, the complex BCCI family of entities created by Abedi was able to evade ordinary legal restrictions on the movement of capital and goods as a matter of daily practice and routine. In creating BCCI as a vehicle fundamentally free of government control, Abedi developed in BCCI an ideal mechanism for facilitating illicit activity by others, including such activity by officials of many of the governments whose laws BCCI was breaking. BCCI’s criminality included fraud by BCCI and BCCI customers involving billions of dollars; money laundering in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas; BCCI’s bribery of officials in most of those locations; support of terrorism, arms trafficking, and the sale of nuclear technologies; management of prostitution; the commission and facilitation of income tax evasion, smuggling, and illegal immigration; illicit purchases of banks and real estate; and a panoply of financial crimes limited only by the imagination of its officers and customers. Among BCCI’s principal mechanisms for committing crimes were its use of shell corporations and bank confidentiality and secrecy havens; layering of its corporate structure; its use of front-men and nominees, guarantees and buy-back arrangements; back-to-back financial documentation among BCCI controlled entities, kick-backs and bribes, the intimidation of witnesses, and the retention of well-placed insiders to discourage governmental action.”

communism into various new theatres within the global South. For rollbackers, Vietnam Syndrome and the Nixon Administration's attempts toward détente with the Soviet Union directly contributed to America's declining influence on the world stage, contributing to various crises for US leadership, including the 1979 Iranian Revolution (Iran hostage crisis) and Nicaraguan Revolution. The so-called 'Reagan Doctrine' would then represent an even more assertive US foreign policy, funding new advanced nuclear weapons systems such as the Strategic Defense Initiative (so-called Star Wars), as well as supporting various pro-Western anti-communist parties and guerilla organizations – specifically in Central America and the Middle East.⁸²

In the US, the rollbackers associated with the Reagan doctrine would include figures commonly associated with so-called neoconservatism (aforementioned acknowledged to be a highly contested term even amongst its proponents and supposed pioneers). Key figures often associated with Reagan-era neoconservatism include intellectuals such as Norman Podhoretz, Robert Kagan Irving Kristol, and Seymour Martin Lipset, as well as major politicians and state officials including Eliot Abrams, Douglas Feith, Newt Gingrich, Richard Perle, Donald Rumsfeld,

⁸² Larry Pratt (1987: 63) defines the Reagan Doctrine as: [An]n aggressive strategy of counter-revolution whose purpose is not merely the containment of Marxism, but the 'bleeding' and overthrow of radical anti-imperialist regimes in the Third World through economic pressure, the arming of right-wing proxies and insurgencies, and the use of force in so-called low-intensity conflicts. Couched in the rhetoric of support for 'democracy' and 'freedom-fighters', the Reagan Doctrine aligns the United States with mercenaries, death squads, and in the words of Christopher Dickey's Miami contra, those who learn to kill and love it. The Reagan Doctrine is not about democracy. It is not about freedom. It is about war and counter-revolution. Safely removed from the central strategic fulcrum of the Cold War, the targets of the Reagan Doctrine are Third World socialist states whose revolutions are of recent vintage and can plausibly be destabilised: for example, Nicaragua which has been subjected to externally-supported insurgent warfare since the beginnings of the CIA-Argentine 'war without frontiers' against Central American revolutionaries in the early Eighties. It was the decision of Congress to cut off military assistance to the contras in 1984 that prompted the elaboration of what has come to be known as the Reagan Doctrine of support to anti-Marxist rebels. However, this policy is global and not merely regional, in its intent. Its fundamental goal is to demonstrate that Marxist revolutions in the Third World can be overturned without a costly, protracted intervention by American combat forces. 'The aim of the Reagan Administration', as Fred Halliday rightly noted in *The Making of the Second Cold War*, 'has not been just to contain the advance of revolutionary sources, but in some degree to reverse it. But the reversals in this war without frontiers are to be brought about without the losses in American lives and the domestic divisions inflicted by the intervention in Vietnam: as with its discredited precursor, the Nixon Doctrine, which lies buried in the rubble of the streets of Teheran, America will supply everything but the corpses.'

Paul Wolfowitz,. Reagan’s foreign policy would help create a broad neoconservative coalition, one which would include hardline conservative nationalists as well as former Democrats (Bell 1992). With the help of numerous publications and think tanks, what is often regarded as a ‘neoconservative’ movement would emerge as a prominent political force within the US during 1970s and 1980s.⁸³

Often resembling the think tanks developed by Atlanticists in the early-mid twentieth century, American neoconservative think tanks would help spearhead the new global project of rollback promoted by the Reagan Administration, namely the Committee for the Free World, Hudson Institute, Manhattan Institute, Claremont Institute, Heartland Institute, Ayn Rand Institute, Atlas Network, Leadership Institute, and most importantly the Heritage Foundation, which would play a direct role in constructing Reagan’s doctrine of ‘peace through strength’. During this time, the UK would similarly produce several political organizations supportive of various far-right objectives within world order, including the Western Goals Institute, the 61, and the Monday Club.⁸⁴ In addition to such political organizations, new religious organizations would also become incorporated in the far-right’s transnational organizations and networks, including the Falun Gong⁸⁵ and the Korean Unification Church – the publisher of the far-right news publication *The Washington Times*. These elite networks, developed during the latter half of the Cold War, would

⁸³ As noted, so-called neoconservatism is often difficult to define, and is often considered as a ‘moderate’ or ‘centre-right’ movement/ideology due to: 1) the closeness of its associated actors and organizations to the ‘liberal establishment’ (federal government bureaucracy, academia, media); 2) their institutionalized approach to political struggle; and 3) the willingness of those associated to strategically marginalize *certain* ideas, policies, social forces associated with more extreme far-right politics when politically expedient.

⁸⁴ Far-right organizations in the UK such as the Monday Club were however unique in their staunch support for anti-republican/anti-Catholic Ulster nationalism in Northern Ireland. James Cooper (2017) notes how despite close relations with the Thatcher government, Reagan sought a US policy of neutrality during The Troubles; and even later (reluctantly) supported an Anglo-Irish peace process – largely due to domestic pressures in the US.

⁸⁵ The Falun Gong would start a far-right media organization called *The Epoch Times* in 2000.

help institutionalize far-right ideas and social forces within the liberal establishment of LIO states, creating lasting foundations for the far-right movement in the post-Cold War era.

Rather than a moderating force on the broad right-wing movement, such organizations in many ways helped normalize/institutionalize far-right ideas and policy proposals related to foreign policy, public education, and criminal justice – often repackaging far-right bigotries, social Darwinism, and jingoism as non-partisan ‘common sense’. To the extent neoconservatism can be considered an ideology, then, it represents: 1) support for ‘anti-totalitarian’ rollback abroad (e.g. against communism or fundamentalist/terroristic Islam); 2) support for the deepening of liberal market capitalist social relations; and 3) support for key Western allies, both within the transatlantic bloc and beyond. This is to say, *certain* neoliberal cosmopolitans and *certain* far-right civilizationists have formed ‘neoconservative’ alliances in support of *certain* domestic and foreign policy initiatives (e.g. War on Terror and support for Ukraine, Taiwan, and Israel).⁸⁶ American paleoconservative writer and historian Stephen Sniegoski (2008: 36) notes:

In the Reagan administration, the neoconservatives allied with the militant right-wing anti-Communists and combated Republican establishment elements in order to fashion a hard-line anti-Soviet foreign policy. Neoconservatives were in the forefront of pressing for Reagan’s military build-up and de-emphasizing arms control agreements, which had been

⁸⁶ Neoconservatism in many ways resembles the so-called US New Right, another ‘fusionist’ project which included various disparate social forces and ideologies during the 1950s and 1960s. In 1955, William F. Buckley, Russell Kirk, Frank Meyer, Whitaker Chambers, and James Burnham created the *National Review* to launch this fusionist ‘New Right’ political orientation, one which would suppress certain ‘Old Right’ predilections within the right wing movement (e.g. antisemitism, anti-Catholicism) and forge politically expedient alliances for the purpose of: 1) winning the global war against communism; and 2) merging cultural ‘traditionalism’ with utilitarian support for liberal markets. The so-called New Right was supportive of various economic positions now associated with neoconservatism (or neoliberal conservatism), including supply-side economics, strategic cooperation with key western allies, support for policies of military rollback (i.e. regime change), skepticism about European political integration through the EU, and staunch support for Zionism as well as the Botha regime in South Africa. Neoconservatives would differ however from *certain* establishment Atlanticist liberals regarding issues of foreign military intervention. For example, while some hawkish Atlanticist liberals would become associated with the so-called neoconservative persuasion due to their staunch advocacy for military intervention (e.g. Henry Jackson and James Woolsey), other major Atlanticists were less convinced of the wisdom of such an approach. One major example being US diplomat George Ball, an Atlanticist within the Democratic Party who advocated for policies of restraint during the Vietnam War and was at times critical of aspects of US support for Israel (Ball 1976; Ball & Ball 1992).

a foreign policy centerpiece of previous administrations, both Republican and Democrat. In contrast to the longstanding American defensive Cold War strategy of containing Soviet communism, the neoconservatives pushed for destabilizing the Soviet empire and its allies. They did not invent this strategic doctrine, which originated with such seminal conservative thinkers as James Burnham and Robert Strausz-Hupe. The goal behind this offensive strategy was to actually bring about the defeat of the Soviet Union, instead of just achieving stalemate, which would be the best that could be obtained by defensive containment. But while not the originators of an offensive Cold War strategy, the neocons were the first to successfully promote its implementation [...] In essence, the neocons did not invent a new strategy for international relations, but lent an air of establishment respectability to doctrines that had been in the repertoire of the American right from the early days of the Cold War.

While largely supportive of the policies advanced by the Reagan Doctrine, arch-neocon theorist Norman Podhoretz would argue that the Reagan Administration was not hawkish enough in its commitments to the global fight against communism. In his 1982 *New York Times* op-ed essay “The Neoconservative Anguish Over Reagan’s Foreign Policy”, Podhoretz would criticize the Reagan Administration for its failure to restore American military power and economic power and confront the USSR. While lauding the Reagan Administration’s domestic neoliberal economic reforms, Podhoretz would criticize Reagan’s foreign policy for mirroring the doctrines of détente associated with Nixon and Kissinger. Moreover, he would argue that the Reagan Administration had failed to regard the Persian Gulf and Central America as a core region of interest for the US criticizing Reagan’s optimism (or naivety) regarding the inevitable disintegration of the Soviet Union/revolutionary communism, as well as (what Podhoretz believed to be a) lack of commitment to Israel. Podhoretz (1982: para. 35) would note:

[W]hereas neo-conservatives may differ among themselves over the extent and nature of American commitments abroad, they would all agree that at a minimum the United States has a vital interest in the survival of the relatively few democratic states already in existence. Israel, in particular, is seen by neo-conservatives as the most exposed of the democracies - the loneliest outpost of what they insist on calling (in deliberate defiance of the ridicule that has been heaped on the term in recent years) the free world [...] [T]he willingness to defend Israel (ideologically and politically no less than through military aid) becomes a subtle measure of our willingness to defend ourselves. This is why, in the opinion of many of us, the slippage of support for Israel in Western Europe has gone hand

in hand with the fading determination of the Europeans to defend themselves against the spread of Soviet power. And it is also why the continuing tilt in American policy toward the enemies of Israel in the Middle East is so worrisome to neo-conservatives.

During the last two decades of the Cold War, the so-called neoconservatives would become the most influential intellectual faction of rollbackers within the LIO. Despite their association with 'centre right' politics, so-called neoconservatives would often share many of the same ideological convictions held by the broader far-right movement throughout the Cold War period. While figures associated with neoconservatism would often seek to strategically purge certain ideas and social forces which were too philosophically nativist, isolationist, antisemitic, austere, and suspicious of the 'managerial state' to support policies of foreign military intervention and/or foreign aid (especially in support of a Jewish state in the Middle East), such differences between neocons and the broader right-wing movement are often overstated. One way in which so-called neoconservative convictions can be measured is by the degree to which an actor expresses unflinching support for policies of US/Western military supremacy within world order. For neoconservatives, an isolationist or reconciliatory approach to US foreign policy (e.g. détente, rapprochement, soft policies of containment) equated to the abandonment of major allies and the core principles which unite Western civilization. While certain influential figures within the far-right movement have questioned the prudence of neoconservative policies and alliances during the post-Cold War era, it is important to note there was an overwhelming consensus within the far-right movement during the Cold War that rollback policies were largely just/necessary to counter the threat of global communism.

ii) *The Revanchists*

At the Republican National Convention in 1992, the far-right politician and writer Pat Buchanan (1992) would deliver what later would be known as the “Culture War Speech”. In the speech Buchanan called for unity for the American conservative movement, displayed nostalgia for the Reagan era, and lauded the accomplishments of the H.W. Bush Administration, while also raising alarm about the dangers of a Democratic victory in the 1992 presidential election. For Buchanan the stakes of the coming election were much higher than the electoral defeat of the Republican Party, but rather a striking defeat to the nation itself. One can presume that for Buchanan, the differences between his paleoconservative economic ideology, and that of Bush, a steadfast neoliberal – were less pronounced than the cultural divide between the two major American political parties. Buchanan (1992) stated: “There is a religious war going on in this country. It is a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we shall be as was the Cold War itself, for this war is for the soul of America.” Buchanan’s speech would list a series of grievances which would increasingly resonate with the far-right in the contemporary moment in the coming decades, including grievances related to LGBTQ+ rights, abortion access, secular public education, and upheavals against racial injustice – specifically the 1992 LA riots. Buchanan’s speech would in many ways, set the stage for a new post-Cold War far-right movement within the LIO, one which would largely jettison the language of anti-communism and instead consolidate a base of support around perceived cultural threats to the nation and civilization.

In the post-Cold War era, various new transnational ideologies would be added to the far-right’s list of threats to the Western culture/civilization, threats which were often described as orchestrated/supported/permitted by a managerial liberal elite and a left-wing/underclass counterculture (e.g. third-wave feminism, anti-racist activism, Islamism, ‘Cultural Marxism’). Beginning in the 1990s the so-called ‘culture war’ would also fracture the far-right movement from

within, with internal debates regarding the character of the Western culture/civilization, its boundaries, and the nature of the threats to it. The so-called culture war is often used as an umbrella term describing a range of issues/grievances related to (but not limited to) ethnicity, demography, religion, popular culture, law and order, national/civilizational identity, gender relations, and international relations (specifically between the so-called West and states/societies in the global South). These so-called culture wars would split the transnational far-right movement into two distinct (but often simultaneous and overlapping) tendencies, which I refer to as: the revanchists and the counter-jihadists.

What I refer to here as the revanchist far-right discourse coalition includes those actors and organizations that are typically associated with the politics of nativism, populism, illiberalism, and nationalism within the LIO. These actors and social forces seek to foment a conservative nationalist renaissance to reverse various aspects of political, economic, and cultural liberalism which emerged during the twentieth century. Specifically, the revanchist coalition has sought to reverse certain liberal trends within the LIO, namely: 1) policies supportive of immigration and refugee settlement; 2) military interventions in support of liberal human rights or democratic state-building; 3) the power of ‘globalist’ transnational institutions (including multinational corporations) and free-trade regimes over sovereign states (EU, UN, NATO, NAFTA); and 4) perceived capitulation to liberal progressives (or ‘the left’) regarding issues related to multiculturalism, secularism, and gender within Western society. In the US, revanchists can be associated with a slew of political orientations, including nativism, nationalism, and the social forces of the so-called Old Right; with adherents often self-identifying as ‘traditionalists’, traditional conservatives, integralists, paleoconservatives, paleolibertarians during the post-Cold

War era.⁸⁷ This revanchist nativist ideological orientation within the US Republican Party has been critical of various policies implemented/advocated by liberals during the twentieth century, namely: the New Deal, the Great Society, the Civil Rights Movement, the Bretton Woods system, NATO expansion, NAFTA, promotion of LGBTQ+ identity/representation/rights, abortion rights, foreign aid, humanitarian military intervention, climate change initiatives, criminal justice reform, and policies of immigration/refugee settlement. Those associated with the revanchist coalition in the US have been critical of so-called ‘fusionism’ within the broader American conservative movement, criticizing the New Right/neoconservative embrace of neoliberal globalization, and instead advocating for a more protectionist/nationalist economic policy. In the post-Cold War period, American revanchists have also supported a more isolationist or nationalist foreign policy, which differentiates them from the liberal internationalist left and ‘neoconservative’ interventionists. For example, Pat Buchanan has publicly opposed various American military interventions in the Middle East and North Africa during the post-Cold War period.⁸⁸ For revanchists, entrenched cultural/civilizational identities make liberal interventions in the name of freedom or democracy inevitably futile endeavours. On the subject of so-called paleoconservative politics, Ray Kiely (2021: 167) notes:

On the face of it, this sounds like a critique of the New Deal and Great Society compatible with [Cold War era] neoconservative and neoliberal critiques, which focus on a self-interested new class of state elites. However, paleoconservatives argue that this liberal managerial state persisted after Reagan and the end of the Cold War. This elite promotes globalization, allies itself with rootless multinational companies who invest overseas and outsource production, and which supports immigration and multiculturalism. The end

⁸⁷ The volume *The Right and Radical Right in the Americas Ideological Currents from Interwar Canada to Contemporary Chile* edited by Tamir Bar-on and Barbara Molas (2022) provides a detailed exploration into these various far-right sub-ideologies.

⁸⁸ Buchanan’s devotion to isolationism can be interrogated when one looks to his proclaimed admiration for the Reagan doctrine in his 1992 RNC speech. Moreover, in an April 19, 1990, article in *The Washington Times* Buchanan proposed that George H.W. Bush take advantage of political turmoil in Canada and the divisions between French and Anglo communities to absorb Canada and Greenland so that the US would command a landmass equal to that of the Soviet Union (Heer 2025).

result is deindustrialization and the undermining of traditional American culture, and in particular white middle America, which is squeezed between a cosmopolitan corporate elite and poor ethnic minorities.

Numerous intellectuals can be associated with the revanchist discourse coalition in the US (e.g. Pat Buchanan, Murray Rothbard, Otis L. Graham. Jr., Gary North, Lew Rockwell, Peter Brimelow, Paul Gottfried, John Tanton, Samuel Francis, Charles Murray, and Samuel Huntington), as well as influential political commentators (e.g. Tucker Carlson, John Derbyshire, Alex Jones, Steve Sailor). Various revanchist publications have sought to counter certain liberal trends within the broader conservative movement (e.g. *Chronicles*, *The American Conservative*, *The Social Contract*, *Taki's Magazine*, *Occidental Quarterly*) as well as influential think tanks and lobby organizations (e.g. Intercollegiate Studies Institute, Mises Institute, Council of Conservative Citizens, the Rockford Institute, American Family Association, Pioneer Fund, Federation for American Immigration Reform, Center for Immigration Studies, NumbersUSA, National Policy Institute, and the Family Research Council) and media organizations (e.g. Newsmax, VDARE, Infowars, One America News). American revanchists in the post-Cold War era have often: associated immigration and minority communities with rising crime; supported scientific racism; equated abortion with murder; claimed climate change is a 'hoax'; labelled the LGBTQ+ community as immoral and a product of mental illness; and argued that liberal leaders have betrayed their nation and Western civilization.

In the European context, the revanchist tendency on the far-right is represented by those actors and social forces associated with modern ethnonationalist political parties and movements oppositional to the EU and globalization. Identity-based nationalism and forms of political consciousness in Europe date back to the early twentieth century, fuelling various fascist

movements and counter-revolutions. Post-1968, the far-right in Europe would develop a more sophisticated philosophical defense of far-right politics, often modifying various Neo-Marxist concepts/ideas, including those produced by Gramsci and members of the Frankfurt School. In the post-Cold War era, many such European revanchist movements would include both social forces associated with the Christian right (e.g. Catholic Integralists), as well as certain fractions which were anti-capitalist, anti-American, anti-Zionist, and anti-Christian (e.g. Nouvelle Droite). The European revanchist movements and political parties have also incorporated language and symbols associated with interwar fascism and paganism into their political project (e.g. Casa Pound in Italy, Golden Dawn in Greece, National Corps and Right Sector in Ukraine). Notable European revanchist think tanks include GRECE as well the publishing house Arktos Media headquartered in Budapest and the Sweden-based media organization Red Ice, producing content that has influenced far-right extremists (so-called 'alt-right') across the LIO and beyond. In recent decades, the pan-European Identitarian Movement has forged transnational links across the EU as well as with far-right social forces in the US, Canada, and Australia, based on the idea of ethnonationalist revanchism. Influenced by far-right thinkers such as Renaud Camus, Alain de Benoist, and Guillaume Faye, this Identitarian Movement is often associated with the 'alt-right' movement, engaging in online social activism to support policies of 'remigration' and direct-action campaigns to prevent/dissuade immigration.⁸⁹

One can locate various similarities amongst American revanchists and their European counterparts. For example, American 'paleoconservative' critiques of 'revolutionary' managerial liberal statism have appealed to European ethnonationalist revanchists who resent the transnational

⁸⁹ In 2017, Identitarian extremists chartered a ship to block refugee vessels from reaching European territories through the Mediterranean.

authorities of the EU and the cosmopolitan aspects of its charter. Similarly, in recent years influential American revanchists such as Steve Bannon, Chilton Williamson (founder of the Rockford Institute) Stephen Miller (former White House advisor) and Steve King (former US Representative) have all expressed support for the dystopian French anti-immigrant novel *The Camp of the Saints* (Raspail, 1973), and the language of Camus' Great Replacement theory. During the post-Cold War era, such aspects of paleoconservative ideology would merge with European identity-nationalism; the result would be the development of a new civilizational consciousness for the far-right movement, one which would serve a metaphysical bulwark against the tyrannical forces of the managerial state and liberal 'globalism' – forces which seek to dilute national/ethnic identity.

Formal coordination at the transnational level has often been an anathema to revanchists, who often lionize nationalist forms of organization. Nevertheless, American 'paleoconservative' revanchists and European ethnonationalist revanchists have shared a critique of multiculturalism, open-door immigration, managerial liberal international institutions, as well as *certain* forms of military intervention, specifically so-called 'humanitarian interventions' based (rhetorically) on utopian cosmopolitan principles, i.e. human rights. Nativists across the transatlantic bloc have coalesced around the shared notion that 'traditional' White-European populations within the West are being 'replaced' as a result of immigration from the global South; rising birthrates amongst non-White European populations, and declining birthrates amongst the White-European population. As such, nativist terms/theories such as 'white genocide' or 'Great Replacement' have become transnationalized across the states and societies of the LIO in post-Cold War era. During the late 2000s and early 2010s, the reach and influence of revanchists was accelerated by the advent of online chat rooms and other social media platforms – which increased the participation of new

cross-class actors and social forces and aided in the construction of a revanchist far-right political consciousness. The so-called alt-right movement would attract younger audiences (specifically male Millennials) to much older far-right ideas and concepts using the dark, politically incorrect, sarcastic, and nihilistic humour that is ubiquitous within various male dominated online forums (Nagle 2017). While often informal in its coordination, this ‘alt-right’ movement (online far-right movement) can be regarded as an example of a transnationalized revanchist coalition which has emerged across the states/societies of the transatlantic bloc in the twenty-first century.

iii) The Counter-Jihadists

The third discourse coalition relevant to an analysis of the far-right during the post-Cold War era can be referred to as the counter-jihadists; a more overtly imperialist faction of the far-right, often referred to as the ‘counter-jihad movement’. Unlike the revanchists, this orientalist far-right intellectual coalition has organized extensively at the transnational level and has sought to: 1) build on the liberal-far-right alliances/hybridizations developed within the LIO during the Cold War, i.e. ‘neoconservatism’; and 2) use the language of Wilsonian liberal internationalism to support a new Manichean global war against ‘terrorism’ and ‘Islamism’. The counter-jihadist coalition includes a range of actors which are often associated with so-called American neoconservatism, and as such, this coalition is often inappropriately associated with a more moderate, centre-right, or neoliberal political orientation within the transatlantic bloc. As previously noted, the neoconservative ideology/movement was an inclusive alliance, with a diverse membership and united around loosely defined ideological tenets, which attracted both hawkish liberal internationalists as well as jingoistic and conservative (ethno)nationalists. I previously noted how neoliberal cosmopolitans have historically embraced ‘neoconservative’

alliances, often incorporating the language of liberal universalism to defend interventionist neoconservative policies. Without discounting this, it is similarly important to acknowledge the role of far-right ideology and the transnational far-right movement in shaping modern 'neoconservatism'. Far-right author Douglas Murray (2005: 1) notes that rather than dogmatic ideology "Neoconservatism is a broad church, containing multiple tracks and directions of thought. And, since it is a type of thought and not a membership club or cult, establishing a lineage, never mind a definition, is not a task with obvious beginnings, middles or ends." Despite the liberal proclamations of those associated with the counter-jihadist movement, an orientalist far-right civilizational worldview has consistently been expressed by intellectuals and organizations associated with the counter-jihadist movement in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.

In July 1979, what can be described as the first transnational collective intellectual organization of 'counter-jihadists' would convene at the Jerusalem Conference on International Terrorism, and would be followed by the June 1984 Washington Conference on International Terrorism.⁹⁰ Both conferences were organized by the Jonathan Institute, an Israeli organization founded by Benjamin Netanyahu in the memory of his brother Yonatan Netanyahu who was killed during the Entebbe Operation in Uganda, a raid against PLO and PLO-linked militants who hijacked an Air France flight in 1976. In addition to various members of the Israeli political and security establishment, the Jonathan Institute's conferences on international terrorism would include various Cold Warriors from within the LIO, including key individuals associated with American 'neoconservatism' (e.g. Henry Jackson, Daniel Moynihan, Norman Podhoretz, Midge Dector, Jack Kemp, Ben J. Wattenberg, Joseph Bishop), numerous elites from the Israeli political

⁹⁰ The presentations of the Jerusalem Conference on International Terrorism would be compiled and published into a text volume edited by Benjamin Netanyahu titled *International Terrorism: Challenge and Response* (1981/2017.)

and military establishment (e.g. Menachem Begin, Chaim Herzog, Benjamin Netanyahu, Shimon Peres, Asher Ben-Natan, Mordecai Abir), and even ‘social democrats’ such as David Barrett, then leader of British Columbia’s (Canada) New Democratic Party. Members of other elite ‘rollbacker’ institutions including the Committee on the Present Danger, Le Cercle, and the Safari Club were also in attendance (e.g. Brian Crozier, Richard Pipes, Robert Moss, Alun Gwynne Jones, George H.W. Bush, Michael Ledeen). Conference Chairman Benzion Netanyahu, father of both Benjamin Netanyahu and Yonatan Netanyahu, would deliver the opening remarks for the 1979 Jerusalem Conference, stating (Netanyahu 1981/2017: 4, 6):

Suffice it to say that in the supposed headquarters of mankind, in the United Nations, terrorism has not only gained a mere foothold. That institution now serves as a springboard and a clearing house for the terrorists’ campaign. It is evident that in their struggle with the terrorists, the attacked nations must admit to failure — that is, if their purpose was to arrest the tide of terrorism in the world and place the malady under control. I do not refer here to the devices which each nation has thus far employed in this contest. These too have, in most cases, been inadequate. I am referring to the measures that had to be taken internationally and which, if chosen wisely, might have been effective, as many believe. Here we note almost a total failure. No common line of attack upon the problem, not even a common line of defense, has been adopted. The few attempts made at forming such defense lines were vitiated by powerful opposing forces [...] This Conference was called to serve as the beginning of a new process — the process of rallying the democracies of the world to a struggle against terrorism and the dangers it represents. Against the international front of terrorism we must build an international front of freedom — that of organized public opinion which will move governments to act. Despite all that has been said about the decadence of the West, its death-wish and moral degeneration, we believe that the free societies of the world still possess a tremendous will to live and enormous powers of recuperation. If these powers are identified and mobilized, and harnessed in time by men of vision and courage, they will save the day for mankind.

Nafeez Ahmed (2005) argues that the purpose of these ‘terrorism’ conferences was to establish the notion that terrorism in-and-of-itself represents an organized international political movement, one which is directly linked to the Soviet Union, and requires a concerted global counter-offensive. Conference presentations would focus primarily on Muslim-majority states as (witting or unwitting) Soviet proxies and/or terrorist states, including Libya, PLO-controlled,

Lebanon, South Yemen, Iraq, and Iran. The conferences would then set the stage for what would eventually become a global ‘war on terror’, and various members would appeal for transnational coordination, solidarity, and coalition-building to confront this threat. In a presentation titled “Terrorism as a Weapon in International Politics” at the Jerusalem Conference in 1979, Senator Henry Jackson stated (Netanyahu 1981/2017: 33):

I believe that international terrorism is a modern form of warfare against liberal democracies. I believe that the ultimate but seldom stated goal of these terrorists is to destroy the very fabric of democracy. I believe that it is both wrong and fool-hardy for any democratic state to consider international terrorism to be “someone else’s” problem. If you believe as I do, then you must join me in wondering why the community of liberal democracies has not banded together more effectively to oppose these international murderers — and to loudly and vigorously expose those states which cynically provide terrorists with comfort and support. One of the great coverups of this century is the effort by Western governments, who know better, to muffle the facts about Soviet-bloc support for international terrorism. I’m not talking about individual acts of madmen. I’m talking about highly organized groups with international connections and support who systematically rely on major acts of violence as a political instrument.

Counter-jihadist far-right elites within the LIO would seek to fill the ideological vacuum left by Western anti-communism with orientalist Western chauvinism, refurbishing the Cold War language of anti-totalitarianism into a new socio-political critique of Islam and post-colonial resistance in the Middle East (specifically targeting Palestinian organizations resisting against Israel’s policies of occupation and apartheid). While the orientalist ‘neocons’ would often claim the war was between ‘barbarism/totalitarianism/terrorism’ and liberal democratic civilization – the implication of such a framing was often that Islam is largely synonymous with barbarism/totalitarianism/terrorism, and that civilization is synonymous with the liberal democratic states/societies of the West. Many of those associated with counter-jihadism would retain the most fundamental elements of Huntington’s ‘clash of civilizations’ framework in their so-called ‘war against militant Islam’, often refurbishing Huntington’s more sweeping

generalizations and cultural relativism. Such modifications would help make the radical policies promoted by neoconservatives (e.g. US military intervention in various Middle East theatres) more palatable to ‘moderates’ within the West and potential non-Western allies. Many figures associated with orientalist ‘counter-terrorism’ or ‘counter-jihadism’ would mask their civilizational supremacism (which might dissuade participation in strategic global partnerships) with the more politically correct language of liberalism, global security, and human rights. Despite the inclusion of such language, an orientalist framing of Muslims and Middle East and North African states/societies would underpin this new neoconservative ‘common sense’ within the LIO.

The counter-jihadists of the post-9/11 era would benefit from the various anti-communist/anti-terrorism networks cultivated within the states and societies of the LIO during the Cold War, as well as representation within various state-establishment institutions and access to policymakers. The objectives of this coalition were quite simple: larger societal recognition regarding the threat of ‘terrorism’ and ‘militant Islam’ and the overwhelming victory of the Judeo-Christian West over this threat. The counter-jihadist orientalist have been vocal supporters of increasing Western hostility towards various regimes in the Middle East including Iraq and Iran, with figures associated with the coalition opposing all forms rapprochement through diplomatic negotiations (e.g. Iran Nuclear Deal⁹¹); even going so far as recommending a pre-emptive first strike against Iran’s nuclear facilities by the American military and/or Israel. Numerous far-right political elites can be associated with the counter jihadist coalition (e.g. Geert Wilders, Marine Le

⁹¹ Sina Azodi (2017) notes how so-called neoconservative think tanks have sought to push for an US foreign policy that seeks to undermine Iran’s regional role and even replace its government. He notes how American neoconservatives such as Mark Dubowitz (executive director the Foundation for the Defence of Democracies) have pushed for US policymakers to abandon the Obama administration’s nuclear agreement with Iran and pushed a narrative that Iran represents an existential threat comparable to the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Furthermore, Rohan Davis’s *Next Stop, Tehran: The Neoconservative Campaign For War In Iran* (2020) provides an in-depth analysis of the ‘neoconservative’ network and their campaign for a US-led attack on Iran.

Pen, Viktor Orbán), as well as far-right scholars, writers, and commentators (e.g. Norman Podhoretz, Eliot Cohen, Daniel Pipes, Joshua Muravchik, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Niall Ferguson, Bat Ye'or, Erick Stakelbeck), capitalist elites (e.g. Nina Rosenwald⁹², Rebekah Mercer, Aubrey Chernick, Sheldon Adelson, Miriam Adelson), and political activists (e.g. Tommy Robinson, Lutz Bachmann, David Horowitz, Robert Spencer, Pamela Geller, Bridgette Gabriel, Anders Gravers Pedersen, Alain Wagner). Many such actors have also funded, organized, and participated in various Islamophobic think tanks and lobbying groups (e.g. Gatestone Institute, Henry Jackson Society, Middle East Forum, Clarion Project, International Civil Liberties Alliance, International Free Press Society, Citizens' Movement Pax Europa, Center for Security Policy, Stop Islamization of America, Foundation for Defense of Democracies, Stop Islamization of Europe, Accuracy in Media, ACT for America, Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, Christians United for Israel, Vérité, Valeurs et Démocratie, L'Alliance FFL, Shalem Centre, and the David Horowitz Freedom Centre), as well as publications (e.g. *Gateway Pundit*, *Middle East Quarterly*, *Breitbart News*, *Campus Reform*⁹³, *FrontPage Magazine*⁹⁴, *Politically Incorrect*) and websites/blogs (e.g. Jihad Watch, PragerU, PJ Media, The Brussels Journal, and Gates of Vienna). The ideas supported by organizations have been echoed by various extreme right organizations within the LIO, specifically the English Defence League (EDL) in the UK and the transnational organization PEGIDA.

⁹² Rosenwald is the heiress to the Sears Roebuck fortune, founder of the Gatestone Institute and member of the Council on Foreign Relations. Over decades she has donated millions of dollars to numerous counter-jihadist organizations (e.g. David Horowitz Freedom Center) as well as to far-right Israeli settler organizations illegally operating in the West Bank.

⁹³ Published by the Leadership Institute.

⁹⁴ Published by the David Horowitz Freedom Centre.

Counter-jihadists have recommended that the West adopt a firm war-footing against the threat of militant Islam – a threat which they argue became an existential threat to the West after the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Over decades, those associated with this coalition have deployed both secular and religious justifications for this posture associated with the so-called ‘Islamic world’, with some members prescribing to an irridentist Religious Zionism or Evangelical eschatology, and others utilizing more secular liberal arguments linked to global security and human rights.⁹⁵ Despite such differences, all of those associated have argued that the US/West should be more explicit in labelling the threat at hand and avoiding unhelpful or ‘politically correct’ euphemisms. Daniel Pipes advocates for a more patient long-term war, one which mobilizes various segments of the state and civil society. He states (2002): par:

To adopt the phrasing of George Kennan in "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," his famous 1947 article about the threat of Soviet Communism, the "main element of any United States policy toward [militant Islam] must be that of long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of [its] expansive tendencies." The goal must be to convince its adherents that the use of force against Americans is at best ineffectual and at worst counterproductive - that Algerians and Malaysians are entitled to their anti-American views, but they cannot act on them by harming Americans. The only way to achieve this goal is by scaring them. And that requires toughness and determination - and perseverance - of a sort that Americans have not mustered for a long time.

In 2004, many figures associated with the orientalist ‘counter-jihadist’ coalition would participate in the third gathering of the Committee on the Present Danger, the Cold War American foreign policy interest group which had not met since 1974. Rather than the threat of global communism, the third CPD would meet to address the threat of twenty-first century global terrorism. The third CPD included various scholars, writers, and activists including Frank

⁹⁵ One group that sought to bridge the liberalism and civilizationism were the so-called ‘New Atheists’ who sought to make liberal criticisms of Islam more explicit. Thinkers such as Sam Harris and the late Christopher Hitchens defended US interventions in the Middle East with secular criticisms of so-called Islamic fundamentalism, noting its detrimental effects on the human rights of women, secularists, and other religious minorities.

Gaffney, Norman Podhoretz, Daniel Pipes, Nina Rosenwald, Midge Dector, Elie Wiesel, Eliot Cohen, as well as numerous US politicians and state officials such as Newt Gingrich, Max Kampelman, Henry Cooper, and Robert McFarlane⁹⁶, capitalist elites such as Steve Forbes, and notable foreign actors including former Prime Minister of Spain José María Aznar, UK writer Gerald Frost, Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defence Forces Moshe Ya'alon and alleged Israeli foreign agent Gal Luft. The committee would comprise of veteran Cold Warriors as well as orientalist which can be associated with the counter-jihadist coalition. Much like its previous gatherings, the participants of the committee would seek to advance a more confrontational/interventionist American foreign policy in the wake of the perceived global security threat of 'radical Islamist' terrorism – what key members would refer to as 'World War IV' (Lobe 2004; Podhoretz 2007).

In 2010, William J. Boykin and nine other authors associated with the Center for Security Policy (CSP) would publish *Sharia the Threat to America* (Boykin et al. 2010), a document referred to as the 'Team B II' report. The purpose of the Team B II report was to impel the US to grapple with the threat of "Civilization Islam", a set of diffuse social forces linked to the Muslim Brotherhood which sought to destroy Western civilization through "stealth jihad".⁹⁷ Various 'counter-jihadist' organizations have targeted numerous liberal institutions for harbouring clandestine 'Islamist' social forces, including higher academia, news media, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations. For example, the Canary Mission, CyberWell, UN

⁹⁶ McFarlane plead guilty for his role Iran Contra Affair in 1988 before being pardoned by George H.W. Bush in 1992.

⁹⁷ CSP founder Frank Gaffney (2014) has supported Islamophobic conspiracy theories which implicate public figures for connections to Islamic organizations, for example implying American conservatives like Grover Norquist has links to the Muslim Brotherhood through his marriage to Palestinian-American Samah Alrayyes, founder of the Islamic Free Market Institute. Gaffney (2012) has accused President Barack Obama of being secretly Muslim and supporting Shariah Law and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Watch, Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America, Maccabee Task Force⁹⁸, and NGO Monitor were formed to surveil various liberal organizations for *perceived* support for Islamic radicalism or supposed ‘antisemitic’ bias/prejudice regarding Middle East politics (i.e. criticism of Israel’s policies toward Palestinians or support for the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement).

Despite personal rivalries over issues related to US foreign policy in the Middle East (specifically US support for Israel), both the ‘neoconservative’ Norman Podhoretz and the ‘paleoconservative’ Pat Buchanan have adopted what can be described as a civilizational ontology towards world order. Buchanan’s *Death of the West* (2001/2010)⁹⁹ and Podhoretz’s *World War IV: The Struggle Against Islamofascism* (2007) are each a call to arms for the social forces of so-called Western Civilization. Despite certain differences between revanchists such as Buchanan and counter-jihadists such as Podhoretz regarding issues of US Middle-East policy and the boundaries of Western civilization, they share deep-seated paranoia regarding the foreign ‘Other’. In response, they offer two divergent strategies to address this ‘Other’ – one which is more nativist/nationalist, and another which is more imperialist/internationalist. The divisions between these two sub-tendencies mirror debates between the so-called American New Right and Old Right in decades prior – specifically in regard to strategies of foreign military intervention and civilizational inclusion (e.g. the inclusion of non-WASP groups into the ruling institutions of the US).

⁹⁸ The Maccabee Task Force is a major funder of Act.IL, a social networking tool developed by Reichmann University in Tel Aviv. Act.IL was developed to aid in the propaganda efforts of Zionist activists and monitor pro-Palestinian sentiments online. It is staffed by former Israeli intelligence officials and has links to the Israeli security state (Schwartz 2017).

⁹⁹ Buchanan’s *State of Emergency: The Third World Invasion and Conquest of America* (2007) would touch on similar themes.

The ideological differences between the revanchists (nativist paleoconservatives) and counter-jihadists (imperialist neoconservatives) are then often overstated, falling prey to the identities and ontological frameworks carved by far-right intellectual entrepreneurs. For example, counter-jihadists often self-identify as disgruntled liberals, however many of the major public intellectuals associated with this intellectual political tendency have articulated what can be described as an orientalist far-right civilizational worldview. Similarly, while often drawing upon the language of cosmopolitanism and human rights, various counter-jihadists have advocated for the securitization of minority groups and have voiced ardent support for the uncompromising, irridentist, and ethnonationalist ‘Revisionist Zionism’¹⁰⁰ of the Likud Party in Israel and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Moreover, many of those intellectuals and social forces that can be associated with the revanchist nativist coalition have also expressed xenophobic critiques toward Islam and Muslim majority countries, many of which have similarly been advanced by various counter-jihadists and counter-jihadist organizations in the post-9/11 era (Buchanan 2015). The fusion of these two sub-tendencies is evident when one looks to the political messaging and policies of far-right leaders in the LIO such as Donald Trump, Marine Le Pen, Viktor Orbán, Eric Zemmour, Giorgia Meloni, and Matteo Salvini. In fact, many counter-jihadists who criticized the

¹⁰⁰ Israeli-British Historian Avi Shlaim (1996: 280) discusses the intellectual roots of the Likud Party’s Revisionist Zionism and its intellectual forefather Ze’ev Jabotinsky, stating: “[Ze’ev] Jabotinsky regarded Arab opposition to Zionism as inevitable, and he believed that efforts aimed at reconciliation were doomed to failure from the start. It was utterly impossible, he argued, to obtain the voluntary consent of the Palestine Arabs to the conversion of Palestine from an Arab country into a country with a Jewish majority. Nor would he settle for the partition of Palestine into two states. His version of the Zionism dream demanded a Jewish state over the whole of Eretz Yisrael, the Land of Israel. Britain had established the Emirate of Transjordan on the eastern part of the Palestine mandate in the early 1920s. Jabotinsky bitterly denounced this ‘original sin’ and remained uncompromisingly opposed to the partition of the Western part of the Land of Israel. Partition, he observed, was unacceptable not only from the point of view of the Revisionist Zionists, but also from that of the Arabs, because both sides claimed the whole country for themselves. Only superior military power, he concluded, could eventually compel the Arabs to accept the reality of a Jewish state. And only an ‘iron wall’ of Jewish military power could protect the Jewish state against continuing Arab hostility. Disdain for diplomacy and a reliance on military power in dealing with the Palestine Arabs thus characterized Revisionist Zionism from the very beginning.”

‘America First’ nationalism of the 2016 Trump campaign have since recanted and supported his presidential campaigns in 2020 and 2024.

As noted, beginning the 1990s, a chorus of right wing ‘conservative’ scholars, commentators, and lobbyists within the US would begin to raise alarm about immigration, multiculturalism, and Islam within the states and societies of the LIO, replacing the war against communism with a new cultural war which threatened the nation, religion, and civilization. Rather than one singular transnational far-right coalition, in the decades following the collapse of the Soviet Union, one finds two distinct (but often overlapping and simultaneous) tendencies on the far-right, each deeply anxious about the ‘culture wars’ shaping political contestation within world order. While the revanchist coalition was primarily concerned with implementing a far-right nationalist renaissance to shift the tides of liberal governance within the states/societies of West, the counter-jihadist coalition sought to trigger a new global war against so-called militant Islam. The reconciliation or ‘fusion’ of these two transnational far-right tendencies has contributed to a new intellectual political subjectivity which I have called ‘Budapest Man’.

iv) *The Budapest Men*

Since coming to power in 2010, Hungary’s Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has gained a reputation within the far-right movement as an ideal-type political leader for what can be described as the ‘national conservative’ political orientation within the LIO. The Fidesz government in Hungary under the leadership of Orbán has championed various ideas and policies supported by the far-right across the LIO in recent decades, including an opposition to refugee asylum, pronatalism, criticism of higher education, and broad support for so-called ‘national conservatism’

and ‘illiberal democracy’ as a governance ideology. For decades, similar policies having been supported by numerous far-right politicians across the LIO, however Orbán’s Hungary would serve as evidence that a ‘national conservative’ governance model was achievable in the twenty-first century – even within the highly regulatory EU. Orbán’s public feud with the Soros-backed Central European University and other Open Society organizations helped cement the notion amongst his supporters that he represented the antithesis of ‘globalism’.¹⁰¹ For such reasons, the ‘national conservative’ elite discourse coalition within the LIO and its network of supporters have found a champion in Orbán.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Huntington used the term ‘Davos Man’ to broadly describe the alienated transnational/global liberal elites who convened at the World Economic Forum. Such an elite were described as detached from the nation states in which they held citizenship/residence, representing a minority elitist or ‘globalist’ opinion regarding public policy, geopolitics, economy, and culture. The political consciousness of the Davos Man is constructed through various exclusive summits and conferences designed to cultivate a transnational elite consensus regarding the shape and direction of global governance. A series of interconnected crises within the LIO have contributed to the emergence of this radical alternative transnational consciousness for elites and the professional managerial classes within the LIO. I have developed the term ‘Budapest Man’ to describe a burgeoning elite transnational political subject, one which is: 1) tethered to certain notions of organic nationalism and civilizational belongingness; 2) believes in the naturalness of certain social inequalities (specifically as they relate to minorities or ‘Othered’ groups); and 3) displays a desire for national withdrawal/secession from ‘managerial’

¹⁰¹ Under Orbán, Hungary approved the C-821/19 ruling, informally dubbed the so-called ‘STOP Soros’ Law, which criminalizes helping asylum seekers (Dunai 2018).

liberal internationalist institutions and secular liberal culture, both perceived as tyrannical, diluting sovereignty, and threatening national/civilizational cultures and traditions.

As such, the various ideological components of far-right civilizationism have been crystalized in the so-called ‘national conservative’ elite discourse coalition, which I label as the Budapest Men. The Budapest Men and their collective intellectual organizations convene at transnational summits/conferences where they are able to construct, debate, strategize, and articulate various ideological aspects of the hegemonic project of far-right civilizationism and reconcile differences within this broad political tendency (specifically amongst revanchist nativists and counter-jihadist imperialists). Such conferences appeal to elites and professional managerial classes within the LIO who have become increasingly disenchanted with a culture of neoliberal cosmopolitanism within modern corporate structures and the various institutions of the state.

While the World Economic Forum and its participants are representative of the Davos Men, the National Conservatism Conference (NatCon), and the network of organizations linked to NatCon, represent the Budapest Men. Attendees of NatCon are often university educated journalists, politicians, scholars and public intellectuals who share a loathing for many of the liberal policies supported by elites during the post-Cold War period – namely mass immigration/refugee settlement, affirmative action, multiculturalism, so-called ‘soft-on-crime’ approaches to law and order, as well as the promotion of gender equality and non-heteronormative sexual identities/familial structures. Liberal policies are often described by this ‘national conservative’ coalition as forms of deviancy and social degradation which violates ‘tradition’ and is indicative of the decline of Western civilization. Speakers at NatCon, and the members of its affiliated institutions, have forged a new transnational political identity with an international

following which is united around vague and ill-defined support of ‘faith, family, flag, and freedom’. Suzanne Schnieder (2023: 43) has described national conservatism as a fusion between the ideologies of the far-right and the anti-neoliberal left, stating that: “The goal is a new conservative fusionism, marrying ethnic nationalism to militarism and reactionary social values, while adopting, at least in part, left-wing critiques of the neoliberal economic order”. I, however, argue that the supposed anti-neoliberalism of this movement is often overstated, and that a more apt description of the movement is a fusion of the revanchist and orientalist tendencies – forming an alliance of elite far-right social forces to address the global culture wars of the twenty-first century.

This is why over the last decade, far-right elites within the LIO have sought to create alternative educational services to compete with a university system which they describe as overrun with ‘wokeness’. In 2018, former-presidential advisor Steve Bannon alongside contributing editor to *The European Conservative* and founder of Dignitatis Humanae Institute (DHI) Benjamin Harnwell, would lay the foundations for a new “gladiator school for culture warriors” within the 13th-century former Carthusian Abbey of Trisulti in Colleparado Italy. After years of delays and legal battles, Bannon and DHI would secure the abbey in 2024, and it has been suggested that the ‘Academy for the Judeo-Christian West’ will be the new headquarters for the operations of Bannon’s transnational think tank The Movement. Similarly, in 2018 Marion Maréchal, niece of Marine Le Pen, would establish The Institute of Social, Economic and Political Sciences (ISSEP), a private far-right (non-accredited) university in Lyon, France. Far-right figures associated with national conservatism such as Nigel Farage, Paul Gottfried, and Éric Zemmour have been associated with the ISSEP. Similar institutions have emerged in the US such as the (non-accredited) University of Austin (UATX), an ‘anti-woke’ and ‘pro-free speech’ private school

established in 2021 by *The Free Press* editor Bari Weiss, with founding faculty including American Enterprise Institute (AEI) President Arthur C. Brooks, counter-jihadist Ayaan Hirsi Ali, as well as former US Treasury Secretary and former Harvard President Lawrence Summers. The collective intellectuals of the transnational far-right movement have then created a network of think tanks and alternative educational institutions which seek to mirror those found in Orbán's Hungary – such as the Fidesz-backed Mathias Corvinus Collegium (MCC), Hungary's largest private educational institution.¹⁰²

As noted earlier in this thesis, contemporary far-right elites have made the case that it is 'woke' liberal 'indoctrination' within the university system in the West which has been a major factor contributing to the formation of this new managerial elite stratum within the states/societies of the LIO. Such a liberal elite is often described as overly idealistic and naively undermining the interests of the larger society while pursuing self-serving (or institution-serving) interests and values which are wholly separate from the majoritarian interests of the community/nation/civilization. What is often proposed by far-right elites in response to 'wokeness' are private/semi-private conservative alternatives to private liberal institutions as well as anti-woke statist overhauls of both primary education as well as publicly funded post-secondary institutions.¹⁰³ Suggested educational reforms include an expansion of semiautonomous charter schools for primary and secondary education, which are described as less burdened by liberal ideology, bureaucratic state-oversight, and parasitic unions (Sowell 2020).

¹⁰² In 2023, American commentator Tucker Carlson delivered an address to MCC in Hungary (Mathias Corvinus Collegium 2023).

¹⁰³ Such support for charter schools and religious socially conservative alternatives to liberal colleges/universities can also be described as a dimension of the far-right's secessionist ideology.

Nationalist forms of secessionism have been associated with fractions of the far-right movement within the LIO throughout the twentieth century. In recent years, intellectuals associated with so-called ‘national conservatism’ have forged what can be described as a transnational neo-nationalist secessionist movement within the LIO, one which has collectively organized across borders against transnational/supranational liberal institutions. Even figures such as Thiel, the arch-libertarian activist, has joined a chorus of far-right actors and institutions in promotion of a ‘national conservatism’, a neo-nationalist alternative to ‘globalist’ liberalism. Various far-right politicians and intellectuals can be associated with ‘national conservatism’ within the LIO, displaying a desire for sovereign nation-states within this historic bloc to secede from its various supranational regulatory regimes which are framed as undermining the capacity for states/societies to steer their own unique economic, cultural, and political destinies (e.g. UN, EU, NATO).

The Budapest Man can be described as the far-right’s alternative to what Matthew Goodwin (2023) and David Goodhart (2017) have labelled as the “anywheres”, those cosmopolitan liberal elites who globetrot between various penthouses, yachts, and vacation homes, and who have shallow roots in their local/national communities. Such criticisms of these ‘anywheres’ can be found across the political spectrum with various scholars on the left describing/conceptualizing the transnational liberal elite in the age of globalization. However, what is unique for the Budapest Men of the twenty-first century is their desire to reverse this liberal trend toward ‘globalism’ through various transnational elite intellectual institutions and networks which are oriented around the creation of a new far-right civilizational consciousness – one which is increasingly globalized and integrating social forces from non-Western states (Brazil, Israel, India). The Budapest Men

then share a common desire to ignore or lament various socially progressive/liberal institutions, causes, and values favoured by so-called ‘globalist’ institutions in favour of civilizationism.

While highly critical of ‘globalism’, certain elites that can be described as part of the Budapest Man discourse coalition have participated within various transnational institutions in order to lambast social liberalism and the global left. For example, Javier Milei the far-right Argentinian President spoke at the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2024 stating: “Communists, Nazis, fascists, socialists, social democrats, national socialists, Christian democrats, Keynesians, neo-Keynesians, progressives, populists, nationalists, globalists. In the end there is no substantive difference.” Moreover, Peter Thiel, a previous attendee of the World Economic Forum and steering committee member of the Bilderberg Group, has criticized elite pro-globalization organizations such as the WEF for their creation of a “homogenizing brain-dead one-world state that is totalitarian and where there is no dissent, and no individualism is allowed” (Corn 2021). We are then witnessing a breakaway moment for elites within world order, where certain far-right factions seek to build parallel elite organizations which can compete with those viewed as captured by the ‘woke revolution’ and ‘globalism’.

Conclusion

Rather than focus on the material dimensions of various crises impacting the states and societies of the LIO, the contemporary far-right movement has fixated on various perceived cultural dimensions of crisis and their relationship to various diffuse ‘woke’ left-wing political ideologies/perspectives. However, at its core far-right civilizationism represents a post-fascist rebuttal of universal forms of global citizenship – a position born out of a deep paranoia about non-majoritarian ethnic groups and anxieties of foreign intrusion/invasion by the inhabitants from

civilizations outside the so-called ‘West’. Such a perspective is also opposed to the anti-civilizational social forces inside the West – namely those within the ‘bureaucratic managerial state’ – that seek greater global economic, cultural, and political integration – including those dedicated to furthering the cause of social justice within civil society. Far-right civilizationism as a foreign policy ideology/doctrine can thus be distinguished from some of the core assumptions of liberal internationalism, invoking a more explicitly ethno-determinist foreign policy.¹⁰⁴ For liberals like Fukuyama, the ‘universal homogenous state’ would not face a coherent ideological rival in the post-Cold War era; rather this new global order would only become threatened by the ghosts of the past. Such forms of barbarianism were not characterized by Fukuyama as counter-hegemonic as such, but rather, indicative of the incompleteness of an inevitable global liberal democratic capitalism. For the intellectuals and politicians associated with far-right civilizationism, such ‘barbarisms’ are far more nefarious than a lack of liberal governance; rather they are representations of entrenched civilizational divides and new forms of global imperialism that threatens the security and existence of so-called Western civilization.

In sum, this chapter notes how the nature of contemporary far-right politics is deeper and more complex than simply a reactionary regression toward nationalism driven by bottom-up cynicism, resentment, and/or paranoia. Furthermore, I note that the recent rise of far-right politics is not simply the capitalist class cynically instrumentalizing the state and civil society around certain narrow economic interests. Rather, the intellectuals and social forces associated with the

¹⁰⁴ Some conservative scholars have argued that this shift away from Wilsonian liberal internationalism is not a modern phenomenon but rather represents a return to a more traditional foreign policy; accentuating certain historical national sub-ideologies which largely resemble to what I have described as far-right civilizationism. For instance, in the context of the US, certain scholars argued that the Trump Administration’s foreign policy harkens back to a so-called Jacksonian foreign policy (Brenden & Laderman 2017; Mead 2017).

transnational far-right movement have developed an alternative hegemonic project over decades, articulating a comprehensive governance model for the states and societies of the LIO. Such a governance model includes a unique vision, strategy, philosophy, and interpretation of modern history with implications for individuals, communities, nation-states, ‘civilizations’, and world order.

Social forces labelled as ‘far-right’ are often designated as such for representing a more rightward deviation from what can be described as more moderate, liberal, or establishment conservatism associated with the so-called ‘centre-right’ or ‘neocons’ i.e. those within the broader right-wing movement which have expressed (to varying degrees) openness to postwar liberal policies/institutions (e.g. New Deal, NATO, EU) and willingness to compromise with the social forces associated with the so-called liberal establishment. However, this analysis reveals that certain far-right ideas/assumptions – specifically culturalist/ethnocentric interpretations of global politics – have also been expressed by ‘centrist’ liberals or ‘moderates’ during the postwar era. Moreover, I have further expanded on how the term ‘neoconservative’ is unproductive to an analysis of the far-right movement, as this label has been used to describe both neoliberal cosmopolitans as well as those associated with the hegemonic project far-right civilizationism, who, despite their unity around certain policy programs and options (e.g. US military intervention), are nonetheless motivated by contrastable social philosophies and worldviews. I note how rather than a distinct world order ideology or hegemonic project, neoconservatism can be described as a loose affiliation of actors – from across the ideological spectrum – who believe that Western military supremacy/interventionism is a crucial component of twenty-first century global governance.

While a range of disparate policy proposals flow downstream from far-right civilizationism, various factions of the right across the states and societies of the LIO in the postwar period have broadly accepted certain core ideological tenets, namely: 1) a critique of the managerial state; 2) adherence to a civilizational ontology towards global politics; 3) a belief that a globalist elite conspiracy has usurped the institutions of the West; and 4) a desire to exit or secede institutions which have been corrupted by the politics and culture of liberal globalization.

Chapter 5

Faith, Family, Flag, and Freedom: The National Conservative Conference and the Budapest Men

The recent political gains made by far-right or so-called ‘national conservative’ politicians within the transatlantic bloc indicates that, in the context of global organic crisis, the hegemonic project of far-right civilizationism represents a competitive alternative to the centrist neoliberal cosmopolitan consensus promulgated by the Davos Men. This chapter will analyze the National Conservative Conference (NatCon) as a transnational hub within a “flexible network” (or “flex net”) of disparate far-right elite intellectuals (individual and collective) who share certain broad ideological assumptions and seek to create the ideological foundations for a far-right political hegemony within the LIO (Wedel 2009, 2014, 2017). An exploration of collective intellectual institutions such as NatCon provides useful insights into the elite social forces supportive of the hegemonic project of far-right civilizationism within the contemporary LIO, as well as insights into the transnational top-down dimensions of the far-right movement more broadly. The intellectuals and organizations associated with NatCon seek to counter the ideas and social forces of ‘neoliberal cosmopolitanism’ within the LIO, by: 1) imitating the transnational strategies of elite liberal collective intellectuals during the postwar period; and 2) by providing an alternative ‘far-right civilizationist’ interpretation regarding crises/decay within world order. I will map the membership (various politicians, think tanks, and ‘educational’ organizations), ideas, and political strategies pursued by this network. An exploration into NatCon as a collective intellectual hub for the far-right movement helps expose the strengths and weaknesses of the Budapest Men as a united/coherent/sustainable elite discourse coalition in the field of global governance knowledge production within the LIO.

NatCon as a collective intellectual organization aims to provide a far-right alternative to the Davos-based World Economic Forum (WEF) – an institution often lambasted by NatCon speakers for representing/platforming/connecting the ‘globalist’ values and social forces obverse to ‘national conservatism’. While describing their political project as philosophically ‘nationalist’, NatCon and its organizers have sought to attract elites as well as segments of what is often described as the professional managerial class into supporting a transnational far-right hegemonic project. I will argue that the NatCon conference is a crystallization of the contemporary far-right discourse coalition, the Budapest Men. This analysis will reveal that despite consensus regarding certain core ideas of far-right civilizationism, intellectuals associated with NatCon have offered contradicting policy prescriptions to address the contemporary crises (or perceived crises) within the LIO and world order. Using NatCon as a case study, I will discuss the origins, mission, membership, and contradictions of the Budapest Men and the material, intellectual, and political capabilities of this coalition.

I) A Critical Theory Approach to Collective Intellectual Organizations

Since the twentieth-century, collective intellectual organizations and networks have formed elite discourse coalitions in the field of Western capitalist governance, which in-turn shape the ideological commitments of political leadership within the LIO. Such organizations help articulate the policy agendas and philosophies toward governance on behalf of various classes and social forces within the state/societal complexes of the LIO. Moreover, such organizations demarcate the boundaries of political contestation and ‘common sense’ within a particular state/societal complex. As previously noted, the *field* of governance within the historic bloc of the LIO involves a vast network of elite actors (political leaders, academics, journalists, activists) with various interests,

affiliations, and ideological assumptions that shape their political operations. Wedel (2017) notes how “influence elites” within contemporary systems of governance benefit from flexibility and informality, mobilizing around a certain *modus operandi*— rather than fixed fealty to a particular organization, institution, or group. While loosely aligned around certain interests, flexible elites within the LIO require collective intellectual bodies (e.g. think tanks, conferences, educational institutions, journals, media organizations, policy clubs) to form/organize/represent their discourse coalitions, unite various classes/factions, as well as to refurbish their hegemonic projects under changing circumstances/material conditions within world order.

i) *Collective Intellectual Organizations in the Field of Governance within the LIO*

In the field of elite governance within the LIO, collective intellectual organizations have played a key role in public policy ‘agenda setting’ and articulate a particular hegemonic project for world order to non-elite classes or groups. Hegemonic projects and their associated discourse coalitions are not purely defined by common membership to a particular class, culture, citizenship, institution, or sectoral affiliation. As such, I argue that it is more useful to identify such projects and coalitions based on the ideological commitments and common/cumulative ideas regarding ideal-type models for governance (geopolitics, political economy, civic culture), as articulated by elite intellectuals. I note how numerous elite actors who can be associated with the ideas of neoliberal cosmopolitanism, have participated in collective intellectual organizations throughout the post-Cold War era to forge (often informal) discourse coalitions around a shared hegemonic project. Such projects, however, include various (often conflicting) interests, classes and/or sub-ideological assumptions regarding the direction of global governance (e.g. universal human rights and neoliberalism; Western militarism and international law).

Global governance is by definition an elite field in the context of a twenty-first century US-centered global capitalism. For decades, modern political think tanks, journals, conferences, educational institutions and their networks of elite intellectuals have competed for influence and ideological hegemony within this uneven/class-based *field* of global governance knowledge production within the states/societies of the LIO. In previous chapters, I have discussed the core ideological tenets of two principal hegemonic projects and identified elite discourse coalitions which have articulated support of such tenets. In this chapter, I provide a more in-depth investigation of one such constellation. The organization discussed here is unique and serves as a major transnational intellectual hub for elite social forces supportive of far-right civilizationism across the LIO. NatCon can be described as an elite transnational far-right ‘boundary organization’ which: 1) demarcates the lines of acceptable or ‘mainstream’ political debate for the far-right movement; and 2) aids in the production/stability of coherent elite discourse coalitions which can represent/reconcile disparate groups, social forces, and sub-ideologies required for a successful transnational hegemonic project. As noted, since the establishment of the LIO, ‘flexible organizations of elite intellectuals – composed primarily of collaborative think tank organizations – have organized and pursued objectives which transcend the nation-state, political party, as well as the artificial separation between the state and civil society (i.e. mechanisms of so-called formal and informal governance). Such collective intellectual organizations are often opaque and secretive in regard to the interests they serve and the level of influence they exert over systems of governance within the states/societies of the LIO. As such, an analysis of collective intellectual organizations is an indispensable but often-neglected asset to a theory/perspective regarding the nature of contemporary political contestation within the LIO.

A democratic pluralist perspective toward collective intellectual organizations implies that within a functioning liberal democratic society, such institutions are one of many stake-holders which use their expertise to compete for influence within a free and open marketplace of ideas, one where an idea ‘wins’ due to its quality/merit (Pautz 2011: 424). In contrast, critical elite theory criticizes the relationship of such institutions with systems of power, arguing that think tanks are more or less homogenous entities which circumvent democratic processes in support of ruling class interests (Almiron 2017; Domhoff 2021). Pautz (2011: 425), notes how a Gramscian perspective towards elite think tanks differs from such perspectives in recognizing the unequal level of material capabilities, influence, and agency various organizations have over state/society complexes, while also acknowledging the competitive ideological field and other structural forces and material conditions which shape the behaviour of such organizations. As noted, the LIO as a hegemonic bloc was constructed through institutional and ideological alliances between various classes and social forces, and the reproduction of this bloc has required consistent management of such alliances. Indeed, the hegemonic projects for Western governance during the postwar period were the product of such processes and forces.

While top-down in nature, capitalist/bourgeois hegemonic projects do require the participation or integration of various nations, groups, and classes to form a competitive hegemonic bloc. Think tanks and other collective intellectual organizations then play a crucial role as a hub for informal ‘flexible’ elite social forces to express certain broad ideas or assumptions toward governance and world order, specifically those which they would like to become ‘common sense’ within the broader state-societal complex. Elite collective intellectual organizations are then both a crystallization of a hegemonic project in its totality, as well as a site for the amelioration of certain ideological or class-based fractures between those social forces associated with a particular

hegemonic project. In the field of global governance, such collective organizations contribute to the development/evolution of (semi)coherent discourse coalitions, which are formed as a mechanism to apply older or more abstract ideas to contemporary circumstances within world order. It is through such organizations that hegemonically ambitious social forces compete for authority within a particular political party/orientation as well as vie for ideological leadership. As noted, such discourse coalitions are often plural, overlapping, and cumulative. This is why it is more fruitful to understand such coalitions as part of a vast network of competing social forces and alliances. A larger and more inclusive coalition can contribute to broadening support/consent for a hegemonic project during a particular historical period (e.g. bipartisan support for far-right anti-communist strategies during the Cold War and Islamophobic surveillance during the War on Terror).

ii) *A Critical Theory Approach*

The Critical Theory approach towards elite think tanks and their networks provided in this analysis acknowledges that elite think tanks compete for ideological hegemony in the context of organic crisis and within the uneven/class-structured *field* of global governance within the LIO. The direction and composition of such think tanks and their networks within the LIO are intertwined with – and responsive to – the material conditions of global organic crisis, the structure of the neoliberal state (and its variety of capitalist development), the geopolitics of US empire, as well as the class struggles, and social relations shaped by global capitalism, disciplinary neoliberal governance, and market civilization. A Critical Theory approach toward elite collective intellectual organizations also acknowledges that in the context of civic decline/apathy/alienation within the LIO during the neoliberal era, elite intellectual organizations play a constructive role in moulding

public discourse from above forging discourse coalitions to steer the disparate institutions, class groups, and social forces necessary for capitalist hegemony. Nevertheless, the power and influence of discursive coalitions, collective intellectual organizations, or ‘flexible networks’ is difficult to measure. Here, therefore, I offer an analysis into the elite membership of major collective intellectual hubs, their messaging, and the material resources and social capital available to them. This evidence offers useful insights into the ideas and social forces contributing to political contestation within elite systems of governance within the LIO, as well as the direction/character of elite political strategy in the twenty-first century. Moreover, in light of the current crises in world order, one can usefully adopt a more normative approach and critically evaluate such organizations, and to what degree their ideas, representatives, or policy prescriptions have failed to uphold their own stated claims, values, or commitments, or the interests of the broader state-societal complex. Similarly, one can also note the balance of power and influence between opposing elite transnational hegemonic projects for world order. An analysis of such networks and organizations then takes seriously the transnational space as an arena for hegemonic struggle/contestation within contemporary world order.

Rather than representing social forces from-below, the rise of far-right ‘populist’ politics within the LIO are linked to a network of transnational far-right elite intellectuals who have effectively utilized collective organizations (think tanks, conferences, research institutes, journals, foundations, media) to organize coherent discourse coalitions and in so doing obscure the top-down nature of the far-right’s hegemonic project for global governance and world order. This Critical Theory analysis will, therefore, seek to: 1) expose the ideas and social forces attached to the most prominent transnational far-right collective intellectual network within the LIO; 2)

elucidate the internal fractures within the Budapest Men as a discourse coalition and identify certain contradictions related to its hegemonic designs for world order.

A qualitative analysis into the membership, organizational structure, strategies, and messaging of “flex organizations” such as NatCon provides a useful window into the constellation of actors and organizations which have participated in constructing the ideological fault-lines of the present hegemonic crisis within the transnational elite power-bloc of the LIO. Using publicly available information provided by NatCon, I offer a comprehensive list of the actors and institutions involved with NatCon and evaluate it as a far-right collective intellectual force. On the utility of a Gramscian approach to a political analysis, of the right’s political hegemony, David Ruccio (2011: 272) notes:

[T]he Left is in the position to conduct a great deal more analysis of the right wing’s creation of “political hegemony” even before it assumed government power [...] What we can retrieve from Gramsci is less an overarching theory that, in its application, would yield the “correct results” than an orientation and set of research criteria offered by the method of concretely determining the conditions within which one movement is successful in “establishing the apparatus of their political leadership” [...] We might then conduct research on specific intellectuals as well as larger intellectual movements, on sources of financing and influential organizations (from obscure think tanks to radio talk shows), on the failures of liberal and radical thought as well as the ability of right-wing intellectuals to create “such a power of attraction” for others (137).

I will analyze the political messaging of the intellectuals associated with NatCon and their attitudes towards various groups, classes, nations, and institutions within the LIO and world order, and discuss how these actors frame the purpose and contours of their political project. Moreover, I will reflect on how such elites, political leaders, and intellectuals associated with NatCon have framed their opposition to the liberal internationalist or ‘globalist’ ruling class. Gramsci (1971:97) notes:

In order to analyse the socio-political function of the intellectuals, it is necessary to recall and examine their psychological attitude towards the various fundamental classes which they put into contact in the various fields. Do they have a “paternalistic” attitude towards the instrumental classes? Or do they think they are an organic expression of them? Do they have a “servile” attitude towards the ruling classes or do they think that they themselves are leaders, an integral part of the ruling classes?

Exploring the social forces associated with NatCon and the so-called ‘national conservative’ political orientation, I will evaluate the degree to which such actors, and the ideas they advance, represent an immediate/direct challenge to the elite neoliberal cosmopolitan consensus within the LIO. Through an analysis of collective intellectual networks, one can locate and analyze the genealogy or contours of developing elite political orientations or ‘discourse coalitions’, which articulate and steer a particular hegemonic project for governance. Collective intellectual organizations often include more institutionalized or ‘establishment’ social forces as well as more fringe or marginal figures, and as such, it is often difficult to measure with precision the impact of certain organizations over others, or the influence of participants over political party apparatuses, the state-bureaucracy, or society writ large. So, rather than compare and contrast individual collective intellectual organizations of the far-right to each other, or their liberal counterparts, it is more useful to assess influential collective organizations on the scale of their network of affiliates, the character of the individuals and organizations involved, and the scope of their operations. Such an analysis into transnational ‘flex organizations’ or collective intellectual hubs (such as NatCon) can therefore help identify aspects of ideological congruence, conflict, or contradiction between the various sub-orientations and identities involved in that organization. Thus, within NatCon, one can identify certain aspects of ideological unity alongside aspects of interpretive disunity within the far-right’s hegemonic project for world order. Allan Müller (2015: 6) notes:

[T]he intra- group identification of discourse coalitions is a function of its homogeneity. Members of a given discourse coalition who share a large number of ideas could be expected to identify with each other more strongly than would be the case if they were to share only a few ideas. Inter-group alienation can be measured according to two parameters. The first indicator is the level of *shared opinions* between groups. The fewer opinions that are shared, the greater will be the heterogeneity of the groups and thus the greater will be the distance between the groups. The second indicator of inter-group alienation is the level of *disagreement*, or the extent of opposing opinions between discourse coalitions. Groups characterized by a high level of disagreement are located at greater distance from each other than is the case with groups in which there is less disagreement.

The ideological homogeneity of the Budapest Men is then central to this analysis. In recent years, social scientists have used various techniques to analyze elite networks and their influence. Some have used social network analysis (SNA) to locate and graph elite interactions, competition, and their spheres of influence within the state/societal complex (Keller 2018; Avin et al. 2012; Apeldoorn et al. 2023). Others have used ethnographic approaches which discuss the “class specific habitus” of elites and the various sites in which elite consciousness is produced (Hartmann 2000). While there are numerous methods that independent researchers and organizations have used to discuss collective intellectuals in the field of global governance, there is no universal metric from which to measure the (often informal) influence of such collective organizations over the governance structures of Western states and societies. Indeed, the analysis of NatCon in the following section can be described as both discursive (analyzing the texts and ‘speech acts’ associated with certain elite actors) as well as historical materialist – conceptualizing collective intellectual organizations (think tanks, journals, educational institutions) as hubs within a network of individuals and organizations in the elite *field* of global governance and capitalist class reproduction within the LIO during a particular moment in the history of empire and capitalist development. A successful elite discourse coalition is dynamic and able to respond/reflect/adapt to shifting circumstances within the LIO and world order – utilizing such collective intellectual

hubs to organize/strategize various factions of elite social forces in response to conditions of crisis and progressive forms of class struggle. Moreover, a successful discourse coalition is more likely to become hegemonic if it can attract cross-class support from actors across various professions/sectors within the economy, and across the various states and societies within a particular historic bloc. The approach I adopt for my case study is, therefore, eclectic and interdisciplinary.

An analysis of NatCon explicates the ideological contours of the discourse coalition, which I have called the Budapest Men, and helps reveal the range of ideas, classes, and social forces supportive of the project of far-right civilizationism within the LIO. This qualitative analysis of NatCon will then: 1) begin by exploring the origins of this organization and its leadership; 2) discuss the ideas expressed within this organization; 3) describe the constellation of actors participating and their activities/affiliations; and 4) identify the fractures that reflect ideological contradictions within the far-right's hegemonic project.

II) The National Conservatism Conference

As noted, the far-right elite discourse coalition of the Budapest Men, seeks to challenge the centrist political consensus of the so-called Davos Men – an established liberal elite intellectual tendency within the states and societies of the LIO. Such Budapest Men have sought to create a transnational ‘national conservative’ alternative to so-called ‘globalism’ within the LIO, with a multifaceted governance program with designs for culture, political economy, public administration, and geopolitics. We start, however, with its origins.

i) *The Origins of NatCon*

In January 2019, Yoram Hazony and David Brog founded the Edmund Burke Foundation (EBF), a far-right Washington DC think tank dedicated to “strengthening the principles of national conservatism in Western and other democratic countries”. Hazony, an Israeli-American political scholar, President of the Herzl Institute, former aide to Benjamin Netanyahu, and illegal settler in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, organized his first Jerusalem-based think tank, the Shalem Center, in 1994. The Shalem Center was a pro-settlement Zionist research institute which had received tens of millions of dollars in funding from American billionaires such as Sheldon and Miriam Adelson and Tikvah Fund founder Zalman Bernstein. The Shalem Center was created for the purpose of countering liberal or ‘post-Zionist’ political attitudes inside Israel and the US. The organization would evolve into the Shalem College in 2013, achieving accreditation and becoming an undergraduate liberal arts college.

Hazony was a lesser known figure outside of Zionist political circles prior to his bestselling book *The Virtue of Nationalism* (2018) where he argued that: 1) liberal internationalism is a form of imperialism; 2) that nationalism is a moral ideology; and 3) that the horrors of the twentieth century (specifically the Holocaust) are best prevented/remedied through an ethnonationalist model of self-determination (e.g. Israel), rather than the creation/expansion of universal rights through transnational institutions such as the EU and UN. While largely circumventing major scholarly debates in the niche field of nationalism studies, *The Virtue of Nationalism* has become a foundational text for a new transnational ‘national conservative’ political movement. The ideas/assumptions presented within Hazony’s book would be condensed into NatCon’s official

manifesto or ‘a statement of principles’ during June 2022; the document would be co-signed by various figures within the far-right media/non-profit ecosystem.

NatCon’s co-founder Brog was a graduate of Harvard Law School who practiced law in both the US and Israel before spending time working in the Senate and serving as chief of staff for Republican Arlen Specter, running as a Republican congressional nominee in Nevada’s during 2022. Brog would spend much of his adult career as a right wing activist, working for Christians United for Israel, a millenarian Evangelical Christian Zionist organization founded by megachurch televangelist John Hagee, before departing in 2015 to work for the Maccabee Task Force – an ultranationalist organization funded by billionaire Sheldon Adelson which was designed to disrupt pro-Palestinian boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) activism on university campuses through intelligence gathering, harassment campaigns, and litigation. Brog (2006, 2010, 2017) has authored numerous books and opinion columns advocating for an alliance between Christians and Jews in support of Zionism and the State of Israel.

Neither of NatCon’s founders, Hazony or Brog, carry as much weight within the American right-wing think tank ecosystem as NatCon’s co-chairman Chris DeMuth, a staffer during the Nixon Administration, an official during the Reagan Administration, a fellow of the Hudson Institute, and former president of the influential AEI. A political operative with decades of experience within the so-called conservative establishment, DeMuth would seem to be an obvious outlier within the larger incipient ‘national conservative’ movement coloured by anti-elitism and anti-establishment rhetoric. A Hayekian neoconservative who has worked closely with so-called ‘never Trumpers’ such as William Kristol, DeMuth has expressed support for certain mainstream or ‘establishment’ policy positions, including support for the Zelensky government in Ukraine and

the Bush-era War on Terror – positions more traditionally associated with the more ‘moderate’, ‘liberal’, ‘centre-right’, political orientation. Similarly, NatCon’s current UK Chairman James Orr comes from a more traditional conservative stock, serving as Associate Professor of Philosophy of Religion in the Faculty of Divinity at the University of Cambridge.

NatCon holds private events and gatekeeps access to the event in order to block left-leaning scholars and journalists. Presenters and keynote speakers include prominent ‘conservative’ politicians and public intellectuals from across the transatlantic bloc, including journalist Douglas Murray, who has written a series of alarmist tracts on the fall of Western Civilization; billionaire venture capitalist and self-described ‘creative monopolist’ Peter Thiel; the again self-described ‘anti-woke’ Florida governor Ron Desantis; US Senators Marco Rubio, J.D. Vance, Rick Scott, and Josh Hawley; UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman; Polish MEP Ryszard Legutko; Hungary’s proudly ‘illiberal’ Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his political director Balázs Orbán; as well as influential conservative intellectuals such as Rod Dreher and John O’Sullivan – who have moved to Budapest and work within Fidesz-backed think tanks in Hungary. While involving elite actors from across the transatlantic bloc, the majority of NatCon attendees are from the Anglosphere, conferences are held almost exclusively in the English language and are primarily geared toward Anglo-American audiences.

While the first official NatCon would not occur until July 2019, there are two conferences associated with Yoram Hazony which precede the official establishment of NatCon but nonetheless appear on the official NatCon website. The first was the “Christian-Jewish Alliance: Reclaiming and Rebuilding Conservatism” conference during 2016 in Glen Cove, New York, which was sponsored by the Herzl Institute and The Institute on Religion and Democracy. This

conference would involve various figures associated with the NatCon and the EBF, such as David Brog, Ofir Haivry, John O’Sullivan, Michael Doran, R.R. Reno, and Yoram Hazony. The first conference directly associated with the newly founded EBF, was “Europe at a Crossroads: The Virtue of Nationalism”, which included only twelve speakers and was held in London in May 2019. Since its launch in 2019, NatCon has held eight conferences in major cities including Rome (Feb 3-4, 2020), Miami (Sept 11-13, 2022), Orlando (October 31 – November 2, 2021), London (May 15-17, 2023), and twice in Washington (July 14-16, 2019 & July 8-10, 2024) and Brussels (Mar 23-24, 2022 & Apr 16-17, 2024).

Since its founding, NatCon has been the rising star of the transatlantic far-right movement. Despite the proposed nationalism of its political project, NatCon has gained the attention of journalists, scholars, and politicians in recent years for filling a critical lacuna for the far-right movement in the transatlantic bloc, by developing a formalized transnational body of organic intellectuals able to articulate a political program that transcends the individual nation-state. The conferences, online media, and publications produced by NatCon attracts an audience of educated professional managerial class conservatives that live in the states/societies of the so-called West (primarily the US, EU, and UK) and beyond (Israel, India, South Africa) who seek moral, spiritual, and scholarly justification for certain forms of authoritarian statism as well as a wide range of policies rooted in xenophobic ethnonationalism, religious social conservatism, anti-communism, jingoism, and secessionism – a desire to exit global (or ‘globalist’) liberal institutions/agreements such as the UN, EU, NATO, WTO, and NAFTA. Speaking at NatCon 4, Yoram Hazony (National Conservatism, 2024, 1:56) lauded the success of so-called NatCon within the political institutions of the West, saying: “[W]e’ve seen national conservatism go from being a curiosity to being

something that everybody's got to talk about to being something that is very close to being the dominant intellectual and political agenda on the right in the Democratic world”.

ii) *The Composition of NatCon's 'Rebel Alliance'*

Attendees of NatCon include figures from a range of far-right organizations and sub-ideological affiliations. Prominent figures associated with it have embraced the diversity in its ranks. For example, speaking at NatCon 2022, Peter Thiel referred to those associated with the conference and the ‘national conservative’ orientation as akin to the “rag tag rebel alliance” from the Star Wars franchise, a heterogenous set of actors challenging the homogenous liberal “imperial stormtroopers” (National Conservatism 2022k: 00:38). For Thiel, such ideological variation was a positive feature for the movement, one which could be contrasted to the supposedly parochial hyper-conformist liberal elite establishment. However, NatCon founder Yoram Hazony has lamented the intra-movement ideological fractures within NatCon and has celebrated growing ideological unity within the ‘national conservative’ movement. Hazony (National Conservatism 2024u: 28:44) notes that NatCon began as a divided movement, with “four tribes”, which includes Straussians, natural law rationalists, Burkeans, and Machiavellians. Speaking at NatCon 4 in 2024, Hazony claimed that these ‘tribes’ have been largely coalesced around a shared project of “restoration” which begins at the community level and then at the level of local and national politics. Indeed, what might have begun as a ‘rebel alliance’ based on loose adherence to a far-right civilizationist worldview has evolved in recent years into a more homogenous elite discourse coalition within the field of global governance knowledge production within the LIO. Such a discourse coalition then does not only unite disparate social forces within the far-right movement but also has agency in steering the direction of this movement and its interpretation of far-right ideology in light of ongoing circumstances within the LIO and world order.

NatCon participants and sponsors come from a range of influential right wing collective intellectual organizations within the LIO including think tanks¹⁰⁵ and major right-wing journals and media organizations.¹⁰⁶ NatCon then serves as a collective intellectual hub, organizing this flexible network of far-right actors into a coherent brain trust for the contemporary transnational far-right movement. In Gramscian terms, NatCon provides a venue for a transnational ‘war of position’ for far-right individuals and organizations who seek cultural and intellectual leadership over the transatlantic bloc. Based on the publicly available information provided by NatCon on their conference website, I have tracked 404 individual figures from 28 different nationalities that can be associated with their conferences. Many of the actors discussed have been associated with numerous institutions at different times during their careers. In the Legend for Tables I, II, and III in the Appendix, I have provided an abbreviation for each of the relevant institutional affiliations, which includes both past and present affiliations for each individual. In the three tables at the end of this chapter, I have split these elite actors into two distinguishable (but often overlapping) categories: 1) Politicians, Advisors, and State Officials (past and present); and 2) Academics, Commentators, Journalists, Activists, and Religious Leaders. I have also identified major individual and institutional donors to NatCon.

While many politicians, advisors, and state officials have taken on the role of an intellectual (e.g. producing books and op-eds during or after their career in public service), I have chosen to list in the first category all those individuals who have served as political party leaders/officials or

¹⁰⁵ Major think tanks associated with NatCon attendees includes AEI, American Compass, American Moment, Bow Group, Center for Family and Human Rights, Centre for Immigration Studies, Claremont Institute, Common Sense Society, Danube Institute, Gatestone Institute, Heritage Foundation, Hoover Institution, Hudson Institute, Manhattan Institute, Mathias Corvinus Collegium, and Zephyr Institute.

¹⁰⁶ Journalists and commentators who attend NatCon have been associated with *The American Conservative*, *First Things*, *Compact Magazine*, *The Daily Wire*, *The Federalist*, *National Review*, *The Spectator*, and *Modern Age*.

have worked within the state bureaucracy. In the first category presented in Tables 1 and 2, I have identified 124 politicians, advisors, and state officials (past and present) from twenty nationalities who can be associated with the NatCon conference – with at least 60 (48%) participants from the US alone in this category. Of the total 280 academics, commentators, journalists, activists, and religious leaders from the 20 different nationalities associated with the second row in Table 1 and 2, a total of 187 (66.8%) are from the US. The second most represented nationality group represented at NatCon are from the UK, with 20 (16.1%) politicians, advisors, and state officials associated with the conference along with 44 (15.7%) figures who fall in the second category of academics, commentators, journalists, activists, or religious leaders. Of the total 124 persons listed in the first category, 21 (16.9%) are women, and of a total of 280 persons listed in the second category a total of 56 (20%) are women, with a total of 77 (19.1%) women out of the 404 participants in both groups.

Outside the Anglosphere, the proportional representation nationality of participants varies across the categories. For example, despite 8 (6.5%) Hungarian politicians, advisors, or state officials attending NatCon (including PM and senior advisors), only 2 (<1%) Hungarian individuals fall in the second category of participants. Similarly, 7 (5.7%) Polish citizens can be found in the first category of participants, despite only 1 (<1%) Polish individuals falling in the second category. In the case of France, this ratio is reversed, with only 3 (2.4%) French participants from the first category and 8 (2.9%) French individuals in the second category. Likewise in the case of Israel, where only 1 (<1%) falls in the first category, despite 7 (2.5%) falling in the second category. Italy has sent an equal number of participants in each category described, with 5 individuals in the first category and 5 individuals in the second. NatCon 4 in 2024 was the first time the conference included politicians from the global South, with two presentations delivered

by Indian BJP members Ram Madhav and Swapan Dasgupta. It is also notable that Canada and Japan are the only G7 states which thus far have not sent a single politician to speak at NatCon.

Many figures directly associated with the EBF organization have spoken at multiple NatCon conferences, including Chris Demuth, Josh Hammer, Ofir Haivry, Yoram Hazony, and Anna Wellisz (all of whom have presented at four or more conferences). Outside of those individuals directly involved in the leadership of the EBF, twenty-three NatCon presenters have spoken at three or more conferences, including influential journalists, politicians, and activists.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, NatCon's keynote speakers have included notable far-right thinkers and politicians from across the LIO.¹⁰⁸

NatCon's operations have been sponsored and supported by 48 collective intellectual organizations from 9 different nationalities, including far-right think tanks, private educational institutions, and charitable foundations. Of these 'collective intellectual' sponsors of NatCon, 37 (77.1%) are American, 3 (6.3%) are Hungarian, and 2 (4.2%) are Belgian (other nationalities in attendance have one or less sponsoring institution from their country of citizenship). In addition to these cosponsoring organizations, NatCon has platformed speakers associated with various major far-right think tank organizations from within the LIO (some participants with multiple affiliations) including (at least): 21 figures associated with the Heritage Foundation; 8 associated with AEI; 8 associated with the Hoover Institution; 6 with the Hudson Institute; 13 with the

¹⁰⁷ The figures who have spoken at three or more conferences include Michael Anton, David Azzerad, Suella Braverman, John Burtka, Rod Dreher, John Fonte, Francesco Giubilei, David Goldman, Mike Gonzales, Josh Hawley, Benedict Kiely, Tom Klingenstein, Ryszard Legutko, Brad Littlejohn, Sumantra Maitra, Daniel McCarthy, Joshua Mitchell, Douglas Murray, Balázs Orbán, John O'Sullivan, Marion Smith, Peter Thiel, Scott Yenor.

¹⁰⁸ The list of keynote speakers include (but is not limited to): John Bolton, Tucker Carlson, Ted Cruz, Nigel Farage, Michael Gove, Janez Janša Glenn Loury, Giorgia Meloni, Mateusz Morawiecki, Viktor Orbán, Jacob Rees-Mogg, Kevin Roberts, Marco Rubio, Eric Zemmour.

Claremont Institute; 7 from the Matthias Corvinus Collegium (MCC); 5 figures associated with the Henry Jackson Society; 4 from the Danube Institute; 4 from the Manhattan Institute; 3 from the Common Sense Society; 3 from the Gatestone Institute; 7 figures associated with the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) political group and party with the European Parliament; and 2 speakers associated with the Patriots for Europe political group. Moreover, NatCon has also attracted the support of more fringe far-right think tanks from across the LIO, including Nazione Futura and Fundación Disenso – the latter a proponent of the radical far-right Madrid Forum and its charter.¹⁰⁹ NatCon’s operations have also been sponsored/supported by private educational organizations such as Hillsdale College, Liberty University, the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, and the MCC.

InfluenceWatch (n.d.), an initiative led by the conservative think tank Capital Research Centre, has tracked major financial contributions made to NatCon through the Edmund Burke Foundation, including a \$174,000 donation from the Jewish Philosophy Fund, a \$300,000 donation from Donors Trust, and a \$100,058 donation from the Thomas D. Kingenstein Fund in December 2019, a \$400,000 donation from the Common Sense Society and \$200,000 donation from the National Christian Foundation in 2022. Other major individual donors to NatCon and the EBF include Peter Thiel (Palantir, Clarium Capital), Cathy and Alex Cranberg (Aspect Holdings), Colin Moran (Abdiel Capital), Roger Hertog (AllianceBernstein), Daniel Gressel (Teleos Management), and Daniel Oliver (*National Review*). Notably, ten institutional supporters of NatCon were also on the advisory board of the Heritage Foundation’s (2023) *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative*

¹⁰⁹ Eoghan Gilmartin (2024) notes how the anti-communist Madrid Forum, an organization founded by the far-right Spanish Vox Party in 2020, is “[P]art of a broader far-right infrastructure of extremist Catholic associations, Latin American exiles, and reactionary think tanks in the Spanish capital, which has also helped turn the city into a key meeting point for authoritarian forces globally.”

Promise report (also known as Project 2025), a set of policy prescriptions for a second Trump presidency which, alongside numerous other proposals, seeks to defund/dismantle the US Department of Education. In addition, NatCon presenter Micah Meadowcroft works directly under Russell Vought, a former Trump Administration official who is a co-author of the Project 2025 document and is currently president of the Center for Renewing America – an institutional sponsor of NatCon and the EBF.

At first glance, NatCon’s attendees and the tone/content of their presentations for global governance are a far-cry from the politics of the January 6 rioters, the anti-vax convoys, or the anti-immigrant hooligans often associated with the contemporary far-right ‘populist’ movement. Despite using a more formal/conventional elitist approach, NatCon does not represent a reformed current within the far-right movement/worldview; rather, its political program is designed to draft segments of the ‘professional managerial class’ into leading/moulding a far-right hegemonic project for world order. Figures associated with the EBF have engaged in both mainstream liberal organizations while simultaneously expressing support for ideas/activities aligned with the politics which I have associated with the hegemonic project of far-right civilizationism. For example, Josh Hammer, senior editor-at-large at the mainstream/liberal publication *Newsweek*, is also a research fellow at the EBF, NatCon presenter, and co-founder of Jews Against Soros, an organization founded in 2023 to counter the perceived anti-Israel bias of George Soros and his Open Society Foundations network. Moreover, NatCon speakers, including John Eastman, Brian Kennedy, and Michael Anton, have echoed the rhetoric of the extreme right, arguing the 2020 US presidential election was rigged, and stoking factions of the far-right who sought to overturn Trump’s election loss – with Eastman facing criminal charges in 2024 for conspiracy related to the attempted

January 6 insurrection (Charter 2025; Fisher and Stanley-Becker 2022; Joseph 2021; Mascaro 2024).

Like so many far-right ‘collective intellectual’ configurations, NatCon has a history which can be conceptualized as both: 1) an outgrowth of, and 2) a reaction to, an existing liberal counterpart. In the first sense, as an outgrowth, one can look to the various liberal organizations and institutions which have produced NatCon’s elite intellectual actors. For example, many of NatCon’s most notable participants have attended liberal Ivy League Institutions, participated within the institutions of the so-called ‘bureaucratic managerial state’, and have participated in numerous elite liberal transnational organizations. In the second sense, one can observe how think tanks on the far-right have a history of reacting to a centrist liberal ideological counterpart. For example, in 1973, conservative activists Edwin Feulner and Paul Weyrich would join forces with beer magnate Joseph Coors to form the Heritage Foundation, now a leading right wing American think tank that was designed to contain the influence of the liberal-leaning Brookings Institution over the US political system. Similarly, *The Next 200 Years* (Kahn 1976) report produced by the Hudson Institute was also developed as a response to the (liberal internationalist) Club of Rome’s *The Limits to Growth* (1972) report on the risks of human growth and consumption on finite planetary resources.

One can then regard the NatCon conference as the far-right movement’s elite collective intellectual response/reaction to the ‘globalist’ World Economic Forum summit, the ‘Davos Men’, and cosmopolitan global governance. As keynote speaker at NatCon 3 in Miami in 2022, Florida Governor Ron Desantis (National Conservatism 2022g) used the platform to declare his state’s opposition to the WEF, saying: “Things like the World Economic Forum, that’s dead-on-arrival in

the state of Florida, we're not going to allow any of that".¹¹⁰ For NatCon attendees, the WEF, the Open Society Foundation, and Ivy League Universities like Yale and Harvard are totems for the global woke revolution. However, as a liberal institution founded on liberal internationalist values, the WEF has created a platform for diverse perspectives and voices, including far-right leaders such as Jair Bolsonaro, Javier Milei, and Narendra Modi as well as more progressive and socially liberal voices associated with the political left, such as Yuval Noah Harari, Joseph Stiglitz, Adam Tooze, and Jeffrey Sachs. Despite the inclusion of numerous 'stakeholders' with diverse political/cultural backgrounds, the WEF's leadership is nonetheless committed to the core ideological principles/assumptions which I have associated with neoliberal cosmopolitanism – including openness to divergent political perspectives.

By analyzing NatCon and its membership, one discovers that this organization is far less diverse than the WEF in the range of individuals and opinions included or expressed. Unlike the WEF, NatCon has not included participants who deviate from the core tenets of contemporary far-right civilizationism. The WEF and other liberal collective intellectual organizations have often used the language of inclusivity, centrism, cosmopolitanism, multilateralism, pluralism, multiculturalism to advance a liberal governance project, opening itself to diverse (and sometimes critical) voices to widen the appeal/prestige of its initiatives; perhaps only to co-opt segments of opposition on the left and right. In contrast, NatCon has pursued a much narrower project of far-right consolidation, providing a site for the pacification of ideological conflict within the far-right movement. NatCon has sought to organize the disconnected numerous politicians, party structures,

¹¹⁰ Such criticism of the WEF have been echoed by other right wing leaders, including leader of the Conservative Party of Canada Pierre Poilievre, who has promised that his ministers and his top government officials will not attend the Davos summit, stating: "It's far past time we rejected the globalist Davos elites and bring home the common sense of the common people" (The Canadian Press 2023).

capitalist elites, organizations, and intellectuals associated with far-right politics across the LIO, forming a proto-typical transnational political party.

NatCon's political messaging is distinguishable from other right-wing lobbying groups/think tanks, with members often distancing themselves from strict market fundamentalism and instead arguing for states/economies to be grounded/embedded within conservative culture/values. As such, organizations such as the Heritage Foundation, the Straussian California-based Claremont Institute, as well as the Danube Institute and MCC in Budapest are more prominent forces within the organization than figures associated with libertarian Koch-backed organizations and networks (e.g. Cato Institute). While NatCon attendees have articulated certain criticisms of neoliberal globalization, such criticisms are largely culturally oriented, and key figures associated with the conference have operated within collective intellectual organizations (AEI, Heritage Foundation) and political administrations (e.g. Reagan Administration, Bush Administration) that have advocated and implemented disciplinary neoliberal reforms.¹¹¹ At the core of NatCon's mission is to create a venue for far-right elites to transcend national politics and develop a new transnational political identity/orientation; one which would unite actors from various nationalities and elevate the notion of a shared membership to an American-centered Judeo-Christian Western civilization. In other words, rather than a regression into parochial nationalism, its membership would champion a transnational far-right civilizationist alternative to neoliberal cosmopolitanism and the 'Davos Men' who currently dominate systems of global governance within the LIO.

iii) *NatCon's 'War of Position'*

¹¹¹ The Heritage Foundation is responsible for major neoliberal policy programs, including the *Mandate for Leadership* (Heatherly 1981) which helped shape the Reagan Doctrine.

In 2017 former Trump campaign and administration strategist Steve Bannon launched The Movement, a far-right secessionist anti-EU campaign designed to create a new nationalist international with the support of far-right politicians and political parties across the LIO – what Bannon often refers to as the Judeo-Christian West. Bannon believed the wind was at his back following various victories for the far-right including Brexit, the election of Donald Trump, and Viktor Orbán’s authoritarian anti-immigrant and anti-LGBTQ+ statism Hungary. Surmising that similar disruptions across the EU were possible, Bannon began a campaign in Europe in 2017 to inspire a counter-revolutionary neo-nationalist coalition across the continent. Forging a coalition of ‘national populist’ allies across the EU, The Movement sought to directly counter the influence of prominent liberal transnational institutions, specifically George Soros’ socially liberal Open Society Foundations networks. Bannon, a self-described “Leninist” on the question of leadership-strategy (Sebestyen 2017), has pursued direct confrontation with many political institutions of the US and the LIO, including NATO, the FBI, and the Federal Reserve, going so far as to call for the complete dismantling of the bureaucratic state, the breakup of the EU, and a Judeo-Christian socio-cultural revival. While Bannon’s ambitions would eventually far exceed his grasp, he did manage to gain an audience and garner support from certain prominent far-right politicians across Europe, including: Željka Cvijanović of Bosnia and Herzegovina, France’s Marine Le Pen, Mischaël Modrikamen of Belgium, Italy’s Giorgia Meloni and Matteo Salvini, Hungary’s Viktor Orbán, the UK’s Nigel Farage, and Geert Wilders of the Netherlands. Bannon’s organization would also seek partnerships in Brazil through Jair Bolsonaro’s family. The Movement, however, would quickly fade into irrelevance, with many distancing themselves from the organization entirely as Bannon faces serious criminal charges within the US.

Using Gramscian terminology, it can be said that Bannon's error was in engaging in a premature "war of manoeuvre" against the LIO, seeking legislative victory – or even insurrectionary action – before the far-right movement had created the ideological/cultural foundations for such operations, through what can be described as a "war of position" that could unite the various hegemonically ambitious far-right actors and social forces in the states and civil societies of the West.¹¹² In contrast to Bannon's (counter)revolutionary neo-nationalist internationalism, the strategy of the NatCon has been far more patient in its approach. NatCon's political strategy has focused on uniting various political factions on the far-right and attracting elite intellectuals and fractions of the 'professional managerial class' who are sympathetic to certain far-right grievances regarding status-quo liberal leadership within the West. NatCon has then incorporated both neoliberal conservatives, such as the Forza Italia founding member and former president of the Mont Pelerin Society Antonio Martino (now deceased), as well as welfare-state chauvinists, such as journalist David Goodhart. Perhaps most importantly, it has sought to reconcile the differences between its more isolationist 'revanchist' factions and its more imperialist 'counter-jihadist' faction.

The strategy of NatCon is comparable to France's Nouvelle Droite, a Pan-European far-right intellectual movement spearheaded by Alain de Benoist, Guillaume Faye, and the think tank

¹¹² Gramsci (1971: 238) notes: "The war of position demands enormous sacrifices by infinite masses of people. So an unprecedented concentration of hegemony is necessary, and hence a more "interventionist" government, which will take the offensive more openly against the oppositionists and organise permanently the 'impossibility' of internal disintegration—with controls of every kind, political, administrative, etc., reinforcement of the hegemonic 'positions' of the dominant group, etc. All this indicates that we have entered a culminating phase in the political-historical situation, since in politics the 'war of position', once won, is decisive definitively. In politics, in other words, the war of manoeuvre subsists so long as it is a question of winning positions which are not decisive, so that all the resources of the State's hegemony cannot be mobilised. But when, for one reason or another, these positions have lost their value and only the decisive positions are at stake, then one passes over to siege warfare; this is concentrated, difficult, and requires exceptional qualities of patience and inventiveness. In politics, the siege is a reciprocal one, despite all appearances, and the mere fact that the ruler has to muster all his resources demonstrates how seriously he takes his adversary."

GRECE. The Nouvelle Droite was an intellectual movement heavily influenced by the New Left with the movement sometimes labelled 'Gramscians of the Right'. The Nouvelle Droite's neopaganism, abstruse theoretical debates (even regarding capitalism), and its explicit anti-Americanism would however limit its transnational appeal to the majority of Judeo-Christian conservatives within the core capitalist states within the Anglosphere (with the exception of particular alt-right fringe currents). The founders of NatCon would similarly target the educated professional managerial classes of the states/societies of the so-called 'west', however, they would seek to create a more inclusive transnational far-right movement and ideology, one which would be more amenable to the power structures of US and global capitalism, and most importantly, would seek to transform the prevailing political consensus within the LIO's core Anglo-American states.

While presenting itself as an academic conference, those at NatCon have largely refrained from engaging in structural critique of capitalist political economy, US geopolitical supremacy, or the consumerist and hyper-individualist culture of market civilization. Rather, the organization is primarily concerned with providing ideological justification for (limited or full) secession from certain liberal internationalist political institutions/norms. In Gramscian terms, the Budapest Men who attend and speak at NatCon are engaged in a longer-term 'war of position', seeking to replace/alter the cosmopolitan socio-cultural basis of public consent for Anglo-American hegemony within world order by appealing to professional/educated classes whose politics have long been associated with the liberal 'centre'. NatCon attendees represents the most influential proponents of the far-right civilizationist project, one which posits that the geocultural centrality of the so-called West is best preserved/reproduced through a governance paradigm shaped by so-

called ‘national conservatism’ (loosely defined), rather than liberal internationalism, Marxism, ‘globalism’, or the so-called ‘woke revolution’.

NatCon’s official statement of principles (National Conservatism: N.D) consists of ten points on the subjects of: 1) National Independence; 2) Rejection of Imperialism and Globalism; 3) National Government; 4) God and Public Religion; 5) The Rule of Law; 6) Free-Enterprise; 7) Public Research; 8) Family and Children; 9) Immigration; and 10) Race. The statement expands on these points, including a series of claims on the importance of Western civilization, patriotism, national sovereignty, federalism, Judeo-Christian values, law and order, capitalism, technological development, traditional family structure, and the rights of the majority and minorities within society. In addition to these more abstract/banal commitments in the NatCon statement of principles are more specific claims regarding the partisan and socially corrupting nature of institutions of higher academia and the threat of liberal, Chinese, and Russian imperialism, as well as policy proposals regarding introduction of the Bible in public education and regulating transnational corporate entities which engage in activities adverse to the ‘national interest’ (e.g. activities linked to ‘wokeness’ or ‘globalism’). While participants broadly conform to such stated principles, the ideology and objectives of NatCon are more easily identified through a qualitative exploration into the opinions expressed by its speakers.

The titles of its speeches provide some insight into the character of this movement. For example, NatCon has platformed numerous presenters who have expressed ideas which can be regarded as aligned with the counter-jihadist discourse coalition, including Ben Weingarten’s (National Conservatism 2024b) “The Islamic Supremacist Challenge to America” and Florence Bergeaud-Blackler’s (National Conservatism 2024e) “Is Europe Aware of the Endogenous

Islamist Threat?“. The conference has also featured presentations that espouse ideas which can be closely associated with the revanchist discourse coalition discussed in the previous chapter, including Theo Wold’s (National Conservatism 2024s) “Decolonizing America: The Necessity of Deportation”, Mark Krikorian’s (National Conservatism 2021e) “Mass Immigration vs. Modern Society”, and J.D. Vance’s (National Conservatism 2021c) “The Universities are the Enemy”. Certain figures have sought to combine/bridge various grievances and discourse coalitions present within the broader far-right movement. Melanie Phillips (National Conservatism 2024m) fuses the ideas of the revanchists and counter-jihadists in her presentation “How Conservatism’s Chickens Came Home to Roost in Gaza”, where she discussed the interconnected threats to the nation-state and Western civilization caused by: so-called Islamist extremism, Iran, mass immigration, multiculturalism, human rights law, multinational corporations, the pro-Palestine movement, as well as the failure of conservative and liberal leadership structures in major transatlantic states to address such threats.¹¹³ Other major topics featured at NatCon include: conservative fusionism, so-called ‘gender ideology’, abortion, economic nationalism, AI/big-tech, energy, faith, China, the EU, and censorship.

One can similarly locate certain themes when looking to the titles of NatCon panels. In addition to numerous panels addressing the importance of national identity, family, Christianity, Western civilization/culture, conservatism, and so-called ‘national conservatism’, the conference has also featured breakout sessions on various topics important to the far-right movement across the LIO. For example, it has hosted two panels exclusively on so-called woke ideology, including

¹¹³ In December 2024, Melanie Phillips wrote an article in the *Jewish Chronicle* titled “If you support the Palestinian cause in any form, you’re facilitating Jew-hate”. After receiving backlash, the article title was changed to “The truth of the Palestinian cause” (2024). The article argues that supporting Palestinian rights facilitates murderous anti-semitic “Nazi-style Jew-hatred” and those advocating for Palestinian rights do so with the desire to exterminate Jewish people.

“Woke Capitalism” at NatCon 2 in Orlando and “Woke World Order” at NatCon 3 in Miami. The conference has also held multiple panels specifically on the perceived threat of China, including “The Challenge of China” at NatCon 2 in Orlando, “America vs. China” at NatCon 3 in Miami, “Breaking the China Addiction” at NatCon 4 in Washington, and “European Security in the Contest between China and the United States” at NatCon Brussels 1.

One can also identify popular themes when observing NatCon’s social media traffic. As of September 6, 2024, the five most viewed presentations on NatCon’s official YouTube channel are: 1) Reza Pahlavi’s (National Conservatism 2024o) July 10, 2024 presentation at NatCon 4, titled “Iran: Ending the Islamist Caliphate and Returning to the Nation State”, with over 432K views; 2) Tucker Carlson’s (National Conservatism 2019) July 15, 2019 presentation at NatCon 1, titled “Big Business Hates Your Family”, with over 371K views; 3) Melanie Phillip’s (National Conservatism 2024m) April 17, 2024 presentation at NatCon Brussels 2, titled “How Conservatism’s Chickens Came Home to Roost in Gaza”, with over 190K views; 4) Jeff Smith’s (National Conservatism 2024i) July 18, 2024 presentation at NatCon 4, titled “The Bad Bet on Pakistan (and the Good Bet on India)”, with over 181K views; and Douglas Murray’s (National Conservatism 2023a) May 16, 2023 presentation at NatCon London, titled “Love, Gratitude, and Aspiration”, with over 170K views.

Major speakers have often devoted a brief segment of their speech to lauding NatCon, the uniqueness of this forum, and the shared ideas and values which unite its attendees. Following this, they will often raise alarms regarding a certain political or cultural crisis, often one in which the institutions of liberal governance have either failed to address/acknowledge or have been the causal agent. NatCon’s attendees include venture capitalists, columnists, politicians, and biblical scholars

who share the notion that in recent years a creeping liberal totalitarianism threatens both the nation-state and Judeo-Christian Western civilization. Beyond the broad stated principles of the organization, speakers at NatCon have sought to define national conservatism as a political program. Some, such as founder Yoram Hazony have argued that whether or not one supports the biblical Ten Commandments these should be posted in every classroom in the state and should serve as the litmus test for the national conservative movement. Other speakers have defined the ‘national conservative’ movement by contrasting its ideas and social forces to those of its opposition – ‘globalists’ or proponents of ‘wokeness’ within the LIO. Speaking at NatCon 4, Israeli settler and pro-settlement activist Eugene Kontorovich (National Conservatism, 2024, 00:13) attempts to define ‘national conservatism’ by stating:

I think we can say for sure what's the opposite of national conservatism, and that is international organizational progressivism maintained through a network of international bureaucracies. A vast and ever-growing constellation of international organizations and bodies of great size are consistently promulgating rules and norms intended to govern the lives of everyone in the world. The workings of these institutions and often even their existence is entirely obscure from those they intend to govern and often even inscrutable to National governments that originally created these institutions.

In regard to national governance and domestic policy, NatCon’s attendees are united by certain social values (or ‘virtues’) related to support for faith, family, flag, and freedom – euphemisms for support for religious cultural conservatism, traditional patriarchy, patriotic/jingoist nationalism, and the capitalist mode of production. Despite being overwhelmingly Christian, constituents also identify with various competing sects of Christianity and other faith groups with contradicting ideologies, cultural norms, missions, and perspectives towards eschatology, including Catholic Integralists, Hindu nationalists, Religious Zionists, and Evangelical Christians. In spite of religious/cultural heterogeneity, NatCon participants share the

belief that society should be guided by endogenous religious values/virtues rather than those associated with multiculturalism, modern feminism, social equity, and other secular cosmopolitan ideals associated with liberal ‘globalism’ or an imperialistic ‘woke’ ideology.

Major figures associated with NatCon have used the platform to declare their admiration for the Orbán government in Hungary for its various far-right reforms to counter secular liberal institutions/organizations (EU, Open Society Foundation) and liberal social norms/policies (official multiculturalism, refugee settlement, LGBTQ+ acceptance). NatCon speakers have suggested that Orbán’s interventions and reforms within the education system in Hungary may be instructive for other Western countries, such as the US. For example, former NatCon presenter Chris Rufo (2023b: para. 54) held that the right should destigmatize forms of state intervention directed toward the preservation of certain historical cultural norms, traditions, and historical artifacts which compliment national identity:

There is a lesson here for American conservatives. Hungary is not a model for everything—the economy lacks innovation, the state controls too much media, corruption remains a problem—but the basic insight of Fidesz’s cultural policies is worth considering. American conservatives have tried and failed to reduce the size of the state for nearly a century. While we should continue to work toward a more limited government, there will be, for the foreseeable future, a large state that has power over family, education, and culture, and conservative political leaders are abdicating their responsibility if they do not employ it to advance conservative aims.

Rufo specifically mentions the role of the Hungarian state in fostering a nationalist identity within the education system through the state-backed Mathias Corvinus Collegium (MCC) – a co-sponsoring institution of NatCon which has Viktor Orbán’s Political Director Balázs Orbán as its Chairman. The MCC has a student-body ranging from elementary school to graduate post-secondary programs, which introduces students to many thinkers associated with the hegemonic project of far-right civilizationism. The Fidesz-backed MCC – an organizational backer of NatCon

– seeks to create an alternative thought collective for future leaders, one which retains the necessary technocratic skills but jettisons certain ideologies and identities which are viewed as undermining the Judeo-Christian state/society. Such an endeavour has similarly been embraced by NatCon members from the US who have critiqued ‘woke’ institutions of public education in the liberal West and seek to expand the religious charter school system.

Speaking at NatCon Brussels 2, N.S. Lyons (National Conservatism 2024n) critiqued the so-called technocratic bureaucratic managerial state, its revolutionary social program, and its tyrannical abuses of power in the West. Lyons argues that conservatism must be reconstituted in the twenty-first century in light of such threats to its political objectives, noting the successes Orbán’s Hungary. He recommends the strategy of the Fidesz party in the 1990s and 2000s, which deliberately constructed a parallel state or parallel polis from the bottom-up and the pre-political level. For Lyons, a strategy of parallel organizing occurs through grassroots community engagement and the creation of civic institutions and patronage networks. Such organizing creates consent for right-wing hegemony and undermines the ideological and institutional remnants of Hungary’s communist past. Lyons (National Conservatism 2024n: 12:13) notes:

[T]he West today is awash with economic, social, and spiritual problems from drug addiction, depression, financial precarity, and the breakdown of family formation. Everywhere people are suffering and struggling. Meanwhile, trust in almost every institution has cratered, with incompetent governing elites determined to destroy their own legitimacy. People feel uprooted atomized, vulnerable and alone; buffeted by forces outside their control and betrayed by their own leaders. In other words, this situation is ripe for anyone who can step in and fill the vacuum by actually addressing even some of these problems directly at the community level. This vacuum is the one great untapped well-spring of authority and power in the West today, and it’s inevitable that someday is going to successfully tap it. Whether that is the far-right or some faction of the far-left, whoever does so first is likely to claim the future right to rule [...] Parallelism is a proven road to power.

Rod Dreher similarly lauds the current Hungarian government, justifying Orbán’s heavy handed approach to the removal of the Open Society backed Central European University from Budapest due to the supposedly nefarious intentions of George Soros and the “untenable liberal status quo” of ideologically captured elite Universities undermining the culture of the nation state. A resident in Hungary, Dreher has acted as an intellectual ambassador of sorts for the Orbán government to far-right elites across the transatlantic bloc. During his plenary address at NatCon 2 in Orlando, Dreher (National Conservatism 2021h: 00:20) states:

I already knew from my reading and reporting that Hungary was not a neofascist state as the smear doctors and the Western media insist. What I didn't know until I actually lived in Budapest for a time was how far the reality is from the dominant Western narrative about Hungary. I thought, good grief, how is it that we American conservatives don't know what's going on here how is it that we're not standing with these people, we have so much to learn from them. Eventually I texted my friend Tucker Carlson and encouraged him to come over and see for himself. Even many American conservative elites have bought the standard narrative about Hungary. Now Hungary is a normal country, not a perfect one. Still, I told Tucker there are plenty of good things going on here and lessons that American conservatives can learn and should learn from the way Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and the Fidesz party govern their country. Well, as you know, Tucker came in late August and did a week's worth of shows from Budapest. This caused the US media's hair to catch on fire – naturally – but what I hope Tucker's broadcast were able to do is first to let the broader conservative movement know that Hungary is an important ally to us, one that needs and deserves our support. Second, to help establish Budapest as an intellectual capital for the anti-woke national conservative movement and third to draw the attention of Western conservative thinkers and politicians to what Viktor Orbán and his government have been able to accomplish as an American conservative whose writing focuses a lot on the totalitarian nature of wokeness the biggest difference between our conservative politicians and Viktor Orbán is this our team talks incessantly about how horrible wokeness is – but Prime Minister Orbán actually does something about it.

NatCon speakers have often advocated for state interventions in the economy when firms are viewed as deviating from capital accumulation and pursuing broader societal objectives. Support for such interventions is a feature which often distinguishes so-called ‘national conservatives’ from libertarian conservatives more faithful of the ‘invisible hand’ of the free market. Speaking at NatCon 4, Ryan Newman (National Conservatism 2024p) argues that major

corporations should be subject to state regulation if they act against the public interest by promoting woke ideologies and fomenting racial divisions within society through participation in ‘cancel culture’ and DEI policies in hiring. For Newman, corporations should behave in accordance with pure economic interests, which is to accumulate profits and raise shareholder value. For such reasons, certain forms of state intervention are acceptable for national conservatives if such interventions are determined to uphold conservative cultural values (loosely defined) and the pure-market capitalist orientation of the corporation – even when the market itself fails to be a corrective on firm behaviour that deviates/supersedes such an orientation. Newman (National Conservatism 2024p: 11:10) states: “[S]o-called stakeholder capitalism has turned out to be a trojan horse for the woke cultural revolution.”

During their presentations, NatCon speakers have often lamented what can be described as a top-down ‘woke agenda’ or a ‘cultural Marxist’ conspiracy administered by ‘globalist elites’ within the liberal institutions of US and other transatlantic states.¹¹⁴ At NatCon 4 Washington, and in the wake of the historic electoral defeat of the Conservative Party in the UK, former UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman (National Conservatism 2024r) spoke of the Conservative Party’s failures in the years following Brexit to stop migrants, cut taxes, and stop “the lunatic woke virus infecting the nation-state”. Similarly, in 2021 at NatCon 2 in Orlando, the Heritage Foundation’s Mike Gonzales (National Conservatism 2021g) delivered a presentation labelled “How Race is

¹¹⁴ Speaking CPAC 2022, NatCon participant Senator Rick Scott declared (Forbes Breaking News 2022): “Today we face the greatest danger we have ever faced, the militant left wing in this country have become quote, the enemy within [...] the militant left has now seized control of economy, our culture, and our country [...] the woke now controls the democratic party, the federal government, the news media, academia, big tech, most corporate boards, and now even some of our top military leaders [...] They're destroying just about everything they touch, and they've got their hands on everything. Here's what they're trying to destroy. American history, patriotism, border security, gender, traditional morality, capitalism, fiscal responsibility, opportunity, rugged individualism, Judeo Christian values, free speech, law enforcement, religious liberty, parental involvement in schools, and even private ownership of firearms.”

Being Used to Introduce Marxism in America” and US Senator Marco Rubio (National Conservatism 2021d) delivered a keynote address at the same conference labelled “We Need American Corporate Patriotism to Defeat American Marxism”. In addition, John Fonte’s (National Conservatism 2022h) “Woke Revolutionaries vs. National Heroes”; Toby Young’s (National Conservatism 2023b) “A Dispatch from the Woke Wars”; Ayaan Hirsi Ali’s (National Conservatism 2021a) “The Menace of Wokeism”; and Frank Furedi’s (National Conservatism 2024f) “Welcome to the Culture War” all describe a Western Civilization that has been overtaken by a ‘woke revolution’. Speaking at NatCon Miami in 2022, journalist and former Trump speechwriter Darren Beattie (National Conservatism 2022d: 7:32) argues that woke ideology is synonymous with US empire and represents what can be described as a form of totalitarianism:

[W]okeness is the unofficial religion and ideology of the globalist American Empire [...] A major corporation or institution in the globalist American Empire can no more repudiate wokeness than a major institution or Corporation in China can rebuke the CCP [...] Wokeness as we have come to understand it is far more deeply and essentially intertwined not only into the power structure of the United States but the specific manner in which the US, or as I call it the globalist American Empire projects power [...] I can provide some intuition for this in invoking the Color Revolution model of power projection, that has become a staple of US influence. A chief characteristic of this color Revolution model is to identify cleavages, ethnic, religious, gender, in the target community exacerbate and mobilize populations on the basis of those cleavages and grievances by leveraging control over NOS media and other instruments of soft power. Just to take a few examples we see this with our approach to the Uyghurs in China, the Rohingya in Myanmar, female student groups in Belarus, gays and feminists in Russia and other parts of Eastern Europe and so forth. Wokeness is in this sense substantively intertwined with the specific mechanisms of soft power that the globalist American Empire wields domestically over its citizens and abroad and plays most directly into America's comparative advantages in terms of mass media, propaganda, and soft power. Wokeness is also more and deeply embedded into not only the American culture but the American economy and legal system on account of an entire ecosystem developed to accommodate civil rights and disparate impact law. In short, it is safe to say that the globalist American Empire is the primary incubator and disseminator of woke ideology and that the overall strength of the woke poison is connected to the strength of the globalist American Empire.

For so-called ‘national conservatives’, the ‘woke revolution’ has contributed to: the managerial top-down implementation of unfair DEI policies; the denigration of the majoritarian

culture of nation-states through official multiculturalism; a ‘cancel culture’ antagonistic towards conservative opinions/values/lifestyles; and (what are described as) disastrous policies of mass immigration – all of which are said to undermine the homogeneity of traditional communities and national cultures at the behest of a university educated liberal elite comprised of ‘anywheres’ or Davos Men.¹¹⁵ Speaking at NatCon Brussels in March 2022, John O’Sullivan (National Conservatism 2022i: 16:03) stated:

[I]f we look at the US and we see it elsewhere we see multiculturalism as a principal energy and device policy which is destroying the unity of the US (...) [M]ulticulturalism is like Europeanism in America, it is the device the policy which Sam Huntington called the “deconstruction of America” and we underestimate the degree to which public policy and public finance in the in the US goes towards de-emphasizing the identity of the US and either generating or emphasizing the psychology of oppositionism and the psychology of prior identity of Multiculturalism. The census alone is conducted in such a way as to suggest that America is much less a country of Americans and more a country of minorities – something wrong in itself. It ignores a very key point, which is that the so-called white majority has not been white for a long time – it is joined by all manner of Asians and Hispanics who actually want to be thought of as Americans, to the point of actually not realizing that the census declares them to be not white.

Institutions of higher education in particular have been a lightning rod for scrutiny from various NatCon attendees, with presentations such as Inez Stepman’s (National Conservatism 2024h) “How Congress Can Break the Higher Ed Cartel” and Mark Bauerlein’s (National Conservatism 2024i) “Reforming a College From the Ground Up” at NatCon 4 underscoring the ‘national conservative’ desire to reform institutions of higher education perceived as captured by woke ideology. Such themes have been discussed by figures outside the anglosphere, including Hungarian politician and Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s political director, Balázs Orbán, who during an address at NatCon 3 in Miami in 2022 described a “woke world order” (e.g. promotion

¹¹⁵ Beyond so-called ‘wokeism’, NatCon attendees have criticized the notions of a ‘risk society’ which I have associated with neoliberal cosmopolitanism. Specifically, NatCon speaker Frank Furedi (2009: 214) has lambasted what he describes as a culture of alarmism that is obsessed with safety and “precautionary delusions of impending disasters”.

of LGBTQ+ rights or support for refugees), an imperialist form of left-wing brainwashing directed toward children, which is inspired by Karl Popper and Neo-Marxism, and implemented by EU institutions as well as George Soros and his Open Society organizations across Europe. Orbán (National Conservatism 2022a: 08:44) stated:

[T]his is a standard operation of Empires they are interested in eliminating nation-states smaller communities and when the crisis hits, ideology is a political weapon they turn to in order to go into the direction of further centralizing of competences. So today it is obvious that the driving ideology of centralization it became the woke ideology in Brussels. If you are on board with it, you are a good European, if not, then you are out of the whole club. And this is something we national conservatives should always stand up against, and as we see the consequences of these kind of transnational ideologies is the opposite of what they expect, it's not integration but is disintegration. It is exactly what we – National conservatives – are expecting.

At NatCon, woke ideology is often tied to what are described as failed policies of immigration, multiculturalism, and racial/cultural equity within the LIO. Asking ‘what is to be done?’ for the ‘national conservative’ movement within the states/societies of the West, German NatCon attendee Hans-Georg Maaßen (National Conservatism 2024g: 18:18) argues: “[W]e should start by tearing the mask off the face of the supposed refugee helpers and the left wing journalists and politicians, the people who claim humanity for themselves, and we should openly say to their faces, you are nothing but enemies of freedom and humanity”. Some figures associated with NatCon have been more explicit regarding the (perceived) threats faced by white majority populations, with language/theories which resemble that of extreme far-right white supremacists. For example, NatCon speaker Douglas Wilson, an avowed Christian nationalist, has publicly expressed the view that Hindus should be banned from holding public office in the US, referring to Hindu in systems of governance as “smudge” and “hodgepodge” (Right Wing Watch 2024). Moreover, during a presentation at NatCon 4 labelled the “The Persecution of Whites in America” (National Conservatism 2024), Jeremy Carl, senior fellow at the Claremont Institute, and the

author of *The Unprotected Class: How Anti-White Racism Is Tearing America Apart* (2024), declared his support for white nationalist ideas and theories which can be associated with the revanchist discourse coalition discussed in the previous chapter, including the ‘great replacement theory’ and notions of so-called ‘white genocide’. Carl’s presentation quotes paleoconservative author Steve Sailor and discusses evidence of a so-called “anti-white regime” or “post-white America” where, due to immigration from non-white states in the global South, the “cultural political and social legacy that built the country” has been maligned and undermined. Carl also notes how this theory/phenomenon of ‘replacement’ can be applied beyond the US. Discussing his solidarity with the National Rally in France, he states (National Conservatism 2024j: 09:18):

Speaking of ‘great replacement’ by the way, what we saw because this is not just a US phenomenon what we saw in France with this recent election of National Rally is the same sort of phenomenon just on a different substrate [...] Every single French party besides National Rally revealed itself to be the party of the ‘great replacement’, that’s the reality of what was going on in France.

NatCon has also platformed speakers who are openly supportive of ethno-nationalist parties and organizations outside of the LIO. For example, NatCon 4 featured Ernst Roets, Deputy CEO of AfriForum, a white nationalist Afrikaner group, which labels itself a civil rights organization, but has also argued that the end of apartheid in South Africa was a “historical injustice” to the white population (Essa 2019).¹¹⁶ Roet’s (National Conservatism 2024d) presentation discussed Afrikaner political organizing in South Africa and applied various ideas championed by the national conservative movement, including the necessity of community-level or ‘parallel state’ organization, opposition to state bureaucracy, and issues related to the ‘woke-

¹¹⁶ Such revisionist accounts of Western policies of colonialism have been championed by other NatCon attendees such as Nigel Biggar, whose book *Colonialism: A Moral Reckoning* (2023) constructs an alternative – and apologetic – account of Western colonialism, which posits that violence and motivations rooted in racial prejudice were a marginal feature of this phenomenon.

mind virus'. Such strategies of community secession from a failed/failing liberal state are then a persistent theme expressed by numerous NatCon attendees including William Schambra (National Conservatism 2024t) who during a presentation labelled "Conservative Parallel Structures Must be Found, Not Built" at NatCon 4 argues for the conservative movement to nourish a parallel polis based on grassroots community-based (ethnicity/faith-based) civic organizing as a strategy to counter liberal progressivism and the authority of (sardonically described) professionals and experts.

NatCon has included various members from Eurosceptic and pro-Leave parties and organizations in the UK and Europe who adhere to the belief that the EU is a managerial bureaucratic state institution which champions an ideology of neoliberal cosmopolitanism (e.g. immigration, multiculturalism, LGBTQ+ rights, cultural globalization). NatCon UK and NatCon Brussels in particular have featured various politicians (e.g. Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, Ladislav Ilčić, Giorgia Meloni, Nigel Farage, Jacob Rees-Mogg, and Suella Braverman) and journalists (e.g. John O'Sullivan, Douglas Murray, Matthew Goodwin) who have criticized technocratic and centralized EU institutions as a threat to the sovereignty of nation-states and the independence of communities under its authority. For NatCon attendees, the EU and its globalist leadership in Brussels has contributed to the multiple perceived crises facing the states and societies of Europe (refugees, high energy costs, over-regulation, inflation, withering religious observance). Speaking at NatCon Brussels 2 in 2024 Eric Zemmour weaves together multiple popular themes amongst NatCon members into his critique of the EU, stating (National Conservatism 2024c: 05:01):

This feeling of urgency, the worry which borders on fear, sometimes even panic, is the impression that European civilization is surrounded by several enemies at the same time, all extremely dangerous, and that this encirclement could get the better of this who we are and everything we love. I consider the most obvious, the most immediately threatening are three in number. The first is the Islamization of the continent. A religion which seeks to

govern all aspects of life wherever it becomes powerful enough to influence change [...] The second enemy that surrounds us [...] is the European bureaucracy and tyranny of its judges [...] a zone of accelerated impoverishment of our freedoms [...] The third enemy wants to destroy our culture, our identity, and our history. It hates with rabid hatred our two millennia of glory, victories, genius, and creativity [...] I'm talking about wokism. An extreme ideology, stupid, empty, uninteresting, but one of absolute aggressiveness and stubbornness. There is not a single element of our civilization that [it] does not want to destroy.

So-called national conservatives at NatCon have often attributed a lack of economic opportunity in the West and the swelling of its underclass on mass immigration, transnational liberal organizations (e.g. EU, UN, WEF, Open Society Foundations), and misguided/cynical 'woke' policies which seek to undermine the sovereignty of the nation-states and communities. In response, NatCon attendees have advocated for: 1) dismantling the authority of the bureaucratic administrative state and its liberal elite; 2) a foreign policy based on civilizational alliances and realpolitik (with differing perspectives regarding the 'national interest'); 3) 'traditional' (patriarchal, social conservative) values and parallel community governance as an alternative to woke statism/globalism; and 4) a civic culture which is more explicitly particularistic/chauvinistic in regard to immigration/citizenship and national/civilizational belonging. While predominantly Christian (Evangelical and Catholic), NatCon and its leadership have included figures from various cultures and religious traditions, including religious Zionists, Hindu nationalists, and Muslim reformers. While officially endorsing so-called Western Judeo-Christian values, NatCon's philosophic orientation is better understood as the cumulation of far-right ideas which have emerged during the postwar era of liberal hegemony within the transatlantic bloc. NatCon has applied far-right theories/ideas from the twentieth century (e.g. critique of the 'bureaucratic managerial state', anti-communism, white supremacy) and have reconfigured these frameworks to address perceived modern phenomenon/trends within the popular culture and ruling institutions of the LIO (e.g. 'woke' liberalism, globalism, DEI, feminism, climate activism, Palestinianism).

During his presentation at NatCon 2 in November 2021, Hazony discussed the new conservative ‘fusionism’ he seeks to build (National Conservatism 2021i: 01:56):

A few years ago in the 1960s, the US and allies were facing a rising communist threat abroad, rising socialism at home, and, in fact, the contemporary conservative movement [...] in the US and in Britain at least, that movement came together at that time [...] That alliance in the jargon of the conservative think tanks was called fusionism [...] The formula that the fusionist conservatives came up with in the 1950s and 1960s was roughly this deal, a public liberalism a private traditionalism – a public liberalism a private conservatism. We're going to support freedom economic social freedom individual liberties everywhere we can, almost across the boards, and in exchange we're going to be emphasizing traditionalism, nation, God, scripture, the traditional family at home. Now this fusionism was immensely successful this fusionism won the cold war. This fusionism defeated the Soviet Union and rolled back socialism in America and Britain. You can't argue with success, but this fusionism was also a failure, and today, we have to understand if we're going to be able to go forward and defeat our opponents, our rivals, our enemies of this moment – then we have to be able to see what went wrong [...] There is going to be a new deal, I hope between conservatives, between national conservatives and traditionalists on one hand and anti-Marxist liberals on the other.

iv) *NatCon's Fractured Foreign Policy*

NatCon's leadership has lectured its participants to dispense of the ideological/cultural minutia that divides the so-called ‘national conservative’ movement (e.g. Straussianism vs. Machiavellianism; Catholicism vs. Protestantism; interventionists vs. realists) and coalesce around unifying ideas and values (e.g. opposition to ‘wokeness’ and notions of Western Judeo-Christian civilization). NatCon has also sought to bridge (with varying degrees of success) its *more* isolationist revanchist camp and its more interventionist counter-jihadist camp. As I note in the previous chapter, both of these discourse coalitions prescribe to a set of ideological assumptions which can broadly be associated with far-right civilizationism, however they differ in regard to the application of these core ideas/principles into the practice of global governance. For example, revanchists and counter-jihadists both share a civilizational framework regarding the politics world order but differ in regard to *aspects of* global governance and boundaries of civilization in a world

order which they argue is parcellated along national and civilizational lines. Revanchists have often sought to distinguish themselves from interventionist so-called ‘neocons’ and have instead largely supported a foreign strategy based on nationalist *realpolitik* and isolationism in global affairs; arguing that costly military entanglements are in the interest of financial elites and the corporate interests tied to the state-dependent industries, i.e. the military-industrial complex. On the other hand, counter-jihadists have used the ‘national interest’ and notions of clashing civilizations to justify support for policies of enhanced Western militarism, regime change, and foreign intervention. A closer look at NatCon attendees and their ideas reveals such ideological/strategic variations as applied to ongoing crises within world order.

While national conservatism as a political orientation might invoke notions of isolationism and nativism, Hazony (National Conservatism 2024u: 25:57) has argued that the isolationists at NatCon only represent about 5%-10% of the organization’s participants – indicating that for the majority of its members, a far-right foreign policy is compatible with certain forms of foreign military intervention. As noted in the previous chapters, revanchists (paleoconservatives, isolationists) on the far-right have been somewhat philosophically inconsistent when it comes to policies of military intervention, with major paleoconservative thinkers (whom I associate with the revanchist discourse coalition in the previous chapter) expressing supportive of certain forms of Western military interventionism (e.g. anti-communist rollback during the Cold War). If there is a consistent theme amongst NatCon members it is the belief that if the state chooses to embark on a foreign military intervention, such an intervention should promote the ‘national interest’ and realist interests, rather than be directed by transnational organizations (e.g. UN, EU, NATO) to advance cosmopolitan principles/pursuits toward global human rights.

In regards to foreign policy, there are two general areas of overwhelming consensus amongst NatCon participants in regard to: 1) broad support for Israel/Zionism and ideas which can be associated with the sub-tendency of counter-jihadism (e.g. hawkish proposals regarding Iran; anti-Palestinianism); as well as 2) support for a more muscular approach toward China/CCP; often advocating for confrontational Western trade policies and military strategies to check China's power over Taiwan and the South China Sea. Despite such areas of agreement, the preferred methods to achieve/administer such geopolitical objectives vary amongst participants.

NatCon has included numerous ardent Israeli Zionist activists, including Yoram Hazony, Eugene Kontorovich, Ofir Haivry, and Likud Party politician Amichai Chikli, all of whom are hawkish toward Iran and support Jewish settlement activity in the Palestinian West Bank (in violation of international law). Numerous conference attendees have also discussed the dangers of so-called 'Islamism' in the West; alluding to themes which can be associated with the counter-jihadist discourse coalition and the 'Eurabia conspiracy theory', where it is argued that liberal multiculturalism and mass immigration are a trojan horse for the eventual Islamization of Western civilization. Despite agreement regarding such perceived threats facing the West, a closer look at NatCon participants reveals certain strategic variations to address such threats. For example, NatCon speaker Michael Doran (2020, 2022) of the Hudson Institute has argued in favour of greater cooperation between the West/NATO and Turkey – as well as the Turkey-backed regime in Azerbaijan (which has engaged in acts of ethnic cleansing in the disputed territories Nagorno-Karabakh) – as a means of checking the power/influence of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Such ideas can be contrasted with NatCon speaker Daniel Pipes, who has *argued against* greater NATO cooperation with Turkey due to Erdogan's "Islamist agenda" (WGI.World, April 9, 2022) and his attempts to undermine the NATO alliance. Moreover, while staunchly supportive of Israel, in an

Op-Ed in the New York Times, he (Pipes 2020) has also argued against Israeli annexation of the West Bank for geostrategic reasons (e.g. enflaming regional tensions and isolating Israel), a position which can be contrasted to Tikvah Fund associated figures such as Hazony, Haivry, and Kontronovich, who have all advocated for policies of Israeli annexation.

The most notable outlier from NatCon's overwhelming support for Israel/Zionism is paleoconservative speaker Paul Gottfried. Gottfried has written critically about Zionism and the Israel Lobby's power over US foreign policymaking – reservations which are far less frequently expressed by his peers at NatCon (perhaps with the exception of Tucker Carlson who has recently platformed certain critical perspectives regarding the US-Israel relationship).¹¹⁷ While critical of certain aspects of the US-Israel relationship, Gottfried (2012) has also articulated opinions which do neatly dovetail with those of the counter-jihadists, namely opposition to immigration from Muslim majority countries, and a belief that Islam is incompatible with the institutions and values of Western civilization. While there is a consensus at NatCon that Israel and the West should be guarded from Iran and the threat of so-called 'Islamism', attendees have expressed strategic differences in regard to the policies the West should implement to confront such threats.

Far less controversial at NatCon is the promotion of a more hawkish stance toward China (economically and militarily) with various speakers describing China as a rising power which requires a united Western opposition. For example, at NatCon 3, Elbridge Colby¹¹⁸ used the

¹¹⁷ Gottfried (2024) has criticized the suppression of free speech by Zionist organizations and "Conservative Inc" in the name of combating so-called 'left antisemitism' on American college campuses. Gottfried has even gone so far as to criticize fellow NatCon presenters such as Douglas Murray for their stale/predictable pro-Israel opinions regarding Middle East politics. Similarly, Tucker Carlson (2024) has featured Palestinian pastor Munther Isaac from the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem on his X show to discuss the impacts of the 2023 Israel-Gaza War on Christian Palestinians.

¹¹⁸ Elbridge Colby is the grandson of William Colby, a CIA officer and Director of Central Intelligence from 1973-1976.

platform to make the case for a more assertive American hegemonic strategy to counter China, as well as an American-led coalition to support Taiwan and deter/counter a potential invasion of the island. Colby (National Conservatism, 2022f, 12:23) makes an appeal for a new foreign policy based on the core US-interest of checking its primary rival – and not “making [the world] safe for Wilsonianism”. Beyond tensions in the South-China Sea, NatCon members have discussed the supposed threat of China from numerous vantage points, with David Goldman’s (National Conservatism 2021b) “Imperial China's Challenge to Nationalism” at NatCon 1, Michael Pillsbury’s (National Conservatism 2021f) “China’s 100 Year Marathon” at NatCon 2, and the Earl of Dartmouth William Legge’s (National Conservatism 2022e) “Confronting China: The State of Europe” at NatCon Brussels 1 are all indicative of a desire amongst NatCon’s participants to construct a comprehensive shift in the West’s foreign policy posture vis à vis China and the CCP. Addressing the threat of China to American industry, NatCon attendees such as Joshua Steinman (National Conservatism 2022j) and Scott Bessent (National Conservatism 2024q) have targeted China for its alleged corporate espionage and unfair trade practice; making the case for reforming American industrial and trade policy to compete with a China. Speaking at NatCon 4, Scott Bessent of the investment firm Key Square Group argues for tariffs and a new US industrial policy equipped to compete with the CCP’s state interventions in the Chinese economy (National Conservatism 2024q: 13:59):

China's competitiveness was built by the Chinese government's selection and promotion of specific national champions. In fact, many leading Chinese companies emerged after a brutal subsidized competition with other would-be national champions. The United States should take this lesson to heart in pursuing our own industrial policy solutions that rely on changing relative prices at the market level create better outcomes and will tend to be more effective than we have seen from the Biden Administration [...] this is why tariffs can be a potent economic policy tool since they operate at the market level tariff policy should reflect the realities of the International System.

While united in opposition to America's primary geopolitical rival China, NatCon speakers have articulated a more diverse range of opinions regarding the direction of Western foreign policy as it relates to the current Ukraine-Russia War. For example, influential political figures at NatCon have been staunchly supportive of Ukrainian self-determination and its inclusion in NATO and the West (e.g. Ryszard Legutko, Giorgia Meloni), while others within this network have cautioned about this support as drawing the West into larger undesirable conflict with Russia (e.g. Steve Bannon, Yoram Hazony, Viktor Orbán, J.D. Vance, Jack Posobiec). Such diversity however does not neatly divide participants into separate camps of isolationists and interventionists, or revanchists and counter-jihadists; rather the perspectives/justifications for Western support (or lack of support) for Ukraine requires a more nuanced analysis.

Beginning with proponents of increased Western military support for Ukraine, addressing a panel labelled "War in Ukraine: Facing the Russian Aggression" at NatCon Brussels in March 2022, Atilla Demko (National Conservatism 2022b) argues for enhancing Western/NATO capabilities in light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Such opposition to Russia and Vladimir Putin has also been echoed by NatCon speakers such as Anna Fotyga, who in a May 2024 opinion column "Russia repeats genocide on Crimean Tartars" for *Euractiv*, described Russia's invasion of Ukraine as both genocidal and imperialist as well arguing for the liberation of Crimea from Russian occupation (Fotyga 2024). Similarly, Ambassador Vsevolod Chentsov (National Conservatism 2022) used his speech at NatCon Brussels in 2022 to garner support for Ukraine within the national conservative movement with a presentation titled "Appeal for Ukraine". Furthermore, in a speech to the European Parliament February 2023, frequent NatCon speaker, Polish politician, professor, and ECR chairperson Ryszard Legutko pleaded for greater aid and commitment to Ukraine, stating (ECR Group 2023):

The ECR will stand by Ukraine until Russia is defeated and beyond. The European Union must ensure that Ukraine emerges victorious from this war - and that Russia pays the price for no longer being able or willing to repeat such an appalling act [...] Those who planned and enabled the terrible war of aggression, including Vladimir Putin and people close to him, must receive their just punishment.

Such declarations of support for Ukraine can be contrasted to more pessimistic NatCon attendees, including NatCon's talisman Viktor Orbán, who has expressed a more cautious and critical perspective toward NATO enlargement, aid to Ukraine, and the West's provocations toward Russia.¹¹⁹ Returning NatCon speaker Senator Josh Hawley has also offered a critique of US policy regarding the Ukraine-Russia War and has advocated for redirecting funds for Ukraine to Israel in order to assist the latter in its war against Hamas and the citizens of Gaza (Lowry 2023). In contrast to many other NatCon participants, journalist/commentator Tucker Carlson and historian/philosopher Paul Gottfried have articulated a more realist concern regarding America's foreign policy toward Russia in recent years, displaying a critical view towards NATO expansion, enhanced military aid for Ukraine, and the West's support for the Volodymyr Zelensky and his government. Similarly, influential far-right politicians and political operatives associated with NatCon such as Steve Bannon, Jack Posobiec, Vivek Ramaswamy, and J.D. Vance have been critical of Ukraine's political leadership and the brinksmanship of the West in relation to Russia – while simultaneously supportive of an ironclad US-Israel alliance against Iran and its allies. In an April 12, 2024, *The New York Times* Op-Ed, Senator Vance criticized the prudence of the Ukraine war effort, arguing that the munitions shipments negatively impact America's critical defense

¹¹⁹ Justin Spike (2024) of the *Associated Press* notes how in a conversation with state radio on May 24, 2024, Orbán declared: “We do not approve of this, nor do we want to participate in financial or arms support (for Ukraine), even within the framework of NATO [...] We've got to redefine our position within the military alliance, and our lawyers and officers are working on ... how Hungary can exist as a NATO member while not participating in NATO actions outside of its territory.”

capabilities needed to deter a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. As one of the few Republicans who has voted against further US military aid packages to Ukraine, Vance (2024: para. 2) states:

Ukraine's challenge is not the G.O.P., it's math. Ukraine needs more soldiers than it can field, even with draconian conscription policies. And it needs more materiel than the United States can provide. This reality must inform any future Ukraine policy, from further congressional aid to the diplomatic course set by the president.

Many figures at NatCon have expressed what can be described as tepid support for Ukraine, making the case for Ukrainian sovereignty on ideological/philosophic grounds as well as arguing against *both* an imperialist Russian invader that seeks to subsume Ukraine's national community, and a liberal West which seeks to integrate Ukraine into its imperium. For example, speaking at NatCon Brussels 1, NatCon founder Yoram Hazony (National Conservatism 2022i) expressed support for Ukrainian independence, while also warning against furthering Western/NATO hostilities with Russia – contrasting widespread support for Ukraine with (perceived) lack of support from the US for key allies such as Israel in confronting the threat of nuclear Iran. While certain individuals associated with the conference have attempted to disassociate themselves from the politics/policies associated with so-called 'neoconservatism', NatCon participants have overwhelmingly expressed support for certain ideas often associated with 'neoconservatism' in the West, namely positive notions of US geopolitical supremacy within world order as well as opposition to 'dictators', China, and Palestinian rights. The primary difference between far-right civilizationists at NatCon and contemporary neoliberal cosmopolitans as pertains to foreign policy is in regard to 1) the appropriate level – or character – of support for key Western allies; as well as 2) the role of international ('globalist') institutions/organizations in the making of Western foreign policy.

NatCon's relationship to ideas and individuals associated with Bush era 'neoconservatism' can be compared to the position of the Trump Administration. Much like many of the figures associated with the NatCon conference, Trump has attempted to distance himself from the policies of the Bush Administration and the so-called 'neoconservative' policies pursued in the Middle East and beyond. However, despite such rhetorical criticisms, both the Trump administration/campaign and NatCon have integrated numerous key individuals and policy frameworks that can be associated with neoconservatism. For example, the first Trump Administration integrated figures associated with the Project for a New American Century such as John Bolton, Frank Gaffney, James Woolsey, Zalmay Khalilzad, and Elliot Abrams. Similarly, NatCon has opened its doors to various individuals associated with Bush-era neoconservatism, including (but not limited to) Daniel Pipes, Michael Doran, Chris DeMuth, and former Deputy Assistant Attorney General John Woo – author of the "Torture Memos"¹²⁰ during the so-called War on Terror. Indeed, NatCon and the Trump Administration have sought to rebrand/rehabilitate various figures associated with neoconservatism and integrate such figures into a new 'national conservative' movement.

v) NatCon and the Second Trump Administration

Donald Trump's victory in the 2024 US presidential election has elevated many members associated with the NatCon network to positions of power within his second Presidential

¹²⁰ Neil A. Lewis describes the so-called Torture Memos as: "A series of memorandums from the Justice Department, many of them written by John C. Yoo, a University of California law professor who was serving in the department, provided arguments to keep United States officials from being charged with war crimes for the way prisoners were detained and interrogated. The memorandums, principally one written on Jan. 9, provided legal arguments to support administration officials' assertions that the Geneva Conventions did not apply to detainees from the war in Afghanistan."

Administration. In addition to J.D. Vance serving as Vice President, Trump has nominated various figures associated with the NatCon network for potential positions in his cabinet, including: Marco Rubio for Secretary of State; Scott Bessent for US Treasury Secretary; Darren Beattie for Acting Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs; Elbridge Colby for Undersecretary for Defense for Policy; Tom Homan for Border Czar; Stephen Miller for Deputy White House Chief of Staff and Homeland Security Advisor; Chris Wright for Secretary of Energy; and Vivek Ramaswamey for the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), a presidential advisory commission which was initially proposed to be led by Ramaswamey and Elon Musk, tasked with increasing government efficiency by slashing government expenditure and regulation.

Trump's presidential transition period has been marred with controversy, highlighting divisions between various factions of social forces associated with NatCon and the Trump presidency. For example, figures associated with the NatCon network have been deeply divided on Trump's proposed policies regarding H1-B visas for foreign workers in the US, following a controversial post on the Musk-owned social media site X by Vivek Ramaswamy.¹²¹ Many Trump supporters perceived Ramaswamy's post – and Elon's support for its message – as patronizing to American-born citizens and their culture. The more hardline (ethno)nationalists/nativists associated with Trump's MAGA movement and NatCon, such as Steve Bannon, Mark Krikorian, and Stephen Miller, have called for drastically reducing or even ending legal immigration into the US, while Silicon Valley tech-elites aligned with Trump – such as Elon Musk, David Sacks, and Vivek Ramaswamey – have advocated for expanding legal immigration through the H1-B visa

¹²¹ Vivek Ramaswamy's post on X would state (Sheth 2025): "The reason top tech companies often hire foreign-born & first-generation engineers over 'native' Americans isn't because of an innate American IQ deficit (a lazy & wrong explanation). A key part of it comes down to the c-word: culture. Tough questions demand tough answers & if we're really serious about fixing the problem, we have to confront the TRUTH: Our American culture has venerated mediocrity over excellence for way too long (at least since the 90s and likely longer)..."

program to fill gaps within the labour market and compete with China in a twenty-first century global economy (Krikorian 2024; Prokop 2024). Weighing-in on the ‘MAGA civil war’ dividing his supporters, Trump aligned with fellow billionaires Musk and Ramaswamey, stating on December 29, 2024: “I have many H-1B visas on my properties. I’ve been a believer in H-1B. I have used it many times. It’s a great program” (Bose 2024). This however was noted by many to be reversal of his previously held positions on the H-1B visa program, with Trump describing the program as “very bad” and “unfair” to American workers in 2016, and signing an executive order in June 2020 which froze such visas for professionals and technology workers due to concerns regarding the impacts on the domestic labour force (Bickerton 2025; Lubin 2025). The scandal produced by Ramaswamey’s post led him to eventually be relieved of his duties at DOGE, with Musk and his Gen-Z engineers taking the reins. However, less than one month into Trump’s second term, Musk’s closeness to the president has been criticized by long-time MAGA political operative Steve Bannon, who in an interview with *UnHerd* (Billot 2025) said “Musk is a parasitic illegal alien. He wants to impose his freak experiments and play-act as God without any respect for the country’s history, values, or traditions.” While Trump’s presidency will undoubtedly increase the political power of various figures associated with the NatCon network, it is yet to be seen whether the ideological contradictions and class divisions which divide the ‘national conservative’ discourse coalition will be pacified or reconciled.

Conclusion

This analysis of NatCon as a collective intellectual organization underscores how the contemporary far-right political project has ‘fused’ certain ideas and social forces associated with older far-right discourse coalitions. In the previous chapters, I note how the far-right’s anti-

communism, Islamophobic imperialism, and ethno-nationalism during the postwar period have contributed to what can be described as a transnational far-right ideology in the twenty-first century. Emerging as a cumulation or fusion of various far-right discourse coalitions and intellectual tendencies is what I have described as the Budapest Men, a new so-called ‘national conservative’ coalition which seeks to advance a far-right civilizationist hegemonic project for the West and world order, a project which is characterized by: 1) opposition to the ‘bureaucratic managerial state’ and a critique of liberal international institutions (e.g. EU, UN, NATO); 2) an adherence to a deeply xenophobic civilizational ontology toward world order; 3) the belief that a Jacobin Neo-Marxist ‘woke revolution’ has hijacked the institutions of the state and society; and 4) support for a strategy of national and/or community-level secession from contemporary liberal society and its institutions. Analyzing publicly available information on NatCon’s official website and social media pages communications, one can identify such trends regarding participating actors and the ideas/interests which drive them.

Transnational collective intellectual organizations can be understood as a crystallization of the diffuse ideas and networks of elites, which are often unaccountable to liberal democratic institutions, despite having a major role in shaping public policy and forging a basis of consent for Western capitalist hegemony since at least the early twentieth century. An analysis of NatCon reveals a transnational top-down leadership for the far-right movement that: 1) has roots in far-right Zionist intellectual circles; 2) advances the governance model of Hungary’s Orbán government; and 3) seeks to shift the elite political consensus within the Anglo-American core of the LIO. NatCon has contributed to political contestation in the Anglo-American core of the LIO and has sought to further exaggerate/project existing political polarities across the states/societies within its hegemonic bloc. Despite certain difficulties in analysing such organizations or

measuring their influence/impact on policymaking, transnational collective intellectual organizations such as NatCon are nevertheless provide useful insights for social scientists exploring the actors and ideas shaping the contours of political contestation in the twenty-first century.

While NatCon has attempted to create conformity/unity amongst so-called ‘national conservatives’ across the LIO, I have noted strategic differences within this coalition. For example, the debate regarding H1-B visas underscores divisions between capitalist elites associated with NatCon/Trump who support (and directly profit from) legal immigration policies, and the more hardline ‘revanchist’ (ethno)nationalists within the MAGA movement who seek to reduce/restrict legal immigration to the US. Moreover, I note how the Russia-Ukraine war has *not only* contributed tensions between political parties and movements associated with the left and right, but rather this crisis has created fractures within the far-right movement. Revanchists – or so-called paleoconservatives – have often based their foreign policy ideology around a realist pessimism towards costly military interventions. In contrast, counter-jihadists on the far-right have often pursued so-called neoconservative policies of Western-backed regime change and has advocated for greater hostility towards so-called rogue or axis states opposed to US/NATO geopolitical supremacy and interests. NatCon attendees have sought to combine such positions, supporting notions of ‘national conservative’ solidarity in regard to Ukraine, while also expressing concern regarding the pitfalls of greater Western involvement and prolonged inter-imperial war with a nuclear Russia. An analysis of NatCon reveals an organization which has been divided on the most consequential geopolitical conflict in our current age, with members offering a range of opinions regarding if – or how much – the West should support Ukraine in quest for territorial sovereignty and integration into transatlantic institutions (EU, NATO).

In light of ongoing crises in world order, the composition of NatCon could be the source of challenges for this far-right collective intellectual organization as well as the future of the Budapest Men as a sustainable discourse coalition in the twenty-first century. NatCon's attendees come from numerous nationalist movements within the LIO, each with particularistic interests regarding geopolitical flashpoints within world order. The vast overrepresentation of Americans at NatCon risks losing supporters from disparate far-right movements across the transatlantic bloc which have historically been critical of US empire (e.g. Nouvelle Droite). Furthermore, the NatCon conference has involved mainstream conservative figures, which raises significant questions whether: 1) fractions of the centre-right establishment have reoriented toward the far-right movement, or, 2) if the far-right movement has moderated/tailored its messaging to appeal to figures within the centre-right establishment. The inclusion of more 'mainstream' conservative figures (i.e. those tied to influential American think tanks and party structures) into the far-right's leadership bloc, risks alienating segments within the base of the far-right movement who have historically been suspicious of major political party structures and elite collective intellectual organizations. Similarly, if NatCon caters to the more extreme base of the far-right movement, it might threaten the status /prestige of NatCon as a collective intellectual organization, its funding, and the participation of certain influential political actors who might wish to disassociate from a more controversial organization (much like what befell Bannon's The Movement think tank in Europe). Despite the context growing support for far-right ideas across the LIO, the competitiveness of far-right civilizationism as a hegemonic project will inevitably rest on the ability of collective intellectual organizations, such as NatCon, to forge a coherent elite discourse coalition that can manage/pacify the strategic differences which plague the far-right movement(s) across the transatlantic bloc.

While Hazony and major politicians such as Josh Hawley and J.D. Vance have taken the podium at NatCon to criticize the languishing effects of globalization and free-market neoliberal economics on American society and industry, the sincerity of such rhetoric can be scrutinized when one looks toward the activities of other NatCon participants. I note how many NatCon presenters and EBF affiliates have worked closely within the leadership structures of major think tank organizations such as AEI, Hoover Institution, Henry Jackson Society, and the Heritage Foundation, and have contributed intellectual resources toward the implementation of neoconservative policies and free-market neoliberal reforms within the US. Rather than challenge the structure or logic of US geopolitical supremacy, neoliberal governance, and market civilization, NatCon and its participants have targeted certain externalities (or perceived externalities) produced by decades of neoliberal cosmopolitan governance (e.g. the woke revolution, China's hegemonic ascendance, managerial overregulation, cultural secularism, migration crisis, rising Islamic fundamentalism). An analysis of NatCon reveals that the far-right's hegemonic project within contemporary world order *is not* structurally transformative, but rather, supports a radical refurbishing of Western capitalist governance ideology within the LIO. Moreover, it is yet to be seen whether the Budapest Men can remain unified and overcome the various limitations and contradictions which threaten this discourse coalition.

Conclusion

The purpose of this dissertation was to provide a useful resource for social scientists and other intellectual social forces who are tasked with understanding, describing, and theorizing aspects of contemporary political contestation which has impacted states/societies across the LIO, and may continue to do so in the foreseeable future. It is my hope that the terms/concepts developed here help elucidate the transnational ideologies and elite social forces relevant to current political polarization within the transatlantic bloc – specifically as it relates to the rise of the so-called far-right movement. Few scholars have provided such a comprehensive analysis of the elite transnational dimensions of the contemporary far-right movement, its governance ideology, and the elite discourse coalitions supportive of this ideology. My investigation shows how the contemporary far-right movement has adapted to a modern globalized political landscape, targeting various aspects of contemporary global governance that supersede individual states. Acknowledging such aspects of far-right politics provides a useful alternative to the state-centric approaches, which often neglect the transnational aspects of contemporary hegemony.

This dissertation was perhaps wildly ambitious in the scope of its analysis, discussing numerous intellectuals and organizations from states and societies across the LIO since World War II. However, it is my belief that in order to tell the story of the far-right movement today, it is necessary to identify and discuss ideas and elite social forces associated with this movement, which date back to the early twentieth century. Furthermore, I believe that it is crucial to acknowledge the complex relationship this movement has with the ideas and actors which shaped the construction of the liberal international order. While what I have provided here could be criticized for being an elite-centric narrative or overly concerned with the top-down dimensions of global

politics this was done consciously, as a way to underscore both the transnational and elite dimensions of contemporary far-right politics within the LIO (aspects of this phenomenon which are overlooked within virtually all mainstream accounts). The approach which I have taken to discuss far-right politics within the LIO has situated this phenomenon within an interplay of competing hegemonic projects, articulated by elite intellectual ‘discourse coalitions’, which operate through various collective intellectual bodies, and represent divergent elite ideologies/strategies/frameworks toward geopolitics, culture, and capitalist economic governance. My research shows how ‘far-right civilizationism’, a combination of social forces with roots in the early-mid twentieth century, is now an emergent hegemonic project for world order which seeks to modify the decades-long neoliberal project, and condition the populations of the so-called “west” politically/culturally for a real or metaphysical “clash of civilizations” with the so-called “rest” (Huntington 1993). I have discussed the origins and evolution of far-right civilizationism as a hegemonic project, catalogued intellectuals and collective intellectual organizations which have directly aided/contributed to its political objectives, as well as evaluated its limits and contradictions.

By providing a deep exploration into social forces which have shaped far-right political ideology since the postwar period, it was my hope that it becomes clear to the reader that concepts such as populism, illiberalism, and nationalism are reductive, and as such, tend to only further obscure important nuances and complexities relevant to any discussion regarding the nature of contemporary political contestation within the LIO. These frequently used concepts/descriptors do little to help explain the transformations/hybridizations the far-right movement has undergone over multiple decades and how its governance ideology has evolved since the postwar period. This dissertation has sought to provide a more compelling historical and intellectual account, one which

addresses a multitude of ideas and a constellation of elite intellectual social forces which have collectively/cumulatively contributed to the construction of contemporary far-right ideology across the LIO. Furthermore, I note how the far-right's worldview is not static but rather has shifted alongside structural transformations in in world order (e.g. the collapse of the Soviet Union, the rise neoliberal globalization), as well as in response to various ideas expressed by the elite proponents of neoliberal cosmopolitan governance within the LIO (e.g. 'stakeholder capitalism'; 'globalism').

I have proposed that two primary forms of political contestation within the contemporary LIO are better described as a 'clash of hegemonic projects' in the field of global governance, a 'clash' prompted by a global organic crisis and in the context of a largely defeated left/socialist movement within the West. This study of elite 'hegemonic projects' was non-exhaustive; however, it attempted to provide a comprehensive analysis into various aspects of the divergent elite worldviews which it identified. These hegemonic projects are produced/articulated by discourse coalitions comprising elite intellectuals, who, since the twentieth century, have organized through various collective intellectual bodies (e.g. journals, clubs, conferences, think tanks, forums, political groups and parties). The historic bloc of the LIO was the product of transnational coordination amongst liberal elites across transatlantic states/societies during the twentieth century. Now, during the twenty-first century, elite intellectuals associated with the far-right have organized across the transatlantic space, with the desire to refurbish the ideas, institutions, and social forces which have long been synonymous with governance within the LIO. An analysis into the transnational elite organizations responsible for far-right knowledge production across various states/societies within the LIO underscores both the top-down dimensions of the far-right movement, as well as the centrality of the US and its elites within this increasingly globalized

political formation – one with linkages which also transcend the transatlantic space of the LIO (e.g. India and Israel).

This dissertation has opted to use a single case-study analyzing NatCon rather than a more in-depth comparative analysis of two or more contemporary collective intellectual organizations for various reasons. First, while I do *loosely* contrast NatCon to the World Economic Forum and Open Society Foundations, these elite liberal institutions have been widely documented, have existed for decades, and have accumulated elites, social capital, and resources which cannot be fairly compared to nascent transnational far-right organizations such as NatCon.¹²² The second reason why a more in-depth comparative analysis of transnational collective intellectual organizations was not developed in this thesis pertains to the nature of this analysis. NatCon is the most prominent transnational hub or ‘network organization’ for elite far-right social forces across the LIO, and as such, I have chosen to explore the competing factions within this organization to speculate on the unity of this vanguardist political project, as well as the potential limits and contradictions of its attempts to reconcile various far-right ideological factions into a coherent discourse coalition. The third (and primary) reason that I have opted to only investigate one collective intellectual institution in great detail pertains to the stated objectives of this thesis. In this dissertation, I have sought to: 1) conceptualize/categorize the ideological aspects of political contestation within the state and societies of the LIO since the postwar period; and 2) challenge certain prevailing theories regarding the nature of the far-right movement/ideology in the LIO – specifically the supposed nationalist, populist, and illiberal character of this movement; and 3) contrast the hegemonic projects of the two primary transnational elite political configurations

¹²² While not the stated purpose of this research project, in the future a compelling comparative analysis of NatCon might contrast this institution to newly developed socialist/progressive transnational collective organization (e.g. Yanis Varoufakis’s DiEM25).

pursuing leadership within systems of Western global governance within contemporary world order. The approach I have taken of course is not the only way to analyze contemporary political contestation and the rise of far-right transnationalism, but it is my hope that the research and analysis which I have provided will help contribute to a growing body of interdisciplinary research on such ideological aspects of political contestation and the role of collective intellectual organizations in the making of hegemonic ideas in the field of global governance.

It was my intention for the reader to gain greater insights into the transnationalization of the far-right movement, and how the transnational strategies pursued by the far-right in recent decades can be understood as imitative of the successful transnational strategies pursued by elite liberal social forces within the LIO since the early twentieth century. By operating through transnational collective intellectual organizations, the far-right has formed elite discourse coalitions who have developed as well as articulated the far-right's hegemonic project across the various states/societies of the LIO's transnational historic bloc. The comprehensiveness of this far-right project (with cultural, economic, and geopolitical dimensions) has contributed to a growing base of support amongst citizens within the formally liberal states/societies of the West – evident in political upheavals since 2016. It can then be said that in the context of a profound global organic crisis, a transnational far-right governance model becomes an increasingly attractive/viable option for *certain* elite social forces within the LIO's historic bloc, who believe that such a radical governance model will help secure their class/material interests as well counter the progressive/redistributive social forces associated with the left.

Each of the hegemonic projects for global governance which I have discussed in this dissertation has failed to address core structural aspects of the global organic crisis within the states/societies of the transatlantic-bloc and world order. Indeed, both projects can be associated

with neoliberal governance, that is, the subordination of the vast majority of the world's inhabitants to US geopolitical supremacy, the disciplinary power of capital, and their inculcation into an Americanized market civilization. While the transnational far-right movement often describes its project as one of sovereign nationalism, the composition of the ideas and social forces associated with its hegemonic project indicate overwhelming support for US-centered global capitalism and Western geopolitical supremacy within this political configuration – evident when one looks at NatCon's membership and messaging.

In regard to political economy, the ideological differences expressed by competing transnational elites within the LIO can be said to reflect strategic splits which separate 'varieties of capitalism' or 'varieties of neoliberalism'. Historically, such strategic variations often correspond/resonate with different states, regions, and class fractions; for example, the often contrasted European-style ordoliberalism/coordinated market economy vs. Anglo-American neoliberalism/libertarianism (Slobodian 2018; Petersmann 2023). In the era of neoliberal globalization, such divergent strategies are increasingly difficult to parse along national/regional lines. Contemporary neoliberal global governance is, therefore, somewhat malleable and able to adapt to various institutional and cultural settings across world order. Neoliberal governance can incorporate/absorb/accommodate various sub-ideologies, and reconciling – whenever it is expedient – core aspects of its economic doctrine with either a culture of cosmopolitanism or one of far-right 'national conservatism'. Despite the ideological/cultural differences dividing liberals and the far-right, a transnational doctrine of US-centered capitalist imperium remains deeply embedded within governing philosophies of both the neoliberal cosmopolitan Davos Men and the far-right civilizationist Budapest Men. Neither neoliberal cosmopolitanism nor far-right civilizationism are structurally transformative, and do not seek a radical shift from a US-centered

global capitalist world order. Rather, they are designed to reproduce popular consent for capitalist class hegemony during conditions of organic crisis within world order. Moreover, neither project has displayed a willingness or capacity to implement the structural reforms necessary to address the current climate crisis and ecocide currently impacting the biosphere

In regard to foreign policy and geopolitical strategy, it can be also said that the far-right and liberal-centre provide different *varieties of supremacism* for Western allied states in the current era. In recent years, complex geopolitical crises within world order have contributed to new internal divisions within the elite intellectual power-bloc each of the major hegemonic projects discussed, with certain figures within each camp adopting contradictory ideas and solidarities which threaten cohesion/consensus. For example, ongoing conflicts in Ukraine-Russia and Israel-Gaza have exposed certain contradictions/challenges for each of the hegemonic projects, with popular movements emerging from below which reject the West's endless wars. These crises, while fraught with catastrophic risks to world order and the biosphere, have then undermined many of the values or virtues espoused by contemporary elites within the states/societies of the LIO. Whether such crises actually provide an opportunity for the progressive left to challenge the leadership structures of the LIO will inevitably depend on whether progressives/socialists are able to effectively organize transnationally and articulate a coherent hegemonic project, one which can counter the "exhaustionist" ideologies espoused by capitalist elites across the transatlantic bloc (Stewart 2022). I have previously developed the concept of "exhaustionism" (Stewart 2022: 8) to describe:

[T]he current moment of ideological enervation which emerged out of this context of a crisis in the twenty-first-century world order. It is linked to the matrix of slow(er) moving, interconnected and classed threats that have been accelerated during the period of globalization; impacting individual, societal, cultural, political and economic outcomes on a global scale – and contributing to a situation as dystopian as the post-extremist world order described by [E.P.] Thompson. Exhaustionism as a popular meta-ideology within

advanced capitalist state-societal complexes recategorizes the present crisis into a series of disconnected or irreversible real and metaphysical ‘risks’ which are to be survived and/or strategized. Such framing often obscures the variable of class location as it relates to survival in the twenty-first century. It also serves to co-opt, pacify and obstruct those communitarian or democratic social forces seeking to create structural alternatives to the current paradigm.

My research shows that the various identities, sub-ideologies, and alliances which divide the social forces associated with the far-right movement are, however, often exaggerated. This is to say, one should not mistake the proclaimed strategic differences expressed by certain intellectuals within the far-right movement for profound ideological/philosophic differences. For example, I note how the term neoconservatism is of little theoretical utility, as figures associated with the far-right and neoliberal ‘centre’ have adopted so-called ‘neoconservative’ policy positions/strategies (e.g. support for interventionist US militarism in the Middle East), but for different ideological reasons. Moreover, many figures associated with far-right politics have shifted/reconfigured their political ideology/identity in recent decades (e.g. Tucker Carlson’s shift from hawkish libertarianism to isolationist national conservatism). It might then be said that within the elite power-bloc of the LIO, both of the major hegemonic projects identified have a susceptibility to a neoconservative mutation each with embedded social forces that advocate for high-risk strategies of imperialism/supremacism – particularly during periods of crisis. Despite often being associated with divergent ideological streams, in recent years various revanchists (paleoconservatives/nativists) and counter-jihadists (neoconservatives/interventionists) have begun to fuse into a new ‘national conservative’ elite discourse coalition, which I have labelled as the Budapest Men – signalling that the supposed flanks of the far-right movement may in-fact closer than many have previously thought.

This dissertation has shown how a Critical IR approach is unique in its ability to illuminate the transnational structural factors and (uneven) agency of particular classes and social forces across world order, which dictate the “limits of the possible” for present and future ‘hegemonic projects’ within world order (Gill 1993c).¹²³ It is my hope that the transnational historical materialist approach toward elite ideology and knowledge production in the field of governance, which was advanced in this dissertation, will be useful for other IR scholars concerned with the forces/factors contributing political contestation within world order. In summary this thesis offered:

- 1) A contribution to the literature on the role of ideology, ideas, and intellectuals in the making of the LIO, as well as neoliberal hegemony and Western supremacy within world order (Ban 2016; Blyth 2002; Gill 1990, 1991a, 1996, 2002b; Moyn 2023; Parmar 2012; Robinson 2013; Slobodian 2018; Van der Pijl 1984, 2005; Varoufakis 2015).
- 2) A critique of major critical interventions/debates in political science scholarship regarding the nature of contemporary ‘populism’, ‘illiberalism’, or ‘nationalism’ in evaluating the utility of these concepts/labels for our understanding of contemporary far-right politics (Bergmann 2020; Brubaker 2017; De Groot Heupner 2023; Goodhart 2017; Laclau 2005;

¹²³ Gill (1993c: 23) notes: “[S]ocial interaction and political change takes place within what can be called the ‘limits of the possible’, limits which, however, are not fixed and immutable but exist within the dialectics of a given social structure (comprising the inter-subjective aspect of ideas, ideologies and theories, social institutions, and a prevailing socio-economic system and set of power relations). The dialectical aspect of this is historical: although social action is constrained by, and constituted within, prevailing social structures, those structures are transformed by agency (for example through collective action in what Gramsci called ‘the war of position’). Thus, the problem of historical necessity is understood in dialectical terms in ways which challenge the subject/ object dichotomy of positivist epistemology. In this sense, Gramscian historical materialism builds upon and extends aspects of the Marxian critique of classical political economy.”

Goodwin & Eatwell 2018; Mouffe 2018; Mudde 2004, 2010, 2019; Pappas 2015; Revelli 2019; Rodrick 2017; Taguieff 1984; Zakaria 1997, 2007).

- 3) A contribution to ongoing debates regarding the nature of the far-right in the LIO and its role in Western capitalist governance – partly by highlighting the historical relationship between far-right/neofascist social forces and those historically affiliated with the LIO’s liberal establishment (Anievas & Saull 2020). Relatedly, it has also provided some clarification regarding the political orientation or thin-ideology of neoconservatism, which I have argued is a highly adaptable strategy for governance which is able to accommodate different sub-ideologies. The chameleon-like character of so-called neoconservatism underscores some of the challenges of neatly disentangling the social forces of the far-right from those often associated with the so-called liberal establishment and so-called ‘moderate/centre-right’ politics within the LIO.
- 4) Add to a growing body of sociological literature concerned with the role of elite transnational intellectual organizations/networks in shaping the politics of hegemony within the LIO and contemporary capitalist world order (Carroll 2009, 2011, 2018; DiMuzio 2015; Ferguson 2019; Gill 1990, 1991, 2017; Navidi 2017; Phillips 2018; Robinson 2013; Sklair 2002, 2009, 2016; Shoup 2015; Wedel 2000, 2009, 2014, 2017).

It is my hope that my exploration into this ‘clash of hegemonic projects’ and the rise of an elite transnational far-right movement within the LIO will be a useful resource for progressive social forces within the LIO and across world order who seek an alternative model of global governance in the twenty-first century, one which addresses widening material inequalities and rejects exclusionary/Othering/supremacist expressions of identity. It is then my hope that this

dissertation provides those within the broad left movement novel insights and conceptual devices to understand the hegemonic ideas advanced by various elite social forces within the West since the mid-twentieth century. In light of both a crumbling elite liberal consensus and a rising transnational far-right movement, it is crucial that progressives and the socialist-left take seriously the importance of transnational collective intellectual organization and coordination in the twenty-first century.

During a 2024 interview with the *Guardian* Steve Bannon quips (Smith 2024: para. 11): “You’ve got to understand where your enemies are and how they’re framing the narrative to understand the contemporary world and to be effective.” Progressives and socialists associated with the global left should heed Bannon’s advice and take seriously the importance of transnational discourse coalitions and collective intellectual organizations in the making of global governance. The future of the socialist-left movement will rest on whether it develops a coherent and comprehensive hegemonic alternative for world order, one which can successfully incorporate progressive social forces and sub-ideologies from across world order and compete with the elite capitalist grand narratives advanced by both the far-right and liberal ‘centrists’ within the transatlantic bloc. Such a transnational left vanguard might resemble what Stephen Gill (2000, 2012b) has labelled as “the post-modern Prince”, a progressive formation which would give “coherence to an open-ended, plural, inclusive, and flexible form of politics” and will operate through political parties, cultural institutions, educational systems, as well as globalized networks of communication and coordination. To close, I would like to quote a passage of Antonio Gramsci writing in 1926 (1994: 336):

Now, we are interested in the mass of intellectuals and not only the individuals. Certainly, it is important and useful for the proletariat that one or more intellectuals, as individuals, should adhere to its programme and its doctrine; should merge with the proletariat,

becoming one with it and feeling themselves to be an integral part of it. The proletariat, as a class, is short of organizing elements; it does not have its own layer of intellectuals and it will only be able to form such a stratum, very slowly and laboriously, after the conquest of State power. But it is also important and useful that a break should take place within the mass of intellectuals: a break of an organic nature, historically characterized. It is important that there should be formed, as a mass formation, a left tendency in the modern sense – that is a tendency oriented toward the revolutionary proletariat.

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Appendix

Legend:

American Compass: AC

American Enterprise Institute: AEI

American Moment: AM

Bilderberg Group: BG

Blaze Media: BM

Bow Group: BG

Claremont Institute: CI

Center for European Renewal: CER

Center for Immigration Studies: CIS

Center for Renewing America: CRA

Christians United for Israel: CUI

Common Sense Society: CSS

The Daily Wire: DW

Danube Institute: DI

Edmund Burke Foundation: EBF

The European Conservative: EC

Europe of Nations and Freedom: ENF

European Conservatives and Reformists (group & party): ECR

The Federalist: F

Foundation for Defense of Democracies: FDD

Forum for Democracy: FvD

Gatestone Institute: GI
Henry Jackson Society: HJS
Heritage Foundation: HF
The Herzl Institute: THI
Hillsdale College: HC
Homeland Movement: DP
Hoover Institution: HOOV
Hudson Institute: HI
Identity and Democracy: ID
Institute of Social, Economic and Political Sciences: ISSEP
Institute of World Politics: IWP
Intercollegiate Studies Institute: ISI
James Wilson Institute: JWI
Macabee Task Force: MTF
Mathias Corvinus Collegium: MCC
Manhattan Institute: MI
Midde East Quarterly: MEQ
Modern Age: MA
Mont Pelerin Society: MPS
New Direction: ND
National Review: NR
New Social Covenant Unit: NSCU
Palantir: Pal

Patriots for Europe: PE

Patriotic Force for Change: PATRIDA

The Peoples Party for Freedom and Democracy: VVD

The Spectator: S

Vlaams Belang Party: VB

White House Writers Group: WHWG

Zephyr Institute: ZI

**Table 1: List of National Conservatism Conference Participants
(May 2019 - July 2024)**

Nationality	Politicians, Advisors, and State Officials (past and present)	Academics, Commentators, Journalists, Activists, and Religious Leaders	Organizational Sponsors
US	<p><u>Republican Party</u> Christian Adams [i]</p> <p>Michael Anton [iii] (CI, HOOV)</p> <p>Ryan Baasch [i]</p> <p>Steve Bannon (<i>Breitbart</i>, The Movement, ISSEP)</p> <p>Mike Benz [i]</p> <p>Jonathan Berry [i]</p> <p>John Bolton [i] (BG, GI)</p> <p>Judge Janice Rogers Brown [i]</p> <p>Ken Buck [i]</p> <p>Adam Candeub [i]</p> <p>Tyler Clancy [i]</p> <p>Ed Corrigan [i] (HF)</p> <p>Ted Cruz [i]</p> <p>Justin Danhof [ii]</p> <p>Sean Davis [i] (F)</p> <p>Jim DeMint [i] (HF)</p> <p>Ron DeSantis [i]</p> <p>Michael Doran [ii] (HI)</p> <p>Dr. Ron Docksai [i]</p> <p>Myron Ebell [i]</p> <p>John Ehrett [i]</p> <p>Mike Gonzalez [iii] (HF)</p> <p>Josh Hawley [iv]</p> <p>Rebecca Heinrichs [i]</p> <p>Thomas Homan [i]</p>	<p><u>The American Conservative</u> John Burtka [iii] (ISI, CI, HC)</p> <p>Emile Doak [i] (CI)</p> <p>Rod Dreher [v] (MCC)</p> <p>Sumantra Maitra [iii]</p> <p>Micah Meadowcroft [i] (CRA)</p> <p>Scott McConnell [i]</p> <p>Curt Mills [ii]</p> <p><u>American Enterprise Institute</u> Michael Barone [i]</p> <p>Michael Brendan Dougherty [i] (NR)</p> <p>Colin Dueck [i]</p> <p>Yuval Levin [i]</p> <p>Ian Rowe [i]</p> <p><u>American Reformer</u> Timon Cline [ii]</p> <p>Ben Dunson [i]</p> <p><u>Center for Immigration Studies</u> Mark Krikorian [ii]</p> <p>Jason Richwine [i]</p> <p><u>Compact Magazine</u> Sohrab Ahmari [i] (<i>First Things</i>)</p> <p>Emmet Penney [i]</p> <p><u>Claremont Institute</u> Jeremy Carl [i]</p> <p>John Eastman [i]</p> <p>David Goldman [iv]</p> <p>Brian Kennedy [i]</p>	<p>Alliance Defending Freedom</p> <p>American Compass</p> <p><i>The American Conservative</i></p> <p>American Moment</p> <p>Beck & Stone Inc.</p> <p>Canon Press</p> <p>Center For Renewing America</p> <p>Common Sense Society</p> <p>Conservative Partnership Institute</p> <p>Claremont Institute</p> <p>Davenant Institute</p> <p>Donors Trust</p> <p>Edmund Burke Foundation*</p> <p><i>First Things</i></p> <p>Gatestone Institute</p> <p>The Heritage Foundation</p> <p>Hillsdale College</p> <p>Human Events</p> <p>Institute of World Politics</p> <p>Intercollegiate Studies Institute</p> <p>International Reagan Thatcher Society</p> <p>James Wilson Institute</p> <p>Jewish Philosophy Fund</p> <p>Liberty University</p> <p>Locals.com</p> <p><i>Modern Age</i></p>

<p>US (cont.)</p>	<p>Philip Hughes [i] Ron Johnson [i] Brandon Judd [i] Clark Judge [i] (WHWG) Wells King [i] (AC, HF, CI) Mike Lee [i] David Malpass [i] (fmr. President of the World Bank) Roger Marshall [i] Blake Masters [i] Michael Mckenna [i] Amanda Milius [iii] Stephen Miller [i] Riley Moore [ii] Clare Morell [i] Ryan Newman [i] Jack Posobiec [i] Clyde Prestowitz [i] Christina Pushaw [i] Vivek Ramaswamy [ii] Gen. Robert Spalding [ii] Marco Rubio [ii] Nadia Schadlow [i] (HI, HOOV) Eric Schmitt [i] Rick Scott [ii] Kiron Skinner [i] (HOOV) Joshua Steinman [i] Katy Talento [i] Eric Teetsel [i] (HF) Matthew Turpin [i] (HOOV, Pal) J.D. Vance [ii]</p>	<p>Charles Kesler [i] Tom Klingenstein [iii] Ken Masugi [i] Arthur Milikh (HF) [ii] Helen Roy [i] Inez Feltcher Stepman [i] (F) Ryan Williams [ii] The Daily Wire Alyssa Cordova [i] (DW) Michael Knowles [i] (DW, PragerU) Edmund Burke Foundation David Brog [iii] (CUI, MTF) Chris DeMuth [vii] (HI, AEI, HOOV, BG) Josh Hammer [iv] (CI, JWI, DW) Clifford Humphrey [ii] James Lucier [i] Nathan Pinkowski [i] (ZI) Saurabh Sharma [ii] (AM) Nick Solheim (AM) Anna Wellisz [vi] (WHWH) The Federalist Rachel Bovard [iii] John Davidson [i] Emily Jashinsky [iii] Eugene Meyer [i] Benjamin Weingarten [iii] (EBF, CI) First Things Mark Bauerlein [i] Colin Moran [ii]</p>	<p>National Christian Foundation New Founding New St. Andrews College Paul E. Singer Foundation Per Aspera Policy Philos Project The Public Interest Smith Richardson Foundation Victims of Communism Memorial Fund White House Writers Group Zephyr Institute</p>
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<p>US (cont.)</p>	<p>Scott Walter [i] Theo Wold [ii] William Wolfe [i] John Yoo [ii] (HOOV, AEI) Todd Zywicki [i]</p>	<p>R.R. Reno [iv] <u>Heartland Institute</u> Paul Driessen [i] Linnea Lueken [i] <u>Heritage Foundation</u> Jessica Anderson [i] Kelsey Bolar [i] James Carafano [i] (IWP) Paul Dans [i] Kara Frederick [i] Mike Howell [i] Andrew Olivastro [i] Jay Richards [ii] Kevin Roberts [iv] (HF president) Jeff Smith [i] Hans von Spakovsky [i] Delano Squires [ii] Emma Waters [i] <u>Hillsdale College</u> David Azerrad [iii] (HF) Mollie Hemingway [i] Wilfred McClay [i] <u>Hudson Institute</u> John Fonte [iv] Walter Russell Mead [i] Michael Pillsbury [i] (IWP) William Schambra [i] <u>James Wilson Institute</u> Hadley Arkes [i] Garrett Snedeker [i] <u>Manhattan Institute</u> Oren Cass [iii] (American Compass) Diana Furchtgott-Roth [i]</p>	
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<p>US (cont.)</p>		<p>Christopher Rufo [i] (HF, CI)</p> <p><u>New Founding</u> Nate Fischer [i]</p> <p>Mathew Peterson [ii]</p> <p><u>Other</u> Andre Archie [ii]</p> <p>Amber Athey [i] (S)</p> <p>Gil Bardollar [i]</p> <p>Megan Basham [ii]</p> <p>Darren Beattie [i]</p> <p>Scott Bessent [i] (Key Square Group)</p> <p>Rev. Dr. Uriesou Brito [i]</p> <p>F.H. Buckley [i] (<i>American Spectator</i>)</p> <p>Daniel Burns [i] (<i>Public Discourse</i>)</p> <p>Chris Buskirk [ii]</p> <p>Tucker Carlson [i]</p> <p>John Carney (<i>Breitbart</i>) [i]</p> <p>Will Chamberlain [iii]</p> <p>Elbridge Colby [ii] (The Marathon Initiative)</p> <p>Paul Coleman [i] (Alliance for Defending Freedom)</p> <p>Alex Cranberg [i]</p> <p>Fr. Michael Degance [i]</p> <p>Patrick Deneen [ii]</p> <p>Miranda Devine [i]</p> <p>Seth Dillon [i] (<i>Babylon Bee</i>)</p> <p>Paul Du Quenoy [i]</p> <p>Mary Eberstadt [ii]</p> <p>Libby Emmons [i] (<i>Post Millennial</i>)</p> <p>Katy Faust [i]</p>	
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<p>US (cont.)</p>		<p>Marcell Felipe [i]</p> <p>Jules Gomes [i]</p> <p>Paul Gottfried [ii] (<i>Chronicles, Nouvelle École</i>, H.L. Mencken Club, Mises Institute, Rockford Institute, ISSEP)</p> <p>Derryck Green [ii]</p> <p>Miriam Grossman [i]</p> <p>Susan Hanssen [i]</p> <p>David Harvilicz [i] (Tranquility AI)</p> <p>Jason Hill [i]</p> <p>Nate Hochman [i] (<i>NR</i>)</p> <p>Jason Jewell [i]</p> <p>Jonathan Keeperman [i] (Passage Publishing)</p> <p>Julie Kelly [i]</p> <p>Julius Krein [ii] (<i>American Affairs</i>)</p> <p>John Lenczowski (IWP) [i]</p> <p>Glenn Loury [i]</p> <p>Kevin Lynn [i] (Progressives for Immigration Reform)</p> <p>N.S. Lyons [ii]</p> <p>Michael Lind [i] (New America)</p> <p>Brad Littlejohn [iii]</p> <p>Rich Lowry [ii]</p> <p>Clifford May [i] (FDD)</p> <p>Auron Macintyre [i] (BM)</p> <p>Daniel McCarthy [iv] (<i>MA</i>)</p> <p>Tom McClusky [i]</p> <p>Sean McGarvey [i] (NABTU)</p> <p>Eugene Meyer [i] (Federalist Society)</p> <p>Joshua Mitchell [iii]</p>	
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<p>US (cont.)</p>		<p>Albert Mohler [ii] Luke Moon [i] (Philos Project) Glenn Moots [i] Mary Margaret Olohan [i] Pavlos Papadopoulos [i] Gladden Pappen [ii] Yeonmi Park [i] Chad Pecknold [i] R. Yehoshua Peffer Daniel Pipes [i] (HOOV, <i>MEQ</i>, GI) Andrew Puzder [i] (fmr. CEO CKE Restaurants) David Reaboi [i] Colin Redemer [i] (Davenant Institute) Richard Reinsch [ii] Aaron Renn [i] Joseph Rigney [i] Julio Rosas [i] David Rose [i] Robert Royal [i] Dave Rubin [i] (BM) Austin Ruse [ii] (Center for Family and Human Rights) Terry Schilling [i] (American Principles Project) Amity Shlaes [i] Justin Shubow [i] Luma Simms [i] (Ethics and Public Policy Center) Steven Skultety [i] Marion Smith [iii] (CSS) Byron Smith [i] (Mountain Group Partners)</p>	
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<p>US (cont.)</p>		<p>Thomas Spence [i] (Regnery Publishing)</p> <p>Daniel Strand [i]</p> <p>John Stonestreet [i]</p> <p>Sarah Sumner [i]</p> <p>Carol Swain [i]</p> <p>Tutus Techera [i]</p> <p>Peter Thiel [iii] (PayPal, Pal, Clarium Capital, BG)</p> <p>Kerri Toloczko [i]</p> <p>Alan Tonelson [i]</p> <p>Batya Ungar-Sargon [ii]</p> <p>Amy Wax [i]</p> <p>David Webb [i]</p> <p>Liz Wheeler [ii]</p> <p>James Wood [i]</p> <p>Robert Woodson Sr. [i]</p> <p>Chris Wright [i] (Liberty Oilfield Services)</p> <p>Scott Yenor [iii]</p> <p>Jonathan Yudelman</p> <p>Salena Zito [i]</p> <p>R. Menachem Zupnik [iii]</p>	
<p>UK</p>	<p><u>Conservative Party</u> Lee Anderson [i]</p> <p>Amandeep Bhogal [i]</p> <p>Suella Braverman [iii]</p> <p>Miriam Cates [ii]</p> <p>Richard Dearlove [i] (fmr. MI6, HJS)</p> <p>Fred de Fossard* [i]</p>	<p><u>Bow Group</u> Ben Harris-Quinney [i]</p> <p>Roger Scruton [i] (CER, HJS)</p> <p><u>Edmund Burke Foundation</u> James Orr [iii]</p> <p><u>Center for European Renewal</u> Douglas Murray [iii] (HJS, S)</p> <p>John O’Sullivan [vii] (DI, CER)</p>	<p>Bow Group</p>

<p>UK (cont.)</p>	<p>Jacqueline Foster [i]</p> <p>David Frost [i]</p> <p>Michael Gove [i] (BG, HJS)</p> <p>Daniel Hannan [ii]</p> <p>John Hayes [i]</p> <p>MP Daniel Kawczynski [ii]</p> <p>Danny Kruger [i] (NSCU)</p> <p>Jacob Rees-Mogg [i]</p> <p>Geoffrey Charles Van Orden [i]</p> <p>Radomir Tylecote [i]</p> <p><u>UKIP and Brexit Parties</u></p> <p>David Campbell Bannerman [i] (UKIP)</p> <p>Nigel Farage [i] (UKIP, Reform UK)</p> <p>William Legge [i] (UKIP)</p> <p>Peter Whittle [i] (UKIP and Brexit Alliance)</p>	<p>Theodore Dalrymple [i] (MI, <i>Taki's Magazine</i>)</p> <p><u>Other</u></p> <p>Katharine Birbalsingh [i]</p> <p>Melanie Phillips [ii]</p> <p>Nigel Biggar [i]</p> <p>Phillip Blond [i] (Respublica)</p> <p>Fr. Daniel French [i]</p> <p>Laura Dodsworth [i]</p> <p>Nile Gardiner [i] (HF)</p> <p>Zewditu Gebreyohanes [i]</p> <p>Henry George [ii]</p> <p>David Goodhart [i]</p> <p>Matthew Goodwin [ii]</p> <p>Madeline Grant [i]</p> <p>Darren Grimes [i]</p> <p>Mary Harrington [ii]</p> <p>Mick Hume [i] (EC)</p> <p>Ed Husain [i]</p> <p>Sherelle Jacobs [i]</p> <p>Daniel Jacobson [i]</p> <p>Benedict Kiely [v]</p> <p>Lois McLatchie [i]</p> <p>Sebastian Milbank [i]</p> <p>Christopher Montgomery [i]</p> <p>Sebastian Morello [i]</p> <p>Louise Perry [i]</p> <p>Philip Pilkington [i]</p> <p>Harrison Pitt [i] (EC)</p> <p>Nina Power [i]</p> <p>Gwythian Prins [i]</p> <p>Andrew Roberts [i]</p>	
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<p>UK (cont.)</p>		<p>Juliet Samuel [i]</p> <p>Imogen Sinclair [i] (NSCU)</p> <p>Tim Stanley [i]</p> <p>David Starkey [i]</p> <p>Robert Tyler [i] (ND)</p> <p>Ed West [i]</p> <p>Toby Young [i]</p> <p>Marcus Walker [i]</p> <p>Emma Web [i] (HJS)</p>	
<p>Hungary</p>	<p><u>Fidesz</u> Attila Demkó* [i]</p> <p>Kinga Gál [i] (PE)</p> <p>Enikő Győri [i]</p> <p>Balázs Hidvéghi [i]</p> <p>Judit Varga [i]</p> <p>PM Viktor Orbán [ii]</p> <p>Balázs Orbán* [v] (MCC)</p> <p>Ágnes Zsófia Magyar* [i] (DI)</p>	<p>Frank Furedi [ii] (MCC)</p> <p>Zsófia Tóth-Bíró [i]</p>	<p>Danube Institute <i>The European Conservative</i> Mathias Corvinus Collegium</p>
<p>Italy</p>	<p><u>Brothers of Italy</u> Lucio Malan [ii]</p> <p>PM Giorgia Meloni [i] (ECR)</p> <p>Nicola Procaccini [i] (ECR)</p> <p><u>Other</u> Lorenzo Fontana [i] (Lega Nord, ENF)</p> <p>Antonio Martino [i] (Forza, HF, MPS)</p>	<p>Alvino-Mario Fantini [iii]</p> <p>Ellen Kryger Fantini [iii]</p> <p>Marco Gervasoni [i]</p> <p>Francesco Giubilei [iii]</p> <p>Roberto de Mattei [i]</p>	<p>Nazione Futura</p>
<p>France</p>	<p><u>Reconquest</u> Marion Marechal [i] (ECR, ISSEP)</p> <p>Éric Zemmour [i]</p> <p><u>Other</u> Patricia Chagnon [i] (National Rally, ID)</p>	<p>Florence Bergeaud-Blackler [i] (National Center for Scientific Research)</p> <p>Édouard Husson [i] (ISSEP)</p> <p>Hélène de Lauzun [ii]</p> <p>Anne-Elisabeth Moutet [iii]</p>	<p>N/A</p>

France (cont.)		<p>Sylvie Perez</p> <p>Alexandre Pesey [ii] (CSS)</p> <p>Grégor Puppinck [i]</p> <p>Pierre Valentin [i]</p>	
Israel	<p><u>Likud Party</u> Amichai Chikli [i]</p>	<p><u>The Herzl Institute</u> Ofir Haivry [vi] (DI, EBF)</p> <p>Yoram Hazony [ix] (EBF, Shalem Center)</p> <p>Rabbi Raphael Eis (EBF)</p> <p><u>The Tikvah Fund</u> Raphael BenLevi [i]</p> <p>Aylana Meisel [i]</p> <p>Yehoshua Pfeffer [i]</p> <p><u>Other</u> Eugene Kontorovich [i] (Kohélet Policy Forum)</p>	The Herzl Institute
Poland	<p><u>Law and Justice Party Poland</u> PM Mateusz Morawiecki [ii]</p> <p>Piotr Naimski [i]</p> <p>Anna Fotyga [i]</p> <p>Anna Maria Anders [ii]</p> <p>Ryszard Legutko [iv] (ECR, CER, DI)</p> <p>Jacek Saryusz-Wolski [i]</p> <p>Andrzej Zybertowicz [i]</p>	Michał Łuczewski [i]	Polish National Foundation
Belgium	<p>Richard Milsom [i] (ECR)</p> <p>Tom Vandendriessche [i] (VB, ENF, PE)</p>	<p>David Engels [ii]</p> <p>Jacob Reynolds [i] (MCC)</p> <p>Cornelis Schilt [i]</p> <p>Mathias Storme [i] (CER)</p>	<p>New Direction</p> <p><i>The European Conservative News Office</i></p>
Spain	<p><u>Vox Party Spain</u> Rodrigo Ballester [i] (MCC)</p> <p>Hermann Tertsch del Valle-Lersundi [ii] (ECR)</p>	<p>Juan Ángel Soto Gómez [i]</p> <p>Jorge González-Gallarza [i]</p> <p>Patricia Santos</p>	Fundación Disenso

Spain (cont.)			
Netherlands	<p>Ayaan Hirsi Ali [i] (VVD, AEI, HOOV)</p> <p>Thierry Bauet [i] (FvD)</p> <p>Rob Roos [ii] (Independent, ECR)</p>	<p>Melvin Schut [i]</p> <p>Eva Vlaardingerbroek [i]</p>	Center for European Renewal
Sweden	<p>Sweden Democrats</p> <p>Charlie Weimers [i] (ECR)</p> <p>MP Mattias Karlsson [i]</p>	<p>Johan Wennström [i]</p> <p>Paulina Neuding [i]</p>	N/A
Germany	<p>Hans-Georg Maaßen [i] (Values Union)</p>	<p>Gerhard Ludwig Müller [i]</p> <p>Gloria von Thurn-und-Taxis [i]</p> <p>Prof. Werner J. Patzelt [i] (MCC)</p>	N/A
Portugal	<p>Ossanda Liber [i] (Nova Direita)</p>	<p>Teresa Nogueira Pinto [i] (HF)</p>	N/A
India	<p>BJP</p> <p>Ram Madhav [i]</p> <p>Swapan Dasgupta [i]</p>	N/A	N/A
Croatia	<p>Ladislav Ilčić [i] (Croatian Sovereignists, ECR)</p> <p>MP Stephen Nikola Bartulica [ii] (DP)</p>	N/A	N/A
Ireland	N/A	<p>Declan Ganley [i]</p> <p>Lorcán Price [i]</p> <p>Helen O'Sullivan [i]</p>	N/A
Canada	N/A	<p>Brian Dijkema [i] (Canada, Comment)</p> <p>Eric Kaufmann [i] (Canada, Policy Exchange)</p>	N/A
Other	<p>MP Constantinos Bogdanos [i] (Greece, PATRIDA)</p>	<p>Alex Kaschuta [iii] (Romania)</p>	N/A

	Amb. Vsevolod Chentsov [i] (Ukraine, Independent)	Monika Gabriela Bartoszewicz [i] (Norway)	
	PM Janez Janša [i] (Slovenian Democratic Party)	Uzay Bulut [i] (Turkey, GI)	
	Fatmir Mediu [i] (Republican Party of Albania)	Reza Pahlavi [i] (Iran)	
	Päivi Räsänen [i] (Finland, Christian Democrats)	Ernst Roets [i] (South Africa, AfriForum)	
		Ralph Gert Schoellhammer [i] (Austria, MCC)	

* A roman numeral for the number of conferences attended by each individual is found inside square brackets next to the names. Inside the parentheses are the organizational affiliations of each NatCon presenter/organizer listed. The table includes organizers and figures who were formally invited but could not appear (e.g. Steve Bannon).

Note: While Yoram Hazony has a dual-nationality with the US and Israel, I have listed him as Israeli based on his place of birth and current residence. I have listed Reza Pahlavi – who was exiled from the Iranian Republic – as Iranian due to the lack of public transparency regarding his current citizenship – despite long residency within the US.

Table 2: National Conservatism Conference Citizenship Statistics
(May 2019 - July 2024)

Nationality (% total indiv.)	Politicians, Advisors, and State Officials (past and present)	Academics, Commentators, Journalists, Activists, and Religious Leaders	Sponsoring Organizations
US (61%)	60 (48%)	187 (66.8%)	37 (77.1%)
UK (15.8%)	20 (16.1 %)	44 (15.7%)	1 (2.1 %)
Hungary (3.2%)	8 (6.5%)	2 (<1%)	3 (6.3%)
Italy (2.7%)	5 (4%)	5 (1.8%)	1 (2.1%)
France (2.7%)	3 (2.4%)	8 (2.9%)	N/A
Israel (2.2%)	1 (<1%)	7 (2.5%)	1 (2.1%)
Poland (2.2%)	7 (5.7%)	1 (<1%)	1 (2.1%)
Belgium (2%)	2 (1.6%)	4 (1.4%)	2 (4.2%)
Spain (1.5%)	2 (1.6%)	3 (1.1%)	1 (2.1%)
Netherlands (1.5%)	3 (2.4%)	2 (<1%)	1 (2.1%)
Sweden (<1%)	2 (1.6%)	2 (<1%)	N/A
Germany (<1%)	1 (<1%)	3 (1.1%)	N/A

Portugal (<1%)	1 (<1%)	1 (<1%)	N/A
India (<1%)	2 (1.6%)	N/A	N/A
Croatia (<1%)	2 (1.6%)	N/A	N/A
Ireland (<1%)	N/A	3 (1.1%)	N/A
Canada (<1%)	N/A	2 (<1%)	N/A
Other (1.2%)	Greece: 1 (<1%) Ukraine: 1 (<1%) Slovenia: 1 (<1%) Albania: 1 (<1%) Finland: 1 (<1%)	Romania: 1 (<1%) Norway: 1 (<1%) Turkey: 1 (<1%) Iran: 1 (<1%) South Africa: 1 (<1%) Austria: 1 (<1%)	N/A
Women (19.1%)	21 (16.9%)	56 (20%)	N/A
Nationalities Represented	20	21	9
Total (100%)	124 (30.7% of NatCon Speakers)	280 (69.3% of NatCon Speakers)	48

**Percentages are rounded to one decimal place.*

Table 3: Edmund Burke Foundation Personnel and Major Donors
(May 2019-July 2024)

Nationality	Personnel and Position	Individual Donors (>\$10K)
US	David Brog (co-founder, fmr. president) Chris DeMuth (chairman) Josh Hammer (research fellow) Nathan Pinkowski (senior fellow) Saurabh Sharma (executive director) Nick Solheim (chief financial officer) Anna Wellisz (president)	Cathy and Alex Cranberg (Aspect Holdings) Christopher DeMuth Stephanie Dishal Daniel Gressel (Teleos Management) Roger Hertog (AllianceBernstin, TF) Tom Klingenstein (Cohen Klingenstein, CI) Colin Moran (Abdiel Capital) Daniel Oliver (NR) Peter Thiel (Paypal, Pal, Clarium Capital)
Israel	Rafi Eis (chief operating officer) Ofir Haivry (distinguished senior fellow) Yoram Hazony (chairman, co-founder)	N/A
UK	James Orr (UK chairman)	N/A