1 A Diverse and Global Right

This is a book about the global politics of the radical Right. We started working on the Right in 2015, when the election victory of President Donald Trump was a vague possibility, an unlikely worst-case scenario. We had a sense that there was a 'World of the Right', a commonality to the various nationalist, right-wing parties and movements that were gaining prominence in country after country – that around the globe, the Right was not only ascendant but also interlinked. After the Brexit referendum and the election of Trump, the more radical parts of the Right gained yet further strength, in Brazil, the Philippines, France, Germany, Hungary, and Poland – to mention only a few. The formal political connections between parties, movements, and individuals were relatively easy to trace. They met at international gatherings such as the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) – once a rather small gathering of American conservatives – organised summits, and bilateral meetings, and formed coordinated groups in the European Parliament. For all their emphasis on national identity, on 'America First' and 'Taking Back Control', there was an unmistakable international dimension to their nationalist, populist agendas. We concluded that despite the Right's diverse, dispersed, and divided articulations, it was increasingly necessary to speak of a globally interconnected Right.[1]

In the COVID winter of 2022, the less formal linkages, discursive resonances, and populist dimensions of this interconnectedness played out in the city where many of us live, when a convoy of trucks occupied Parliament Hill and the streets of downtown Ottawa. In

[1] Rita Abrahamsen, Jean-François Drolet, Alexandra Gheciu, Karin Narita, Srdjan Vucetic, and Michael C. Williams, 'Confronting the International Political Sociology of the New Right', *International Political Sociology* 14:1 (2020), 94–107.

freezing temperatures, the protesters condemned the Canadian government for its alleged abuse of power during the pandemic – and they did so in a language that echoed the critiques that the intellectual vanguard of the radical Right had carefully developed over the previous decades. As the so-called Freedom Convoy set up their noisy camp in the centre of a city not often the focus of international attention, they gained worldwide notoriety on social and mainstream media. Soon copy-cat demonstrations were organised in cities around the world, in Brussels, Canberra, Wellington, Oslo, Paris, and countless US cities. While the protests and the participants were diverse, the demands often incoherent, and the accusations frequently conspiratorial, they had one unifying factor: they all shared a deep disdain for the experts and the technocratic elites that had mandated vaccines and lockdowns. It was this managerial elite that was to blame not only for the pandemic restrictions but also for so much of what was wrong with the world. These views were repeated at 'Rolling Thunder Ottawa', a follow-up rally at the capital's National War Memorial in April 2022. One of the speakers at the protest was a man identified only as Daryl, a Canadian veteran who had served in Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Iraq:

> At my lowest, I began searching for answers to why I had to go do what I did in all those different countries, and in doing so I discovered who the real enemy of this world is: the elites, the ones who are controlling what we hear, what we see, what we read, our education system, our monetary system.[2]

This book seeks to explain how this recognisably populist vision of the world has become so widespread. Rather than a conventional political ideology, this is a form of thinking and speaking that promotes right-wing politics on a scale that is global rather than

[2] Matthew Lapierre, 'Police Outnumber Bikers at "Rolling Thunder" Ceremony as Speakers Evoke Memory of "Freedom Convoy" Protests', *Ottawa Citizen* (30 April 2022). 'Rolling Thunder' was also the codename for a US bombing campaign during the Vietnam War.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009516075.001 Published online by Cambridge University Press

geographically confined and that is radical in both methods and tactics. To fight liberalism, it has turned the left-wing hero Antonio Gramsci on his head and engaged in a carefully crafted counter-hegemonic struggle. This is no mere posturing or the ephemeral operation of a thin ideology; it reflects a relatively novel and revolutionary intellectual orientation. This 'radical Right', as we call it, has developed an international political sociology with the power both to identify a common enemy – the New Class of international 'managerial elites' – and to mobilise 'the people' against it. These movements are not just national: in fact, the global is a crucial part of the radical Right's intellectual foundations and political strategies.

The political strategy of the radical Right is multifaceted, targeting diverse audiences via old and new media, through multiple channels and techniques of communication, at many different venues. Nationalist and populist in character, this strategy is also international because its populism seeks to unify socially and geographically disparate groups through specific understandings of their marginalisation by liberalism and globalisation. In Marxian terms, the radical Right strategy is to try to bring its existing and potential supporters to self-consciousness, turning them from analytically identifiable but political inchoate classes (or in the case of the Right, diverse social groups) *in* themselves to politically aware and active classes *for* themselves. A key to understanding the novelty and relevance of the radical Right is thus to appreciate both its transnational revolutionary impulse and its foundational precepts concerning the so-called liberal international order (LIO).

Grounded in the study of politics and International Relations, this book also draws on insights from other fields, including sociology and political and intellectual history. This multi-faceted approach provides a broad conceptual and empirical understanding of what otherwise often appears as a disjointed series of kneejerk right-wing attacks on the advances of civil rights, immigration, and other targets in the global culture wars. Like all scholarly approaches to these themes, ours is not without risks. Our intention is neither to over-intellectualise, nor

legitimise, the actors under study, or to bestow them with an academic or scientific credibility that they often do not deserve. As scholars of right-wing politics, we always face the danger of being accused of normalising even the most fringe elements of those movements. Such risks aside, we firmly believe that to counter the rise of the radical Right and to achieve a less destructively polarised politics, we need to understand their ideas and their attractions for large sections of the population. This book is an effort towards that understanding.

AN ILLIBERAL INTERNATIONAL? MAPPING A GLOBAL RIGHT

The near worldwide rise of radical right-wing parties and movements has transformed not only domestic politics but also international relations. Increasingly, the threat to the LIO is seen as stemming not only from illiberal powers such as China and Russia but also from *within*, due to the rise of right-wing nationalist and populist governments and their domestic constituencies.[3] While the various nationalist personalities and parties – from Trump in the US to Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil and Narendra Modi in India, to Georgia Meloni's Brothers of Italy, Marine Le Pen's Rassemblement National, and Viktor Orbán's Fidesz – are far from unified in their ideas and policies, a globally connected Right is emerging.

One way to trace this interconnectedness is through the activities of CPAC. Established in 1974 by the American Conservative Union (ACU) as an annual meeting for US conservatives, CPAC has evolved into a series of global festivals for the Right, increasingly including the more radical parts of the movement. The first European CPAC was held in Budapest in 2022 and featured an opening address by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who declared that under his leadership Hungary was 'the laboratory where we managed to come up

[3] Alexander Cooley and Daniel Nexon, *Exit from Hegemony: The Unravelling of the American Global Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020); Rebecca Adler-Nissen and Ayşe Zarakol, 'Struggles for Recognition: The Liberal International Order and the Merger of Its Discontents', *International Organization* 75:2 (2021), 611–634.

with the antidote for progressive dominance'. To replicate this success elsewhere, Orbán argued, conservatives must 'make friends'. According to him, their opponents, 'the progressive liberals and the neo-Marxists have unlimited unity', whereas conservatives squabble over the smallest issues. In order to counter the progressives' threat to 'the whole of Western civilization', conservatives must 'coordinate the movement of our troops, because we face a great challenge'.[4] The focus on international unity was even more overt at the second Budapest CPAC in May 2023, which met under the slogan 'United We Stand' and was billed as 'creating the liberals' nightmare: the international convergence of national forces'.[5]

Seeking to construct a unique platform for 'joining with our allies in North and South America, in Europe, Japan, Israel, and Australia', the two Budapest conferences did indeed bring together a large number of conservative friends, including congressman Eduardo Bolsonaro, a prominent figure on the Brazilian Right and son of the then president, who addressed the conference via video link. The Bolsonaros were no strangers to CPAC: Brazil has hosted its own annual meeting since 2019. The 2021 event was presided over by President Jair Bolsonaro and the highlight was a virtual speech by President Trump. Anticipating the defeat of Bolsonaro at the polls, the 2022 edition was a more subdued affair. It was nevertheless dubbed a 'conservative Lollapalooza', featuring former Trump spokesperson Jason Miller and several protégés of Steve Bannon, Trump's one-time political strategist. It also brought together right-wing personalities and politicians from across Latin America, including Argentina's Javier Milei, then congressman and now president, and former Chilean presidential candidate José Antonio Kast. In the words of Kast, 'For us it is very important to meet, to discuss and to get to know what the radical left is doing in different countries in Latin America.'[6]

[4] Victor Orbán, 'Speech at the CPAC on 19 May 2022', *Viségrad Post* (19 May 2022).
[5] The phrase is from the website of CPAC Hungary 2023, www.cpachungary.com.
[6] Nick Burns, 'Latin America's "CPAC Right" Still Has Big Ambitions', *Americas Quarterly* (15 November 2022).

The Latin American Right met again at the first Mexico CPAC in 2022. Bannon addressed the conference via video link, while Matt Schlapp, the chairman of CPAC's parent group the ACU, used his opening remarks to express his fear that Latin America's 'godless communism' would spread to the US.[7] Schlapp made a subsequent appearance at Israel's first CPAC in 2022, alongside prominent US conservatives such as the Ohio senator J. D. Vance and the media personality Ben Shapiro.[8] CPACs have also spread to Australia, Japan, and South Korea, with CPAC organisers in Japan pledging support for strengthening conservative cooperation within the so-called Quad (the strategic dialogue comprising Japan, India, Australia, and the US) and across the Indo-Pacific through the establishment of an Asia-Pacific Conservative Union, or APCU.

CPAC promoters are therefore not exaggerating: their events have become an important international stage for leading conservatives and provide opportunities to build bridges and cultivate alliances between right-wing individuals, groups, and political parties. The traffic in radical conservative ideas, policies, and personalities at these events is geographically multi-directional rather than uni-directional from the Euro-Atlantic to the rest of the world. Certainly, there was a great deal of fanfare about Bannon going to CPAC Japan in 2017, and about ex-United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) leader Nigel Farage and Breitbart News Network editor-in-chief Raheem Kassam appearing at CPAC Australia in 2019. But Jair Bolsonaro figured prominently on the 2023 CPAC programme in Washington DC, and the leader of the Japan Conservative Union (JCU) and founder of CPAC Japan, Hiroaki 'Jay' Aeba, also known as Jikido Aeba, has been a regular speaker at CPACs for more than a decade.[9]

[7] Brendon O'Boyle, 'At CPAC Mexico, "Orphaned" Right Tries to Build Home as Region Tacks Left', *Reuters* (19 November 2022).

[8] Zac Beauchamp, 'CPAC Goes to Israel', *Vox* (23 July 2022).

[9] Aeba has close ties to the religious organisation Happy Science. Graig Graziosi, 'Japanese Cult Representative Is Speaking for the 10th Year in a Row at CPAC', *The Independent* (9 April 2021). He flaunts his association with figures on the American Right on the JCU website; the JCU has likewise made hay out of Aeba's attendance of CPAC Hungary.

Attendance at CPAC meetings also serves to bestow legitimacy and an appearance of importance to right-wing groups that may be relatively marginal in their home countries. A case in point is AfriForum, an organisation that seeks to represent the white Afrikaner minority in South Africa. In post-apartheid South Africa, Afrikaner nationalists have struggled to establish a domestic political platform that is not tainted by their historical association with white supremacist power. But recognition abroad helps with recognition at home. When AfriForum's deputy CEO Ernst Roets spoke at the 2022 CPAC in Budapest, it was not only an opportunity to tell the world about alleged discrimination against Afrikaners in South Africa but also a way of strengthening the organisation's domestic visibility and legitimacy.

CPAC internationalisation is but one indicator of a globally interconnected Right. There are numerous other conferences, summits, and more or less formal networks and forms of collaboration. The Madrid Forum is of particular importance. Spearheaded by the Spanish radical Right party Vox and its leader Santiago Abascal, the Forum describes itself as a 'coordinated effort between different actors, from different ideological spheres, who share their determination to face the threat posed by the growth of communism on both sides of the Atlantic'.[10] The centrepiece of this transatlantic front is the *Madrid Charter: In Defence of Democracy and Freedom in the Iberosphere*, which has been signed by more than 150 politicians and activists in Europe, the US, and Latin America – including Italy's Meloni and Brazil's Eduardo Bolsonaro – and over 10,000 people worldwide. Through the Charter, Vox promotes the concept of the *Iberosphere* – in effect, a new type of 'imagined political community' that would bring together over 700 million people who 'share a deep-rooted heritage and possess a significant economic and geopolitical potential' based on a pan-Hispanic identity and

[10] Nathalia Urban, 'The Global Far Right Is Betting the House on Bolsonaro', *Jacobin* (19 October 2021).

Catholic faith.[11] Abascal and other Vox delegates have toured Latin America to promote and recruit signatories to the Madrid Charter, meeting with senior politicians in Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, and Peru. In 2022, the Madrid Forum organised its first regional meeting in Bogotá, with delegates from the Vox party and right-wing groups from Colombia, Peru, Cuba, Venezuela, and Chile forming a trans-atlantic right-wing alliance.

Further indicators of a globally interconnected Right can be found in the National Conservatism (NatCon) Conferences, run by the Edmund Burke Foundation and its chair Yoram Hazony, author of *The Virtues of Nationalism*. Thus far, NatCon meetings have been held in London, Washington, Rome, Brussels, and Orlando, among other cities, bringing together hundreds of delegates from around the world. NatCon has attracted ever more high-profile politicians from the right of mainstream conservatism and has become a meeting place for a diverse collection of '"dissidents", "neo-reactionaries", "post-lefties", or the "heterodox" fringe – though they're all often grouped for convenience under the heading of America's New Right'.[12]

Countless right-wing leaders and personalities circulate within these other networks too. The US media superstar Tucker Carlson appeared at the NatCon in Washington in 2019, and with great fanfare took his FOX TV show to Hungary for a week in 2021. Marion Maréchal, the granddaughter of Jean-Marie Le Pen and prominent French politician, was a big hit at the 2018 CPAC in Washington, while Viktor Orbán is a regular star guest at important right-wing summits. Texas senator Ted Cruz addressed delegates at the VOX party in Madrid, stressing their 'shared values',[13] and numerous

[11] See Richard Sanders, 'Spain's Vox Sets Its Sights on Latin America', *World Politics Review* (14 December 2021). Robert Semonsen, 'Vox's Abascal Meets Bolsonaro to Promote Transatlantic Alliance', *The European Conservative* (15 December 2021).

[12] James Pogue, 'Inside the New Right: Where Peter Theil Is Placing His Biggest Bets', *Vanity Fair* (20 April 2022).

[13] Ishaan Tharoor, 'The GOP Alliance with Europe's Far-Right Deepens', *The Washington Post* (12 October 2021).

parties and individuals are strengthening their ties with the Likud party of Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel. These include the Hindu nationalist government of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as well as Orbán and others from the Visegrad group of countries.[14]

National political leaders on the radical Right revel in demonstrating friendships in public and via public diplomacy. Modi has a long history of cultivating shared camaraderie not only with Israel's prime minister but also with Bolsonaro and Trump. In September 2019, Modi famously went to Houston, Texas, where he clasped hands with Trump in front of 50,000 people.[15] The same year he visited Bolsonaro in Brasilia, who in turn was guest of honour at India's Republic Day parade in 2020. Bolsonaro's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ernesto Araujo, showered praise on India, suggesting that the country 'is modernising itself without giving up its traditions and values, and is being built from its roots and essence and not from the dogmas of those who form the post-nationalist or anti-nationalist world … Only nations that recognize themselves as nations can aspire to be something in the world. That is the lesson of India and also the one that Brazil is trying to give to the world.'[16] More recently, Prime Minister Modi's attention has turned to Italy's Meloni, who was welcomed by Modi as the main guest and keynote speaker at the 2023 Raisina Dialogue, India's premier world affairs conference.

We must avoid the temptation to exaggerate the unity of the Right. At the same time, it is crucial not to fall prey to a search for national differences that effaces the international dimensions, and thus retreat into a methodological nationalism that sees claims of globality as sensationalist and even tending towards conspiracy

[14] Dani Filc and Sharon Pardo, 'Israel's Right-Wing Populists: The European Connection', *Survival* 63:3 (2021), 99–122. The relationship with Israel helps insulate leaders and parties from criticisms that they are pursuing anti-Semitic discourses and policies.

[15] Weeks after the 'Howdy, Modi' rally in Texas, a group of mostly right-wing members of the European Parliament visited Indian-administered Kashmir, whose 'special status' the Modi government had revoked earlier that year.

[16] Ricardo Senra, 'O encontro entre o "mito" e o "messias": o que Bolsonaro traz na volta da Índia para Brasil', *BBC Brazil* (28 January 2020). Our translation.

theories, denying that the global dimensions have any real significance.[17] The global activities and interconnections we have described certainly do not represent a unified 'right-wing international'.[18] They are often diffuse and diverse; divergences and conflicts are as common as convergences.[19] But they are not purely ad hoc. They represent strategic attempts to build transnational links, to spread and exchange ideas, and, perhaps above all, to gain exposure and generate energy and commitment. The highly mediatised spectacles of CPAC, NatCon, and other right-wing meetings serve not only to generate connections but also to perform unity and thus solidify the image of the radical Right as a movement with power, purpose, and momentum – a performative politics that can itself be symbolically powerful. They constitute a crucial aspect of what we call the radical Right's counter-hegemonic strategy, a performative politics of global radical Right networks. As the brief illustrations above suggest, simply dismissing the radical Right's global dimensions is increasingly unconvincing. Analyses that move beyond the national/international divide and its methodological entailments are essential.

GLOBALITY AND THE GLOBAL RIGHT

A core puzzle of this book is the extent to which it makes sense to speak of the international prominence of the radical Right as a *global Right*, as opposed to simply a simultaneous upsurge of a variety of national right-wing parties or movements that are primarily the

[17] See, for instance, the position of one of the most influential of these analysts, Cas Mudde, *The Far Right Today* (Cambridge: John Wiley & Sons, 2019); and the discussion in Mihai Varga and Aron Buzogány, 'The Two Faces of the "Global Right": Revolutionary Conservatives and National-Conservatives', *Critical Sociology* 48:6 (2022), 1089–1107.

[18] Logically, 'right-wing internationalism' can seem an oxymoron because the right is nationalist in nature but compare with Mussolini's attempts in the early 1930s to set up a 'Fascist International'. Jens Steffek, 'Fascist Internationalism', *Millennium* 44:1 (2015), 3–22; Kye J. Allen, 'An Anarchical Society (of Fascist States): Theorizing Illiberal Solidarism', *Review of International Studies* 48:3 (2022), 583–603.

[19] Clifford Bob, *The Global Right Wing and the Clash of World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 5.

products of economic dislocation and inequality.[20] At the thinnest analytic level, the globalised Right seems a typical network phenomenon – a group of 'actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services'.[21] Clearly this captures key dimensions of a globally interconnected Right. However, we suggest that the conditions of today's global Right require a wider rethinking of its relationship to the global in two ways. First, it is constituted by transnational interactions operating at multiple scales. Second, it defines itself and is co-constituted by its relation to the global, not just to the national.

Regarding the first, studies of globalisation have argued for decades that the domestic and the international are entwined in novel structures and power relations with crucial impacts on the relationship between the global, the national, and the local. These relationships go beyond the rise of networks or of digital media, important as these often are.[22] Contemporary global politics is not just a matter of connectivity between discrete actors who remain largely within national/international, state/society divides, nor are the local, the national, and the international neatly stacked on top of each other in the manner of conventional levels of analyses. Indeed,

[20] Numerous studies have stressed economic factors as the key explanation for the rise of right-wing populism within individual countries. While we recognise the importance of the economic, our analysis emphasises how disadvantaged groups have to be politically mobilised and how a particular conceptualisation of the global is a key part of the radical Right's ability to do so. On economic factors, see Dani Rodrik, 'Why Does Globalization Fuel Populism? Economics, Culture, and the Rise of Right-Wing Populism', *Annual Review of Economics* 13:1 (2021), 133–170; Eric Protzer and Paul Summerville, *Reclaiming Populism: How Economic Fairness Can Win Back Disenchanted Voters* (London: Polity, 2022).

[21] Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders* (New York, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 2. Also see Bob, *The Global Right Wing*; Frank A. Stengel, David B. MacDonald and Dirk Nabers eds., *Populism and World Politics: Exploring Inter-and Transnational Dimensions* (London: Palgrave, 2019); Owen Worth, 'Globalisation and the "Far-Right" Turn in International Affairs', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 28 (2017), 19–28.

[22] Chenchen Zhang, 'Postcolonial Nationalism and the Global Right', *Geoforum* 144 (2023), 1–5.

they never were, and recent studies have drawn attention to the deep 'imperial globality' of the world, and the manner in which the global is partly constituted inside the national and the local, giving rise to new assemblages that both territorialise and de-territorialise.[23]

Our focus on interconnectedness thus breaks away from established, pre-defined categories of state, nation, and society, recognising their fluid interactions, profound relationality, and the co-constitution of identities. The radical Right, its conditions of possibility, its ideologies, worldviews, and sensibilities, are simultaneously global and local. Thus, the white nationalism of the US and the Hindu nationalism of India are formed in part through transnational dialogues rooted in narratives of race and civilisation that have their origin in colonial knowledge – transnational and transhistorical spaces unseen by conventional methodological nationalism.[24] Or to return to the example of events such as the CPACs, these gatherings are not simply new forms of radical Right networking: they are examples of what Julian Go and George Lawson have called 'contact zones or interstitial spaces' that span the national/international divide and bring together and constitute a range of forces whose power is magnified through their reverberations with each other.[25] As such, they illustrate characteristics of an identifiably global Right that requires a transnational historical sociology to be fully understood.

Second, we argue that today's radical Right is *substantially constituted*, not just structurally enabled, by its relation to the global. It is located not just in opposition to globalisation, but in an ideological relation to the global. Contemporary globalisation involves the construction of transnational structures explicitly designed to operate

[23] Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, *Empires and the Reach of the Global 1870–1945* (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, 2012); Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

[24] Ishan Ashutosh, 'The Transnational Routes of White and Hindu Nationalism', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 45:2 (2022), 319–339.

[25] Julian Go and George Lawson, 'Introduction: For a Global Historical Sociology', in Julian Go and George Lawson, eds., *Global Historical Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 27.

across boundaries and create universal institutions of power and authority beyond national control. The global Right defines itself in diverse but recognisably resonant ways in relation to these structures of power. For example, it opposes (though not without ambivalences) the neoliberal project and its creation of new international structures and elite-dominated institutions insulated from popular pressures and national control.[26] While there are many diverse strands to these analyses, they all demonstrate an engagement with the global as a constitutive condition of a *new* Right. Most importantly, as we will show at length in Chapter 3, the radical Right defines itself in direct opposition to global managerialism and what they perceive as a new global elite. As such these movements and ideas are themselves constituted by the global.[27]

To develop a theoretical framework that can account for both the transnational resonances and the divergences of the global Right, we turn to recent debates surrounding the concept most often associated with the Right: populism. Populism is frequently characterised as a 'thin' ideology that posits a divide between 'the people' and a perfidious 'elite' but that lacks specific content beyond this basic opposition.[28] As a result, populism as a concept can cover a wide range of ideological positions – Left and Right, industrial or agrarian – and is adaptable to many different contexts. Yet despite its popularity, it is not clear that the idea of populism as a thin ideology can bear the weight it has been asked to carry. As Paris Aslanidis has argued, if

[26] Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2018); Ray Kiely, *The Conservative Challenge to Globalization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020).

[27] We are not suggesting that the Old Right, including its fascist forms, did not relate to the global. These positions linked their ideas to the impact of international economic, social, and political processes, including global trade, technology transfer, colonialism, migration, and a host of others. Even a cursory glance at the racial theories of Gobineau, the transhistorical assessments of Spengler, or the legal theories of Schmitt easily and quickly reveals the depth of their engagement with global dynamics; and far and fascist Right movements have a long, if uneven, history of attempting to organise internationally. These ideas remain important to parts of the radical Right.

[28] Cas Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', *Government and Opposition* 39:4 (2004), 542–63.

ideologies are comprised of core and adjacent concepts (liberalism, for instance, has necessary if varying connections to liberty), it is unclear whether in this very attenuated form populism is an ideology at all. How can an ideology, however 'thin', embrace substantially opposed concrete ideologies on both the Left and the Right?[29]

These limitations have led to suggestions that populism is better understood as a specific form of discourse, or a particular discursive framing, that retains the commonplace understanding of populism without getting entangled in the question of whether it is an ideology or not. As Aslanidis puts it, this reformulation yields 'a purely discursive definition: populism modestly becomes a discourse, invoking the supremacy of popular sovereignty to claim that corrupt elites are defrauding "the People" of their rightful political authority. It becomes an anti-elite discourse in the name of the sovereign People.'[30]

This understanding of populism can be traced to the work of Ernesto Laclau, who argued that 'a movement is not populist because in its politics or ideology it presents actual contents identifiable as populistic, but because it shows a particular logic of articulation of those contents – whatever those contents are.'[31] The populist form, or mode of articulation, in turn produces structuring effects that manifest themselves at the level of political representation.[32] In this discursive approach, the division between the elite and the people remains at the heart of populism, but both concepts are 'empty signifiers'. As Aslanidis captures the point:

> The populist form pits a certain "People" against a certain "power bloc", but both subjectivities are "empty signifiers", symbolic vessels filled with particular content depending on the specifics

[29] Paris Asladinis, 'Is Populism an Ideology? A Refutation and a New Perspective', *Political Studies* 64:1 (2016), 88–104.

[30] *Ibid.*, 96.

[31] Ernesto Laclau, 'Populism: What's in a Name?', in Francisco Panizza ed., *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy* (London: Verso, 2005), 33. See also Chantal Mouffe, *Toward a Left Populism* (London: Verso, 2019).

[32] Laclau, 'What's in a Name?', 34.

> of the political context within which they are invoked and the cultural toolbox at work … It is those formal components of populist discourse that account for the – almost instinctive – affinity we perceive among the varying phenomena collected under the populist umbrella, while the flexibility of their contents explains the diversity of this ecosystem.[33]

For Laclau, these points are particularly important when one moves from conceptual analysis to political practices and strategies. What if, he asks, 'rather than a clumsy political and ideological operation', populism is a 'performative act endowed with a rationality of its own – that is to say, in some situations, vagueness is a precondition for constructing relevant political meanings?'[34] In this view, the 'people' in populism is never 'a primary datum' and populist discourses do not simply express some kind of original, popular identity. Instead, it constitutes the latter and seeks to bring it into being as a political force.[35] Populism is thus marked by a rhetorical performance, based on metaphor and analogy, containing a structure of basic oppositions. These oppositions do not require a pre-existing sameness or unity. Instead, populism emerges from the 'equivalent articulation of demands making the emergence of the people possible'.[36] Populism is a political practice of 'metaphorical re-aggregation', seeking to allow different groups to 'regroup themselves as equivalent differences around one of the poles of the dichotomy' and to see themselves as part of the same struggle despite the diversity of their social positions and specific demands.[37] In a case of popular opposition to oligarchic domination, for instance, 'the wrongs experienced by various sections of "the people" will be seen as equivalent to each other *vis a vis* the "oligarchy". But this is simply to say that they are all *analogous* with each other in their confrontation with the oligarchic

[33] Aslanidis, 'Is Populism an Ideology?', 97.
[34] Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), 17.
[35] Laclau, 'What's in a Name?', 48.
[36] *Ibid.*, 74.
[37] *Ibid.*, 18.

power.'[38] Moving away from essentialist visions of classes and class interests in classical Marxist politics, this understanding of populism focuses on its generative practices and strategies. While Laclau and his followers focus primarily on its contributions to leftist politics, it also provides a particularly useful means of thinking about the radical Right and its transnational alliances.

As a form of political discourse, populism can be filled with various kinds of ideological content, whether these are from the Left, the Right, or variations on each. In an important contribution, Marlene Laruelle has argued that discursive views highlighting the ideological 'thinness' of populism address not only conceptual questions but also help explain the pervasiveness of populist movements today – a pervasiveness that reflects the postmodern and globalised conditions of contemporary social and political life itself. In her words, 'thick ideologies' such as socialism or liberalism 'are a product of classical modernity that may not be repeated. Instead, the post-modern world, with its inherent ideological fluidity, may only produce thin ideologies. As such illiberalism does not necessarily present a unified front with a coherent doctrine in its competition with liberalism.'[39] From this perspective, 'illiberalism' is, in her felicitous phrase, 'post-postmodern'.[40]

The radical Right embraces these ideological possibilities. It accepts the 'fluid' or 'liquid' sociology of late or post-modernity that renders thick ideological uniformity less politically viable. But it radicalises this acceptance into new forms of willed tradition or modern values: a 'strategic essentialism' that (unlike liberal, Left, or many postcolonial uses of the concept) asserts the truth of these claims even as it rejects modernist views of objectivity. This paradoxical stance is difficult to understand if one remains inside the truth/relativism, modern/postmodern dualisms that dominated controversies

[38] *Ibid.*, 19.
[39] Marlene Laruelle, 'Illiberalism: A Conceptual Introduction', *East European Politics* 38:2 (2022), 303–327, 7.
[40] *Ibid.*, 309.

over postmodernism across the social sciences from the 1970s on. As Laruelle notes: 'Post-postmodernism … offers an appealing context for thinking about illiberalism as a call for a return to modernity against post-modern values or to classic modernity against liquid modernity.'[41]

In the case of the radical Right, Laruelle argues, the content of these discourses (or what she refers to as a discursively reformulated 'thin' ideology) is illiberal – that is, it takes an oppositional stance 'to today's liberalism in all its varied scripts' and represents 'a new ideological universe that, even if doctrinally fluid and context based, is to some degree coherent.' We argue that the global is a crucial element of this framing. Discursive framings of the global provide content for the empty form of populist discourse for today's radical Right ideologies and are key conditions for the globalisation of those ideologies. This two-fold globality is vital and justifies – indeed requires – thinking of today's multiple and diverse radical Rights as simultaneously a global Right.

In our conceptualisation and analysis, this global Right does not require ideological uniformity, institutional hierarchy or even strong network ties. Its strength emerges in part from its ability to *articulate* connections between different agendas and positions. Strict functional or social equivalence – identical economic class relations or specific forms of cultural domination and subordination – between different groups or national settings is *not* required for clustering to emerge around analogically common oppositions to globalisation or the liberal international order. Recall Daryl from the demonstrations in Ottawa; his ready identification of the 'real enemy of this world' as 'the elites, the ones who are controlling what we hear, what we see, what we read, our education system, our monetary system' is part

[41] *Ibid.*, 309. On 'liquid modernity', see Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), and for an account of how the radical Right embraces a post-postmodern neo-traditionalism, see Jean-François Drolet and Michael C. Williams, 'From Critique to Reaction', *Journal of International Political Theory* 18:1 (2022), 23–45.

of an equivalence chain that situates his position in Canada alongside that of millions of other people around the world. Another striking illustration comes from fieldwork among a right-wing Afrikaner group in rural South Africa, where two supportive visitors from Tennessee explained their presence with the statement 'our situation in the US is the same as that of the Afrikaner minority. We too are a threatened minority.'

These are the terms under which it makes sense to speak of a global Right. They allow us to see articulations between and across national Rights, and between the radical Right and national conservatives. As Mihai Varga and Aron Buzagány have noted, we can distinguish between the radical Right – such as the French New Right, which is often anti-statist and proposes alternatives to the international order beyond the sovereign state system – and national conservatives such as Orbán, whose agendas are based more on national sovereignty and reform of the existing order and its institutions.[42] These are important distinctions; however, they should not distract from the ways that these different positions interact either directly or indirectly within the wider political, social, and cultural field. The multi-valanced nature of right-wing articulations makes the global Right hard to define, but it also gives it its protean nature.

Consider, as an example, how the 'Northeast European' version of the far Right, revealingly analysed by Rogers Brubaker, reverses religious traditionalist convictions and defends LGBTQ+ rights in the name of 'European' values of tolerance that it argues relativistic liberals have abandoned in favour of a multicultural ethos that refuses to defend them, lest it should offend the values of Islamic Traditionalists.[43] Here, the radical Right presents itself as the defender of the true Europe and Western (liberal) values and attacks contemporary liberalism for failing to do so. In

[42] Varga and Buzagány, 'The Two Faces of the "Global Right"'.

[43] Rogers Brubaker, 'Between Nationalism and Civilizationism: The European Populist Moment in Comparative Perspective', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40:8 (2017), 1191–1226.

Hungary, by contrast, LGBTQ+ rights are rejected in the name of a fusion between Christian traditionalism and nationalism that presents itself as the 'true' basis of European or Western civilisation. Despite their differences, both positions stress the importance of Western or European civilisation as a particular set of values, both are suspicious of Islam and seek radically to limit its influence in their societies, and both oppose the liberals that they present as threatening their societies and values. Analogously, powerful elements of the radical right-wing Hindu diaspora have mobilised anti-racist protests in the US to promote their visions of India as a Hindu community that excludes Muslims.[44] In India itself, the leadership of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has voiced opposition to 'cultural Marxists or Woke' and the 'destructive, all-devouring forces' said to be hobbling India's rise.[45]

The result is not political uniformity, but neither is it nullity: each identifies with and seeks to advance the cause of the radical Right and weaken that of liberal adversaries, sharing some agendas and differing on others. Similarly, they generally eschew revolutionary violence and work within existing political institutions, engaging in counter-hegemonic struggles to radically reform them. Such counter-hegemonic action avoids the 'false dilemma between reform and revolution'[46] that bedevilled the Old Right as well as the Left, while simultaneously enabling a range of agendas that, despite their differences, advance the radical Right.[47]

[44] Ashutosh, 'The Transnational Routes of White and Hindu Nationalisms'.

[45] Quotes from RSS leader Mohan Bhagwat's speech at its annual 'Vijayadashami Utsav' event. NDTV, 'Cultural Marxists, Woke Only Want Complete Control', 24 October 2023. The RSS used similar language to dismiss a 2023 BBC documentary critical of the Modi government.

[46] Mouffe, *For a Left Populism*, 45.

[47] This unity in diversity is captured by the US white nationalist Greg Johnson, 'The North American New Right is not a political party or a party-like intellectual sect. We are an informal network that can overlap and penetrate all social institutions, including parties. I maintain contacts with people all over the globe who are involved in various political parties. They know where I stand. Where we disagree, we agree to disagree.' Greg Johnson, 'New Right vs. Old Right', *Counter-Currents* (11 May 2012).

In this book, we trace how the contemporary Right has succeeded in developing an opposition between a global managerial elite and diverse 'people' in multiple geographical locations. This takes many forms, but it is a key discursive structure that anchors the construction and mobilisation of the radical Right across diverse contexts. Uniformity, unanimity, conceptual precision, or centralised organisation are not required in order to craft such performatively loosely shared but still salient and impactful political identities, discourses, and alliances. The unity of the global Right emerges instead from diverse demands articulated in ways that allow its participants to see and feel themselves as engaged in analogically similar struggles against a common enemy. As we will show, within these articulations, African cultural nativists can make common cause with their analogical global allies – as is the case with the radical pan-Africanist Kemi Seba, the *éminence grise* of the French *Nouvelle Droite* Alain de Benoist, and the Russian radical Right ideologue Alexander Dugin. Russians and Iranians, Hungarians and Americans, Swedes and Japanese, Brazilians and Indians, and myriad other social groups and identities can find common rhetorical and affectively mobilising oppositions and affinities despite their divergent economic, cultural, and geographic positions.[48] Similarly, in one of the most striking shifts in recent political discourse, the concept of class – and particularly support for a 'forgotten working class' – has become a key signifier for the radical Right since it is no longer tied to the anti-capitalism of the Left but is defined in opposition to the New Class of liberal globalism. This helps explain why so many right-wing parties now explicitly fight for the votes of the working classes, linking culture, class, and economics within this structuring opposition.

[48] There has recently been welcome interest in these global manifestations of the radical Right. See, for example, Priya Chacko and Kanishka Jayasuriya, 'Asia's Conservative Moment: Understanding the Rise of the Right', *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 48:4 (2018), 529–40; Şefika Kumral, 'Globalization, Crisis and Right-Wing Populists in the Global South: The Cases of India and Turkey', *Globalizations* 20:5 (2023), 752–781; Roderigo Duque Estrado Campos, 'The International Turn in Far-Right Studies: A Critical Assessment', *Millennium* 51:3 (2023), 892–919.

There is an important affective, or emotional, aspect to this form of politics, but it is not reducible to emotions alone. Successful populist politics of this kind involves constructing, propagating, and adapting core conceptual oppositions across divergent groups and settings and engaging in educational and organisational initiatives that make this happen. It requires widespread attempts to inspire globe-spanning coalitions of forces able and willing to wage what Gramsci calls a 'war of attrition, trench warfare' against existing common sense. Such war by definition takes decades and requires considerable economic and cultural resources, as well as organisational structures and strategies.

Key right-wing thinkers – especially those associated with the so-called New Right – have, over several decades, theorised and strategically mobilised global economic dislocation and cultural resentment, developing a coherent sociological critique of globalisation. Drawing on the oft-neglected tradition of elite managerialism, New Right ideologues have borrowed freely from Lenin and Schmitt on the power of enmity, as well as from Gramsci and the Frankfurt school on counter-hegemonic strategies. Against the temptation to dismiss right-wing ideas as merely populist and by implication as lacking in ideological and theoretical foundations, we are thus faced with the more challenging task of engaging a position that has already developed its own international political sociology and incorporated it into its political strategies.

THE CHALLENGES OF STUDYING THE RIGHT

Studying the Right is fraught with challenges and studying the global Right even more so. To begin, there is a great deal of disagreement concerning what constitutes a satisfactory and all-encompassing definition of conservatism and the Right, the content of which varies enormously with time and place. Unlike other modern political ideologies, conservatism is not a rigorously developed and cohesive school of thought but a constellation of ideas, attitudes, and thinkers revolving around a series of historically situated rejections of liberal

and socialist thought. Even its most committed chroniclers have noted that 'conservatism is inherently resistant to precise definition.'[49] As Karl Mannheim argues, conservatism 'is a counter movement, and this fact alone already makes it reflective: it is, after all a response, so to speak, to the "self-organisation" and agglomeration of "progressive" elements in experience and thinking.'[50] Against the abstract, speculative tendencies of modern thought, conservatism emphasises the comforting immediacy of shared cultural conventions and self-evident truths. It affirms the importance of historical heritage, collective memory, and the concrete, situated experience of one's particular environment as the main determinant of political thought and action.

This does not mean that conservatism is necessarily committed to maintaining the status quo. Rather, it seeks to prevent the sort of abrupt and disruptive change sought by forces perceived to be of the Left and destructive of what conservatives at a given time want to preserve. Typically, it does this by insisting on the presence of forces (e.g., nature, God, biology, or history) deemed beyond human control, and that impose severe limitations on the perfectibility of the human condition. This preference for stability and continuity over disruptive change is often matched by support for more substantive political concepts such as hierarchy, elitism, religiosity, property rights, free enterprise, and state sovereignty – though naturally not all these are found, or found in the same ways, in conservatism's varying guises.[51]

[49] George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in American since 1945*, Thirtieth-Anniversary ed. (Wilmington: ISI, 2006), xvii; for a massive recent survey, see Edmund Fawcett, *Conservatism: Fight for a Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).

[50] Karl Mannheim, *Conservatism: A Contribution to the Sociology of Knowledge* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1936/1997), 84.

[51] Compare Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Elliot* (New York: BN Publishing, 1953/2008), 8–9; Roger Scruton, *A Dictionary of Political Thought* (London: Pan, 1982), 408; Robert Nisbet, *Conservatism* (Milton Keynes: The Open University, 1986), 34; Jennifer Welsh, '"I" is for Ideology: Conservatism in International Affairs', *Global Society* 17:2 (2003), 165–85.

The difficulty in trying to identify a more substantive ideational essence to conservatism arises from the fact that such concepts are open to a wide variety of interpretations and configurations, and they are also not exclusive to the ideological repertoire of the Right.[52] As Michael Freeden argues, 'to ransack conservatism for the substantive core concepts and ideas located in rival progressive ideologies, such as liberty, reason, sociability, or welfare, is to look at the wrong place'. Apart from the morphological consistency provided by its core commitments to organic change and the randomness and uncontrollability of events and human behaviour, 'conservative ideology can only display a substantive coherence that is contingent and time – and space – specific, because that coherence is created solely as a reflection of the substantive internal congruence of the rival ideological structures which the particular conservative discourse aims at rebutting.'[53]

These difficulties are even more fraught when we turn our attention to the adjective 'radical', as in 'the radical Right', a term that has circulated in sociology and political science since the middle years of the twentieth century.[54] Contemporary scholars favour adding – and debating – this and related adjectives (like 'far' and 'extreme') to the nouns Right and conservativism as a way of signalling the challenge of dealing with such a highly context-dependent, contingent, and often rapidly evolving object of study. We think the radical Right draws on a consciously traditionalist and reactionary anti-Enlightenment current that emerged as a response to the breakdown of pre-modern visions of political order underpinned by Providence. It developed as a distinct style of right-wing politics during the late nineteenth and

[52] See Roger Eatwell and Noël O'Sullivan eds., *The Nature of the Right* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1989).

[53] Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 333.

[54] Seymour M. Lipset, 'The Radical Right: A Problem for American Democracy', *British Journal of Sociology* 6 (1955), 176–209. Telford Taylor, a US lawyer best known for opposing McCarthyism, used the same term even earlier. For further discussions, see Cas Mudde ed., *The Populist Radical Right: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 2017).

twentieth centuries in response to the rise of socialism and the perceived failures of conventional conservatism and bourgeois society to deal with the challenges of mass liberal democracy. As Jerry Muller argues, the 'radical conservative shares many of the concerns of more conventional conservatism, such as the need for institutional authority and continuity with the past, but believes that the processes characteristic of modernity have destroyed the valuable legacy of the past for the present.'[55] This leads to the conclusion that 'a restoration of the virtues of the past' requires abandoning the gradualist attitude of conventional conservatism in favour of a more militant, voluntarist, and programmatic approach that will command the loyalty of individuals and bind them together into an organic whole to a greater extent than existing institutions can be expected to do under present conditions of sociocultural decay.[56]

The threshold delimiting where conventional conservatism ends and radical conservatism begins is often ambiguous, not least because the relationship between tradition and authority determining this continuum of reaction can manifest in many different forms.[57] Contemporary political science suggests that the extreme Right generally refers to right-wing revolutionary movements that reject liberal democratic institutions and tend to embrace violence. The radical Right, by contrast, accepts democracy but is anti-liberal or illiberal in its worldview and transformative ambitions. These ambitions can be reformist or revolutionary in character, but the radical Right tends to acknowledge the importance of institutional means to attain and maintain power. Thus, according to this broad taxonomy, neo-fascist organisations and movements such as the

[55] Jerry Z. Muller, 'Carl Schmitt, Hans Freyer and the Radical Conservative Critique of Liberal Democracy in the Weimar Republic', *History of Political Thought* 12:4 (1991), 695–715.

[56] *Ibid.*, 697.

[57] Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Göran Dahl, *Radical Conservatism and the Future of Politics* (London: Sage, 1999); Robert Toplin, *Radical Conservatism: The Right's Political Religion* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006); Jane Coaston, 'When Conservatives Turned into Radicals', *New York Times Magazine* (31 October 2017).

Proud Boys, CasaPound, and Golden Dawn would typically be part of the extreme Right, whereas Lega Nord, Fidesz, the Rassemblement National (formerly Front National), the AfD, and Trumpism would be part of the radical Right. Yet as numerous commentators have pointed out, a degree of ambiguity inevitably exists in distinguishing the extreme and radical Rights.[58]

These ambiguities grow once we abandon the national territorial framing and expand the level of analysis to the international. Our study is concerned with the ideological terrain occupied by the radical Right in our present political and sociocultural conditions of globalisation and late liberal modernity. But it does so with the strong caveat that the politics and intellectual commitments of these movements and organisations often exceed and transcend the boundaries of established academic categories and conventions. The Right is an ideological space to be fought over, and we want to make room for this agonistic dimension in our analysis. Yet, at the same time, we argue that today's radical Right *also* contains a systematic and sustained philosophic enterprise that over several decades developed a narrative of globalisation that could equip a renewed radical Right with an analytic, strategic, and affective foundation for its return to political prominence, and even power.

To understand this crucial ideological revision, we must pause over yet another contested term; the New Right. While the label is often attached to the resurgent Right in general, it is more usefully restricted to the assortment of writers, publications, and cultural platforms with strong affinities to the French *Nouvelle Droite*. Established during the late 1960s by Alain de Benoist, Guillaume Faye, Pierre Vial, Dominique Venner, and other militant right-wing intellectuals associated with the *Groupement de recherche*

[58] For discussions, see Eatwell and O'Sullivan, *The Nature of the Right*; Cas Mudde, 'The War of Words Defining the Extreme Right Party Family', *West European Politics* 19:2 (1996), 225–248; Nonna Mayer, 'Political Science Approaches to the Far Right', in Stephen D. Ashe, Joel Busher, Graham Macklin, and Aaron Winter eds., *Researching the Far Right: Theory, Method and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2020), 17–31.

et d'études pour la civilization européenne (GRECE), the *Nouvelle Droite* took shape as a response to the rise of the New Left, the student movements, and the realisation that the post-war Right had seriously neglected the importance of cultural and intellectual activism in the maintenance and subversion of political power. Although it remained on the fringe of French political debates until the very end of the Cold War, the *Nouvelle Droite*'s efforts to move the far Right away from historical fascism and the violent anti-intellectualism of skinhead subculture inspired the creation of similar epistemic communities in Italy, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, and elsewhere across Western and Eastern Europe during the 1980s and beyond.[59] The first book written in English about the *Nouvelle Droite* appeared in 1990, indexing trans-oceanic dissemination of GRECE ideas.[60]

In the United States, a similar agenda has been promoted actively in more recent years by cultural enablers such as Greg Johnson, Michael O'Meara, Jared Taylor, Kevin MacDonald, Richard Spencer, and other ideological entrepreneurs gravitating around the publishing and media platforms of the Alt-Right, the North American New Right, American Renaissance, and other agents of white nationalism.[61] The New Right in the US is also closely related to the earlier development of the paleoconservative movement led by intellectuals such as Paul Gottfried, Samuel T. Francis, Thomas Fleming, Clyde N. Wilson, and Donald Livingston. Gottfried and Fleming coined the term paleoconservatism during the early 1980s in an effort

[59] Mark Wegierski, 'The New Right in Europe', *Telos* 98/99 (1993–1994), 55–70; Michael O'Meara, *New Culture, New Right: Anti-Liberalism in Postmodern Europe* (London: Arktos, 2004); Jean-Yves Camus and Nicolas Lebourg, *Far-Right Politics in Europe* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2017); Roger Griffin, 'Interregnum or Endgame? The Radical Right in the "Post-Fascist" Era', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 5:2 (2000), 163–178; Tamir Bar-On, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone?* (London: Routledge 2016).

[60] Tomislav Sunic, *Against Democracy and Equality: The European New Right* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990). Prefaced by Paul Gottfried, the book was based on a political science dissertation the author, a Croatian émigré, completed in 1988 at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

[61] Johnson, 'New Right vs. Old Right'; see also Thomas J. Main, *The Rise of the Alt-Right* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2018).

to revitalise the agency of the Old Right. The aim was to counter the growing influence of the neoconservative and neoliberal strains of conservatism that were also often designated as the New Right in the US and the UK at the time.[62] Elements of this New Right have for some decades now been among the primary suppliers of high-calibre intellectual ammunition to a wide range of agents and ideological forces challenging the prevailing liberal order nationally and internationally – from the Tea Party and the Alt-Right to Orbánism and Trumpism, and most recently, the National Conservative movement.[63]

Definitional matters are far from the only difficulties confronting the academic study of the Right.[64] In contrast to their predecessors, today's culture wars are globalised and social-mediatised – as well as fuelled by ever-greater sums of political money.[65] They are also shaped by the discursive shifts that have narrowed the space for the most explicit expression of sexism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and anti-Black racism. Thus, rather than inviting their audiences to

[62] Thomas Fleming and Paul Gottfried, *The Conservative Movement* (Boston: Twayne Publisher, 1988); Joseph Scotchie, *The Paleoconservatives: New Voices of the Old Right* (New York: Transaction Publishers, 1999); Chris Woltermann, 'What Is Paleoconservatism?', *Telos* 97 (1993), 9–20; Edward Ashbee, 'Politics of Paleoconservatism', *Culture and Society* (March/April 2000), 75–84; Jean-François Drolet and Michael C. Williams, 'America First: Paleoconservatism and the Ideological Struggle for the American Right', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 25:1 (2020), 28–50.

[63] Timothy Shenk, 'The Dark History of Donald Trump's Revolt', *The Guardian* (16 August 2016). Gottfried is credited with co-inventing the term 'alternative right' (alt-right) with Richard Spencer during the first Obama presidency. See Paul Gottfried, 'Some Observations from the Man Who Created the Alt-Right', *Frontpage Magazine* (30 August 2016).

[64] Aurelien Mondon and Aaron Winter, 'From Demonization to Normalisation: Reflecting on Far Right Research', in Stephen D. Ashe, Joel Busher, Graham Macklin, and Aaron Winter eds., *Researching the Far Right: Theory, Method and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2020), 370–382.

[65] The term culture wars invokes not only political struggles over 'cultural' issues but also a Gramscian awareness of the role cultural institutions play in politics. James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991). On the role of money, see Jane Meyer, *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right* (New York: Free Press, 2017); Ralph Wilson and Isaac Kamola, *Free Speech and Koch Money: Manufacturing a Campus Culture War* (London: Pluto Press, 2021).

identify themselves with 'white supremacy' or 'the Christian West', contemporary radicals seek to mobilise support by using new terminology and rhetorical inversions. This helps illuminate not only the genealogies and recent popularity of the terms 'white nationalism' and 'the *Judeo*-Christian West' but also a reactionary rearticulation of seemingly centre-liberal discourses of 'not racism' and 'race neutrality'.[66] Along the same lines, we can see why an obligatory renunciation of racism is routinely followed up with a rearticulation of some of its key features under the guise of either evolutionary biology or 'cultural diversity'. For example, radical Right theorists often invoke 'the integrity of cultures' and 'respect for difference' in order to rehabilitate an ethnopolitics discredited by its association with the genocidal violence of the twentieth century, which they argue allows them to make a 'not racist' case against immigration, cultural mixing, and the cosmopolitan hybridity of globalisation.[67] However, even a cursory a look at the radical Right's opus reveals a contemporary segregationism alongside its claims to difference.

The study of the Right is further complicated by mutual suspicion between the contemporary academy and conservative movements. As scholars, it is probably fair to say that we are predisposed not to like right-wing parties and ideas. In fact, our structural position in the academic field gives us a habitus – a deeply sedimented set of expectations, values, and predispositions – that restricts our ability to engage and understand the Right and its supporters.[68] The feeling is reciprocal; for many on the Right, academics belong to the

[66] Daniel Geary, Camilla Schofield, and Jennifer Sutton eds., *Global White Nationalism: From Apartheid to Trump* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020); Jelena Subotic, 'Antisemitism in the Global Populist International', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 24:3 (2022), 458–474; Alana Lentin, 'Beyond Denial: "Not Racism" as Racist Violence', *Continuum* 32:4 (2018), 400–414.

[67] Alain De Benoist and Charles Champetier, 'Manifesto of the French New Right in Year 2000', *Telos* 115 (2000), 117–144.

[68] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Pierre Bourdieu, 'Participant Objectivation', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 9 (June 2003), 281–294. In the latter, Bourdieu talks about forms of 'academic transcendence' grounded in the post-Kantian metaphysical tradition.

liberal elite. We are part of the problem – part of the enemy. This situation has numerous consequences and creates what Arlie Russell Hochschild calls the 'empathy wall': 'an obstacle to deep understanding of another person, one that can make us feel indifferent and even hostile to those who hold different beliefs or whose childhood is rooted in different circumstances'. Instead of understanding, we settle for 'quick certainties'.[69] Didier Eribon captures this academic inability in his auto-biographical account of his struggles to understand – and empathise – with his own family.[70] Having left his working-class roots in Reims to become a sophisticated, suave Parisian intellectual, he could write eloquently about being gay in France, but not about being working class. The former would earn him academic and symbolic capital, the latter derision and shame. When his family, as so many among the working class in France, turned first to the National Front and then the *Rassemblement National* as the party that best represented their interests, Eribon is confronted with his own structural inability to understand their positions. As a member of the intellectual Left, he is devoid of empathy, structurally prevented from understanding. From this perspective, the problem with accessing the Right entails questions of ethics, politics, and reflexivity – the conditions of knowledge and our own social and political location in its production.

In seeking to take the radical Right, their ideas, and their supporters seriously and subject them to careful academic analysis, we are mindful that some might accuse us of popularising, and possibly naively legitimising them. However, we are convinced that it is essential to take their analytical and political strategies seriously. Not all radical Right schools of thought and movements – let alone all their members – share the views we trace in this book. But many

[69] Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (New York: The New Press, 2016), 5. For a sceptical view of Hochschild's call for empathy, see Katja Freistein, Frank Gadinger, and Christine Unrau, '*It Just Feels Right*: Visuality and Emotion Norms in Right-Wing Populist Storytelling', *International Political Sociology* 16:4 (2022), 1–23.

[70] Didier Eribon, *Returning to Reims* (New York: Semiotext(e), 2013).

do, and without an understanding of their agendas and global interconnectedness, any attempt to counter these movements will be less robust.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

This book traces key elements of the intellectual strategies and ideological content of the contemporary global Right, their organisational and institutional initiatives, as well as the possible implications for global order. In Chapter 2, we show how the radical Right has turned to the Left's iconic hero Antonio Gramsci for inspiration and guidance on how to launch a counter-hegemonic struggle against liberal cultural and political domination. We argue that Gramsci provides a powerful way to understand the globalisation of the radical Right and show how many of Gramsci's core ideas, particularly those concerning cultural hegemony, historic blocs, and counter-hegemonic movements, have been self-consciously and strategically appropriated by the Right. We do so by tracing the European origins of this project and show the subsequent global spread and adoption of what radical Right intellectuals call metapolitics. This metapolitics provides the radical Right with a global sociological, ideological, and political framing, as well as a political economy with capitalism and class at its centre. It also provides a strategic direction that seeks to mobilise social forces produced and marginalised by liberalism and globalisation by bringing them to self-consciousness, turning them in Marxist parlance from analytically identifiable but political inchoate classes *in* themselves to politically aware and active classes *for* themselves. As we show, recent ideas about the construction of a Gramscian 'postmodern Prince' capture key aspects of what the Right has attempted, and often succeeded, in doing. The global radical Right does not consist of an overarching, universal theory, ideology, or objective that all adherents must subscribe to. Nor does it have centralised controlling institutions. Instead, these counter-hegemonic ideologies enable a range of actors and agendas to find common cause despite their different contexts and concerns. Radical conservative actors and ideas seek

to construct transnational chains of equivalences – and at the most basic level, the global Right consists of powerful articulations and equivalences between political subjects that help generate significant political movements.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed analysis of global managerialism, the core ideological content of the radical Right's understanding of the world. In this view, the essence of contemporary world politics is not the age-old story of realist power politics, the liberal tale of progress through institutions, or the corrosive spread of neoliberal capitalism. It is instead the rise to power of a global liberal managerial elite, the so-called New Class of experts and bureaucrats. Detached and unmoored from their national identities and cultures, the interests of this elite lie in yet further globalisation and liberalisation, and work against the interests of traditional national values and local communities. Within this managerialist sociology, the unequal experiences of globalisation and late modern politics are not the unavoidable consequences of anonymous market dynamics or economic modernisation. On the contrary, they are the result of the actions of specific, identifiable agents and institutions that produce, dominate, and benefit from the system. This in turn provides the radical Right with a common enemy – the global liberal elite – which may have different faces in different geographical locations, but which nevertheless facilitates powerful equivalences and transversal alliances than span nations and regions. In this way, liberal managerialism is not only a central part of the radical Right's conception of the world but also the foundation and means of its radicalisation and globalisation.

Chapter 4 shows that the radical Right's initiatives have not been confined to the realm of ideas. Armed with a specific understanding of the deep cultural and social foundations of the liberal hegemonic order, they have diligently embarked on a Gramscian war of position, a patient counter-hegemonic struggle to change the predominant 'common sense' and produce 'organic intellectuals' who can critique the existing order and provide alternatives to it. While the most visible and audible part of this strategy has been

their transgressive and often offensive use of digital communication and social media, these activities and their effects have already been extensively analysed.[71] We therefore focus on their equally important but often overlooked efforts to capture the traditional institutions of cultural and political domination via academic publishing, universities, and policy institutes. While diverse and uncoordinated, we argue that these various initiatives serve to create a new legitimacy and acceptability for radical Right ideas, explicitly rewriting intellectual history from a radical conservative perspective and reclaiming it from the academic mainstream. Through new universities and think tanks, their ultimate aim is to replace the liberal, woke, managerial, globalist elite with a Right elite, schooled in the critique of managerialism and critical of the overreach of liberal power and international institutions. This Right elite will then be able to reshape the world in its image.

In Chapter 5, we examine how these counter-hegemonic projects relate to other struggles for power in contemporary world politics and attacks on the so-called LIO. Drawing on recent literature on struggles for recognition within the LIO, we show how the radical Right has built powerful transversal, global alliances based on a logic and discourse of difference and diversity rather than claims to Western superiority. We illustrate this through an analysis of an emerging global alliance in defence of the 'natural family', which seeks to undermine the LIO's progressive family policies and replace them with a new normative global order that is both less liberal and

[71] See, for example, Christoper Wylie, *Mindf*ck* (New York, Random House, 2019); Patricia Ann Simpson and Helga Druxes, eds., *Digital Media Strategies of the Far Right in Europe and the United States* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015); Anna Leander, with Cristiana Gonzales, Luisa Lobato, and Pedro dos Santos Maia, 'Ripples and Their Returns: Tracing the Regulatory Security State from the EU to Brazil, Back and Beyond', *Journal of European Public Policy* 30:7 (2023), 1379–1405; Chenchen Zhang, 'Right-Wing Populism with Chinese Characteristics? Identity, Otherness and Global Imaginaries in Debating World Politics Online', *European Journal of International Relations* 26:1 (2019), 88–115; Jeffrey J. Hall, *Japan's Nationalist Right in the Internet Age: Online Media and Grassroots Conservative Activism* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2021).

more sovereigntist. The radical Right's civilisationalism and calls for multipolarity also enable complex entanglements with illiberal states such as China and Russia, as well as states and people in the Global South. While the agendas of these actors frequently vary, they are unified in their opposition to Western dominance of the LIO and their desire for recognition within a more multipolar world order. The multipolar, civilisational world order envisioned by these alliances and the radical Right, however, is not anti-hierarchical and inclusive. It legitimises new differences and new forms of exclusion through its claims to cultural diversity. It can both contain and conceal forms of racism, anti-Semitism, and hatred, while supporting new forms of essentialism and exclusionary identities. It is also a more sovereigntist vision of the world in which these more exclusionary illiberal forces would be able to operate with fewer international constraints, be it in the Global North or the Global South.