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ILLIBERALISM IN ITS EPOCH
**The Emergence of Modern Illiberalism as a
consequence of the Global War on Terror**

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**Note to examiners: The two new sections, Literature Review and
Methodology, are colour coded in yellow. Changes made to the
text are highlighted via track changes.**

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to look at the extent to which the Global War on Terror (GWOT) played a role in the emergence of the phenomenon of modern illiberalism.

While 9/11 was undoubtedly a paradigm-shifting event in global and local politics, this work argues that the GWOT was a specific ideological response to those attacks. Moreover, the particulars of that response contributed to the rise of modern illiberalism in various ways.

In order to best understand how the GWOT played a role in the emergence of modern illiberalism, it was necessary to examine modern illiberalism in practice. This work includes case studies and analyses of Orban's Hungary, Putin's Russia, and the 'counter-jihadist' ideology of the Islamophobic terrorist Anders Behring Breivik. It examines how the consequences and dynamics of the GWOT, often functioning inadvertently, shaped key aspects of their methods, beliefs, and reactions

It concludes the GWOT was a major contributing factor to what this work terms the 'epoch of illiberalism' that describes a significant aspect of global politics. That is not to say that illiberalism would not exist if not for the GWOT, as it obviously preceded it, but, rather, that without the GWOT, modern illiberalism, as a phenomenon in itself, would be both quantitatively and qualitatively different.

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INTRODUCTION

It was barely an hour after the North Tower of the World Trade Centre fell to rubble during the terrorist atrocities of 9/11 that President George W. Bush declared that America was at war. The enemy had yet to be defined in conventional terms and there was not even, at that point, a specific country, group or entity that the US could name.

But there was to be a war.

Speaking from the Oval Office on that day, Bush stated, “America and our friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world, and we stand together to win the war against terrorism.”¹

This was the first time, within the context of 9/11, that the term “war on terrorism” had been used by the American president. Over the course of the next eight years of the Bush administration, the Global War on Terror (GWOT) would become the focal point of American foreign policy. However, it went far beyond the usual terms of a foreign policy agenda. Not only did it have huge ramifications on US domestic policy, but it altered and shaped the social, political and economic trajectories and conditions of global institutions and countries around the world.

Although unique in ways peculiar to the time, the GWOT was a paradigm-shifting event in the manner of a world war, coming to define and transform global and local politics in ways that are still unfolding to this day. It is the contention of this work that one of the ways that it is still unfolding is through its influence on modern illiberalism around the world.

The now clichéd *raison d'être* of the executioners, progenitors and advocates of the GWOT was that it would make the world a more secure place by eliminating or vastly reducing global terrorist organisations and the alleged conditions within which they emerge. The

¹ ‘Statement by the President in His Address to the Nation’, *George W. Bush White House Archives*, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010911-16.html> [accessed 17 February 2022].

similarly clichéd rejoinder is that it had the precise opposite effect, namely that it would make and observably was making the world much more insecure and increasing the phenomenon of terrorism that it allegedly set out to defeat.

Though it's not the aim of this work to evaluate the GWOT according to perceived successes or failures, the central question of this work is how the GWOT came to produce its own antithesis? How did the GWOT, this exceptional agenda of eradicating not just terror but the causes of terror in the name of freedom and democracy, end up preceding and coexisting with an era of politics where democracy is receding in the face of illiberal political regimes, governments and occurrences?

It is apposite to define the meaning of the 'Global War on Terror' in terms of how it will be used throughout this work and the wider historical context and ideological meaning that fed into it. The GWOT era, as defined in this work, begins with the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and ends with the election of President Barack Obama in 2008.

That is not to say the GWOT formally ended with the ascendancy of Obama to the White House. However, it is to say that if the GWOT continued after Obama assembled his first administration, it did so in a manner quite distinct from that of the GWOT during the Bush era, but with certain areas of continuity. It could be argued that the GWOT, until the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan in 2021, became a contentious staple of US foreign policy. This is comparable to how every post-war US president inherited and navigated the Cold War, often with differing methods, doctrines, and objectives.

However, most definitively, in 2009, the Obama administration officially ceased using the term 'Global War on Terror' (GWOT); instead referring to it as the 'Overseas Contingency Operation.'² Thus the GWOT, as relating to this work, belongs to the Bush administration. The main argument of this work centres on the ramifications of the period in which Bush held office.

In order to understand the interrelated methods of the Bush administration in initiating, crafting and fighting the GWOT, we must look at from where they emerged. In the post-Cold War period of alleged liberal democratic triumph is where we find the origins of what this work has termed the GWOT ideology.

²Marie Breen-Smyth, 'Countering Terrorism in the International Arena: An Evaluation', *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, Volume: 18 (2017), p. 65.

This work contends that the GWOT was not the focal point in an American quest for imperialist global domination. Nor was it, as some posited at the time, a convoluted conspiracy involving the so-called ‘military industrial complex’ to make profit out of endless war, or a power play to steal Iraq’s oil. These were all widespread beliefs at the time and, indeed, many of them persist in the popular understanding behind the motives of the GWOT in its totality or aspects of the GWOT, especially the Iraq war.

While the root motivation of the GWOT was the terrorist atrocities of 9/11, this work does argue that GWOT did contain an opportunistic, idealistic and ideological vision of transcendence, by which is meant the drive for the USA to actively fulfil its role as the ‘benign global hegemon’ of liberal democracy.

Some might say that this is in itself simply a rationalisation of so-called American imperialism, or others, more sympathetically, might say it was a hubristic attempt to universalise liberal democracy following the apparent post-Cold War vindication of liberal values and capitalist democracy.

This work contends that the ideological vision behind the GWOT, no matter how catastrophic its collapse or how corrupted its ‘values’, was to advance the spread of an American vision of democracy – to impose on the post-Soviet world a *Pax Americana*. The central argument of this study is not that modern illiberalism, which will be defined and discussed in depth, would not exist without the GWOT. Rather, it posits that in a world in which the GWOT never occurred or played out differently, illiberalism would look and operate very differently, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

The attacks of 9/11 created new ideological realities for the world, but this work argues that the ideological response to the attacks further shaped and fostered an ecosystem of illiberalism within which illiberal ideas could be revitalised, transformed, amplified and normalised. The GWOT served on multiple different levels as an *illiberalising process*. This was not just occurring on the level of states and global relations between states, but on local levels, among provincial forces and individuals. In the next two chapters, this work will seek to define modern illiberalism in, to borrow and adapt from the historian of 20th Century fascism Ernst Nolte, epochal terms, linking this phenomenon to a time and space that was explicitly defined by the GWOT.

This work will use Orban’s Hungary and Putin’s Russia as examples of what is termed the state-form of illiberalism, while a case study of the Islamophobic, self-proclaimed ‘counter-

‘jihadist’ mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik will be utilised as an example of what is termed ‘activist-form’ illiberalism.

Moreover, across these three case studies, this work will demonstrate how the GWOT ideology, put into practice by the Bush doctrine in both formal and informal terms, created the perfect global conditions not just for illiberalism to thrive, but for it to assume a counterhegemonic or anti-hegemonic aspect.

As an addendum to that, it is also important to say that while there are moments where the GWOT and modern illiberalism align, almost all of the influence of the GWOT on modern illiberalism occurred indirectly and functionally, as opposed to intentionally. Paradoxically, while the GWOT engendered illiberal reactions and responses, this study also examines key liberal thinkers of the 1990s, such as Francis Fukuyama and Anthony Giddens. It highlights that the ideological assumptions and events associated with these thinkers, which underpin much of GWOT ideology, are antithetical to modern illiberalism.

On this note, it is impossible to understand the rise of modern illiberalism without understanding the ideology that fed into the GWOT. It’s certainly not within the scope of this work to give a full historical account of liberalism in its centuries-spanning totality, but rather to give an account of the dominant modes of liberal thinking and practice within specific period in history, namely in the period immediately after the Cold War.

It thus begins at the ‘end of history’, with the fall of the USSR and Iron Curtain and the political dynamics of the vanquishers over the vanquished.

The self-destruction of Soviet Communism embedded a conviction across the US political spectrum—but especially among Reaganites and later the ‘Neo-Reaganite’ tendency of neoconservatism—that the fall of the USSR and Iron Curtain were synonymous with the ultimate triumph of liberal democracy and free markets over Marxist-Leninism and all forms of communist or non-liberal democratic tyranny. This view was only underlined by the rapid democratisation of former communist states in Eastern Europe in the early 1990s and what appeared to be the astonishingly smooth and lightning quick victory over Saddam Hussein’s Iraq in the Gulf War of 1990. Within US politics, again particular the neoconservatives, this victory was proof, if it were needed, of its unrivalled technological and political supremacy.

The policies of the Reagan administration were seen by many as being decisive in the fall of the USSR and thus also in the triumph of liberal democracy.³ Within the context of post-Cold War triumphalism, the model of ‘Reaganomics’, which is synonymous now with ‘neoliberalism’ and which had already been international in character, became thought of as an exportable economic standard that was key to the expansion and reinvigoration of liberal democracy around the world.⁴

This formed part of the ‘Reagan doctrine’. The legacy of the doctrine as it pertains to hastening the fall of the USSR remains contested, but it’s the assumptions of its techno-social victoriousness that are of interest to this work. Reagan’s foreign policy doctrine was for the most part a commitment to ditch or adapt the realist and perceived timid and parochial ‘containment’ strategy favoured by almost every post-war president before him. In its place, Reagan committed to a strategy of military interventionism to support ‘democratic allies’ against the Soviet Union – Reagan adopted and adapted John Foster Dulles’ ‘rollback’ strategy to actively push back against Soviet machinations in the world.⁵

This meant, as merely two examples, greatly expanding the Carter administration’s patronage of the Afghan mujahideen against the Soviet invasion and proxy forces, and providing support for right-wing Nicaraguan contras against the Marxist-Leninist Sandinista Junta.⁶ In terms of ideology, it meant that these conflicts were depicted as battles for human freedom against tyranny. Promoting and instituting freedom in the world was the ultimate defence against the antithetical tyranny of, as Reagan famously put it in 1983 in a speech to the National Association of Evangelicals, the “Evil Empire” of the USSR.⁷

The actual efficacy of the Reagan Doctrine in contributing towards the fall of the USSR is heavily contested. However, the proximity of the Reagan administration to its collapse, as well as the accompanying assumed triumph of liberal democracy and the coming to the fore of the US as a global hegemon, allowed Reagan to acquire the role of a prophet president. The reality was that Reagan had overseen major shifts in the political nature of the US, shifts

³ Andrew E. Busch, ‘Ronald Reagan and the Defeat of the Soviet Empire’, *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Volume: 27 (1997), p.460.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.460

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.454

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.457

⁷ ‘Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida’, *Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation*, www.reaganfoundation.org, March 8, 1983 [Accessed January 2023]

that were part of and would shape wider global ‘revolutions’ in technology and industry and which would have major ramifications for the onward march of globalisation.

The 1990s was then, as the neoconservative political scientist and historian Francis Fukuyama notes, the first time in the 20th century that liberalism could reign without any active and serious competition. In the mind of the proponents of liberal democracy, in the latter part of a century defined by the ultra-destructive rise of the phenomenon of totalitarianism where the onward march of civilisation had been halted by barbarism, good had overcome evil.

In Fukuyama, we find, regarding his work in the 1990s, most notably 1992’s *The End of History and the Last Man*, one of the most germane examples of the complex triumphalism attached to liberalism in the post-Cold War period leading into the GWOT. Though in hindsight some might call these approaches to the global supremacy of liberal democracy hubristic, Fukuyama presents a compelling case as to why such an idea was in some sense correct about the place of liberal democracy in the world at the time and in other ways dangerously blind to its discontents. The importance of Fukuyama to this work is further enhanced by the fact that, unlike most his fellow neoconservatives, he became majorly critical of the manner in which the Bush administration enacted the GWOT and, in particular, the Iraq war. This is reflected in his post-neoconservative works such as 2004’s *State-Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century* and 2006’s *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy*, the latter of which is referenced throughout this work.

Fukuyama is even more intriguing because he, like other neoconservative intellectuals and politicians, cut his teeth as an official in Reagan’s State department and as a key contributor to the formation of the Reagan doctrine. There is thus little doubt that the main imprint of his thesis of liberal democracy being the endpoint of mankind’s ‘ideological evolution’ is rooted in the prevailing politics and policies of the Republican Party of the 1980s and particularly those of the Reagan administration.⁸

Fukuyama’s central argument of “the end of history” is inextricably linked with the downfall of the USSR and the triumph of not just the US, but the form of government and the political values that the US represents, namely liberal democracy, over tyranny. Fukuyama essentially

⁸ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin, 1992), p.44.

considers the driving force of Cold War politics to be a clash of two metanarratives. According to the metanarrative of Soviet Communism, the key ‘movement’ of history was the ever-spiralling and more advanced struggle between classes that would lead to communism as the zenith of humanity’s sociocultural evolution and thus the end of history. However, for Fukuyama the end point of history is liberal democracy and its ‘movement’ was not class struggle but a much more stripped-down struggle of the will for the greatest amount of people to live according to their inherent desire for comfort, peace and prosperity.⁹ History ends, as Fukuyama writes, “when mankind ha[s] achieved a form of society that satisfied its deepest and most fundamental longings.”¹⁰

It’s important then to understand what Fukuyama meant by ‘liberal democracy’ in the context of its triumph following the collapse of the USSR and the rapid democratisation of former communist countries. Although Fukuyama personally believed that ‘neoliberalism’, here used as synonymous with ‘Reaganomics’, was a mode of capitalism that could be easily exported and was axiomatically linked to personal and societal liberty, he doesn’t imagine that the precise political dimensions of the US will be repeated throughout the world.¹¹

According to Fukuyama, liberal democracy in praxis takes on multiple different forms. For example, the constitutional monarchies of Scandinavia or the UK are observably different than the republican and federal forms of government in France and Germany. The same could be said of the difference between European social democracy and American liberalism, though each have different approaches towards socioeconomic policy, they all have the same essential features that aim to provide the highest possible amount of freedom, according to Fukuyama. These features can be summarised as free and fair elections, free markets, fair private property rights, universal human rights guaranteed in law, the separation and independence of different state powers and freedom of speech.

The USSR, according to Fukuyama, could never have triumphed over liberal democracy because tyranny cannot provide resolutions for social problems, needs and desires in the same way that liberal democracy can.¹² While the problems that led to the collapse of the USSR were due to the nature of the USSR as a sociopolitical entity, the problems faced in liberal democracies are due to, as Fukuyama puts it, “incomplete implementation of the twin

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.65

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Introduction

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹² *Ibid.*, p140.

principles of liberty and equality on which modern democracy is founded, rather than of flaws in the principles themselves.”¹³

In contrast, within a tyrannical system like the USSR, it was its inherently ‘flawed principles’ that led to its collapse, along with the external pressures applied by the Reagan Doctrine. The people, namely the mass protest movements across the USSR and Iron Curtain, sought the creation of systems of government that better represent the desires, comforts and liberties of the population – liberal democracy.¹⁴

It ought to be noted that none of this was viewed by Fukuyama as theoretical – the proof of the triumph of liberal democracy had been seen in the manner of the collapse of the USSR and the lightning speed of democratisation in the former Communist states of Eastern Europe. In other words, the collapse of the USSR did not merely prove the superiority of liberal democracy as a mode of sociopolitical organisation, but the inevitability of it. According to Fukuyama, within every illiberal regime were the seeds of liberal democracy, given that the desire of human beings for sociopolitical ‘recognition’ is universal and knows no national or cultural bounds.¹⁵

Fukuyama sees in liberal democracy what Hegel called the “homogenous and universal regime”, which is a form of government that establishes systems of economic and social equality or the ability to establish such equality and ‘recognition’ in the most functional way possible¹⁶. The post-Soviet period provided the perfect opportunity for this to occur in practice in truly global terms. Global recognition, as understood by Fukuyama, would only be achieved if the world operated as part of a bloc of liberal democracies, each with shared values and where disagreements would be overcome through the systems of governance and not by armed conflicts.¹⁷ This was the trajectory of US-led globalisation – liberal democracy assured by American hegemony, combined with neoliberalism as a mode of economics that transcends national boundaries and is able to provide a global model for both nascent democracies and older entrenched ones.

It is important to note that this ‘politics of inevitability’ was not just confined to America but was predominant throughout the West. Reaching many of the same conclusions about the

¹³ *Ibid.*, Introduction.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, introduction.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.204.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p126.

trajectory of the post-Cold War world but coming at it from a different discursive perspective and academic field, was the English sociologist Anthony Giddens.

Giddens was a leading sociologist and political theorist, widely regarded as the progenitor of the ‘third way’ politics of the 1990s and the court philosopher and main theorist of the socioeconomic policy of Tony Blair and New Labour. It is of course interesting to note that the Blair government was unique among major liberal democracies in its zealous ideological and material support for the Bush administration in not just the GWOT, but the much more contentious Iraq war.

Giddens most prominently lays out his theories of globalisation, modernity and the development of the third way in his 1990s works *The Consequences of Modernity*, *Beyond Left and Right. Modernity and Self-Identity* and *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy*.

Unlike Fukuyama, Giddens sees no endpoint in modernity, but rather the movement of the world into “late modernity”.¹⁸ Within this paradigm, Giddens believes modernity has simultaneously acquired and is objectively forcing the world to acquire a new character of “reflexive modernity” unfolding according to particular conditions.¹⁹ Giddens argues that the end of the Cold War and the rise of new forms of revolutionary technology provides the liberal democratic world with a unique opportunity to move away from the old definitions of left and right. In pre-modern societies, social interactions and relations were constrained by time and space, but in modern societies – globalised societies – such constraints on time and space no longer exist thanks to new technologies in communication, travel and global economic relations.²⁰

The aim should be for societies to establish a new political order that synthesises the economic reforms of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan (neoliberalism) with “social justice” that defines social democracy.²¹

The new reality of globalisation undermines the old political conceptions of politics, whether ‘statist’ socialism or right-wing forms of tyranny, protectionism and isolationism. The necessity then, according to Giddens, is for a new form of radical centrist politics—the third

¹⁸ Chad Lackey, ‘Review: Giddens's "Modernity and Self-Identity"', *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, Volume 37 (1992), p.181.

¹⁹ Anthony Giddens, *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), p.147.

²⁰ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), pp. 63-64.

²¹ Giddens, *The Third Way*, p. 162

way—simultaneously shaped for and from the era of globalisation.²² It is both a sociopolitical reaction to and embracing of globalisation. The fundamental belief is that within localities, progressive liberal democratic governance bolsters a progressive liberal democratic world order and weakens regressive and reactionary political forces that resist globalisation.²³

Much like Fukuyama, Giddens saw the European Union as the model of a new global system, with its 'invisible' and objective erosion of national identity and its seemingly unending successes when it came to embedding liberal democracy in a continent that only decades before had been the site of two of the most destructive wars in human history.

Giddens, like Fukuyama, is outlining a politics of inevitable transcendence that now, with no Soviet threat, has a new opportunity to gain indefinite hegemony and progress. Not only is this connected to the GWOT in that the likes of Fukuyama and Giddens contributed, however remotely, to the form of post-Cold War liberalism that fed the GWOT ideology, but it also tells us something about how the GWOT, both on the level of geopolitics and local politics, shaped and amplified illiberal ideologies and identities. The GWOT, this truly global event, reflexively informed the identities and beliefs of millions of people, while it reified the ideological predispositions of others.

In Fukuyama and Giddens' conception of liberal democracy, we see the quiet hubris of what the historian Timothy Snyder called 'politics of inevitability', defined by him as "a sense that the future is just more of the present, that the laws of progress are known, that there are no alternatives, and therefore nothing really to be done".²⁴ Though Fukuyama uses philosophical terms, borrowed from Hegel, such as 'homogenous and universal state', and Giddens use sociological terms like 'reflexive modernity', what we see here is the idea of the US as the 'benign global hegemon' – there was nothing left to challenge it. That was the point of political orientation for post-Cold War liberalism in the 1990s.

The US, being simultaneously the most economically prosperous, technologically advanced and liberal democratic state on earth, had become the global patron for a stable world order based on the values of liberal democracy. Though Fukuyama at this point was only politically influential and hardly any kind of policymaker, we can see his vision matched with

²² *Ibid.*, p. 185

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 112

²⁴ Timothy Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom* (New York: Vintage, 2018), p. 7.

the infamous ‘new world order’ speech delivered by then president, and Reagan’s former vice president, George H.W. Bush to a joint session of Congress following US victory in the Gulf War in 1990. The president triumphantly proclaimed, “[a] new partnership of nations has begun”, where “a new world order can emerge ... freer from the threat of terror ... and more secure in peace ... an era in which the nations of the world ... can prosper and live in harmony”.²⁵

The general notion was that in the post-Cold War era, with liberal democracy having no rivals and the US as the hegemonic patron of this ‘new world order’, freedom would spread and thus ‘terror’ and injustice would decline. With the combination of US ‘soft power’, spreading ‘free markets’ around the world and its unmatched military might, the world ought to have looked to be on the path to shaking off the horrors of the early-to-mid 20th Century.

The US victory in the Gulf War was meant to be indicative of the trajectory of the world – uniting against so-called rogue states and residual authoritarian regimes if they brushed up against the US hegemonic interests. We see in Bush I’s speech there are echoes of Bush II’s rhetorical and practical approach to the GWOT. It was at this point in history that many of the assumptions that would feed into the GWOT ideology would become concretised decisively.

Though the extent of the neoconservatives’ influence over the Bush administration and the GWOT has been contested, this work argues that they, particularly the signatories of the Project for a New American Century (PNAC) think tank, including Francis Fukuyama, were pivotal in fostering the GWOT ideology and reflective of a specific strain of post-Cold War liberalism.

Of the twenty-five signatories of PNAC’s mission statement, ten went on to have pivotal roles in the Bush administration. Most notably, this included Vice-President Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defence from 2001-2006, Elliott Abrams, Bush’s National Security Advisor from 2005-2008 and Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defence from 2001-2005. If the thinking of Fukuyama and Giddens could be described as embracing the

²⁵ ‘Bush: out of these troubled times a new world order’, The Washington Post Archives <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1990/09/12/>, 12 September 1990.

‘politics of inevitability’, the neoconservatives not only also embraced such inevitability, but combined it with the politics of aggressive perpetual triumph.

The foundational essay of the major neoconservative think tank of the 1990s, namely the Project for the New American Century (PNAC), was written by William Kristol and Robert Kagan, published in the pages of *Foreign Affairs* in 1996 and titled ‘Towards a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy’.²⁶ Like most neoconservatives, Kristol and Kagan had become disillusioned with the Bush I administration for its failure to overthrow Saddam Hussein following the lightning victory of the US-led coalition in the Gulf War, as well as his failure to intervene against Slobodan Milosevic in the nascent Yugoslav Wars.²⁷

Though they had briefly switched allegiance from the Republican Party to the Democratic Clinton administration, they saw similar failings in him to Bush I on the questions of Iraq and the Yugoslav Wars.²⁸ PNAC was thus ultimately set up to move Republican foreign policy away from Bush-era “minimalist realism” and back on track with ‘Neo-Reaganism’.²⁹ As Kagan and Kristol write, “Ronald Reagan's exceptionalist appeal did not survive the presidency of George Bush”, further lamenting that “self-proclaimed pragmatists” like James Baker, the White House Chief of Staff under Bush I, had found it easier “justifying the Gulf War to Americans in terms of jobs than as a defense of a world order shaped to suit American interests and principles.”³⁰

Both Bush I and Clinton had embraced the fundamentals of Reagan’s economic policy, but the major neoconservative indictment of both is that they had not, in terms of foreign policy, maintained or adapted the Reagan Doctrine into the post-Cold War era. As Kristol and Kagan state in their essay, and much in line with the Fukuyamist vision of the US as the grand pioneer of the global triumph of liberal democracy, the global US role in the post-Cold War era is one of “benevolent hegemony”.³¹

Kristol and Kagan concede that “the aspiration to benevolent hegemony might strike some as either hubristic or morally suspect”, but they seek to assuage such fears by defining such hegemony as “nothing more or less than a leader with preponderant influence and authority

²⁶ ‘Towards a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy’, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, <https://carnegieendowment.org/1996/07/01/toward-neo-reaganite-foreign-policy-pub-276>.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

over all others in its domain”, further arguing that “having defeated the evil empire ... that is America’s position in the world today.”³²

The neoconservatives saw in both the Bush I and Clinton administrations traces of both the potential power (the manner of victory in the Gulf War) and the potentially catastrophic failed opportunities of the US as the ‘benign global hegemon’ if such power was not wielded in the ideologically adequate manner. As opposed to bowing to “Wilsonian whimsy”, as was the charge against Clinton (who had embraced a multilateralist approach to foreign affairs, emphasising domestic rather than global politics), they argued America should be capitalising on its “strategic and ideological predominance”.³³ US foreign policy, they further argue, should be built around “the necessity to preserve and enhance that predominance by strengthening America's security, supporting its friends, advancing its interests, and standing up for its principles around the world.”³⁴

Though no PNAC document mentions the idea of ‘the end of history’ directly, the language they use is distinctly one that accepts as a given the uncontested hegemony of the US – PNAC considered its task as to make sure that history remained ‘ended’, so to speak.

On a more practical level, and perhaps one of the most formative documents written by PNAC regarding what would become the GWOT ideology is PNAC’s policy document *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategies, Forces, and Resources For a New Century*. After 9/11, the document became beloved of conspiracy theorists (often illiberal ones, at that) and those who seek the demonisation of neoconservatism as an ideology of American world domination. The document is entirely in line with neoconservative thinking and actually identifies the “main military mission” of the US in the 21st Century to “secure and expand zones of democratic peace ... deter rise of new great-power competitor ... defend key regions”, while, in this pre-9/11 period, the main adversary is identified as China.³⁵

The publication’s main agenda is what it identifies as the need to maintain American and liberal democratic hegemony by having the strongest most technologically proficient armed forces on earth. In its immediate historic context, the document is essentially a neoconservative rejoinder to the perceived anaemic defence spending and military policy of

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ ‘Rebuilding America’s Defences: Strategies, Forces and Resources for a New Century’, *Internet Archive*, <https://archive.org/details/RebuildingAmericasDefenses>.

the Clinton administration, as well as the significant ‘neo-isolationist’ tendency within the Republican Party.³⁶ American hegemony and what the document fittingly calls a “global Pax Americana” can only be sustained if there is a revolution in military technology that is constantly maintained even absent of conflict.³⁷

There is an argument that many neoconservatives within the Bush II administration saw the GWOT as an opportunity to create the kind of US military envisioned in ‘Rebuilding America’s Defenses’. This vision was driven by the ideological conviction that raw military power can engender and sustain democratic change. This is one of the key aspects of the GWOT ideology, namely that democracy can simply be built, ready to order, and superimposed on a country externally and within the context of military power and power in general.

Much of *Rebuilding America’s Defenses* is simply a reiteration of the so-called Wolfowitz Doctrine, named after PNAC signatory and Bush II’s Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz. The ‘doctrine’ actually comes from the proposed Defense Planning Guidance for the years 1994-1999, which was written by Wolfowitz during his spell as Under Secretary of Defense in the Bush I administration and leaked to the *New York Times* in March 1992.³⁸

The 46-page document makes an ideological and practical case for American hegemony or “benevolent domination by one power”, stating it is the US’ role to ensure that no rival superpower emerges across the world, as well as making a case for US unilateralism and pre-emptive military action for the purposes of advancing US interests and maintaining world order.³⁹ Criticism of the document was widespread, with Democratic Senator Ted Kennedy calling it “a call for 21st century American imperialism that no other nation can or should accept”, leading to Bush I formally rejecting and rewriting the document towards a more multilateralist and diplomatic approach.⁴⁰

Out of context, the document could be considered a blunt expression of American exceptionalism and chauvinism; however, within the context of Wolfowitz’s neoconservatism and the ‘end of history’ ideology, ‘American interests’ were synonymous with a global order

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ ‘US strategy plan calls for ensuring no rivals develop’, *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/03/08/world/us-strategy-plan-calls-for-insuring-no-rivals-develop.html>.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ ‘US imperial ambitions and Iraq’, *Monthly Review*, <https://monthlyreview.org/2002/12/01/u-s-imperial-ambitions-and-iraq/>.

of liberal democracy. Wolfowitz's doctrine envisions a "US-led system of collective security" that will lead to an expanding "democratic zone of peace" to combat threats to peace and democracy.⁴¹

Not only does this directly feed into the GWOT ideology, but in Wolfowitz's document we see the way in which such ideology was put into practice by the Bush doctrine in the aftermath of 9/11. There is little doubt that much of Wolfowitz's policy proposals formed the basis of the Bush doctrine, which, according to Robert Jervis in 'Understanding the Bush Doctrine', has four main elements: regime change, preventative war, unilateralism and the primacy of the US in world politics for the sake of peace and stability.⁴²

The reality of this doctrine in practice was the merging of police-like counterterrorism (CT) tactics with nation-building and 'civilisational' counterinsurgency (COIN) tactics, combined with pre-emptive strikes, preventative war and the idea that democracy and free markets represent an alternative to "weak" and terror-producing states. The GWOT ideology is what underlies this, which this work defines, based on an analysis of the conceptions of liberalism and neoconservatism in the US of the post-Cold War period, as:

- 1) Pragmatism: the GWOT must be pursued because Islamic terrorism is a threat to the US and other democracies around the world.

- 2) 2) Idealism: the best defence against Islamic terrorism and any threat to global order is to spread democracy through 'soft power', but this process must be done rapidly due to the immediate threat of terrorism. This necessitates 'hard power', namely military regime change and democracy building through military occupation and the threat of force. This will deter states from sponsoring terror and lead to a process by which they integrate themselves into the prevailing global socioeconomic order thus engendering stability. In the post-Soviet world, it provides an opportunity to rid the world of the few remaining anti-American tyrannies. US unilateralism won't alienate allies and undermine the international community because both understand the need for a strong but 'benign' global hegemon in the face of a civilisational threat.

⁴¹ 'US strategy', *New York Times*

⁴² Robert Jervis, 'Understanding the Bush Doctrine', *Political Science Quarterly*, Volume: 118 (2003), p. 365.

- 3) 3) Realism: The US is the hegemonic vanguard of liberal democracy; thus, in the face of Islamic terrorism, its foreign policy interests and security are paramount and anything that impedes them must be transcended – it must rebuild a security regime not just internally, but globally. In the war against a truly civilisational enemy, the means justify the ends.

Though, again, it was al-Qaeda that struck the first blow, the Bush administration saw in its response to 9/11 an opportunity to press home the advantages and opportunities of American global hegemony. To bring about a world that best served such hegemony by spreading liberal democracy and, what they believed to be its necessary companion, free markets around the world. This, in turn, would incapacitate and transform unstable, anti-American tyrannical regimes, which the Bush administration presupposed as the main sponsors and producers of terror, into viable and productive states in line with US hegemony and thus international peace.

George W. Bush, speaking at the White House one year after 9/11 on the goals of US policy in the GWOT, openly stated this logic:

“[T]he the United States will use this moment of opportunity to extend the benefits of freedom across the globe. We will actively work to bring the hope of democracy, development, free markets, and free trade to every corner of the world. The events of [9/11] taught us that weak states, like Afghanistan, can pose as great a danger to our national interests as strong states. Poverty does not make poor people into terrorists and murderers. Yet poverty, weak institutions, and corruption can make weak states vulnerable to terrorist networks ... within their borders.”⁴³

It is in the ideological presuppositions behind the visions and goals Bush sets out above, namely the GWOT ideology, that we can trace the roots, methodologies and consequences of the GWOT as it relates to modern illiberalism. The world, far from being on the verge of a pioneering new age of triumphant global liberalism, was knocked off its precariously liberal democratic axis, giving rise to the counterhegemonic illiberalism that can be found around the world, including in America itself.

⁴³ ‘Speech at the White House’, *George W. Bush White House Archives*, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/text/nssintro.html#:~:text=We%20will%20actively%20work%20to,national%20interests%20as%20strong%20states> [accessed 12 February 2022]

What this meant in practice isn't just the doctrines of pre-emptive war that birthed the invasion and occupation of Iraq, but the US's attempt to create a global security state based on its model and following its lead. The problem, as will be laid out in more detail in the case study of Orban's Hungary, was that the US was indeed providing models, ideological narratives and setting new standards, but for forces that believed only in the 'stick' approach. The kind of forces that would use the post-9/11 global counterterrorism agenda for their own purposes of maintaining and expanding power at the expense of perceived enemies.

Regardless of the ideological allegiances and goals of illiberal regimes and forces, the Bush administration provided a legislative and bureaucratic blueprint for the qualitative and quantitative nature of state powers in counterterrorism. This occurred in two era-defining moments: the passing of the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act (USA PATRIOT Act) in 2001 and the Homeland Security Act in 2002. The PATRIOT Act, passed overwhelmingly by Congress and signed into law by George W. Bush, was enacted just over a month after the events of 9/11.

The act restructured the US national security state along the following three main provisions:

- 1) Expanded surveillance by law enforcement of both domestic and international groups, organisations or individuals suspected of financing, planning or propagating terrorism.
- 2) The centralisation of counterterrorism efforts.
- 3) Increased punitive measures against perpetrators and planners of terrorism and an expanded legal definition of what activities constitute terrorism.

In conjunction with this, the Homeland Security Act was passed resulting in the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which was essentially an attempt to fulfil the second provision of the USA PATRIOT Act. The DHS was run by a presidentially-appointed cabinet-level secretary, while it consolidated, either in whole or partially, 22 different agencies and departments of the federal government and had a starting workforce of over 200,000 – this was, as Romaniuk and Njoku put it, “the largest national security realignment in US history since the National Security Act of 1947”, which was the US readying itself for the nascent Cold War.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Scott Romaniuk and Emmeka Njoku, *Counterterrorism and Civil Society* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), Major security policies 9/11 prompted section, para. 4.

The PATRIOT Act, and its subsequent presidential renewals, has garnered controversy due to perceived illiberal aspects of it, especially around detainment of suspects (and immigrants) without trial and surveillance capacity.⁴⁵

Even within a liberal democracy, as pointed out by Romaniuk and Njoku, the revamped counterterrorism policies of the Bush administration during the GWOT, have served to curtail civil society organisations (CSOs) and NGOs.⁴⁶ The logic is rooted in the Wolfowitz doctrine and PNAC's ideological vision of "US-led collective global security". Through the PATRIOT Act, executive orders (orders that come direct from the president, bypassing congress and legislative processes) and other measures, the Bush administration could freeze the assets of CSOs merely suspected of terrorism and issue injunctions against association with them.⁴⁷ On the day that the specific executive order was signed against 'terrorist financing', President Bush, in a speech given in the Rose Garden of the White House on September 24, 2001, characterised it as, "this morning, a major thrust of our war on terrorism began with the stroke of a pen ... Today, we have launched a strike on the financial foundation of the global terror network".⁴⁸

In terms of global policy, the US employed directly and unquestionably illiberal means, particularly regarding extraordinary rendition. Extraordinary rendition was the unlawful (by the standards of both US and international law) abduction by the CIA of legally ill-defined "unlawful enemy combatants". The US would then outsource the torture of these abductees, ostensibly to gather intelligence on terrorist plots and groups, to illiberal regimes in the third world where torture, and worse, was commonplace and legal.⁴⁹ Many, if not most, of those who had been subject to this were never charged with any crime.⁵⁰

Kim Lane Scheppele, a scholar of law and politics at Princeton, determined US' foreign policy conduct during this time to be ideologically akin to the Nazi philosopher Carl Schmitt's take on the 'state of exception'.⁵¹ This is, of course, not to say that the Bush

⁴⁵ Mary Wong, 'Electronic Surveillance and Privacy in the US after 9/11: The USA PATRIOT Act', *Singapore Journal of Legal Studies* (2002), pp. 221 – 222.

⁴⁶ Romaniuk and Njoku, Major security policies 9/11 prompted, para. 5.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*

⁴⁸ 'President Freezes Terrorists' Assets', *George W. Bush White House Archives*, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/text/20010924-4.html>, September 2001.

⁴⁹ Aziz. Z. Huq, 'Extraordinary Rendition and the Wages of Hypocrisy', *World Policy Journal* Volume: 23 (2006), p. 25.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*

⁵¹ Kim Lane Scheppele, 'State of Exception and the Temptations of 9/11', *Journal of Constitutional Law* Volume: 6 (2004), p. 1003.

administration were anything like the Nazis, but they justified extraordinary rendition, as well as other potentially illiberal or legally ambiguous acts, by arguing that it was all necessary due to exceptional circumstances.⁵² "Schmitt, arguing against liberal democracy in Weimar Germany, claimed that liberal democratic constitutions are inherently flawed. While they make grand commitments to ideals such as human rights, the rule of law, and the curtailing of state power, these ideals will inevitably be challenged and destroyed by 'exceptions'—times when society faces exceptional circumstances or “emergencies”.”⁵³

In the US, 9/11 clearly did necessitate some form of change in the application of power by the executive and the different branches of government, but, as Scheppelle argues, such changes ought never to fall outside the ideals of liberal democratic values.⁵⁴ If liberal democracy and its values can be simply suspended by the sovereign, in the eyes of illiberal ideologues like Schmitt, the consequences are that the rule of law has no constraint on the sovereign and the sovereign can always claim exception to the rule. Essentially, the state carves for itself the road to unlimited power. The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben dedicated an entire book to this in 2005, namely *State of Exception*, in which he argues that the US adopted a ‘state of exception after 9/11 and this risks becoming a more prolonged status quo until democracy itself ceases to exist according to values of individual liberty.

Though the US itself did not become a tyranny during the GWOT, the schematics of the ‘state of exception’ connected to the GWOT have been acquired and adapted by illiberal states and forces in the name of tyranny. Agamben notes with righteous alarm at the insidiousness of how extraordinary rendition victims, deemed “unlawful enemy combatants” by the US, were supra-legally turned into non-entities. Combatants that were neither prisoners of war subject to the Geneva convention or criminals subject to US law, we can see how this “radical erasure of the legal status of the individual” has become commonplace among illiberal regimes targeted towards both domestic enemies and external threats, particularly immigrants.⁵⁵

In Weimar Germany, the Reichstag Fire was the culmination of what the Nazis argued was an assault by ‘Judeo-Bolshevism’ on Germany and it infamously led to the complete overhauling of liberal democracy and the installation of the totalitarian Third Reich. A

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 1003 – 1004.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 1007 – 1009.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1021.

⁵⁵ Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2005), p. 3.

situation like this was unlikely for strong democracies like the US, despite not just the illiberal lurch of extraordinary rendition, but also ‘enhanced interrogation’ and the “space of exception” that is Guantanamo Bay. However, in weaker and flawed democracies, where there has been the rule of tyranny in the recent past, and where illiberal forces were much stronger, such as in Hungary, the US could not expect to coherently separate its illiberal misdeeds from its general call to provide a new security model against global terrorism.

In a microcosm of how the US navigated its status as the liberal democratic hegemon despite its many close illiberal allies, the Bush administration, in its push to build a US-led collective security consensus, encouraged states worldwide to follow its legislative lead. However, it lacked the moral authority—given extraordinary rendition—and pragmatic authority to challenge any illiberal abuses of counterterrorism measures.

If the US flirted with Schmitt’s illiberal conception of the ‘state of exception’ during the GWOT, other states began to fully embrace such thinking. When the US called for the world to get behind the GWOT, the international reply was, as Romanuik puts it, “new points of consensus followed by waves of Orwellian counterterrorism laws”.⁵⁶ All too often with conveniently flexible definitions of how governments define and what constitutes terrorism and “how far governments can exercise their power in response to threats to the state and national security.”⁵⁷

Moreover, this redefining of ‘security’ and the hysterical language used to justify a ‘state of exception’, also had a profound impact on provincial and local levels. The second chapter examines this aspect, namely by looking at the motives, logics and roots of the radicalisation of the Breivik according to framework influenced by ‘securitisation theory’ and speech acts.

What we see being advanced in much of post-Cold War liberalism, neoconservatism, the GWOT ideology and Bush doctrine is what this work terms a ‘thin’ version of liberalism, borrowed and adapted from Seth D. Kaplan’s work *Human Rights in Thick and Thin Societies: Universality Without Uniformity*.⁵⁸ ‘Thin liberalism’ constitutes a form of liberalism which was believed could be easily exported around the globe, penetrating and altering societies regardless of local cultures, traditions and antithetical forces within such

⁵⁶ Scott Romaniuk, *Under Siege Counterterrorism and Civil Society in Hungary* (Rowman: London, 2021), p. 1.

⁵⁸Seth D. Kaplan, *Human Rights in Thick and Thin Societies: Universality Without Uniformity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018),

societies.⁵⁹ It is the vision of ‘opportunity’ that Bush described in the speech quoted earlier – one where the ‘peace’ of the world was tied to the ability of the US to spread ‘free trade’ and ‘free markets’ and where, according to this idealistic metanarrative, the ‘weak institutions’ that indirectly lead to terrorism would be replaced by strong ones. The US was itself exposed not exactly as weak, but as much more limited than many had previously imagined, while it was caught between trying to be the ‘benign global hegemon’ yet appealing to, as Fukuyama writes, “national greatness”.⁶⁰ To the world, this translated as a chauvinism to be feared or admired.

In the chapters on Orban, Russia and Breivik, it will be demonstrated how the problem lay not just with the enemies the purveyors of the GWOT could see, but with the ones that it could not. That is not to downplay the threat of Salafi-jihadi terrorism, but the hubristic mission of the US during the GWOT, as the apotheosis and defender of liberal democracy on earth, ended up birthing, enabling and amplifying forces antithetical to everything liberal democracy stands for.

The progenitors and perpetrators of the GWOT thought that the inevitability of liberalism meant that such global policies, such as extraordinary rendition, unilateralism and incentivising new global security models, were perfectly in line with protecting civilisation from barbarism. They could not see that barbarism, far from being confined to Salafi-jihadism or rogue states, was bubbling away within western society and close to the power and technology that they thought would be in the hands of liberal democrats.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

⁶⁰ Fukuyama, ‘America’, p. 42 – 43.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is important to situate the subject matter of this work within the wider context of literature that is integral to the understanding of modern illiberalism and the GWOT.

The sheer scale of the GWOT means that literature on this topic is vast, while there is an abundance of scholarship and literature on what went wrong with liberalism and subsequent the rise of illiberalism.

However, what is notable is that there exists very few literary works that weave together the GWOT and modern illiberalism – or the idea of the GWOT as a major catalyst in the preponderance of modern illiberalism.

The main debate that dominates the now flourishing field of illiberalism studies can be simplified as being between whether we now live in an objectively post-liberal age or whether liberalism can be sufficiently reformed as a countermeasure against its illiberal discontents.⁶¹

Although this debate is not directly relevant to this work, the different works that feed into this discourse are key in both laying out a framework for understanding illiberalism and also attempting to diagnose its inception.

However, they also fulfil the function of allowing us to see the space the GWOT occupies within the literature of illiberalism studies. As shall be seen, most works on illiberalism as a modern phenomenon make fleeting references to the GWOT as a factor in illiberalism, but few identify it as giving modern illiberalism, as is the case made by this work, a major part of its distinct ideological form in the current era.

Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes in their seminal work *The Light that Failed: A Reckoning* (2020), account for the modern phenomenon of illiberalism by looking at the antagonistic relationship between what they term “the imitated”, which is the liberal democratic West and its related economic orthodoxies, and “the imitators”, which is the former countries of the Iron Curtain that underwent rapid democratisation and economic liberalisation.⁶²

⁶¹ Marlene Laruelle (2022) *Illiberalism: a conceptual introduction*, East European Politics

⁶² Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes, *The Light that Failed* (Penguin: London, 2020), p. 5

The authors claim that 1989, the year of the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of Marxism-Leninism as a serious competitor to liberal democracy, heralded an “age of imitation” and a “Western-inspired Imitation Imperative”.⁶³

The basic dynamic behind this, they argue, was one where the high living standards and economic freedoms seen among Western liberal democracies could easily be attained if the former Iron Curtain countries simply imitated the West by adopting the economic orthodoxies of the West at the time.⁶⁴

The authors argue that the “Western-dominated unipolar order” made “liberalism seem unchallengeable in the realm of moral ideals”.⁶⁵ This “ideological supremacy”, in turn, “conferred such normative legitimacy on Western institutional forms as to make copying them, for those able to do so, seem obligatory.”⁶⁶

However, the authors argue that the liberal democracies that arose out of the former Iron Curtain Marxist-Leninist states were sold an illusion by the West, and the crumbling of this liberal illusion led to illiberal resentment:

“After initially high hopes of exporting the West’s political and economic model began to fade, however, revulsion at the politics of imitation gradually spread. An anti-liberal backlash was arguably an inevitable response to a world that had been characterized by a lack of political and ideological alternatives.”⁶⁷

Krastev and Holmes pinpoint the financial crash and global banking crisis of 2008 as the point of departure between imitators and imitated, with the “anti-liberal” backlash acquiring definitive form.

The authors argue compellingly that liberalism’s reputation never bounced back after the 2008 crisis. This, they say, is because the processes by which liberalism justified itself depended on a social framework that allowed significant portions of the population to enhance their standard of living, primarily through credit. However, this framework started to crumble following the financial crisis.⁶⁸

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.167

Krastev and Holmes, among a number of other authors on the subject of illiberalism, emphasise the economic failures of liberalism as having a particularly poignant and ideologically vexing effect on the former communist states of Eastern Europe and the cultivation of illiberalism within some of them.

However, while the 2008 economic crisis was almost certainly a major factor in the rise of illiberalism, the attribution of it as shattering the post-1989 “imitation imperative” does not offer an adequate illustration of the form that illiberalism has taken in some of those countries.

Hungary, which is key to both the central arguments of Krastev and Holmes and this work, as well other former communist states of Eastern Europe, had been sold the idea of rapid economic liberalisation within the scope of the EU.

This work similarly agrees that the fundamental inadequacies of what can be called ‘thin’ liberalism, as discussed in the introduction, with an emphasis on market reforms as a democratising factor, was certainly a major factor in the emergence of modern illiberalism in the shape of the regime of autocratic Prime Minister Viktor Orban and his Fidesz Party.

It is also important to look at illiberalism through the lens of an imperative towards imitation, but Krastev and Holmes perhaps neglect one of the major factors in this so-called imitation game, namely the dysfunctional illiberal imitation and co-option of the ‘security’ models that the US set out during the GWOT.

The 2008 financial crisis and the idea that it represented the nadir of the neoliberal economic hegemony, was immediately seized upon by illiberals as a means of pushing the idea that a wholesale rejection of liberalism was necessary for national prosperity.

However, one major aspect of Orban’s rule missed by the authors is that he didn’t justify the creation of his vast security state based on the 2008 financial crisis.

Although Orban does attempt to superficially advertise his own economic ‘third way’ (between liberalism and communism), he has not in any sense broken from the model of neoliberal capitalism.⁶⁹ His ideological assault has mostly been in the arena of illiberal

⁶⁹ Dorit Geva, ‘Orbán’s Ordonationalism as Post-Neoliberal Hegemony’, *Theory, Culture and Society*, Volume: 38 (2021).

identity politics: taking aim at Islamic immigration and adopting and normalising conspiracy theories, such as the Great Replacement Theory and the “Cultural Marxism” conspiracy.⁷⁰

There’s little doubt that the 2008 financial crisis was a major factor in the rapidity and logic of illiberalisation in Eastern Europe and around the world. Orbán’s Hungary is the most egregious case of this tendency of illiberalisation.

However, this work argues that it is apt to look upon the ideological and practical form of the phenomenon and that the ramifications and illiberal conclusions prompted by the financial crisis were toxically intermixed with the GWOT to produce, by functional amplification, the modern phenomenon of global illiberalism.

Unlike the at times economic reductionist arguments put forward by Krastev and Holmes, this work seeks more to look at how illiberalism came to acquire a particular ideological form that has been definitively shaped by the Global War on Terror – including how, in the case of Orbán’s Hungary, it came to deal and exploit events such as the 2008 financial crisis.

In this sense, political scientist Scott Romaniuk’s work *Under Siege: Counterterrorism and Civil Society in Hungary* (2022) is a vital contribution to empirically understanding the manner in which the GWOT was essential to Orbán’s building of his self-defined illiberal state.⁷¹

Among what is a fairly comprehensive compendium of scholarship on counterterrorism policy and its effects on civil society over the past two decades, including works such as Howell and Lind’s *Counter-Terrorism, Aid and Civil Society: Before and After the War on Terror* (2009), Masferrer and Walker’s *Counter-Terrorism, Human Rights and the Rule of Law: Crossing Legal Boundaries in Defence of the State* (2013) and Kowalski’s *Ethics of Counterterrorism* (2017), Romaniuk’s work uniquely focuses on how GWOT-inspired

⁷⁰ ‘Janša Pledges to Fight “Cultural Marxism” in Online Discussion with Orbán, Vučić on Future of Europe’, *Total Slovenia News*, www.total-slovenia-news.com/politics/6576-jansa-pledges-to-fight-cultural-marxism-in-online-discussion-with-orban-vucic-on-future-of-europe.

⁷¹ Romaniuk, *Under Siege*, p. 14.

counterterrorism measures have been exploited in one particular state for the ideological purposes of creating an illiberal state.⁷²⁷³⁷⁴

Although Romaniuk's focus is on how US-led counterterrorism measures during the GWOT gave Orbán the means to build his own apparatuses of illiberalism against domestic dissent, he does contextualise this as a global phenomenon.⁷⁵

However, Romaniuk tends to focus on the illiberalising process of the GWOT through the lens of "legitimising US primacy", with the contradiction of even nominally 'pro-Western' illiberal regimes, including Orbán, and forces positioning themselves against the US and West.⁷⁶ The exploration of this contradiction is a key component of this work's case studies of Hungary and Russia.

In fact, the tendency of the scholarship on illiberalism to view the phenomena solely through the lens of either pro-Western or anti-Western is pronounced. For the most part, much of the scholarship on illiberalism can be characterised as US or Western-centric, by which the US or West is either seen as the main cause or major victim of illiberalism, or Russia or non-Western-centric, which conceives of Russia as the epicentre of illiberalism, at least as it pertains to Europe.

Krastev and Holmes' work, as has already been discussed, would be an example of US or Western-centric scholarship on illiberalism, seeing, as it does, the failure of US or Western-led fiscal models in the former Iron Curtain states of Eastern Europe as the main cause of illiberalism.

Other examples of this include Edward Luce's valuable polemic *The Retreat of Western Liberalism* (2017) and former chief foreign policy advisor to President George H.W. Bush Richard Haas's work *A World in Disarray: American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order* (2017).⁷⁷⁷⁸

⁷²J. Howell and J. Lind, *Counter-Terrorism, Aid and Civil Society: Before and After the War on Terror* (Palgrave Macmillan: 2009).

⁷³Aniceto Masferrer and Clive Walker, *Counter-Terrorism, Human Rights and the Rule of Law: Crossing Legal Boundaries in Defence of the State* (Edward Elgar Publishing: 2013).

⁷⁴Kowalski, *Ethics of Counterterrorism* (Uitgeverij Boom: Amsterdam, 2017).

⁷⁵Romaniuk, *Under Siege*, p. 4.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*

⁷⁷Edward Luce, *The Retreat of Western Liberalism* (Little, Brown: 2017).

⁷⁸Richard Haas, *A World in Disarray: American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order* (Penguin: 2017)

Examples of Russia or non-Western-centric scholarship on illiberalism include *The Return of the Russian Leviathan* by Sergei Medvedev, Marlene Laruelle's *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire* and David G. Lewis's *Russia's New Authoritarianism: Putin and the Politics of Order* (2020).⁷⁹⁸⁰⁸¹

This work, however, seeks a middle ground, acknowledging aspects of both positions. It describes how Russia used the GWOT to emerge as a counter-hegemonic force, employing tactics and justifications similar to those of the US during the GWOT to challenge its dominance, which will be further explored in the chapter on the case study on Russia.

One key work in the Russia-centric camp of scholarship in illiberalism is Timothy Snyder's *The Road to Unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America* (2018), where the locus of illiberalism is placed firmly with Putin's Russia and its various illiberal actions over the years.⁸²

Snyder accounts for the expansionist illiberal turn of Russia under Putin from 2008 onwards in terms of parochial nationalist discourses – particularly the Russian fascist philosopher Ivan Ilyin – that influence the Putin regime and the subsequent effects of this on geopolitics.⁸³

The work is a vital attempt to locate agency for Russian illiberalism in the modern era with Putin and Russia itself, as opposed, as one example, certain foreign policy realist arguments that attribute much of the blame on concepts such as "NATO encirclement".⁸⁴

However, what Snyder fails to emphasise is the how Putin's ideology and practice both elides with the narratives of the GWOT, while its illiberal foreign policy agenda has been pragmatically bolstered by it.

Though Snyder provides a detailed account of the ideological grounding of Russian chauvinism that comprises the specific illiberal order in Putin's Russia, the GWOT itself as an *illiberalising factor* is not discussed.

This work accepts Snyder's contention that Putin's Russia has become arguably the global pioneer of illiberalism. However, as is argued in the case study on Russia, this ought to be

⁷⁹ Sergei Medvedev, *The Return of the Russian Leviathan* (Polity: 2019).

⁸⁰ Marlene Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire* (Johns Hopkins University Press: 2012)

⁸¹ David G. Lewis, *Russia's New Authoritarianism: Putin and the Politics of Order* (Edinburgh University Press: 2020).

⁸² Timothy Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America* (Vintage: 2018).

⁸³ *Ibid*, p., 17.

⁸⁴ John J. Mearsheimer, *How States Think: The Rationality of Foreign Policy* (Yale University Press: 2023)

viewed within the lens of a form of ideological illiberal counter-hegemony made possible by the GWOT.

In this sense, there has been some key literature that analyses both the structural and ideological nature of illiberalism within Putin's Russia with explicit reference to the GWOT.

John Russel does not view Putin's Russia through the dynamic of illiberal counter-hegemony in his work *Chechnya: Russia's 'War on Terror'* (2008). However, Russell presents a detailed description of how Russia used the GWOT to obscure the legitimate demands of Chechen rebels, depicting them solely as Al-Qaeda terrorists and thus portraying Russia as part of the global fight of the civilised world against Islamic fundamentalism.⁸⁵

Russell's main focus is a critical assessment of the military tactics used by Russia in its war on Chechen rebels, as well as the manner in which the nascent Putin regime used the war to "whittle away the rights and liberties of Russian society", but also how the GWOT normalised this behaviour.⁸⁶

Russell, describing the Second Chechen War as "the continuing saga of one of the most horrific human tragedies of the past decade in Europe", ponders why the conflict "has failed ... to stir the conscience of liberal society across a continent that avowedly seeks to define itself by its commitment to human rights, social justice and the rule of law."⁸⁷

Though Russell concedes that this wilful ignorance preceded the GWOT, he concludes that Russia used the GWOT not simply as a smokescreen for war crimes, but as a means to make everything – any crime, no matter how brutal – justifiable.

By attaching Chechnya to 9/11, al-Qaeda and the GWOT, the Russians were able to turn the Chechen war, characterised by Russell as motivated by three centuries of Russian attempts to subjugate Chechnya, into yet another noble front in the GWOT.⁸⁸

Russell's argument focuses on the Second Chechen War, but his depiction of Russia leveraging the conflict to justify illiberal tactics against Chechens, curtail civil liberties across the country, and the apathy of the US and the West towards these actions, serves as a crucial example of how the GWOT facilitated this dynamic on a global scale.

⁸⁵ John Russell, *Chechnya: Russia's War on Terror* (Routledge: London, 2008), p. 68.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.71

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.73

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.70

Russell doesn't examine how these ideological transformations played out in terms of shaping Putin's foreign policy, but it does demonstrate how Russia's language around Chechnya began to change to mimic and appeal to US rhetoric on the GWOT.

However, there is scholarship on this mimicry being deployed by Russia in its post-Munich speech foreign policy. This includes an entry in the journal of *Europe-Asia Studies* titled the 'Diversionary Role of the Georgia-Russia Conflict' (2009) by Mikhail Filippov, which extensively details how Russia utilised the US's GWOT narrative and did so in defiance of US foreign policy and to the detriment of its democratic neighbour Georgia.⁸⁹

It also includes a 2016 journal article titled 'Russia as an anti-liberal European civilisation' by Marlene Laruelle, which identifies the regime of Vladimir Putin in the GWOT era as eschewing nationalism and embracing an "anti-liberal" conservatism that appeals to like-minded conservatives in the West.⁹⁰

Laruelle's arguments about the ideological nature of the Putin regime in this period contrast with those of Snyder. While Snyder details a Russia motivated by a quest for Eurasianist and explicitly anti-Western domination, Laruelle, using Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea from Ukraine as an example, describes the Putin regime attempting to become the "torchbearer of an anti-liberal Europe".⁹¹

This work extends this analysis of Russian foreign policy into its 2015 intervention in Syria, which has been somewhat neglected by scholarship tied to grander ideas about the role of Russia as a pioneer of illiberalism.

Much of the scholarly focus on modern illiberalism concentrates on illiberals in state power, particularly the governments of Vladimir Putin in Russia, Viktor Orbán in Hungary, and the former governing party of Law and Justice in Poland.

There is much less focus on illiberalism as a form of activism where it seeks state power or seeks to illiberally influence the state.

There is some valuable work on illiberal activists and politicians, such as Michel Eltchaninoff's *Inside the Mind of Marine Le Pen* (2018), which is an ideological biography of

⁸⁹ Mikhail Filippov, 'Diversionary Role of the Georgia-Russia Conflict', *Europe-Asia Studies* Volume: 61 (2009)

⁹⁰ Marlene Laruelle, 'Russia as an anti-liberal European civilisation', in *The New Russian Nationalism*, ed. Pål Kolstø and Helge Blakkisrud (Edinburgh University Press, 2016), p. 276.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

the leader of France's National Rally, formerly the explicitly Neo-Nazi Front National, but now France's primary illiberal party.⁹²

This work is a good example of the procession of modern illiberalism, in this case the transition of the Front National of Jean-Marie Le Pen from a traditional postwar far-right party into a modern illiberal party under his daughter Marine.

The Front National of the senior Le Pen was rooted in racial nationalism, antisemitism and political violence, while its successor National Rally eschews overt racial nationalism for anti-migrant populism, antisemitism for Islamophobia and political violence for a sole focus on electoral power.⁹³

However, while Eltchaninoff's work is an apposite explanation of Le Pen's illiberal ideology from a domestic perspective, it fails to look at the role the GWOT had in fomenting Islamophobia. Eltchaninoff does connect Le Pen's illiberalism to a more general shift of the illiberal right towards Putin's Russia – contrasted with her father's "love" for Ronald Reagan – and the .⁹⁴

However, insufficient attention has been given to the global trend within the traditional far-right activists, particularly the Front National, which significantly revised its ideologies during a specific period. This work argues that these changes did not merely coincide with the GWOT but were fundamentally shaped by the new realities it introduced.

Anne Applebaum's 2020 work *Twilight of Democracy: The Seductive Lure of Authoritarianism* is fundamental to understanding the relationship between activist illiberalism and illiberalism in state form.⁹⁵

Applebaum is less concerned in this work with illiberal and authoritarian figureheads and regimes and more with the intellectuals and activists who make illiberalism, as a social force, possible.

Borrowing from the French philosopher Julien Benda who was writing about 20th Century fascism and communism, Applebaum examines modern "clercs", defined as a class of

⁹² Michel Eltchaninoff, *Inside the Mind of Marine Le Pen* (C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd: London, 2018)

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 95

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 135

⁹⁵ Anne Applebaum, *Twilight of Democracy: The Seductive Lure of Authoritarianism* (Penguin, 2020)

intellectuals, polemicists and public figures who actively advocate illiberalism or, as Applebaum puts it, “the fall of liberal democracy”:

“[T]he fall of liberal democracy in our own time will not look as it did in the 1920s or 1930s. But it will still require a new elite, a new generation of clerics, to bring it about. The collapse of an idea of the West, or of what is sometimes called ‘the Western liberal order,’ will need thinkers, intellectuals, journalists, bloggers, writers, and artists to undermine our current values, and then to imagine the new system to come.”⁹⁶

Applebaum examines these “clerics” through the lens of the rise of the illiberal Law and Justice Party in Poland, Viktor Orban’s Hungary, Brexit in the UK and the rise of Donald Trump as president and now ideological figurehead of the Republican Party in the US.

Applebaum does not mention the GWOT or consider its radicalising effect on discourse around Muslims, immigration and national security, or its degrading effects on public trust in centrist political institutions and so-called mainstream media outlets.

The GWOT’s effect on these things will be discussed in both the chapter on Hungary and Russia and, especially the one concerning Anders Behring Breivik and the Counter-jihad movement (CJM).

However, Applebaum’s work presents a crucial and compelling case for the role played by radicalised media and public figures in the dissemination of illiberal ideas and narratives.

In the chapter on Anders Behring Breivik and the CJM, a key component of understanding how the GWOT served as a period of illiberalisation is looking at what this work terms as ‘transitional figures’ who blur the lines between mainstream discourse and radicalised deviations from such discourse.

Applebaum, writing about illiberalism in 2020, is perhaps describing an evolved form of the transitional figures discussed in this work, as they share much of the same characteristics.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18

As Applebaum writes, these “clerics” of illiberalism “range from nativist ideologues to high-minded political essayists ... some of them write sophisticated books, others launch viral conspiracy theories.”⁹⁷

For example, Applebaum cites Laura Ingraham, a popular *Fox News* host and conservative media personality, as an example of an illiberal ‘clerc’.⁹⁸ She notes Ingraham’s transformation from a ‘moderate’ Reaganite Republican to a supporter of the openly illiberal former US President Donald Trump and the Make America Great Again (MAGA) wing of the Republican Party.⁹⁹

As part of her advocacy for Trump, Ingraham has come to believe in and promote far-right conspiracy theories. These include the Great Replacement Theory, which claims that political elites are trying to replace 'native' white populations with racially or culturally inferior migrants, and aspects of the QAnon conspiracy movement, which alleges that a powerful cabal of Satanic child molesters is conspiring against Trump.¹⁰⁰

Ingraham, as Applebaum describes, shifted from supporting the “optimistic conservatism” of the 1980s and 1990s to embracing and promoting an “apocalyptic pessimism”.¹⁰¹ Ingraham now believes “America is doomed ... Western civilisation is doomed” due to “[i]mmigration, political correctness, transgenderism, the culture, the establishment, the left, and the ‘Dems’.”¹⁰²

Applebaum notes that Ingraham, who used to profess idealistic notions of “America’s power to do good in the world”, now believes in the “degeneracy” of the US, while, like many MAGA proponents, seeing a model for the rejuvenation of America and Western civilisation in Putin’s Russia.¹⁰³

Although Applebaum examines the alignment of MAGA Republicans with Putin’s Russia through the lens of rejuvenated illiberal Christian nationalism, she does not make the link between this rejuvenation and the GWOT.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 20

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 160

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 160-167

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 166

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 165

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 164

In the segment on Russia, this work shows how Putin used a variant of the US's GWOT narrative to portray itself as the true defender of Christendom and Western civilization, particularly in Syria. The chapter on Breivik details the form of Christian or civilisational nationalism that the GWOT largely unwittingly unleashed, even exploring the links between the ultra-Islamophobic CJM from which Breivik emerged, the US Christian right and the transitional illiberal Tea Party movement, which provided Donald Trump with a new political platform.

Applebaum notes that political discourse in the age of illiberalism has acquired a civilisational aspect, citing Ingraham's consistent depiction of the existence of Western civilisation hinging upon the success or failure of Trump, but never looks at where this aspect arose from?¹⁰⁴

In the chapter on Breivik, this work looks at how the discourse around the GWOT brought this civilisational aspect to the fore and allowed it to flourish and mutate.

One of these early mutations was the openly illiberal CJM, the movement from which Anders Behring Breivik emerged and honed his ideology. Scholarship on the CJM is fairly sparse, but Benjamin Lee's journal article 'A Day in the "Swamp": Understanding Discourse in the Online Counter-Jihad Nebula' (2015) is a useful look at how the CJM relates to and differs from the traditional far-right.¹⁰⁵

The origins of the CJM are not really discussed by Lee and it should not be taken as obvious that the scholarship on the movement accept that it was instigated, amplified and consolidated by the GWOT, which the chapter on Breivik in this work unambiguously argues.

As pointed out by Lee, one of the main scholarly focuses of the CJM have been on its links to violence and, in its most infamous case, Breivik's 'lone wolf terrorism'.¹⁰⁶

In this debate, scholars such as Paul Jackson point to Breivik's extensive ties with the CJM to understand his crime and his radicalisation, as in, why he chose his targets and how he

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 165

¹⁰⁵ Benjamin Lee, 'A Day in the "Swamp": Understanding Discourse in the Counter-Jihad Nebula', *Democracy and Security* Volume 11 (2015)

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 250

justified his crimes, or others, such as Jacob Ravndal, claim Breivik's prejudices emerged prior to his involvement in the CJM.¹⁰⁷¹⁰⁸

This work takes the position that both positions can be accurate, as Breivik describes his own point of radicalisation as 9/11, but the manner in which the GWOT was relayed publicly saw the emergence of the CJM as an ideological "activist" response, with Breivik making this journey.

In this sense, Gavan Titley's 2013 journal article 'They called a war, and someone came: The communicative politics of Breivik's Ideoscape' presents Breivik's actions through the lens of "framing".¹⁰⁹ Titley defines this "framing" regarding Breivik, via Judith Butler, as, "The recurring imaginary and invocation of war, and the reproduction of the patriot/alien/traitor geometry of war".¹¹⁰ In Titley's view, Breivik's ideology and activism, and that of the wider CJM, must primarily be seen as being framed by the self-defined motivations of the movement, which is, as Titley puts it, the "ticking urgency of two minutes to an Islamofascist midnight".¹¹¹

The inception of this "framing", to borrow from Titley, is the GWOT itself, as this work argues and the CJM is a what might be termed a radicalisation within a radicalisation – a mutation of GWOT ideology cultivated within what this work terms an ecosystem of illiberalism created, unwittingly, by the ideological dimensions of the GWOT.

Importantly, Titley's work, as well as Arun Kundnani's 2012 research paper for the International Centre for Counterterrorism, 'Blind Spot? Security Narratives and Far-Right Violence in Europe', consider the CJM as movements of complex ideologies.¹¹² This contrasts with the view suggested by Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens and Hans Brun in their 2013 work, *A Neo-nationalist Network: The English Defence League and Europe's Counter-jihad Movement*, which describes the CJM as a single-issue activist movement.¹¹³

¹⁰⁷ Paul Jackson, 'The License to Hate: Peder Jensen's Fascist Rhetoric in Anders Breivik's Manifesto 2083: A European Declaration of Independence', *Democracy and Security* 9, no. 3 (2013): 247–269

¹⁰⁸ Jacob Ravndal, 'Anders Behring Breivik's Use of the Internet and Social Media', *Journal Exit-Deutschland* 2 (2013)

¹⁰⁹ Gavan Titley, 'They Called a War, and Someone Came: The Communicative Politics of Breivik's Ideoscape', *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 3, no. 4 (2013)

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 217

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 218

¹¹² Arun Kundnani, 'Blind Spot? Security Narratives and Far-Right Violence in Europe' (The Hague: ICCT Research Paper, 2012)

¹¹³ Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens and Hans Brun, *A Neo-nationalist Network: The English Defence League and Europe's Counter-jihad Movement* (London: ICSR, 2013).

This work argues in the chapter on Breivik that the CJM had broad illiberal goals, goals that were both related to its convergence with the traditional far-right and its divergence from them. As will be demonstrated, the problem of “Islamisation” as depicted by the CJM is more often than not seen by the movement’s intellectuals and proponents as a symptom of a problem endemic to the Western liberal democratic order – the overall target is liberalism.

METHODOLOGY

DEFINING MODERN ILLIBERALISM

Before outlining the research methods and theoretical underpinnings of this work, it is important to consider precisely what is meant by modern illiberalism.

This study accepts Marlene Laruelle’s definition of illiberalism in her extensive journal entry ‘Illiberalism: A Conceptual Introduction’ (2022) as “represent[ing] a backlash against today’s liberalism in all its varied scripts ... political, economic, cultural, geopolitical, civilizational”.¹¹⁴

Laruelle further defines modern illiberalism as:

“[...] favouring traditional hierarchies and cultural homogeneity. It proposes to restore national sovereignty in various spheres; internationally, by rejecting supranational and multilateral institutions in favour of the sovereign nation-state; economically, by denouncing neoliberal orthodoxy and promoting protectionism at the nation-state level (while at the same time, when in power, sometimes implementing neoliberal reforms); and culturally, by rejecting multiculturalism and minority rights in favour of majoritarianism. This majoritarianism advances a “traditional” vision of gender relations (what is defined as “traditional” covering a vast range of practices depending on the local context) and a vision of the nation that—whether essentialist and nativist or assimilationist—takes from nationalism the division between *Gemeinschaft* [community] and *Gesellschaft* [society] and sees the latter only as the product of the former.”¹¹⁵

Laruelle’s description of illiberalism provides the most generically applicable account of what is meant by the term and the values of those described as illiberals. One could apply the above as much to the regime of Viktor Orbán in Hungary as they could to the ideology of Donald Trump’s MAGA Republican Party.

What most scholars of illiberalism agree on is that the phenomenon is rooted in a rejection of, or ought to be seen in contrast with, the triumphant liberalism of the post-Cold War period of

¹¹⁴Marlene Laruelle, ‘Illiberalism: A Conceptual Introduction’, *East European Politics* Volume: 38

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 309

the 1990s. This is what Snyder, as previously discussed, calls “the politics of inevitability” and what Laruelle describes as “the purported historical inevitability of liberalism”.¹¹⁶

In Laruelle’s definition, she roots illiberalism in, borrowing from the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, a “post-Cold War” and “post-modern” era of “liquid modernity”.¹¹⁷ This era, she says, is shaped by “media immediacy, economic and cultural globalisation, a fragmented world of competing and contrasting identities, and the idea that knowledge is inter-subjective and self-referential.”

This is essentially what Giddens referred to as “late modernity” or “reflexive modernity”, as mentioned in the introduction, where traditional notions of the nation state and identity are challenged and eroded by technologically driven globalisation.

Modern illiberalism constitutes the opposition to this.

Laruelle situates this in terms of “post-postmodernism”, where illiberalism is opposition to “postmodernism’s cosmopolitanism, as well as its belief in the abolition of boundaries and the supposed death of the nation”.¹¹⁸

Laruelle writes:

“Illiberalism sees postmodernism both as the post-1960s morality turn as well as the post-Cold War U.S. unilateralism, right to interference, multinational institutions, and globalisation that have challenged the nation-state as the backbone of the international order. Yet illiberalism functions in a postmodern world where immediacy and eclecticism are the norm, which makes it fit the definition of a post-postmodern phenomenon.”¹¹⁹

Additionally, this work looks at modern illiberalism through the lens of “resistance to transcendence”. This term was first conceived by the German historian Ernst Nolte in his book *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche*, meaning ‘fascism in its epoch’, published in English in 1965 as *The Three Faces of Fascism*, as a means to understand 20th Century fascism.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 304

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 310

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Ernst Nolte, *The Three Faces of Fascism* (Holt, Reinhart and Winston: New York, 1963).

In its most basic form, “resistance to transcendence” means to resist anything, whether policies, institutions or ideas, that transcends ideas of the nation or ethnic identity – anything perceived as “fixed” or fundamental to the nature of something.¹²¹

More conceptually, in Nolte’s own words, the transcendence fascism is resisting “can be taken to mean a social process ... which continually widens human relationships, thereby rendering them in general more subtle and ... which disengages the individual from traditional ties.”¹²²

Nolte conceived of the term not solely as a means to understand fascism, but to understand how its different forms, such as National Socialism and Italian fascism, could be very different yet part of the same phenomenon.

This is an important aspect of modern illiberalism, given its forms can often be quite different and occur according to modalities specific to a range of particular conditions, yet ultimately be part of the same phenomenon.

For example, as Applebaum puts it, an illiberal event like Brexit, while having many differences from the election of Trump, contains much of the same targets – conjuring hatred of an ill-defined “establishment”, as one example, which is *a priori* taken to be mendacious, corrupt, elitist and working against the interests of the alleged majority.¹²³

In the case of Brexit, this vampiric establishment was the pro-EU partes in the UK and the EU itself. Among Trump supporters, it was the Democratic Party, anti-Trump Republicans and federal agencies considered to be antagonistic to Trump, as well as the completely fantastical “deep state”, a term also adopted by Brexiteers, including Prime Ministers Boris Johnson and Liz Truss.¹²⁴¹²⁵

In this one example, we see the interplay of illiberalism as a “thin” ideology, where its archetypes, euphemisms and bete noires can be interchangeable within different local contexts.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 538 – 540.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 433.

¹²³ Applebaum, *Twilight of Democracy*, p. 127.

¹²⁴ <https://www.euractiv.com/section/uk-europe/news/deep-state-may-try-to-reverse-brexit-warns-johnson/>

¹²⁵ <https://www.politico.eu/article/liz-truss-unlikely-journey-from-downing-street-chief-to-deep-state-conspiracist/>

One vital point made by Laruelle in her definition and analysis of illiberalism is that it must not be seen simply as “anti-liberalism”.¹²⁶ Even in a document such as Breivik’s manifesto, attached as it is to such an extreme actor, it is clear that one of the main pitches illiberalism makes is that liberalism has failed to achieve its hegemonic mission.

As Laruelle puts it:

“Illiberalism presents itself not simply as anti-liberal, but as post-liberal, thus competing with liberalism using its own conceptual language. Moreover, illiberal figures or movement do not reject liberalism in all its versions: they may repudiate certain aspects while embracing others.”¹²⁷

This is especially important when understanding how the GWOT came to shape and hasten the rise of illiberalism as major global force, given, as is evident in the segment on Orban’s Hungary, his initial illiberal pitch is that liberal democracy is no longer sufficient to upkeep the security and homogeneity of the nation. Orban’s gambit is to suggest that liberalism’s historic mission has failed and must be replaced with a successful post-liberal agenda.

RESEARCH METHODS

In order to best examine the role of the GWOT in the rise of modern illiberalism, it was clear that a multidisciplinary approach to the question, utilising historical quantitative research methods and then rendering them with devices most associated with political science.

It was important to identify baseline primary sources, which, in this case, was the extensive George W. Bush White House Archives, as well as an extensive number of primary sources relating to policy documents, contemporaneous articles and a host of think tank and NGO reports.

As the work developed, and it became clear that it was necessary to account for the ideological, practical and contextual underpinnings of both the GWOT and the post-Cold War liberal world order, it became an imperative to look up similar archival materials relating to neoconservatism and policy documents going back as far as the administrations of US Presidents Bill Clinton and George H.W. Bush.

¹²⁶ Laruelle, *Illiberalism*, p. 311.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

Similarly, this study also utilised primary sources, comprising archives of speeches, articles and compilations of policy proposals, by Viktor Orban and Vladimir Putin.

This work decided to focus on Orban in a case study of illiberalism because while Hungary under his rule attracts a lot of scholarly attention, there exists a genuine gap of looking at his regime through the lens of the GWOT. Particularly, there exists a gap at examining the ideology of Orban through the lens of the GWOT.

The work also looks at Russia and its intervention in Syria as a case study of an illiberalism. Putin's Russia is considered by most scholars on illiberalism to be the epicentre of illiberalism. However, what is much less studied is the relation between the GWOT and Russia's eventual and potentially definitive break with the West in 2007.

From this, his study develops the concept of a GWOT ideology and war on terror narrative emerging from the post-9/11 US-led global security nexus. It argues that Russia's interventions in Georgia and Syria utilise the war on terror narrative, weaponising the US's own models against it in a counter-hegemonic manner.

There might be a question as to why this study leaves out Ukraine. At the time of writing, Russia had not yet launched its invasion of Ukraine, though it had annexed Ukraine. In both cases, the GWOT ideology and blueprint has been used by Putin and his regime as a means of justification, but Russia's intervention in Syria is much less covered from a scholarly angle and this work is the first to look at this intervention through the lens of the disembodied, counter-hegemonic war on terror narrative utilised by Putin.

Also, with Russia's intervention in Syria there is a continuity, well understood by Russia, and as can be seen in speeches examined in the segment on Russia, with the US's original GWOT. While the US-led GWOT, particularly the Iraq war was a case of the overreach of liberal interventionism with illiberal consequences, Russia's intervention in Syria was what this work terms illiberal interventionism.

This concept is related to one of the defining aspects of illiberalism mentioned in the definition of illiberalism, in that illiberalism likes to contend with liberalism by liberalism's own terms. Global liberalism, led or at least embodied by the US, depicted itself as leading the charge against Islamic jihadism, Putin's pitch to the world is that it failed, leading to international chaos and order can only be restored on Russia's distinctly illiberal terms.

Additionally, this study involves a textual analysis of Anders Behring Breivik's 1518-page manifesto, which contained within it a huge compendium of secondary source on the subject of "Islamification", ranging from newspaper articles to excerpts of books.

In order to best demonstrate the relationship between the GWOT and Breivik, this work uses a framework inspired by securitisation theory, which is usually used in the fields of political science and international relations, and the related concept of speech acts.

Securitisation conceives of a securitising actor who, to quote the international relations scholar Clara Eroukhmanoff, "has the social and institutional power to move the issue 'beyond politics' ... so, security issues are not simply 'out there' but rather must be articulated as problems by securitising actors."¹²⁸

In this case, the "securitising actor" is the Bush administration and all proponents of the GWOT – as previously touched upon, as soon as the Bush administration declared that there was a "global war on terror", they reified their own ideological contentions of terror and the threat it posed to the world and individuals. To the individual, of any country, given the war was "global", suddenly they were either a potential victim or combatant.

The GWOT, in the form of ideology and praxis, is itself a "speech act", which, in the words of Anatol Lieven:

"[R]equires the presentation of the danger concerned as an existential one and thereby removes it from the normal sphere of politics and policies. The threat is thereby placed in a special, exceptional category, backed by a national consensus and allowing the use of exceptional measures and the mobilization of national resources to meet it."¹²⁹

This novel approach allows us to examine Breivik and the CJM's relationship with the GWOT, and with the manner in which the GWOT was ideologically articulated, while avoiding simplistic notions of causality.

It also allows to look at the manner in which GWOT ideology and associated policies, can be utilised by an illiberal leader like Viktor Orban to create their very own "state of exception",

¹²⁸ 'Securitisation Theory: An Introduction', *E-International Relations*, www.e-ir.info/2018/01/14/securitisation-theory-an-introduction.

¹²⁹ Anatol Lieven, *Climate Change and the Nation State* (Penguin, 2020), p. 6.

which is often the environment from which the landscape of illiberalism is formed and shaped.

In order to better explain the differences between illiberalism in power and illiberalism seeking power, or seeking to pressure those in power, this work takes a structuralist approach to analysing illiberalism, looking at in terms of its forms and structures, as opposed to focusing on the psychology or personalities of illiberal figures.

In this respect, we bifurcate illiberalism into its state-form, represented by case studies on Orban's Hungary and Putin's Russia, and its activist-form, represented by a case study on Breivik and the CJM.

Not only has this approach never been done before in scholarship, but it allows for us to compare and contrast two forms of the same phenomenon and the interplay between the two and how they relate to existing orders. Illiberalism is an emerging concept across multiple scholarly fields, so this form of analysis advances considerations about how illiberal ideas, values, policies and tactics operate in different contexts.

This work, borrowing from Nolte, looks at illiberalism in "epochal" terms. This is the theoretical framework that underpins my central argument that the manner in which the Bush administration pursued the GWOT enabled illiberalism to emerge more rapidly and according to certain forms and structures.

This work does not seek to try to establish a new historical era, but the use of "epoch of illiberalism", or to describe illiberalism as "epochal", is to note that it has characteristics unique to its own time and space. In Nolte's *The Three Faces of Fascism*, he writes:

"[I]t is obvious that the question of fascism cannot be separated from the question of its era ... Even if the name 'fascism' is taken strictly as a name, that is, to describe an isolated phenomenon, the question remains of the extent to which events in Italy were *not*—in spite of their incalculable world-wide effect—epochal. Whichever way we look at it, the common nature of the inquiry into fascism and the era is inescapable, and it is our task to define the concept and review the fact."¹³⁰

Nolte, referencing Mussolini's March on Rome of 1922, is asking how it is possible not to look at fascism as relating to an epoch, as emerging from and even forming its own era,

¹³⁰ Ernst Nolte, *The Three Faces of Fascism* (Holt, Reinhart and Winston: New York, 1963), p. 18.

shaped, influenced and defined by historical events of preceding eras. In common with this work, Nolte goes on to say that even though fascism still exists after the “epoch of fascism”, its lack of prominence serves as a natural demarcation.¹³¹

Similarly, this work recognises that illiberalism existed prior to what I have called the “epoch of illiberalism”, but the point of demarcation here is that at no time, since 20th Century fascism, has illiberalism been so dominant as a phenomenon in the West.

By considering the current era to be an epoch of illiberalism, it allows this work a flexible framework to explain how the space for this epoch emerged and, furthermore, to explain that though different modern illiberalism might have many dissimilarities, why modern illiberalism has a distinctly similar ideological flavour in key essential areas.

The inciting incident, as this thesis argues, that birthed this epoch of illiberalism is the GWOT, both as an ideologically and practical, though perhaps unintended, facilitative factor and as an event, or set of events, that remade world order or recalibrated the prevailing ideological composition of world order.

¹³¹*Ibid.*

CHAPTER 1

ORBAN’S HUNGARY AND PUTIN’S RUSSIA: STATE-FORM ILLIBERALISM AND THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR

The last chapter ended with the description of the modern era as “the epoch of illiberalism”, but if this is the case, it was preceded and directly informed by an era of counterterrorism.

Though Viktor Orban, in his illiberal guise, did not come to power in Hungary until 2010, (he had previously been prime minister on a centre-right ostensibly liberal programme), much of his ‘programme’ has been rationalised and justified in the name of counterterrorism and the building of a security state designed to match the apparent threats to Hungary from terrorism.

It is through the lens of the age of counterterrorism that Romaniuk contextualises the illiberal autocratisation of Hungary by Orban.¹³² Romaniuk further places it firmly within the context of not simply counterterrorism, but the normalisation of the GWOT-led recalibration of counterterrorism policy on a global scale – what he refers to in Eastern Europe as, conjuring its previous authoritarian form during the Iron Curtain, “the return of the security state”.¹³³

However, the main frame of reference for counterterrorism policy in Hungary was in fact the US counterterrorism measures as part of the GWOT, as discussed in the introduction. This has both pragmatic and ideological dimensions, with the GWOT providing an opportunity for states like Orban’s Hungary to create their own states of exception.

This has meant that illiberal states, such as that of Hungary, have enacted PATRIOT Act-style counterterrorism measures and created DHS-style organisations without the checks and balances of liberal democracy. While the potential for illiberal abuse of such laws is precisely what makes the adoption of them so delicately complex within even robust liberal democracies like the US, in the context of Hungary, this kind of legislation has been used to build Orban’s illiberal democracy and to persecute enemies of the regime.

As Chatterjee and Kreko put it, Orban has used counterterrorism laws to “sustain Fidesz’s power and pass restrictive legislation that aims to silence or marginalize opposition

¹³² Romaniuk, *Under Siege*, p. 238.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

factions.”¹³⁴ After regaining power in 2010, one of Orbán’s first acts as prime minister was to take the power of “preventing terrorism in Hungary” away from the intelligence services and into the hands of his newly created centralised, and Fidesz-loyal, Hungarian Counter-terrorism Centre (TEK), modelled on the DHS and the centralised approach of the US.¹³⁵

Orbán’s justified the creation of TEK, citing the attacks of 9/11 and the necessity to recognise that ‘terrorism’ was the main security challenge in Hungary.¹³⁶ In a pattern that is inherent to modern illiberalism, despite TEK being set up under the model and remit of the GWOT, namely, to combat the threat of Salafi jihadi and other political terror threats, TEK has been involved in operations against, as one egregious example, Hungarian citizens who host and run BDSM websites.¹³⁷

The GWOT, in the case of Hungary and for many other illiberal regimes and forces, became a convenient means for them to enact their illiberal ideological agenda. We see how an illiberal force, via the GWOT, interacts with the GWOT not as a means to deter any real or immediate threat to Hungary from Salafi jihadi terrorism, but to take aim at liberal values in general and assert an aggressive form of ethnochauvinist, homophobic national sovereignty. In Orbán’s Hungary, we see an almost perfect example of how GWOT served as a transformative moment wherein illiberal forces could use the impetus of a world order defined by American-driven counterterrorism, aimed at defending civilisation from barbarism, as was the nature of Bush’s Manicheanism, to take aim at liberalism itself.

What begins with ‘counterterrorism’ in the wake of al-Qaeda carrying out unprecedented attacks on the US becomes itself an attack on liberal values. What we see in Hungary is the procession of illiberalism through the lens of the GWOT. Counterterrorism is expanded from its original remit of protecting the country against terrorism to its initial distortion into Islamophobia and conspiratorial opposition to immigration and multiculturalism and then further distorted to take aim at any group considered to be undermining the strength of the

¹³⁴ Sohini Chatterjee and Péter Krekó, ‘Elastic Interpretation of National Security’, *Centre for Strategic and International Studies* (2018), p. 47.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Mood Pictures, *Hungarian Spanking & BDSM Studio Arrested*, online video, Youtube, 3 February 2010, www.youtube.com/watch?v=u48sMrFTdZA&ab_channel=TJHotMovies.

Hungarian ‘nation’ and its Christian civilisation. This includes everything from civil society NGOs that aid Muslim or non-white migrants to LGBT groups.¹³⁸

The GWOT constituted the combination of the institution of domestic counterterrorism legislation that was often in many countries underregulated and passed without proper scrutiny, as well as a genuinely international security superstructure.¹³⁹ It was an attempted realisation of Wolfowitz’s “US-led security collective”. This involved over half the world’s governments acceding to security initiatives and endeavours that were often bereft of regulation.

Though this is not in itself illiberal, as Romaniuk points out, the Hungarian government, as well as many other modern illiberal forces and states has “seized the opportunity” provided by the GWOT and the “uptake of counterterrorism policy” to take aim at CSOs, NGOs and other groups that undermine Orbán’s illiberal agenda.¹⁴⁰ Romaniuk writes that these non-violent groups are:

“[Portrayed] as vehement adversaries of the Hungarian state’s authority through foreign-funded advocacy campaigns ... Fidesz has placed civil society and the space in which CSOs maneuver in the crosshairs of security policy and CTMs [counterterrorism measures] ... in the absence of any serious terrorist attack having taken place on Hungarian soil.”¹⁴¹

Orbán has used freezing of asset orders, police raids and bans to stamp out hundreds of these groups, as well as enact crackdowns on academia and the few remaining independent media outlets in Hungary.¹⁴² Throughout all of Orbán’s bolstering of Hungary’s pre-existing counter-terrorism legislation, including increasing defence spending mostly for border protection, his most prominent message is that he, as opposed to the insipid liberal democracies of the EU, “takes the war on terror seriously”.¹⁴³ Though the use of counterterrorism measures against liberal civil society is an illiberal end in itself, most of the

¹³⁸ ‘Hungary: Intensified attack on LGBT People’, *Human Rights Watch*, www.hrw.org/news/2020/11/18/hungary-intensified-attack-lgbt-people

¹³⁹ Romaniuk, *Under Siege*, p. 3.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 162

¹⁴³ ‘Hungary takes the war on terror seriously, says Viktor Orbán’, *Budapest Free Beacon*, budapestbeacon.com/hungary-takes-the-war-on-terror-seriously-says-viktor-orban/

organisations targeted in the name of ‘counterterrorism’ have been those groups that aid migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Hungary.¹⁴⁴

In fact, as referenced above in Orban’s speech taking aim at the failure of ‘liberalism’ to protect Hungary, it is through the GWOT’s normalisation of the language and logics of radicalised securitisation and counter-terrorism policies that Orban has managed to carve out the key pillars of his ‘illiberal democracy’.

“Liberty”, as Orban’s spokesman said when defending Hungary’s decision to detain all new migrants in camps, “comes only after security”.¹⁴⁵ But what exactly does ‘security’ mean according to modern illiberalism? It is impossible to understand the centrality of ‘security’ to the process of illiberalisation without understanding the former’s prominence in the era of the GWOT and its intimate connections to Islamophobia, itself connected to a militarised conception of the nation and the sanctity of its borders. This is perhaps something that is missing from Agamben’s portentous observations about the US government and the ‘state of exception’ during the GWOT, namely the manner in which regimes like that of Orban’s have wrought a state ideology that can justify an illiberal ‘state of exception’ that persists indefinitely.

It ought to be noted that there exists modalities of anti-immigrant sentiment among modern illiberal forces, but almost all are united in their opposition to Muslim immigration, whether through legal migration or as refugees and asylum seekers.

Islamophobia obviously existed before 9/11 and the subsequent GWOT, but in this period it has transitioned into viable political discourse across of much of Europe, America and in many different parts of the world. As Fukuyama notes, the rhetoric of the Bush administration and many of its high-profile supporters has led to the eliding of Islamic identity with ‘radical Islam’, a term which itself is often lazily coupled with diverse political phenomena such as Islamism and ‘political Islam’.¹⁴⁶ Fukuyama argues that during the GWOT supporters of the Bush administration too often argued that the ‘threat’ comes from

¹⁴⁴ Chatterjee and Kreko, ‘Elastic Interpretation’, pp. 51 – 52.

¹⁴⁵ ‘Hungary announces it will detain all new migrants in camps’, *The Daily Mail*, www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4198270/Hungary-announces-detain-new-migrants-camps.html.

¹⁴⁶ Francis Fukuyama: *America at the Crossroads* (Profile Books: London), pp. 67 – 71.

“a version of the religion Islam ... that is thoroughly unappeasable and anti-Western ... and that is deeply and broadly rooted among the world’s more than one billion Muslims.”¹⁴⁷

In combination with the Bush administration’s dire warnings of the potential of terrorist groups to eventually obtain access to WMDs, these exaggerated and at times hysterical takes on the role of Muslims in the West as ‘enemies within’ were normalised and became ripe for political exploitation and, ironically, radicalisation. This concoction of truth with political fictions, over-exaggerations, simplifications and prejudices, often designed to shore up support for the policies of the GWOT, led to a situation where Islamic terrorism and Muslims in their totality could be seen or cynically depicted as a civilisational threat to the West. Within this model of counterterrorism emanating from the US and spreading across the world, everything from multiculturalism to mass immigration became intertwined with political responses to the GWOT.

Though a large component of the GWOT constituted the US’ unilateralist activities in Iraq, much of it involved, what Romaniuk and Njoku call “internal securitization”. They further define the concept in the following manner:

“[As] focus grew on identifying and responding to internal threats, more complex security discourses have developed in support of greater intelligence capacity at home. The result has been the normalization of counter-terrorism discourse and practice which has problematized some forms of legitimate dissent and enabled the flourishing of a wide palette of Islamophobic discourse.”¹⁴⁸

This entire discourse of “internal securitization” has most strongly manifested in the idea of ‘radicalisation’, which is itself linked to the Bush administration’s often nebulous attempts at waging a mixture between counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency, where the distinction between ‘combatant’ and ‘civilian’ is as blurred as that of ‘moderate’ and ‘extremist’. In the context of the GWOT, on the domestic level, this has led to a set of policies that have the net effect of looking at terrorism on a communal level (as in, terrorism emerges from the ‘Islamic community’ and a lack of policing within it) and that has the effect of Otherisation.

Orban’s Hungary demonstrates the process of counterterrorism, ‘radicalised’ by the GWOT, transitioning into outright Islamophobia and militant opposition to particularly Muslim

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.71.

¹⁴⁸ Romaniuk and Njoku, ‘Counter-terrorism’, Discursive Structures section, para. 2.

immigration and the imbibing and espousing of other illiberal ideological obsessions. Under Orban, Hungary has become a deportation machine, breaking EU law and defying international law in the process of forcibly detaining and deporting all Muslim refugees and asylum seekers, with no regard for humanitarian concern.¹⁴⁹ Much like Agamben's observations about how the victims of the US' extraordinary rendition programme, the so-called 'enemy combatants', had been turned into individuals with no legal rights, we see the same with the Orban regime and immigrants.

This is not to say that Orban is taking direct inspiration from 'extraordinary rendition' in his treatment of migrants. Rather, Orban, using counterterrorism legislation modelled on that of the US, has created out of the so-called refugee crisis of 2015 his very own 'state of exception' that directly appeals to the normalised dynamics of the GWOT. However, unlike the Bush administration, Orban goes much further to ideologically maintain his 'state of exception', appealing to ideologies that have now become staples of the illiberal right, such as Great Replacement Theory (GRT) and variants of it such as 'Islamisation'.¹⁵⁰

GRT, in its modern form, can be traced back to the French far-right writer Renaud Camus, who in his 2012 book *Le Grand Remplacement* claimed that in a process of "reverse colonisation" white populations with low birth rates are being systematically 'replaced' by non-white, specially Arab and Muslim, immigrants who tend to have higher birth rates.¹⁵¹ All of this is being enacted according to the grand plan of liberal elites for their own ill-defined purposes. This is obviously outlandish and it might seem absurd to imagine that anyone would believe it, but the modern illiberal elected leaders of Italy, Poland and, of course, Hungary endorse it or variants of it, while modern illiberal elected parties and representatives across Europe and within the US also espouse it.

This is part of the ideological lens through which the Orban regime exploited the so-called refugee crisis of 2015, during which thousands of Syrian refugees sought refuge across Europe: to bolster its security regime by illiberal means and to illiberal ends. Without ever

¹⁴⁹ 'EU Court Rules Hungary Broke Asylum Law By Detaining Migrants', *Radio Free Europe*, www.rferl.org/a/hungary-eu-court-migrants-asylum-law-broken/31005770.html.

¹⁵⁰ The Great Replacement in Hungary, 'The Hannah Arendt Center for Politics and Humanities', hac.bard.edu/amor-mundi/-the-great-replacement-in-hungary-2022-08-06.

¹⁵¹ Eitan Azani, 'The Development and Characterization of Far-Right Ideologies', *International Institute for Counter-Terrorism* (2020), p. 17.

mentioning the far-right conspiracy by name, Orban has made direct rhetorical appeals to GRT, such as during a summit held on ‘demography’ in Budapest in September 2019:

“If Europe is not going to be populated by Europeans in the future and we take this as given, then we are speaking about an exchange of populations, to replace the population of Europeans with others ... There are political forces in Europe who want a replacement of population for ideological or other reasons.”¹⁵²

By appealing to the GWOT-era narrative of terrorism and ‘radicalisation’ as a threat to the Hungarian nation and European civilisation, as well as to radicalised illiberal conspiracy theories such as GRT, Orban has attempted to make the words ‘terrorist’ and ‘immigrant’ or ‘migrant’ synonymous to the Hungarian public. Speaking in an interview in 2015, Orban baldly stated that “the factual point is that all the terrorists are basically migrants”, going on to state that the link between terrorism in Europe and Muslim immigration was “overwhelmingly logical”.¹⁵³

To put it in brief perspective, Hungary has almost no Muslims living within its borders. Most refugees who end up in Hungary, Muslim or otherwise, have little intention of settling there, with most using it as a transit country on the way to Western Europe. Moreover, as touched upon earlier, with Orban transforming Hungary into a deportation machine, the Fidesz-dominated parliament introduced legislation in 2015 making the granting of refugee status in Hungary almost impossible, while they began building a four-meter-high wall along 175km of the border with Serbia.¹⁵⁴

Orban, during the refugee crisis and after the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in Paris in 2015, seized the opportunity to create yet another counterterrorism organisation called the Counterterrorism and Criminal Analysis Centre (TIBEK), which was charged with providing the government with deep intelligence on terror activities.¹⁵⁵ The *Charlie Hebdo* attacks saw the Orban regime, which was going through a domestic slump due to corruption allegations combined with a poor economy and increasing authoritarianism, launch a racist propaganda

¹⁵² ‘Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s speech at the 3rd Budapest Demographic Summit’, About Hungary: Speeches and Remarks, abouthungary.hu/speeches-and-remarks/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-speech-at-the-3rd-budapest-demographic-summit, 5 September 2019.

¹⁵³ ‘All the terrorists are migrants’, *Politico*, <https://www.politico.eu/article/viktor-orban-interview-terrorists-migrants-eu-russia-putin-borders-schengen/>.

¹⁵⁴ Chatterjee and Kreko, ‘Elastic’, p. 49.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

campaign against Muslims and immigrants. The campaign included a series of racist and xenophobic billboards, including one bluntly stating, “The Paris attacks were committed by Migrants”, as well as one with the more reserved yet insidious message of “If you come to Hungary you have to respect our culture”.¹⁵⁶

Combined with this, the Orban regime launched a “national consultation on immigration and terrorism”. In distributed millions of questionnaires to Hungarians over the age of 18 asking for their opinions on issues whether the government should be able to detain illegal immigrants for more than 24 hours (in contravention of EU law) or whether immigrants should be immediately expelled.¹⁵⁷

It is notable that the billboards were written entirely in Hungarian and the questionnaires were obviously aimed solely at Hungarian citizens, meaning that the intended message wasn't to non-Hungarian speaking refugees and migrants, but rather Hungarians themselves. As a 2015 article for the *Hungarian Free Press* put it, the whole exercise was a way for the Orban regime to conflate immigration with terrorism and “demonstrate to wayward right-wing voters, who are slipping away to Jobbik, that Fidesz can be relied upon to keep Hungary racially pure.”¹⁵⁸ What begins as policy, legislation and politics belonging in the realm and appealing to the language of counterterrorism rapidly becomes radicalised into populist forms of Islamophobia and racism to be weaponised for the Orban regime's own broader intra-social agendas. It is then used to justify the extension of the state's power.

Orban's 'state of exception' is maintained by the contrived idea that the nation is under assault from terroristic jihadist Muslims posing as refugees, but it is expanded by his appeal to illiberal conspiracies such as GRT or 'Islamisation'. All enemies, whether pro-refugee NGOs and CSOs or pro-democracy opposition parties, politicians and media outlets, can be defined as part of the conspiracy to have the white Christian Hungarian population 'replaced' or outbred by non-white Muslim immigrants. In legislative terms, the definition of terrorist has been expanded to include those who “disrupt the operation of an international organization.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹⁵⁸ 'Hungarians Deface Governments Openly Racist Billboards', *Hungarian Free Press*, <https://hungarianfreepress.com/2015/06/06/hungarians-deface-governments-openly-racist-billboards/>.

¹⁵⁹ Chatterjee and Kreko, 'Elastic', p. 51.

We see, in the manner in which Hungary has oriented its security state and counterterrorism policies against domestic liberal enemies of the state, the twisted distortions that the GWOT has unwittingly promoted. Indeed, in 2016, the Fidesz-controlled parliament voted to give Orban the power to arbitrarily declare a “terror threat situation” and allow the armed forces to be mobilised within the country, while also boosting the surveillance powers of the security forces, with the definition of ‘terror’ left, according to opposition groups, deliberately vague.¹⁶⁰ This has allowed Orban, in defiance of EU law, to declare mass migration a “state of crisis”, which is to say that migration itself is deemed to be a crisis of national security – it provides the indefinite ‘state of exception’.¹⁶¹

In turn, it has allowed the state security apparatuses, including TEK and those tasked specifically with counterterrorism, to target migrants themselves, such as by detaining them or summarily deporting them, and crackdown on any domestic group that is found to be aiding migrants.¹⁶² In 2016, after the Brussels terror attacks—and while Orban was dangerously ratcheting the rhetoric up, publicly declaring that migrants were “a poison” and that “every single migrant poses a public security and terror risk”—the regime authorised a new Counterterrorism Action Plan.¹⁶³

The plan allows police to introduce “high-level security measures” for up to, at the very least, 6 days, while also allowing the Hungarian military to aid TEK in “counterterrorism activities”, including against Hungarian civilians.¹⁶⁴ Indeed, as is the recurring theme, despite migrants, terrorism and national security being the pretext, these measures were aimed at Hungarians and liberal civil society, with these new measures requiring communication service providers to “ensure the continuous operation of call numbers used by certain organisations”, namely “nonloyal CSOs,”¹⁶⁵

In March 2017 Orban delivered a rambling speech to the Hungarian parliament in which he likened himself to the 11th century Hungarian king and Christian saint Ladislaus I, who, in the words of Orban, “protected Hungarians from destruction by nomadic peoples” which he compared to his own crusade to “stop migrants” and the will of foreign conspirators, from

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² ‘Viktor Orban: Migrants are ‘a poison’’, *Politico*, <https://www.politico.eu/article/viktor-orban-migrants-are-a-poison-hungarian-prime-minister-europe-refugee-crisis/>.

¹⁶³ Chatterjee and Kreko, ‘Elastic’, p. 53

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 48 – 51.

George Soros to Brussels, to hasten that destruction.¹⁶⁶ However, the real meaning of the speech was the fact that Fidesz had passed new legislation under the title ‘On the amendment of certain acts related to increasing the strictness of procedures carried out in the areas of border management’, which allowed the Orban regime to declare and maintain a ‘state of crisis’ (or a ‘state of exception’) without justification or limit.¹⁶⁷

Given the lack of immigrants, migrants, refugees and Muslims, let alone Islamic terrorists, in Hungary, the moves by the Orban regime to repurpose GWOT counterterrorism measures has one explicit purpose: to further strangle genuinely oppositional forces by distorting the qualitative and quantitative realities of migration in Hungary.

As discussed previously, this endorsement of GRT and ‘Islamisation’ by Orban is essentially him repurposing GWOT ideology and policy as a means to fortify his own power. Much of this has involved increased counterterrorism measures co-existing with the embracing of convoluted conspiracy theories centred around ‘globalism’ and particularly the machinations of the Hungarian American billionaire philanthropist, financier and liberal activist George Soros.

According to Orban, Soros has great influence if not total control over Brussels and even Washington. In the ideology and demonology of modern global illiberalism, the connotations of the name ‘Soros’, which go much beyond Hungary, are akin to the mythic role of the name Rothschild to the fascist illiberals of the 20th Century. Soros represents to modern illiberals the antithesis of their political *Weltanschauung*, particularly his Open Society Foundation (OSF), which was created to promote liberal democratic values in areas of civic society where they are being challenged.¹⁶⁸

Using Nolte’s terms, Soros represents to illiberals the politics and culture of *transcendence* by the combination of his extreme wealth and relatively powerful influence with his strong beliefs in transnationalism, liberal democracy and universal liberal values. In *The Three Faces of Fascism*, Nolte defines ‘practical transcendence, as “a social process which renders

¹⁶⁶ ‘Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s National Consultation Speech In Full’, *Hungary Today*, <https://hungarytoday.hu/migrants-issue-identity-sovereignty-hungarian-orban-speech-full-20779/>.

¹⁶⁷ Chatterjee and Kreko, ‘Elastic’, p. 52.

¹⁶⁸ How Vilification of George Soros Moved From the Fringes to the Mainstream, *New York Times*, www.nytimes.com/2018/10/31/us/politics/george-soros-bombs-trump.html.

human relationships ever more abstract, disengages man from traditionalities, and increases the power of groups.”¹⁶⁹

This is what Soros, and liberal democracy, represents to illiberals.

Nolte, who was writing about transcendence in relationship to the epoch of 20th Century European fascism, could be writing about the liberal conceptions of the ‘End of History’ or the dreams of reflexive modernity and the Third Way – all the dominant modes of liberalism in the post-Cold War period. Soros sees progress in liberal internationalism, open societies, social liberalism, further European federal integration, anti-nationalism, support for transnational governance and support for freedom of movement.¹⁷⁰

In Hungary, and across Europe, the OSF funds many NGOs and CSOs working to help refugees, which have been openly portrayed by the regime as terrorists and criminals.¹⁷¹ The conspiracy theory for the Orban regime is a very simple one: the arch-liberal Soros is funding groups within Hungary to aid refugees, who are synonymous with terrorism, the usurping of the ‘indigenous’ Hungarian population and threats to national security. Thus, Orban can characterise Soros and those he funds as enemies of Hungary and of Western civilisation – or, indeed, he can use the ‘Soros’ label as an attack on political enemies.¹⁷²

The extent to which Orban, who himself in his former liberal guise once received funding from the OSF, believes his own Soros conspiracy theories is unknown, but there is little doubt that such conspiracy theories have found a popular audience among illiberals in Hungary and around the world. Moreover, such conspiracy theories function to ideologically shore up Orban’s agenda and justify his illiberalisation of Hungary.

Orban has essentially recast the players in the GWOT. While Islamophobic narratives of Muslims and terrorism remain central, al-Qaeda and Salafi jihadism have been relegated in Orban’s modification. Instead, Soros now fulfils the role of a Bin Laden-type orchestrator, with Muslims reduced to mere foot soldiers in Soros’s plan to undermine Western Christian civilization through mass Islamic migration. As Orban put it after Fidesz’s victory speech after they unsurprisingly won almost 50% of the vote in the elections of 2018:

¹⁶⁹ Nolte, *Three Faces*, p. 541.

¹⁷⁰ ‘Vilification of Soros’, *New York Times*

¹⁷¹ Chatterjee and Kreko, ‘Elastic’, p. 55

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

“We are fighting an enemy that is different from us. Not open, but hiding; not straightforward but crafty ... not national but international; does not believe in working but speculates with money; does not have its own homeland but feels it owns the whole world ...”¹⁷³

Orban’s speech, though aimed at Soros and appealing to traditional antisemitic tropes, bears a striking resemblance to much of the language of the Bush administration when describing the grand enemy of global terror. In line with this, and completely in line with Romaniuk’s conception of “internal securitisation”, Orban has thus sought to use the security state to try to eradicate Soros-funded NGOs and CSOs. He has, in essence, waged his own local war on terror on them, appealing to a localised GWOT ideology, heavily distorted and modified from its original source, to justify such a war. In 2016, Orban ordered TEK to undertake “national security inspections” of any organisation deemed to be “cooperating with the Soros network.”¹⁷⁴

Rhetorically speaking, Orban has combined ‘Clash of Civilisations’ rhetoric, conspiratorial illiberal populism and a form of militarised Islamophobic Christianity to justify his indefinite ‘state of exception’.

Speaking to the German newspaper *Bild*, Orban stated that Syrians entering Europe should not be considered as refugees but rather as “Muslim invaders”, while he warns in his addresses to the nation of the influence of George Soros over the EU elites whose policies are paving the way for the “decline of Christian culture” and “the expansion of Islam”.¹⁷⁵ Even absent of a specific threat, Orban, using a radicalised language and logic of the GWOT, depicts every Muslim outside of the so-called Muslim world as a foot soldier in a war being waged against Christian Europe. However, by conjuring Soros, he also brings into play what he views as the real enemy, namely liberalism and its alleged will to destroy or its collaboration in the destruction of the Hungarian and European peoples.

The Orban regime's promotion of anti-Soros conspiracy narratives has had the desired popular effect.

¹⁷³ ‘Hungarian leader says Europe is now 'under invasion' by migrants’. *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/15/hungarian-leader-says-europe-is-now-under-invasion-by-migrants>.

¹⁷⁴ Chaterjee and Kreko, ‘Elastic’, p. 55.

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Hungary’s Viktor Orban, *Bild*, www.bild.de/politik/ausland/viktor-orban/exclusive-interview-with-viktor-orban-54405140.bild.html.

As reported by Chatterjee and Kreko, in an opinion poll for Publicus, 64% of Hungarians agreed that Soros is a potential threat to Hungary, while 57% said foreign-funded organisations should not take part in domestic politics.¹⁷⁶ Much like the US in the GWOT was compelled by ‘exceptional circumstances’ to excommunicate ‘terror suspects’ from both domestic and international legal norms, so it is the case in Hungary for those working to aid asylum seekers and refugees.

The main consequence of this popular support for the regime’s demonisation of Soros, occurred in 2018 when, in contravention of EU law, Orban passed the infamous ‘Stop Soros’ legislation.¹⁷⁷ The legislation was designed to restrict the ability of NGOs, allegedly funded by Soros, to aid in asylum cases in defiance of EU law and human rights conventions, making the “organisation of illegal immigration” a criminal offence¹⁷⁸ Under part of the legislations, individuals or groups, who help asylum seekers gain status to stay in Hungary can be imprisoned and subject to surveillance by TEK and other anti-terror agencies. It also included a constitutional amendment, in defiance of the EU’s migrant quota plan, stating “an alien population cannot be settled in Hungary.”¹⁷⁹

This was followed the following year by the decision of the prestigious Soros-funded Central European University (CEU) to relocate much of its operations to Vienna, after the Orban regime banned the university from issuing US-accredited degrees in the country.¹⁸⁰ The CEU’s central appeal was that it could grant free or cheap English-language degrees to Hungarians and people from Eastern Europe of all backgrounds. Although the Orban regime denied any ideological agenda, it had targeted and persecuted the CEU for years before, attempting to make it impossible for it to function.¹⁸¹ Moreover, at the time of its closure in Budapest, historian Maria Schmidt, an Orban government official, Fidesz ideologue, and

¹⁷⁶ Chatterjee and Kreko, ‘Elastic’, p. 55.

¹⁷⁷ ‘Hungary’s Stop Soros law that criminalises helping asylum seekers ‘infringes EU law’. Euronews, www.euronews.com/my-europe/2021/11/16/hungary-move-to-criminalise-support-of-asylum-seekers-infringes-eu-law.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ ‘Hungary passes Stop Soros laws’, *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/20/hungary-passes-anti-immigrant-stop-soros-laws>.

¹⁸⁰ ‘Hungary: Central European University closure highlights ‘erosion’ of rule of law’, *International Bar Association*, <https://www.ibanet.org/article/58bd55a0-243d-4fde-818d-1a300f2bd188>.

¹⁸¹ ‘Michael Ignatieff, President and Rector of Central European University, on the lost fight against Viktor Orban’, *Central European University*, <https://www.ceu.edu/article/2021-04-13/it-was-great-battle-michael-ignatieff-president-and-rector-central-european>.

Holocaust revisionist, referred to the university as “Soros’s forward garrison in Europe,” using the language of war.¹⁸²

Directly appealing to GWOT counterterrorism policy and radicalised narratives of impending ‘Islamification,’ the consequences of GRT, or exaggerated terror threats conflated with Muslims and migrants, Orban has restructured Hungary’s security state along the lines of ‘internal securitisation. Outside of deeper philosophical accounts of the motivations of illiberalism and illiberals, this perhaps touches upon the *why* of illiberalism as it relates to the GWOT more than any other aspect: the GWOT, by propagating what Romaniuk calls the ‘return of the security state’, has allowed Orban to consolidate power and thus the interests of the constellation of social, economic, cultural and political forces he represents.

This was reflected when Orban took former US President Bill Clinton to task for criticising Hungary and Poland’s illiberal policies towards refugees and claiming they want “Putin-like leadership”.¹⁸³ Orban responded that the US ought to show them “more respect”, with the connotations that, unlike the US, its statesmen like Orban who are fighting the ‘real’ enemies and that they are the ones defending Western civilisation.

Orban sees in his illiberalism the necessary escalation and, more complexly, modification of what the US first started in the GWOT. The Hungarian leader thinks that the liberal democratic West, from Brussels to Washington, ought to hold up his own illiberal agenda as a model to better defend the West from its existential foes. However, the major difference is that while the US and the mainstream propagators and defenders of its GWOT strategies and activities were attempting to, as has been discussed, eradicate terror in defence of liberal idealism, illiberals such as Orban have obviously discarded liberal idealism for an illiberal idealism.

One of the most interesting aspects of this is the reflexive and counterhegemonic aspects of illiberalism in the case of Orban and in general. In his speech at CPAC, the most prestigious conservative conference in the US, Orban proclaimed, “I’m here to tell you that we should unite our forces,” going on to detail a shared global fight between the vanguard defenders of

¹⁸² ‘Classes move to Vienna as Hungary makes rare decision to oust university’, *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/16/ceu-classes-move-to-vienna-orban-hungary-ousts-university>.

¹⁸³ ‘Putin-like?’ Not us, say Poland and Hungary in response to Bill Clinton’, *Politico*, <https://www.politico.eu/article/us-democracy-putin-like-not-us-say-poland-and-hungary-in-response-to-bill-clinton/>.

Western civilisation like him and the CPAC attendees (mostly MAGA Republicans).¹⁸⁴ We see here aspects of a ‘thin’ illiberalism, where it is assumed or contended that illiberalism is exportable or mutually applicable from one national context to any other and but that its methods, such as building border walls, conspiracy theories and the self-victimisation of invoking the machinations of ‘globalists’ against everything that illiberals believe ought to be static in a nation.

In his CPAC speech, Orban detailed the global vision for his own internal ‘war on terror’ – a war against immigration, gender fluidity and the globalism. “The West is at War with itself”, he concluded.¹⁸⁵ What Orban means by this is that the West’s main enemy is the enemy within, namely the transcendence of liberal democracy. This is a general ideology of illiberalism, narratively aroused and methodologically made possible by the disorienting actions of the US during the GWOT.

It's not as if Orban has been conspicuous about any of this. In a speech at the XXV Balvanyos Free Summer University and Youth Camp, dated to July 26th, 2014, he openly declared that he was constructing an “illiberal state” to make Hungary “competitive”, given that “liberal democratic societies cannot remain globally competitive”.¹⁸⁶ Orban, in this, speech, attempts to dismantle liberal democracy as a viable form of governance for Hungary and for the world, literally listing examples of how liberal democracy and its values has failed to protect the Hungarian nation and poisoned the Western world.¹⁸⁷ In the speech, Orban does not directly reference the GWOT, but he lays out, in summarised form, what the point of his illiberal state is, which is essentially to right the many wrongs of liberalism – of economic excesses, which he characterises as “corporate colonisation”, but also, as he describes when speaking of liberal values and American soft power (which is the cultural wing of the US as the benign global hegemon), the way in which “liberal values today incorporate corruption, sex and violence”.¹⁸⁸ Tied to this is his populist contention that through liberal values, “Western Europe was so preoccupied with solving the situation of immigrants that it forgot about the white working class”, which is the classic illiberal trope of recasting the majority,

¹⁸⁴ ‘Viktor Orbán laid out his dark worldview to the American right — and they loved it’, *Vox*, www.vox.com/2022/8/5/23292448/orban-cpac-dallas-2022-speech-trump.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ Viktor Orban’s Speech at the XXV Balvanyos Free Summer University, *Hungarian Spectrum*, <https://hungarianspectrum.org/2014/07/31/viktor-orbans-speech-at-the-xxv-balvanyos-free-summer-university-and-youth-camp-july-26-2014-baile-tusnad-tusnadfurdo/>.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

as in white people, as the victim due to the minority.¹⁸⁹ This is not just aimed at Hungary – Orban cites examples of how liberal democracy, through economic malfeasance, has failed globally – as he put it, the “battle for Western civilization would be fought in Washington and Brussels.”¹⁹⁰

It is impossible to say whether Orban’s illiberal state would have existed without the GWOT, but it certainly would have been deprived of many of its GWOT-era normative counterterrorism methods and the inner workings of its ideological narratives. To borrow from Titley, Orban would have been denied a large component of the “framing” through which he has built and justified his illiberal state.¹⁹¹

The GWOT provided the language through which Orban could weave his illiberal ideology, pertaining to outlandish ideas such as ‘Islamification’, GRT and Soros conspiracies. This distorted GWOT-like, siege-mentality narrative coincides with Orban’s main methodology for the crafting of his illiberal state: using counterterrorism measures and apparatuses to attack and ban NGOs, CSOs and entities irreconcilable with his illiberal political agenda. Under the guise of fighting terrorism, creating a security state that indefinitely maintains a ‘state of exception’ where all power resides with Orban’s regime and the definition of ‘terrorist’ essentially means anyone who opposes the nature of that power.

In the Orban regime, we see something of an historical tragedy that is nonetheless apt for the trajectory of this work, given that Hungary’s rapid democratisation after the fall of the Iron Curtain was hailed as evidence of liberal democracy’s triumph. The fact that Hungary, under Orban’s grip, remains an important and influential member of Europe and NATO, only makes its illiberalisation more ominous, given, though there has been some fightback, Orban has effectively been normalised – many of his anti-immigrant policies have found resonance within the centrist-dominated EU.¹⁹²

Orban’s core illiberal ideas could be described as counter-hegemonic: the notion of a transnational, multicultural world of liberal democratic hegemony now contends with and normalises a world where ethnonationalism, majoritarianism and segregationism works against anything that is perceived to contradict the pillars of illiberal notions of civilisation.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ Titley, ‘They called a war’, p. 217.

¹⁹² ‘How Orbán broke the EU — and got away with it’, Politico, <https://www.politico.eu/article/how-viktor-orban-broke-the-eu-and-got-away-with-it-hungary-rule-of-law/>

This counter-hegemonic aspect is precisely the space within which Putin's Russia has, with exceptional success, come to shape, fill and exploit. More concretely, it is not odd for illiberals to support radicalised and cynical versions of GWOT-era domestic (or as is the case with Russia, even foreign) counter-terrorism strategies and logics, while rejecting the US, in the era of Bush and Obama, as a negative force of 'globalism'.

Critical approaches to these questions are often caught up in a dichotomised dynamic where illiberalism, as in the case of Krastev and Holmes, Laruelle, Snyder, Applebaum and others, is fundamentally, though nuancedly, opposed to America and the West, while, in the case of Romaniuk, sees it as being an ideological continuation of American hegemony.

This work considers the Age of Illiberalism to be not dissimilar in terms of the navigation of world order to the Age of Empire in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries, where different hegemonic forces were often as capable of opprobrium towards one another as they were to collaboration. While Orbán's Hungary has mostly but not exclusively positioned itself in the camp of Putin's Russia, illiberal forces such as Poland's Law and Justice Party (PiS) have, despite their rescinding of liberal democratic principles, been much more cooperative with America.

These geopolitical subtleties reflect the historical timeline of illiberalism and indeed that of the interaction of the US with illiberal allies during the GWOT. Putin's Russia was a very early and zealous supporter of America's GWOT, embracing the new global landscape of the predominance of the 'security regime' and was itself embraced by America and the liberal democratic West.

However, this informal *entente cordiale* only lasted until 2007, when Putin made a definitive break with the West and began Russia's course of expansive illiberalism in a quest to assert its post-Soviet hegemony. However, Putin and his definitive turn towards illiberalism present a perfect example of the GWOT as providing a functionally transformative era wherein illiberalism could attain a status of counter-hegemony, allowing its ideals to thrive in the face of a liberal order severely weakened by US conduct during the GWOT.

At the time of 9/11, Putin was waging a war on Chechnya and bought into the GWOT for entirely cynical reasons. Only hours after the attacks of 9/11, the very first leader to call President Bush and express his sympathy and support for the US was Vladimir Putin. Just a year before Putin declared support for the GWOT, his war in Chechnya had been heavily

criticised by the Clinton administration for potential Russian war crimes, particularly the targeting of Chechen civilians and accusations of ethnic cleansing.¹⁹³

In sharp contrast, during a speech given by George W. Bush just over a year after 9/11 in the White House, far from criticising Russian atrocities, the president celebrated the “common values” shared between America and Putin and commented on his rule in Russia as a “hopeful moment of transition ... reaching for its democratic future” and celebrated him as a “partner in the war on terror”.¹⁹⁴

By attaching Chechnya to 9/11, al-Qaeda and the GWOT, the Russians were able to turn a war characterised by Russell as motivated by three centuries of Russian attempts to subjugate Chechnya into yet another noble front in the GWOT.¹⁹⁵ There would be no attempts by the Bush administration to undermine this fiction. Putin’s support for the GWOT not only legitimised his brutal war in Chechnya, but it normalised a series of policies, justified often by the ‘terror threat’ from Chechnya, that constituted a tyrannical centralisation of power.¹⁹⁶ In 2001, in a speech to the German Bundestag, addressing the new global security situation after 9/11, Putin called for the US and Europe to work more closely with Russia, while, on the question of transcendence, Putin echoed the thinking of the ‘Third Way’, proclaiming “the time has now come to think about what should be done to make sure that a united and secure Europe becomes the harbinger of a united and secure world.”¹⁹⁷

In the introduction to this work, the GWOT was described as knocking the world off its liberal democratic axis. Though one might argue that it was never on such an axis, the idea and realities of the US as the liberal democratic hegemon, the ‘benign global hegemon’, had genuine global meaning. The world’s largest superpower was a liberal democracy and the power it wielded emanated from a domestic liberal democratic power structure. The international community was led and determined by a liberal democracy, and other small but powerful liberal democracies in the European Union.

¹⁹³ ‘U.S. Response to Human Rights Commission Resolution on Chechnya’, Internet Archive, <https://web.archive.org/web/20130906153240/http://www.usembassy-israel.org.il/publish/press/state/archive/2000/april/sd50427.htm>, April 26 2000.

¹⁹⁴ ‘George W. Bush speech to National Security Council’, *George W. Bush White House Archive*, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nssall.html>, September 17 2002.

¹⁹⁵ Russell, *Chechnya: Russia’s War on Terror*, p. 68.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 73-74

¹⁹⁷ ‘Speech in the Bundestag of the Federal Republic of Germany’, *Kremlin Archives*, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/21340>, September 25 2001.

International bodies, and international law, as well as human rights based on liberalism, were seen as being the pinnacle of sociocultural development on the global stage. Today ‘liberal interventionism’ has become a phrase unfairly though in some cases understandably contaminated with the hubris of the US invasion and occupation of Iraq. This was not the case before 9/11. On the contrary, in the wake of the failure of the world to stop the Bosnian and Rwandan genocides, it was the African Union in 2000 that called for a collective global effort, including a military capacity, to intervene if a state was carrying out or failing to protect its own population from mass atrocities. This call eventually became ‘Responsibility to Protect (stylised as ‘R2P’), which was endorsed by every member of the United Nations and which held that the world had a concrete responsibility to stop war crimes, ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity and genocide.

It’s too easy to say that the GWOT essentially ruined all of this. However, the GWOT created the space through which other forces could create their own ‘Wars on Terror’ – with their own enemies, states of exception and unilateral rejections of international law. In the preceding part of this chapter, this work demonstrated how the GWOT pragmatically and ideologically influenced the illiberalisation of Orbán’s Hungary. However, globally speaking, it is vital to understand this illiberalism as counterhegemonic or anti-hegemonic.

Russia has been the most vociferous of these new poles of illiberal hegemony. Not only did the GWOT widen the cracks in the edifice of post-Cold War liberal democratic hegemony, but it provided those who wanted to break it apart with the ideological tools to do so.

It was in 2007 at the Munich Security Conference that Vladimir Putin, the early ally of the US in its GWOT, shocked the international community by excoriating US hegemony and its military excesses, describing this as “almost uncontained hyper-use of force in international relations”.¹⁹⁸

The tone of Putin’s speech starkly contrasted with his 2001 address advocating unity and political ecumenism. Notably, much of his speech was factually correct, highlighting the ways in which the US had abused the international system during the GWOT. The US had shaken the international order with its reckless, illiberal and hubristic endeavours, something

¹⁹⁸ ‘Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy’, *Kremlin Archives*, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/copy/24034>, 10 February 2007.

very craftily worded by Putin in his speech as: “no one feels safe ... because no one can feel that international law is like a stone wall that will protect them.”¹⁹⁹

It ought to go without saying that Putin wasn't using this speech to genuinely stick up for the integrity of international law in the face of the US's weakening of it. Rather, he was effectively declaring that the US had rendered international law redundant and made it necessary for other powers and forces, who might oppose the US's monopoly on power, to also no longer work according to the international standard. The US was supposed to protect this standard, but instead it opened it up to being circumvented.

The main focus of Putin's speech was NATO expansion in Eastern Europe, specifically concerning Ukraine and Georgia. While it is beyond the scope of this work to fully examine that particular question, it is clear from the speech that Putin planned to use the question of NATO expansion, which he had been more sanguine about in the preceding years, to justify Russia's new 'multipolar' or revanchist foreign policy.

The main conclusion of the speech was that Russia had no interest in integrating with the US or European-led liberal order. Moreover, though Putin dresses up his concerns in the terms of his opposition to 'unipolarity', unlike in the Bundestag six years earlier, he fundamentally rejects transcendence, saying, “I consider that the unipolar model is not only unacceptable but also impossible in today's world ... the model itself is flawed because at its basis there is and can be no moral foundations for modern civilisation.”²⁰⁰ In other words, sovereign states ought to act according to their own unique civilisational traditions and morality, as well as ambitions.

One might wonder why Putin chose 2007 to definitively break with the US and Western order? Or, indeed, why he broke with it all? On the latter question those such as Timothy Snyder tend to believe that Putin has always had overtly illiberal ideological ambitions and it was simply a matter of time before he put them into practice.²⁰¹ It is certainly true that, contrary to the optimism of Tony Blair in 2000, Putin was never a liberal democrat, and that he has been influenced by Russian nationalist ideologues of the past and present. However, the extent to which his ambitions are more to do with opportunism than direct ideology is up for debate. What is less debatable is Putin's directly illiberal turn against the US and Western

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ Snyder, *The Road*, p. 15.

world order, with him citing the GWOT as a reason for Russia's own adoption of an aggressive values-based foreign policy.

The GWOT, far from revealing the US to be some unstoppable omnipresent global policeman, had actually vividly revealed its military, cultural (as in 'soft power') and economic limitations and the beginnings of its decline as the 'benign global hegemon'. Putin references this in his 2007 speech, pointing out that the "international landscape is so varied and changes so quickly" and that the combined GDP of China and India now exceeded that of the US.²⁰²

While the US had not lost the war in Iraq, its unrealistic ambitions and its exceptionally naïve attitudes towards the scope and nature of the war had been obvious from the minute that George W. Bush declared "mission accomplished" on the eve of the worst day of violence since the occupation began. The same could be said about the even more intractable situation with its war in Afghanistan. Furthermore, it was looking increasingly likely that a Democratic president, opposed to the manner in which the Bush administration conducted the GWOT, would be elected when Bush's term came to an end in 2008.

Combined with the US cracking the edifice of liberal democratic order with its unilateralism and breaking of international law, it's quite possible that Putin saw the opportunity in 2007 to begin to challenge and appeal to a counter-hegemonic sense of anti-US sentiment. One year after his Munich speech, Russia, for the first time since the fall of the USSR, militarily invaded a sovereign state, namely Georgia, making it the 21st Century's first war in Europe, one that, flying in the face of the long-forgotten hopes of R2P, involved the ethnic cleansing of Georgians from the Russian-backed separatist entities of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

While this work doesn't have the space to fully explore the reasons behind the Russian invasion, what is directly meaningful is that in the years preceding the invasion, the Putin regime had directly appealed to the GWOT to a domestic and global audience. As Mikhail Filippov points out, Russia began directly appealing to a war against Georgia in terms of the GWOT but also justifying its attack according to its own 'War on Terror'.²⁰³ Filippov writes, "After 9/11, Russia's accusations that Georgia supported the Chechen rebels intensified ... filling the national media with statements ... that Georgia was harbouring some 20 Chechen

²⁰² 'Speech at Munich', *Kremlin Archive*

²⁰³ Mikhail Filippov, 'Diversionary Role of the Georgia-Russia Conflict', *Europe-Asia Studies* Volume: 61 (2009), p. 1832.

terrorist bases and declared that Rappani Khalilov, a suspect in the deadly bombing of a parade in 2002 was being harboured by the Georgian government.”²⁰⁴ This is the appeal to its own war on terror, but it also, at this stage, attempts to seek wider justification from the US-led GWOT, with Filippov adding that Russia also claimed Georgia was housing “1500 Arab mercenaries and 200 Taliban” and the Putin regime “asserted that Russia therefore had a ‘moral right’ to launch a counterterrorist operation Pankisi [Abkhazia]”²⁰⁵

What we see here is Russia’s simultaneous urge to justify its territorial ambitions over Georgian sovereignty, which was set to apply for NATO membership the very year it was invaded. Essentially, we see the GWOT being used by the Russian state to justify imperialism and a form of revanchism, via its proxy states of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Not only does Russia conjure the threat of Islamic terrorism, and real Salafi jihadi terrorists who had committed atrocities to manufacture consent among the public, but it speaks of a “moral right”. This is what the GWOT changed – if the US had the moral right to conduct the GWOT in the manner in which it did, then so did Russia.

The most extraordinary example of this came in 2002, when Putin himself issued this statement about Georgia:

“Today, no one can deny, and we know for sure ... that Georgian territory has been chosen as a haven by those who were complicit in planning the terrorist attacks in the US a year ago [11 September 2001] and those who blew up houses in the Russian Federation [September 1999] ... I ask the General Staff to submit proposals on the feasibility of delivering strikes on known terrorist bases in the course of hot pursuit.”²⁰⁶

At this point, Putin was still an ally of the US in the GWOT. However, his language reveals that Russia seized the opportunities provided by the GWOT to use it as an ideological and pragmatic tool (e.g., claiming that the perpetrators of 9/11 were using Georgia as a 'haven') to manufacture consent for military action against it.

Though this was Russia gearing up for the invasion that eventually came in 2008, what we see developing out of the GWOT ideology is what this work terms a ‘war on terror narrative’, which is a cynical attempt to manufacture consent for military action and acts of hostility by painting the enemy as terrorists and attaching them to terrorism. In the case of Georgia,

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1833

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1834

Russia's goals were quite possibly a fear of Georgia integrating with the democratic West and moving further out of its ideological sphere of influence.

The so-called 'colour revolutions', which was the name given to several anti-regime protests in former Soviet territories, including Georgia in 2003, Ukraine in 2004 and Kazakhstan in 2005, were widely seen as attempts within these countries to move towards integration with the West and assimilation with liberalism. All of these initial three popular uprisings were against pro-Russian regimes. It's no surprise then that within Russia, they were, in combination with the expansion of NATO and the EU, seen as being liberal encroachments into Russia's sphere of influence. However, what is relevant to this work is that we see in Russia's dramatic hostility to the so-called colour revolutions the fomentation of its illiberal counter-hegemonic posture – its resistance to the sovereign right of those nations deemed to be within its 'sphere of influence' to determine their own futures outside the shadow of Moscow. Since then, and as stated by the Russian National Security Strategy, issued into law by Putin, Russia identifies "colour revolutions" as being fomented by foreign NGOs (including Soros's OSF), Western "financial and economic structures" and "groups using ... religious extremist ideology" in order to destabilise Russia socially and politically and destroy "traditional Russian religious and moral values."²⁰⁷

Not only do we see in this the language of the GWOT, the invocation of "religious extremist ideologies", but we see it intermixed with overt illiberalism, such as its conspiratorial hostility to the "colour revolutions". We can perhaps see here what Russia's 'war on terror narrative' is truly aimed at. However, it should be noted, that this more imperialist application of the 'war on terror narrative' goes beyond Russia. In in the post-GWOT age, this narrative has been seized upon by illiberal regimes across the globe to justify all manner of actions, ranging from military attacks and invasions to crimes against humanity and genocide.²⁰⁸

The 'war on terror narrative' can easily be separated from its original source, namely that of the US-led GWOT, and be modified for different local situations with devastating effect. Russia was the pioneer not just of this repurposing of the logics and vocabularies of the GWOT towards directly imperialist and illiberal ends, but also in doing so for the purposes of

²⁰⁷ 'Russia's updated National Security Strategy', *NATO Defence College*, <https://www.ndc.nato.int/research/research.php?icode=704#>.

²⁰⁸ 'How China hijacked the War on Terror', *Politico*, www.politico.com/news/2021/09/09/china-hijacked-war-on-terror-511032

counterhegemony. In a journal article titled ‘Russia as an anti-liberal European civilisation’, Laruelle puts forward the notion that around about the early 2010s, Russia began to advertise itself as an ‘alternative Europe’ by embracing illiberalism or values that were deemed antithetical to the liberal democratic values of the West.²⁰⁹ Russia essentially began to advertise itself not so much as something separate from Western civilisation, but rather a bulwark of ‘traditional’ Western civilisation against the erosive transcendence of liberalism, especially around questions of identity and values.

Russia attempts to appeal to the West in terms of the so-called ‘culture wars’, such as opposition to LGBT rights and an affirmation of Christianity identity.²¹⁰ As quoted by Laruelle, at a speech at the Valdai Discussion Club on 20 September, 2013, Putin claimed “the Euro-Atlantic countries” are “rejecting their roots, including Christian values that constitute the basis of Western civilisation.”²¹¹ Concluding that “they are denying moral principles and all traditional identities: national, cultural, religious, and even sexual.”²¹²

Here we see Putin essentially claiming that Russia stands for the basis of “Western civilisation” against its manifold threats, which he vaguely identifies as the transcendence of liberal democracy, but by which he means secularism, increasing LGBT rights/awareness and multiculturalism. However, this conservative turn by Putin was more than a “state posture”, as Laruelle puts it.²¹³ As mentioned in the context surrounding Putin’s 2007 Munich speech, Russia is appealing to the very real currents of illiberalism within Russian and global political cultures in counterhegemonic terms. Russia is not trying to militarily threaten the hegemony of the US and West, but rather become an illiberal hegemon – Russia appeals directly to Western illiberals with its claim of standing up for “Western civilisation” and tying Western civilisation to exclusivist and majoritarian notions of Christianity and illiberal notions of identity.

Russia advertises itself as an emerging model and pole of illiberal counterhegemony globally, but with a particular focus on Europe and the West. Laruelle points out that Putin, even in

²⁰⁹ Marlene Laruelle, ‘Russia as an anti-liberal European civilisation’, in *The New Russian Nationalism*, ed. Pål Kolstø and Helge Blakkisrud (Edinburgh University Press, 2016), p. 276.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 294

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

this overtly “conservative” illiberal phase of his rule, he has “generally avoided making nationalism a central element”.²¹⁴

The reason for Putin’s lack of emphasis on overt nationalism is because he is appealing to the world on global terms – he is attempting to appeal to illiberals across the world for the purposes of crafting a counter-hegemonic bloc. It is, in fact, the counterpart, the distorted reflection, of the ‘thin’ liberalism discussed earlier relating to the ideology of post-Cold War liberalism that fed into the GWOT ideology. It is a ‘thin’ illiberalism that thinks by simply wielding hard and soft power in the correct manner, it can shape the world in its interests.

Syria is perhaps the best example of Russia’s counter-hegemonic global intent against the US and its utilisation of the ‘war on terror narrative’ in service of such intent. As with Georgia, and more recently Ukraine and Libya, this is an example of what I call ‘illiberal interventionism’, which is the intervention of an illiberal force to bolster other illiberal forces and to crush nascent or established democratic forces – military interventions against sovereignty and self-determination. Through its intervention on behalf of the Assad regime in the Syrian Civil War, Russia has actually recast the US as being part of the equivalent of an ‘Axis of Evil’, accusing it of sponsoring and fostering terrorism in Syria.

Baathist Syria also contained Russia’s only remaining Cold War-era military base in the Middle East, namely its naval facility in Tartus, so there was never any doubt as to who Putin supported in the conflict. Indeed, prior to its veritable invasion of Syria, Russia had already been providing weapons, economic aid, propaganda and diplomatic support to the Assad regime.²¹⁵ Other than Iran, Russia was Assad’s biggest ally as he waged a war that, by the account of every single major human rights organisation and other independent observer, was one that deliberately targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure, including residential neighbourhoods, schools and hospitals.²¹⁶

Assad himself had attempted to dip into GWOT ideology and craft for himself a ‘war on terror narrative’ to justify his mass murderous war effort, but when Russia entered the fray, it became Russia’s very own global ‘war on terror’.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 282.

²¹⁵ ‘Russian Arms for Syria’, DW, <https://www.dw.com/en/russia-supplying-weapons-to-syrian-government/a-15808613>.

²¹⁶ ‘Syria/Russia strategy targeted civilians’, *Human Rights Watch*, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/10/15/syria/russia-strategy-targeted-civilian-infrastructure>.

In a speech to the UN General Assembly on September 28, 2015, just weeks after Russia began its military intervention in Syria, Putin stated:

“It is now obvious that the power vacuum created in some countries of the Middle East and North Africa through the emergence of anarchy areas, which immediately started to be filled with extremists and terrorists.

Tens of thousands of militants are fighting under the banners of the so-called Islamic State. Its ranks include former Iraqi servicemen who were thrown out into the street after the invasion of Iraq ... Many recruits also come from Libya, a country whose statehood was destroyed as a result of a gross violation of U.N. Resolution 1973. And now, the ranks of radicals are being joined by the members of the so-called moderate Syrian opposition supported by the Western countries.

First, they are armed and trained and then they defect to the so-called Islamic State. Besides, the Islamic State itself did not just come from nowhere. It was also initially forged as a tool against undesirable secular regimes.”²¹⁷

Putin is essentially saying that its intervention in Syria is to clear up not just the mistakes of the ‘West’ (such as the NATO intervention in Libya, which Putin deliberately elides with the Iraq war) that he claims have produced ‘terrorism’, including ISIS, but also to combat ‘terrorists’ (“the so-called moderate Syrian opposition supported by the West”) that the West has deliberately produced. In a sense, Putin is saying that Russia is handling the real GWOT or it is vying for its place as the real securitising actor in global order – a pole of hegemony able to grip world order in a manner similar to the US. Putin is saying that under the hegemony of the US and West, the result has been ‘anarchy’ and the rise of ISIS and the proliferation of terrorism – he even likens Russia, Iran and Assad to the “anti-Hitler” alliance during WWII.²¹⁸ In his remarks on ISIS being “forged as a tool”, Putin is directly appealing to the illiberal conspiracy theory that the US somehow created ISIS to destabilise and target regimes that are hostile to its hegemony.

This is the common theme of Russian propaganda relating to Syria – create its very own ‘war on terror narrative’ to justify its intervention against Syrian rebels and the civilian areas they

²¹⁷ Putin’s U.N. General Assembly speech, *The Washington Post*, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/09/28/read-putins-u-n-general-assembly-speech/>, September 28 2015.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

hold, creating a ‘state of exception’, while using it to advertise itself as a bastion of illiberalism in the face of the failed, destabilising and destructive liberalism of the US and West. The disorienting factor here is that Russia’s language belongs to the GWOT. At times it would be difficult to distinguish between US rhetoric during the GWOT and Russia’s rhetoric during its intervention in Syria. Speaking in October 2015, justifying Russian intervention, Putin said: "The collapse of Syria's official authorities will only mobilize terrorists. Right now, instead of under-mining them, we must revive them, strengthening state institutions in the conflict zone."²¹⁹

It almost goes without saying that the ‘terrorists’ Putin speaks of above were not, as he and Russian propaganda tried so hard to convince the world, ISIS and al-Qaeda, but rather the Syrian opposition in its totality – ISIS was actually losing territory in areas where Russia was not bombing.²²⁰ During the insurgency phase of the Iraq war, the US often used blanket terms like ‘terrorists’ and ‘al-Qaeda’ to describe what was actually ideologically diverse forces of resistance to the occupation. In Syria, the Russians used the exact same playbook. They used terms like ‘terrorists’, ‘ISIS’ and ‘al-Qaeda’ as blanket terms to describe all of the Syrian rebels, all the better to justify bombing them.²²¹ Addressing the UN in October 2015, Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov claimed that Russia’s airstrikes in Syria “do not go beyond ISIL (ISIS), al Nusra [al-Qaeda] or other terrorist groups ...”.²²² But when pushed to define “other terrorist groups”, Lavrov replied, “If it looks like a terrorist, if it acts like a terrorist, if it walks like a terrorist, if it fights like a terrorist, it’s a terrorist, right?”²²³

Russia had to convince the world that they weren’t simply propping up a tyranny waging war on its own populace, but rather that they were saving the world from the triumph of ‘terrorism’, from the triumph of ISIS and al-Qaeda-led barbarism. The ‘war on terror narrative’ here fostered by Russia functioned to create a ‘state of exception’ even more vague in its targets than the GWOT’s ‘unlawful enemy combatants’, as was the designation of victims of ‘extraordinary rendition’. According to Lavrov’s statement above, anyone deemed by Russia to be a ‘terrorist’ was a legitimate target.

²¹⁹ Angela Stent, ‘Putin's Power Play in Syria’, *Foreign Affairs* Volume 95 (2016), p. 109.

²²⁰ Florence Gaub, ‘Russia’s non-war against Daesh’, *Institute for Security Studies* (2018), p. 57.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

²²² ‘Russia’s Lavrov on Syria targets’, *CNN*, <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/10/01/middleeast/russia-syria/index.html>.

²²³ *Ibid.*

This is precisely what occurred, far from Russian intervention targeting ‘terrorism’ and ‘ISIS’, the vast majority of strikes were aimed at anti-Assad rebels, most of whom had fought against ISIS and were ideologically anti-ISIS.²²⁴ As part of the preestablished tactic of Assad and Iran to drive out rebel-loyal Sunni Muslim populations all the better for Assad and Iran’s sectarian forces to conquer them, the Russian Air Force deliberately targeted civil infrastructure, including schools, hospitals and vital civilian aid workers known as the White Helmets.²²⁵ In fact, in the Russian targeting of the White Helmets, we see an even more extreme version of Orbán’s GWOT-inspired ‘state of exception’ aimed against civil society that aids ‘the enemy’. The White Helmets are a Nobel Prize-nominated volunteer, non-violent first responder search and rescue group who risk their own lives to recover civilian casualties, whether dead or maimed. Their selflessness and brief popularity in the West, did not go unnoticed by Russia.. Through its official and unofficial propaganda outlets, Russia had crafted a byzantine conspiracy theory claiming the White Helmets were actually al-Qaeda in disguise.²²⁶ Orbán merely demonises CSOs and NGOs to justify their arrests or closure, while Russia demonised the White Helmets to quite literally justify their murder.

In fact, in its pursuit of creating a ‘state of exception’ to justify its clearly brutal intervention, Russia stretched the justificatory process to its limit. As proven by an extensive study for the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, it created networks of disinformation within the West, composed of activists, media figures, politicians, academics and thousands of bots dispersing tens of thousands of social media posts to “distort the reality of the Syrian conflict”, with the purpose of “detering the intervention of the international community”.²²⁷

Though there were real ambiguities on the ground, such as the genuine presence of ISIS and al-Qaeda in Syria, it used these ambiguities to create a strong ‘war on terror narrative’ that was wielded for illiberal and counterhegemonic ends. Firstly, the destruction of the Syrian rebellion and the stabilising of the Assad regime, and, secondly, to attempt to recast the US as not just a failed hegemon but a force that had directly helped foment terrorism. Russia, whether by design or not, had managed to manipulate the new ‘order’ in international affairs created by the GWOT, the one Putin spoke about in Munich in 2008. It did so to craft for

²²⁴ Gaub, ‘Russia’s non-war’, p. 59 – 60.

²²⁵ ‘Russia and Syria conducted dozens of illegal ‘double tap’ strikes’, *The Washington Post*, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/07/21/syria-russia-double-tap-airstrikes-report-war-crimes/>.

²²⁶ ‘Why Assad and Russia Target the White Helmets’, *New York Review of Books*, <https://www.nybooks.com/online/2018/10/16/why-assad-and-russia-target-the-white-helmets/>.

²²⁷ ISD’s Digital Investigation on Syria Disinformation, *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, https://www.isdglobal.org/digital_dispatches/isds-digital-investigation-on-syria-disinformation/.

itself a new place in the world as a pole of illiberalism, pursuing its own territorial and imperialistic ambitions and challenging or perhaps filling the void of the future of transcendence once offered by the liberal democratic West.

CHAPTER 2

ANDERS BEHRING BREIVIK AND COUNTER-JIHADISM: ACTIVIST-FORM ILLIBERALISM AND THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR

On the 22nd of July 2011 in Oslo and on the island of Utoya just 24 miles northwest of the Norwegian capital, Anders Behring Breivik committed the single most deadly terror attack by a single perpetrator in modern history. At around 3:25 in the afternoon, Breivik detonated a fertiliser bomb placed in a car in the Government Quarter (*Regjeringskvartalet*) of Oslo, directly outside the tower block that contained the office of then Labour Party prime minister Jens Stoltenberg. In this attack, 8 people lost their lives and 209 people were injured.

Just under two hours later, Breivik, armed with a semi-automatic rifle and hollow point bullets to increase the likelihood of death for his targets, struck again. This time he targeted members of the Workers' Youth League (AUF, the youth wing of the governing Labour Party). In this attack, 69 innocent lives were claimed by Breivik, the vast majority of them teenagers, aged between 14 and 19.

Norway had suffered the worst act of political violence since the occupation by the Nazis during WWII, and one of the worst ever in Europe. Despite media depictions otherwise, and in a mirror of how 9/11 appeared to come out of the ether in terms of popular understanding, Anders Behring Breivik, the 32-year-old perpetrator of this terrorist attack, had been motivated by an ideology that had been percolating for years during the GWOT.

Whatever the psychological motivations, there can be no doubt as to the ideological motivation of Breivik. 90 minutes before his attack began he posted a 1518-page 'manifesto' entitled *2083: A European Declaration of Independence* online.²²⁸ Though 'counter-jihadism' pre-existed Breivik, his act of terror brought widespread focus on this new illiberal ideology as a genuine threat across the world, but particularly in Europe, North America and the Anglosphere.

Breivik's manifesto provides a self-described 'compendium' of the ideology of the counter-jihad movement (CJM). It is split into three sections, the first, entitled 'History, Marxism and

²²⁸ Anders Behring Breivik, 2083: 'A European Declaration of Independence' (unpublished manifesto, 2011).

Islam – What your government, the academia and media are hiding from you’, is a potted history and analysis of Islamic civilisation as a hostile, genocidal imperialist force. It also provides the reader with a pseudohistorical account of the alleged crisis afflicting Europe, which Breivik attributes to ‘cultural Marxism’, ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘Islamification’ imposed upon ‘indigenous Europeans’ by liberal elites.

The second, entitled ‘Europe Burning’, outlines a counter-jihadi metanarrative of a European civil war, between “the European Resistance Movement/Indigenous Rights Movement” and the “Western European Multiculturalist Regimes” that are using Muslims to enslave and eradicate Western civilisation. Breivik claims that Europeans must wake up to the realities of Europe becoming “Eurabia”, which is an illiberal conspiracy theory that warns of Europe becoming a colony of the Arabo-Islamic world. If they do so, after a long civil war, by 2083 a new monocultural Europe, free from its pollutants can emerge triumphant. The third section, entitled ‘A Declaration of Pre-Emptive War’, is essentially a terrorist manual, wherein much more emphasis is put on the practicalities of waging the civil war.²²⁹

From the beginning of the work, Breivik claims to belong to a secret organisation known as the ‘Knights Templar’, whose Crusader cross logo adorns the first page of the document. The document is full of references to and appeals to the binaries of the Crusades and the Manichean simplicity of belonging to a civilisational good against its antithesis, namely Islam. However, while the Muslims are the external enemy, much of the focus is on the enemy within, defined as the “cultural Marxists” and “multiculturalists” who stand to gain from ‘Islamification’ or ‘Eurabisation’, which they push using the grand indoctrination of “political correctness”.²³⁰

In much the same way that the Bush administration’s shaping of the GWOT provided a facilitative framework for the crafting or legitimisation of illiberal regimes, it also had a radicalising effect on the discourses of political activity, with *activity* being the key word here. As has been previously touched upon, new words, terms and narratives became normalised across the world, whether it be the daily public briefings of ‘terror threat levels’ to the constant news stories regarding both real and imagined terror activities.

In the language of securitisation theory, the dynamic between the securitising actor, in this case those who declared and pursued a GWOT – which is a ‘speech act’, an extraordinary

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4 – 5.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

event requiring extraordinary action – and the securitised subject is crucial. As Eroukhmanoff points out, the securitised subject is not securitised in a vacuum – ideology intervenes, meaning securitisation produces “uneven power relations between people”.²³¹

Eroukhmanoff goes on to say, “in the context of the Global War on Terror, a person who looks Arab has been regarded with suspicion as a dangerous ‘other’ and there has been an increase in surveillance operations in Muslim communities on the presumption that because they fit a certain profile, they may be connected to terrorism.”²³²

Eroukhmanoff’s point is that the framing of the GWOT could only lead to Otherisation of Muslims, given, within the dynamic, they are securitised as suspects based on physical and cultural indicators. Breivik, within this unbalanced dynamic of securitisation, is seen either as a potential victim of the Other or as a protector of the ‘referent object’—what is being secured. In the case of the GWOT, this is the nation-state or, as securitisation is influenced by other ideologies, identity. For instance, a Norwegian of Islamic faith is suddenly securitised as an Other and potential threat.²³³

At times, through government and media narratives, it felt as if “the terrorists”, as had become common parlance among the US president and other world leaders, were keeping Western civilisation under siege. Within these conditions, and the ambiguities of GWOT ideology, it became very easy, as Titley points out, for people by themselves, or, more often than not, nudged on by political leaders, political groups and aspects of the media, to shape a civilisational threat out of Muslims and Islam, out of the ambiguities provided by GWOT ideology.²³⁴

As with all speech acts, the ultimate source of this was from officialdom. The US government set the nomenclature and the narrative, while governments around the world followed suit – by no means was all such nomenclature hyperbolic and nor were the narratives always cynical. However, one of the major problems, as was touched upon in the last section, was the reckless manner in which the Bush administration clumsily conflated different sociopolitical phenomena relating to Muslims, such as Islamism and ‘political Islam’, with Salafi jihadism. More generally, as also detailed in the previous chapter, the ‘re-emergence of the global security regime’ birthed a new ideological world, where ‘security’

²³¹ Eroukhmanoff, ‘Securitisation Theory’, p. 1.

²³² *Ibid.*

²³³ *Ibid.* pp. 1-3

²³⁴ Titley, ‘They called a war’, p. 219.

the constant threat of violence were a personal and civilisational priority. Everyone, from those who might have to wait a bit longer at customs in the airport, to those fighting the ‘evil doers’ in Afghanistan and Iraq, were all portrayed as doing their bit for the new war effort and the sustenance of the security regime.²³⁵

It is also true that the Bush administration, when support for it or its GWOT policies seemed to be slipping in polls, would often attempt to shore up support through the stoking of primal fears and radicalised rhetoric.²³⁶ However, regardless of intent, the Bush administration’s entire framing of the GWOT saw it slip messily from idealism to foreign policy realism, conjuring unwittingly not ‘the end of history’ but the ‘Clash of Civilisations’.

Though the Bush administration did not see Islamophobia, or a general ‘Clash of Civilisations’ ideology, as central to the goals of the GWOT, it often, consciously or not, dipped into the dynamics of both. For example, when Bush, in his address to the nation nine days after the 9/11 attacks, said the GWOT was “not just America’s fight ... but civilisation’s fight”, it was unlikely the president was attempting to cast all Muslims out of civilisation or even Western civilisation (he began the address by mentioning the prayers given for the victims of 9/11 in ‘English, Hebrew and Arabic’).²³⁷ However, this rhetoric certainly appealed to those who did endorse Islamophobic worldviews and radicalised visions of a ‘Clash of Civilisations’.

Though the Bush administration had no conscious intention of creating ‘counter-jihadism’, the language they used became identity-affirming for many individuals. Breivik and his comrades took seriously the dimensions of the GWOT. They took seriously the dire warnings of its representatives such as, as one example of many potential ones, that of the Bush-appointed Tom Ridge, the first ever head of the Bush-created Department of Homeland Security, who said we were all “targets of enemies who have demonstrated they have no remorse about killing thousands of innocent civilians”.²³⁸

According to the methodology of ‘discourse analysis’, this work seeks to look at Breivik’s manifesto as not simply a justification for his terrorist activity, but also as a prime example of

²³⁵ Leonie Huddy, Stanley Feldman, Charles Taber and Gallya Lahav, ‘Threat, Anxiety, and Support of Antiterrorism Policies’, *American Journal of Political Science* Volume 49 (2005), p. 594.

²³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 597

²³⁷ ‘President Bush Addresses the Nation’, *The Washington Post*, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/bushaddress_092001.html, September 20 2001.

²³⁸ ‘Gov Ridge Holds Homeland Security Briefing’, *George W. Bush White House Archive*, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/12/text/20011203-5.html>, December 3 2001.

how the GWOT served to, indirectly, enable and flavour illiberalism on the level of the activist-form and how different strands of illiberalism interact with one another within the illiberal ecosystem. Breivik's manifesto leaves behind a historical footprint of a 'lone wolf' mass murderer, but it also provides an extreme portrait of a nascent and prescient strand of modern illiberalism and how the discourses of the GWOT became so prone to the enablement of such radicalisation.

Breivik's methodologies were extreme, but as far as the activist-form of modern illiberalism goes, much of what he believed and what motivated him, often with slight differences and variations, has been incorporated into the ideology and narratives of modern activist-form illiberalism. Activist-form illiberalism is the form of illiberalism that takes the shape of street movements, online activists, websites, media figures, political parties and activist individuals that seek to change liberal norms or overturn the fundamentals of liberal democracy. Much emphasis is placed on the civilisational evils of mass immigration, particularly Muslim immigration, the perceived decline in traditional Western values, with a fixation on notions of sex and gender roles and the alleged curtailment of 'national sovereignty' by transnational bodies.

Activist-form illiberalism is often directly related to state-form illiberalism in that it is often the form illiberalism takes before it gains power, or it provides a base for illiberal parties in power or it seeks to challenge liberal democratic parties by pressure and politicking. In the case of Breivik, this work is looking at an activist who was part of a movement of activist-form illiberalism that is often presented as single-issue, namely the CJM.

The CJM sought to challenge liberal discourses on Islam, Muslim immigration (and immigration in general) and Islamic terrorism, reframing it as something inherent to Islam and something consequential to Muslim immigration. Attached onto this is the conviction that there is an attempted takeover of Europe by Muslims occurring through immigration.

It is often considered that the CJM effectively disappeared and thus failed in Europe. As pointed out by Benjamin Lee, in his study 'A Day in the "Swamp": Understanding Discourse in the Online Counter-Jihad Nebula', most of the scholarship on the CJM considers the movement to be single issue with no "wider ideological programme and instead focus only on their opposition to Islam".²³⁹ However, the necessary corollary here is that rather than

²³⁹ Benjamin Lee, 'A Day in the "Swamp"', *Democracy and Security* Volume 11 (2015), p. 250.

failure accounting for their relative disappearance, the fact is that much of their ideology has been imbibed by still very active and very powerful illiberal movements. As can be seen in the works of CJM's intellectuals, their ideology was itself part of a wider illiberalising process occurring during and in the immediate aftermath of the GWOT. Far from them rejecting a wider ideological programme, the CJM has merged with and latched onto broader illiberal forces, including prime ministers and presidents.

Moreover, CJM ideology is still prominent in illiberal media outlets, whether it's *Fox News*, *Breitbart* or *Infowars* or the numerous websites that embody the illiberal media. Rather than failing, CJM ideology simply became part of mainstream illiberal discourses – it no longer needed to exist as a movement separate from the illiberal right. As a pertinent recent example, the current Prime Minister of Italy, Giorgia Meloni, following Orban, has endorsed Great Replacement Theory (GRT).²⁴⁰

A full study of the CJM could comprise a thesis by its own right, the key point in this work is to look at the manner in which the GWOT inspired and amplified the CJM in general and, in particular, the ideology that motivated the terrorist attacks carried out by Breivik on July 22, 2011. It is therefore necessary to place the CJM and its rise in the early 2000s within the context of the GWOT.

The Bush administration saw in the GWOT a similar struggle as the last generation's fight against Soviet Communism. The ideological relationship between the GWOT, as a set of policies and occurrences guided by ideology, and the CJM thus finds an analogy in the dynamics of the Cold War.

During the Cold War, anti-communism defined every single -post-war American presidency and thus comprised the official state ideology of post-war America. It was a 'war effort', in that anti-Communism was what all of America's security, intelligence and military apparatuses were geared towards, while citizens were expected to do their bit in the fight against Soviet Communism.

²⁴⁰ Meloni is first west European leader to believe Great Replacement conspiracy theory', *The Times*, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/giorgia-meloni-is-first-west-european-leader-to-believe-great-replacement-conspiracy-theory-pddmf5vsf>.

Coexisting with and, perhaps indirectly, emerging out of this official state ideology of anti-communism were different levels of anti-communist radicalisations, such as McCarthyism and the John Birch Society (JBS).

The JBS simultaneously imbibed the official or mainstream anti-communism of the US government, while also rejecting it as compromised and inadequate – the communist threat, for the JBS, was much graver than the US government would care to admit. In fact, the JBS eventually had as its core ideology (known as ‘Bircherism’) the conspiratorial and insurrectionist idea not just that the official anti-communism of the US government wasn’t being waged harshly enough but that Washington itself was compromised by and under the control of crypto-communism.²⁴¹

The emergence of the CJM fulfils a similar role proximate to the GWOT – the formation of the CJM was the result of a radicalised offshoot of the GWOT agenda. Much like Bircherism and McCarthyism in relation to the official anti-communism of the US, the CJM straddles the line between the mainstream GWOT ideology of the US and allied governments and a radicalised offshoot of it. In Breivik’s manifesto, and, particularly, by the identity of the authors and ideas he cites and plagiarises, we see how Breivik did not need to scour the gutter fringes of the nascent ‘dark web’ to find his justificatory ideas, but rather how these ideas could be found in the ‘mainstream’ and among those who were close to the official GWOT ideology. However, we also see, quite distinctly, the metamorphosis, evolution and radicalisation of Breivik’s ideas away from the ‘official’ GWOT and towards a unique strand of illiberal thought and practice.

When George W. Bush made his infamous warning, less than a week after the 9/11 attacks, that “this crusade, this war on terrorism, is going to take a while”, the argument ought not to be that the US president was deliberately trying to appeal to the Crusades or instigate neo-Crusader ideology. Rather, his comment, no matter the intent, aroused those who genuinely thought that 9/11 signified, or ought to signify, the beginning of a new war with Islam – a new Crusade.²⁴² Despite Bush’s repeated ecumenical proclamations to contradict his apparent slip of the tongue ‘crusade’ remark, the conjuring of the crusades by the Commander-in-Chief of the country that declared the GWOT no doubt had a radicalising

²⁴¹ Matthew Dallek, *Birchers: How the John Birch Society Radicalized the American Right* (Basic Books: 2023), p. 77.

²⁴² ‘Remarks by the President Upon Arrival’, *George W. Bush White House Archive*, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010916-2.html>, September 16 2001.

function. It produced enough ambiguity among the most ardent sections of the pro-GWOT ‘intellectual’ base of support for the notion of the GWOT as a crusade, as an inevitable and necessary clash of civilisations, to grow its own legs.

The fact that most of Breivik’s manifesto is almost entirely copy and pasted from books and articles from pro-GWOT or counter-jihad writers and authors is testament to this process of radicalisation.

The essence of Breivik’s manifesto is linked to the Bush administration and a major part of its core base, for whom the GWOT was particularly appealing. This base, the ultra-Bush loyal Christian right in the US, emerged as its most radical supporters.

More often than not, the Christian right embraced and perpetuated the most extreme stances on the GWOT, conceiving Islam as an ideology of essential evil that ran contrary to ‘Judeo-Christian’ civilisation. Whether Bush meant it or not, for the Christian right (and, indeed, other secular Islamophobes), the GWOT was a crusade and it ought to be one. It is thus of no surprise that much of the opening chapters of Breivik’s work is directly plagiarised from a number of articles by the conservative Christian writer William S. Lind compiled as *Political Correctness: A Short History of an Ideology*, which was released online in 2004 by the Free Congress Foundation, a Dominionist right-wing Christian ‘think tank’ founded by Bush supporting ‘religious conservative’ political activist Paul Weyrich.²⁴³

Weyrich was certainly no fringe figure among the US right. In 1979, he coined the conservative Christian political term ‘moral majority’ and went onto co-found the right-wing Christian organisation of the same name with the infamous conservative Christian figurehead, the Reverend Jerry Falwell.²⁴⁴ It’s worth noting here—and this has direct relevance to Breivik’s relationship with Christianity and indeed the ideology of the CJM—the likes of Weyrich and Falwell conceived of 9/11 not only in the usual manner of seeing terrorism as the result of something inherent in Islam, but as emerging due to the transgressive nature of liberal American, and more broadly Western, society in the 20th Century.

Falwell would make the anticipated Islamophobic denunciations. However, his comments, just days after 9/11, on fellow right-wing Christian mogul Pat Robertson’s TV show *The 700*

²⁴³ ‘The Alt-Right’s Favorite Meme Is 100 Years Old’, *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/13/opinion/cultural-marxism-anti-semitism.html>.

²⁴⁴ Derek. H. Davis, ‘Thoughts on the Possible Realignment of the Christian Right in Twentyfirst Century America’, *Journal of Church and State* Volume 41 (1999), p. 433.

Club, took aim at America itself, saying he would “point the finger ... and say you helped [9/11] happen” to “pagans, “abortionists, “feminists”, as well as “gays and lesbians” and “all of them who have tried to secularize America”.²⁴⁵

Contained within Falwell’s proclamation of 9/11 as divine retribution is really an attack on liberalism, liberal civil society (the ACLU people) and the values of liberal democracy. Breivik was an atheist that identified as a cultural Christian and, furthermore, identified strongly with a militarised vision of Christianity as the religion of the Crusades. However, like Falwell only minus the divine retribution aspect, he would, as will come to be seen, very much blame liberalism and liberal democracy for 9/11 and the ‘Islamisation’ of the West.

In Falwell’s diatribe, and the kind of mainstream, Bush-supporting right-wing Christian ideology attached to militant Islamophobia during the GWOT, we already see that it began to shape itself as an attack on liberalism. Weyrich went onto found, via his co-founding of the influential conservative think tank The Heritage Foundation, the aforementioned Free Congress Foundation, at which William S. Lind was the Director of the Centre for Cultural Conservatism.

In the chapters that Breivik lifts from Lind’s work, Gramsci and the Frankfurt School are discussed, at length, to make the case that is now known as the ‘Cultural Marxist’ conspiracy theory. Though this conspiracy theory is actually decades old, it has become a staple of modern illiberalism. As will become clear from Breivik’s manifesto, it gained a whole new relevancy, interweaving with other conspiracy theories such as ‘Islamisation’ and ‘Eurabia’, during and, functionally speaking, due to the GWOT. As Breivik-via-Lind in his manifesto has it, “cultural Marxist radicals”, who control Western societies from the EU to the US, have refocused their revolutionary aspirations away from the proletariat and towards the sphere of culture and education.²⁴⁶

Breivik-via-Lind makes the case that these “cultural Marxists” have achieved hegemony in the institutions of higher learning and across mainstream political parties.²⁴⁷ These elites have weaponised these platforms to wage war to bring about the destruction of Western culture and Christian civilisation. Specifically, the elites are using the mass immigration of

²⁴⁵ ‘Falwell: blame abortionists, feminists and gays’, *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/sep/19/september11.usa9>.

²⁴⁶ Breivik, p. 6 - 22

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Muslims, who allegedly have their own imperialist agenda to fulfil what could not be accomplished at the Gates of Vienna or at Tours, to supplant the pillars of Western civilisation.²⁴⁸

The crossover of pro-GWOT enthusiasts and counter-jihadists, witnessed so brazenly in Breivik's manifesto and his utilisation of their ideas, documents the evolution of the GWOT narrative into the radically illiberal counter-jihad narrative. The GWOT was the base, while counter-jihadism was one variation of its ideological superstructure. In Weyrich, with his strong associations with the mainstream Christian right, which comprised a large and fervent part of Bush's support base, we see one of these transitional figures. Those figures who straddle the line between proximity to the 'mainstream' GWOT ideology and their own radicalised deviations from that ideology.

For people like Weyrich, Bush's ecumenism towards Islam was merely a pragmatic step that the president must take in order to not provoke even more jihadist threats. George W. Bush might call Islam a 'peaceful religion', but to Weyrich, as reported by *Salon* in July 2004, the president "knows the real score" and "feels that he has to say these things ... "but doesn't really believe them".²⁴⁹ He goes on to say that "America is in a war against Islam", but that Bush is "soft-peddling the rhetoric" to diminish mass Muslim anger.²⁵⁰

We're already beginning to see a friction here between the official GWOT, which seeks to counter the idea that 'America is in a war against Islam', and the GWOT as people like Weyrich think it ought to be conducted. This is the essentially the roots of counter-jihadism. Weyrich, however, as a transitional figure, is willing to give Bush the benefit of the doubt for partisan reasons on his alleged unwillingness to tell the truth about the "war against Islam". Contrarily the CJM is notable for pitting itself against elected governments, including even pro-GWOT ones and the Bush administration, for not doing what is really necessary to fight Islam – for being part of or not acknowledging the 'real' problem.

In order to better illustrate this process of radicalisation around the GWOT and within the context of Breivik, it is thus necessary to briefly account for the wider CJM. Lee defines the movement as "a collection of parties, pundits, and movements all linked by a common belief

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ 'Conservative activist says Bush knows "real score" with Islam', *Salon*, https://www.salon.com/2004/07/14/weyrich_5/.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

that the West is being subjected to takeover by Muslims.”²⁵¹ This is what broadly differentiates ‘counter-jihad’ from the mainstream GWOT – the CJM have taken the boundaries of the GWOT seriously, namely that everyone is a potential combatant or victim in this new war, but they have also moved beyond the ‘boundaries’ of the GWOT.

They see national governments, including the US, as not taking the adequate punitive, defensive and offensive measures in fighting this war, measures that are centred around Islamophobia and specifically the notion of ‘Islamisation’ and ‘Eurabia’. These are the terms which, in conjunction with ‘Islamisation’ and ‘Eurabia’, are favoured by Breivik in his manifesto as terms of describing what he perceives as the political reality facing the West – terms that are synonymous with Islamic conquest and the use of terrorism by jihadis to attain such conquest.

The CJM see central governments, especially mainstream liberal democratic parties of the centre-left and centre-right, as being, at best, unwitting facilitators of ‘Islamisation’ or, at worst, as is laid out explicitly in Breivik’s manifesto, conspirators colluding in the downfall of Western civilisation. Though the CJM was anchored to and amplified by the GWOT, it is often at odds with the official purveyors of the GWOT ideology. The CJM believe that the main fight is not just, or even at all, against alleged terror-sponsoring or terror-promoting states (as was the line of the mainstream GWOT ideology), but rather against Muslims at home or Muslims seeking to emigrate to the West.

During the CJM’s heyday in the mid-2000s, in the wake of 9/11 and during the height of the GWOT, its most radical and visible manifestations were street movements and pressure groups. These included Stop the Islamisation of Europe (SIOE), Stop the Islamisation of America (SOIA), the English Defence League (EDL) and other ‘Defence League’ franchises in most European countries). In addition to these street movements, there was a host of online platforms, including the blogs *Jihad Watch*, *Gates of Vienna* and *Atlas Shrugs*, all three of which are cited extensively in Breivik’s manifesto. There were pundits and editors of the aforementioned blogs, such as Robert Spencer and Pamela Gellar, both mentioned by name in Breivik’s manifesto. Intellectuals like Bat Ye’or, the creator of the ‘Eurabia’ conspiracy theory central to Breivik’s manifesto, and David Horowitz, an ex-Marxist, ex-neoconservative, and mainstream writer, were also influential. Along with these, there were dozens of CJM think tanks created around the globe, including the International Civil

²⁵¹ Lee, ‘Swamp’, p. 248.

Liberties Alliance, the International Free Press Society, Human Rights Service, Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity and the David Horowitz Freedom Centre.

Though the CJM found currency with a wide array of diverse political forces of the right, such as right-wing Zionists to Strasserite Nazis, it became a strong political currency, often removed from but continuous with the traditional far-right.

As Lee points out, scholars on radicalisation such as Brun and Meleagrou-Hitchens consider the CJM to be completely “distinct from traditional anti-immigrant and ethnic nationalist groups”.²⁵² On the contrary, I see the CJM as having introduced the traditional far-right to more acceptable ideological opportunities. The CJM served as a stepping stone between the new realities of the GWOT and the extremes, providing illiberals with an opportunity to mask many of their more extreme or abhorrent ideas, such as outright racism, behind the language of ‘counter-terrorism’, ‘preservation of culture’ and ‘opposition to Islam’.

To use an illustrative example, one connected to Breivik and the CJM, of this process of traditional illiberalism using the GWOT and its consequences to better mask, market or transform their old ideologies, it’s apt to briefly look at the ideological trajectory of the British National Party (BNP). The BNP were formerly the UK’s foremost far-right party and many members of which Breivik, under the *nom de guerre* ‘Andrew Berwick’, sent his manifesto to immediately before committing his acts of terroristic mass murder.²⁵³

Immediately after the 9/11 attacks and the launching of the GWOT, the BNP completely rescinded its association with its former Strasserite Neo-Nazi ideology and went through a conscious process of rebranding its narrative to focus solely on Muslims and Islam as the main societal evil. The BNP, as a Neo-Nazi party, had previously been opposed to all non-white immigration, which in the UK happened to be mostly from the Indian subcontinent and mostly Muslim.

The UK government, which under the premiership of Tony Blair was the closest ally of the Bush administration in carrying out the GWOT, had introduced a raft of anti-terror legislation and policies, such as Prevent, which many consider to have had the effect of otherising and

²⁵² Lee, ‘Swamp’, p. 252.

²⁵³ ‘Norway shooting: Anders Breivik sent ‘manifesto’ to supporters of BNP’, *The Daily Telegraph*, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/norway/8666457/Norway-shooting-Anders-Breivik-sent-manifesto-to-supporters-of-BNP-English-Defence-League-and-Combat-18.html>.

policing the political agency of Muslims.²⁵⁴ The BNP clearly saw an opportunity to tap into this political environment of otherisation and further their own political cause.

After 9/11 and the GWOT, the BNP's narrative on immigration changed to not quite embracing it, but rather focusing only on Muslim immigration as not just a terrorist threat to UK, but also as part of a wider conspiracy narrative common with the modern illiberal ideology of GRT. Breivik essentially endorses GRT via his endorsement of the 'Eurabia' conspiracy theory, which is that liberal elites were deliberately using Muslim immigration to destroy European or Judeo-Christian or white or Western civilisation nation-by-nation.

However, the key is that the language has shifted away from the more explicit racism of the traditional far right and towards that of culture, values and social cohesion. Breivik himself emphasises in his manifesto that he is fighting a "cultural war, not a race war".²⁵⁵ Similarly, the BNP shifted away from their previously zealous antisemitism, 'anti-Zionism' and non-white racism and emphasised Islamophobia and the fear of 'Islamisation' – they even tried to appeal to Hindus, Jews and non-Muslim people of colour.

The BNP, now rebranded in GWOT Crusader clothing, even came to support Israel as the alleged island frontier of civilisation against the terror-producing ocean of Arabo-Islamic barbarism.

This rebranding of far-right ideology was commonplace across the West and the Anglosphere, with the far-right sensing that the GWOT provided enough ambiguity around the question of Muslim immigration to turn into prime political capital.²⁵⁶ Though there's no doubt that for some within the traditional far-right, the opportunity was seen as a new means to conceal the politics of blood and soil, it was also seen by some illiberal ideologues as a moment of genuine reform. The GWOT provided ample room for a realignment of the right to transcend the traditional antisemitic conspiracy theories, Holocaust denial, Nazi-fixation and racial nationalism, all of which were overwhelmingly rejected by a broad public.

This process of rebranding towards counter-jihad ideology itself had an intellectual base that both supplanted and incorporated traditional far-right ideology into a brand of illiberalism that can now be found in the governments of Hungary, Poland, Italy and Russia, or the administration of President Donald Trump, with, as one of the most extraordinary examples

²⁵⁴ Njoku and Romaniuk, 'Counter-terrorism', Military Structures section, para. 4 – 8.

²⁵⁵ Breivik, p. 669.

²⁵⁶ Tahir Abbas, *Islamophobia and Radicalisation: A Vicious Cycle* (Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 61.

of ‘activist’ form illiberalism in modern times, aspects of it also prominent in the ‘Leave’ side of the Brexit referendum in the UK, as well as across numerous elected parties in the parliaments of many European countries.

While the CJM certainly embodied a radical nationalism and identitarianism, it was, in what is a mirror-like distortion of the utopian imaginings of Giddens’ technology-driven ‘reflexive modernity’, definitively transnational in its scope and aspirations. Even those who consider multiculturalism to be the main weapon of the ‘Cultural Marxists’ against Western civilisation must contend with the global reflexive reality of multicultural society; hence the rescinding of overt racism and the attempt to appeal to non-white non-Muslims against the invading Muslims and their ‘Cultural Marxist’ allies.²⁵⁷

Throughout Breivik’s manifesto, his concerns aren’t confined to Norway, Norwegians or Scandinavia, but are rather definitively pan-European and pan-Western. These anti-globalists and opponents of liberal transcendence and transnationalism had weaved their very own ‘global’ network. The CJM was an early pioneer of adeptly cultivating the internet to appeal to followers and craft a pan-European and even global network of ‘activists’ in the name of the cause. Other forms of illiberalism, out with but often directly or indirectly related to the CJM, have adopted similar methodologies, utilising what is now the dark web, as well as the ‘alternative media’, which is often directly or indirectly controlled or allied with illiberal states, to distribute tonnes of misinformation presented in fact-like manners that ape the methodologies of the so-called ‘mainstream media’.

The global war on terror required a global response, according to the Bush administration, and so did its radical form, according to the CJM. The vast global components of the CJM amounted to a loose, relatively diverse but fairly ideologically cohesive network that had definable, agreed-upon enemy and goals on how to stop that enemy. It was this network that Breivik so strongly identified with and it was to this network that Breivik was appealing to when he decided to try to radicalise it even further by carrying out the fatal attacks of July 2011.

In Breivik’s manifesto, the most cited works are those of his fellow Norwegian counter-jihadist blogger ‘Fjordman’, real name Peder Are Nøstvold Jensen, who blogs for the US-based *Gates of Vienna* website and *Jihad Watch*, which were two of the first CJM platforms

²⁵⁷ ‘Prey for the BNP’, *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/nov/23/bnp-racism-deluded-sikhs-muslims>.

and easily the most prominent.²⁵⁸ Jensen is not just the perfect example of someone radicalised towards illiberalism and counter-jihadism in the era of the GWOT, but also of the platforms that were made available as a result of the radicalising processes of the GWOT. Jensen had been, up until 9/11, a Labour-voting moderate whose parents were both fairly prominent leftists in Norway.²⁵⁹ He had shown some interest in Islam and the Middle East, including studying Arabic at the American University in Cairo. Jensen was in Cairo when the 9/11 attacks occurred and it was here that he allegedly witnessed Egyptian Muslims celebrating the attacks with ‘cake parties’.²⁶⁰ After this, he returned to Norway and this is essentially when Jensen transitioned into an outright activist of counter-jihadism, at first assuming the name ‘Norwegian Kafir’ (*Kafir* referring to the Quranic term for ‘unbeliever’ – a moniker, along with ‘infidel’, often proudly adopted by CJM activists) and writing for several blogs.²⁶¹ Jensen adopted his name ‘Fjordman’ primarily through the ‘online magazine’ Document.no, which is a far-right Islamophobic website set up in the wake of 9/11 in 2003, and which helped popularise Bat Ye’or’s ‘Eurabia’ conspiracy theory in Norway. Again, though Document.no is hardly global in its reach, its existence is testament to the atmosphere that was unleashed by 9/11 and the subsequent GWOT. Given this war was mostly against an ideology, as opposed to tangible enemies, websites like Document.no were, to their founders and contributors, akin to veritably manning the barricades.

It's here that Breivik encountered Jensen (under the name Fjordman) and where, though there is room for debate about the exact details, Breivik himself was converted to the counter-jihadist cause. What is known for sure is that Breivik became acquainted with and convinced by the ‘Eurabia’ and ‘Islamisation’ conspiracy theories through Fjordman, as evidenced by the manifold articles by Fjordman referenced in his manifesto on this specific subject. Indeed, one of the first of Fjordman’s articles republished in its entirety by Breivik in his manifesto is titled ‘EU’s Eurabia Project – Documenting the EU’s deliberate strategy to gradually Islamise Europe.’²⁶²

While I’ve already detailed the divergences between the ‘official’ GWOT discourse of the Bush administration and the CJM, there is another distinction to be made within counter-

²⁵⁸ Paul Jackson, ‘The License to Hate: Peder Jensen’s Fascist Rhetoric in Breivik’s Manifesto’, *Democracy and Security* Volume: 9 (2013), p. 248.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 252

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

²⁶² Breivik, p. 280.

jihadist Islamophobia. There are those who simply see Islam as incompatible with liberal democracy and those who see the Islamic takeover as being a consequence of liberal democracy and/or in connivance with the elites who allegedly control liberal democracy. Breivik, via Fjordman, came to embrace the latter with gusto.

This is of great relevance to understanding Breivik's motives and targets in the July 2011 attack, but it's also of great relevance to the proposition in this work that the GWOT contributed greatly, functionally but unwittingly, to the creation of an ecosystem of definitive, though often diverse, illiberalism. It was here that the idea that the West, under the control of 'Cultural Marxists' and through 'multiculturalism' and egalitarianism, was wedded to the GWOT for the counter-jihadists. It was this narrative that first introduced Breivik to the idea that the main enemy was not in fact Muslims, but the enablers of the Muslim takeover, namely liberal democracy itself.

Much of Jensen's material utilised by Breivik comprises pseudohistorical denunciations and polemical attacks on Islam. However, a large part of it is dedicated to attacks on liberalism and liberal democratic civil society, including western universities and pro-multicultural political parties, or, as he puts it, "little hippie factories, teaching about the wickedness of the West and the blessings of barbarism", for their collusion with 'Islamisation.'²⁶³

Within the manifesto, we see Breivik's obsessions gradually shift from this exceptionally detailed though pseudohistorical account of the essential evils of Islam, to the 'Cultural Marxists', 'liberals' and 'multiculturalists' who are allegedly the force that is colluding with or engendering 'Islamisation'. As noted before, along with *Gates of Vienna*, much of the material Breivik cites, often written by Fjordman, comes from the counter-jihadist website *Jihad Watch*.

Jihad Watch was founded by Robert Spencer, who, via dubious academic credentials, claims to be an academic 'expert' on Islam and, given his allegedly expert knowledge, is thus privy of the true mission of Islam to conquer the entire world. Spencer is also the co-founder, along with Pamela Gellar, a 'Tea Party' Republican who founded prominent Islamophobic website *Atlas Shrugs*, cited extensively by Breivik in his manifesto, of Stop the Islamisation of America. He founded his *Jihad Watch* website on the 23rd of November 2003, , most of the

²⁶³ *Ibid.* p. 59.

funding for which comes from the David Horowitz Freedom Center, whose eponymous founder is one of the most important and influential figures within the global CJM.

On the *Jihad Watch* website, under the title ‘Why Jihad Watch?’, Spencer writes the following:

“Because non-Muslims in the West, as well as ... the world over, are facing a concerted effort by Islamic jihadists, the motives and goals of whom are largely ignored by the Western media, to destroy their societies and impose Islamic law upon them — and to commit violence to that end even while their overall goal remains out of reach. That effort goes under the general rubric of *jihad*.”²⁶⁴

As well as Breivik’s incalculable official and unofficial references to Fjordman writing for *Jihad Watch*, which is referenced by Breivik hundreds of times, Spencer himself is directly cited 64 times in Breivik’s manifesto. Every reference espouses the same conspiratorial Islamophobic narrative of imperialistic, invasive Islam enabled by a compliant or indifferent ‘mainstream’ elite.

Breivik, via Spencer, puts a lot of emphasis on misapplied notions of ‘Dhimmitude’, something which Spencer fixates on – the idea that it is the Islamic quest to either convert non-Muslims by conquest or to allow non-Muslims to live as Islamic slaves, or ‘Dhimmis’ (an archaic Islamic term used to describe non-Muslims who lived under Islamic rule but were exempt from military service, instead paying the *jizya* tax).²⁶⁵ Spencer already ascribes ‘dhimmitude’ to the ‘mainstream media’, academia and the political class (collectively, the ‘elites’ in the nomenclature of illiberalism), claiming them to be already in service of the Islamic plot to conquer the West for the purposes of Islamisation. Spencer’s Islamophobia and illiberalism no doubt precede the GWOT, but he was unheard of and without any political influence before it. In fact, in the same section on the *Jihad Watch* website, Spencer essentially acknowledges this link, writing that “before 9/11 it was easy to ignore and whitewash dhimmitude, but the atrocities changed the situation forever.”²⁶⁶ Spencer goes on to explain that “Jihadist groups” are not strong enough to carry out the Islamisation of Europe

²⁶⁴ ‘Why Jihad Watch’, <https://www.jihadwatch.org/why-jihad-watch>.

²⁶⁵ Breivik., p. 105 – 106.

²⁶⁶ Spencer, ‘Why Jihad Matters’.

alone, but rather rely on a “potent destructive ally”, which he identifies as “dhimmi academics” and “dhimmi journalists”, accusing them of being “a genuine fifth column.”²⁶⁷

For Spencer, the emphasis isn’t even on Muslims or indeed ‘Jihadists’, but on their alleged allies among liberals. You’ll note that for him 9/11 wasn’t a moment where he began to think about Islam and the West, but rather these alleged ‘dhimmis’, who are in CJM ideology liberal non-Muslim proxies and even instigators of the Islamic menace.

One of the most disturbing aspects of Spencer is how close to the mainstream he and his ideas actually were, particularly in the US. For a start, his main patron, David Horowitz, whose ‘Freedom Center’ provided *Jihad Watch* with an annual budget of \$1 million, was again no kind of fringe figure on the US political scene, though he might now have become one. Horowitz’s journey to one of the major benefactors of counter-jihadism and illiberalism was a particularly odd one. It was a journey that has spanned Trotskyism, the New Left, liberalism, neoconservatism and finally illiberalism.

Though Horowitz never held any official position in government, he embraced the Bush administration and the GWOT with particular zeal. Not content with holding to Bush’s mostly ecumenical line that the war was against ‘terror’ and not Islam, Horowitz established his David Horowitz Freedom Center (DHFC), embracing a ‘clash of civilisations’ approach to Islam, seeing 9/11 as an essential evil and the GWOT as necessary to confront it.

Horowitz remained a staunch supporter of Bush, but simply conceived of his own more radical endeavour as working towards the GWOT ideal – pushing the boundaries Bush had set by declaring the GWOT in response to 9/11 in the first place.²⁶⁸

In the ensuing years, Horowitz dedicated his resources not just to Islamophobia, but the cultivation of illiberalism – seeing in American liberalism ‘radical leftism’ and a conspiracy to destroy ‘American values’. This led to his funding of Spencer’s *Jihad Watch* and offers a fascinating insight into how the illiberalism associated with the GWOT evolved into a broader ideology of illiberalism, targeting liberal democracy itself. It also highlights how illiberal counter-jihadist ideas were always close to the line separating the mainstream from the fringe. Though it is not within the scope of this work to fully detail this, Horowitz is

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ ‘The Godfather: Profile of David Horowitz’, *Southern Poverty Law Center*, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2014/godfather>.

typical of a process that was occurring within American right-wing politics at this time that is worthy of note.

When the Republicans lost power at the end of George W. Bush's final term in 2008, with Barack Obama coming to power, the party definitively radicalised to the right, with the formation of the Tea Party, which served to carry on the form of broad right-wing populism that had been fomented during the era of the GWOT. Similar to the manner in which counter-jihadism became an essential feature of the more general illiberal parties across Europe, the Tea Party's ideological agenda was almost identical. Within the Tea Party could be found a fusion of ideologies: racist anti-immigrant sentiment tied up with both secular and religious-infused GWOT and counter-jihad ideology. This was often combined with conspiracism about Democrats, civil society and the liberal media all being part of some or many byzantine conspiracies to destroy America from within, in collaboration with jihadists.²⁶⁹

Breivik, in his manifesto, makes note and celebrates the rise of the Tea Party movement, writing:

“In the US, the Tea party movement is one of the first physical, political manifestations which indicate that there is a great storm coming. The creation of similar conservative organizations, even the creation of revolutionary conservative movements such as the Knights Templar is just another manifestation that real resistance to the EUSSR/US cultural Marxist/multiculturalist hegemony is about to materialize. The cultural Marxists are losing their momentum to our advantage.”²⁷⁰

One suspects that Breivik's praise for the Tea Party was fortified by the fact that counter-jihadist ideologues like Pamela Gellar, who he references several times in his manifesto, and a close ally of Spencer and Horowitz, was a leading figure in the Tea Party, as was David Horowitz.²⁷¹

The fusion of counter-jihadism and general illiberalism of the Tea Party is best glimpsed by the hysterical activism, buoyed by sympathetic media such as Bush's former unofficial propaganda channel *Fox News*, around such things as the so-called 'Ground Zero Mosque',

²⁶⁹ 'Coalition of fear: Tea Party, the religious right and Islamophobia', *Salon*, https://www.salon.com/2010/09/19/conason_values_voter/.

²⁷⁰ Breivik, p. 1225.

²⁷¹ 'Tea Party patriots wallow in Muslim-bashing gutter with Geller', *SPLC*, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2011/06/15/tea-party-patriots-wallow-muslim-bashing-gutter-geller>.

as well as the ‘Birther’ conspiracy theory, which claimed that Obama was a crypto-Muslim and born outside the USA, thus making him ineligible to be president.²⁷²

Once again, notions of jihadism and ‘Islamisation’ are used here as part of an attack on liberalism, pluralism and egalitarianism in general – Obama was conceived as an agent of ‘them’, the occult forces of ‘Cultural Marxism’ who are portrayed as wanting to essentially destroy America by installing a Muslim and, as the Tea Party claimed about Obama, ‘Marxist’ president. To the illiberal right that have colonised the Republican Party, political opponents are no longer merely ideologically disagreeable, but existentially dangerous. Though again, it is beyond the limits and scope of this work to detail this, one can see draw a straight line from radicalised GWOT ideology, such as the CJM, to the Tea Party to the political movement and ideology of Donald Trump (MAGAism), who was a major supporter of the Tea Party and a major backer of the Islamophobic conspiracy theory of the ‘Ground Zero Mosque’ and the racist ‘Birther’ conspiracy theory.

The Tea Party, infused with Islamophobic GWOT dynamics, CJM conspiracies and their interrelation to general illiberal ideology, melted away into the MAGA Republican Party – it was, in a sense, triumphant.

However, what we see is here is this ecosystem of illiberalism in full effect. American CJM ideologues with financial and political clout aligning with the nascent ‘alt-right’ that was the Tea Party, which played a role in not just Donald Trump ascent to the White House, but also in giving Breivik an ideological justification for mass murder.

Horowitz played a major role in funding the CJM and Jihad Watch in particular, he never held any official power or had any influence over the policy of the Bush administration. However, Spencer’s *Jihad Watch*, funded by Horowitz, rather disturbingly, managed to find influence among aspects of law enforcement and official counterterrorism in the US during the GWOT era. In the same year that Breivik carried out his mass murderous terror attacks, it came to light that two of Spencer’s radically Islamophobic books, namely *The Truth About Muhammad* and *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam*, both of which were cited in

²⁷² ‘Birther myth persists among Tea Partiers’, *CBS News*, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/poll-birther-myth-persists-among-tea-partiers-all-americans/>.

Breivik's terror manifesto, had been recommended and cited in FBI training manuals on Islam.²⁷³

Along with this, it also emerged that Spencer, along with a handful of other radically Islamophobic CJM activists such as Walid Shoebat and Joe Gunadolo, had been paid to give seminars on Islam to local, state and federal law enforcement agencies.²⁷⁴ It goes without saying that Spencer would have presented law enforcement officials with his illiberal conceptions of Islam and Muslims, but what is of more interest to this work is how the lines between the 'fringe' and officialdom were entirely blurred in this instance. As this work argues, the CJM was a radically illiberal offshoot of the official GWOT ideology, but instances of radically illiberal CJM ideologues like Spencer being used by the official apparatuses of the state, regardless of the level at which it occurred, erodes this line and demonstrates that CJM ideology was interacting with official GWOT ideology on numerous different levels, as well as attempting to colonise it and use the new interest in counter-terrorism to normalise itself within and without the state.

We see in Breivik's stated CJM ideology more than just the seeds of a much more general illiberal ideology—similar to that of modern European illiberalism or the Tea Party and now MAGA Republican Party—an ideology that has emerged out of the CJM, but which transcends its immediate focus on 'Islamisation' and 'Eurabia'. In fact, as previously mentioned regarding Orban's Hungary, we see in this 'activist form' illiberalism the same procession of illiberalism: from the particular, namely Islamic terrorism; to the general, namely illiberal opposition to liberal democracy and its values. Breivik, on multiple occasions, mentions the necessity of reinforcing 'traditional' or 'conservative' sociocultural aspects such as the "nuclear family", "law and order" and "the free market".²⁷⁵

What began as an activist 'shadow' war on terror, evolves into a comprehensive ideology of civilisation—or, in the Noltean terms of this work, an 'epochal' ideology. The threat of terrorism, and the related issues of mass Muslim migration, multiculturalism and cultural integration, is considered by the illiberal to be a symptom of a disease that is afflicting Western civilisation, namely the disease of liberal democracy.

²⁷³ Anti-Muslim speakers still popular in law enforcement, *The Christian Century*, <https://www.christiancentury.org/article/2014-03/anti-muslim-speakers-still-popular-law-enforcement-training>.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁵ Breivik, p. 219.

According to this narrative framework, the attacks of 9/11 were not simply the first symptom of Islamic imperialist designs on the West, but a jolt to the system of Western civilisation in its totality – where occurrences like the erosion of the ‘nuclear family’, tied to Breivik’s misogyny, and ‘law and order’ are considered as terminal weaknesses of liberal democracy. On a similar note, Breivik, summarising the book *Defeating Eurabia* by his mentor Fjordman, writes:

“Mass Muslim immigration will continue (or more precisely, the cultural Marxists/multiculturalists will continue to import voters) ... The factors above results in a scenario where the "Muslims/Multiculturalist alliance" remain in power (despite that more and more non-Muslims move right in the political landscape). They therefore set a stop to all democratic attempts or "solutions" which can stop or reverse the Islamisation of that specific Western European country. It basically cripples the democracies and uses the democratic mechanics against the non-Muslims ... ”²⁷⁶

Breivik, via Fjordman, here perfectly demonstrates the process of ‘securitisation’, wherein he clearly considers himself, and his fellow counter-jihad comrades, to be on the frontlines of the GWOT. However, they have to go further than the “mainstream GWOT”, as they know that the real enemy is from within – at best, liberal democracy and its openness, but at worst ‘Cultural Marxism’ and its civilisation-threatening treachery. Democracy itself is recast as another weapon or an ally of the terrorists.

As previously detailed with the likes of Weyrich, Spencer and Horowitz, one doesn’t need to look too far outside of the ‘mainstream’ media to find such ideologies in the post-9/11 period. However, there is a grade above these influential but rather sullied figures. These recall the “clerics” identified by Anne Applebaum as being mainstream proponents of illiberal ideas and narratives. It is these writers, those who were high profile supporters of Bush, proponents of the GWOT and integrated into the mainstream, who blur the line between the CJM and the official GWOT narrative and who helped normalise illiberalism as it relates to the GWOT.

One of the best examples of this is the journalist, author and public intellectual Melanie Phillips. Though Phillips is only mentioned four times in Breivik’s manifesto, her contributions are so crucial to him that he reprints one of her articles in full. Phillips is as far away from the ‘fringe’ as possible.

²⁷⁶*Ibid.*, p. 119.

Before she transitioned fully to the hard right, Phillips had begun her career as a journalist for the centre-to-centre-left *Guardian*, for which she won the coveted Orwell Prize. She then gravitated to the more generally more conservative but mainstream *Times*, for which she is still a columnist, the *Jewish Chronicle* and the *Daily Mail*, which is one of the most-read newspapers in the UK and whose website is the most popular news outlet on earth.

Politically speaking, Phillips was originally aligned with Labour and then the centrist Social Democratic Party. She then began to drift rightwards towards Neoconservatism, though after the GWOT, she transitioned into a transitional illiberal via the GWOT and ‘counter-jihadism’. Phillips was an ardent supporter of the Bush administration and the GWOT, including the Iraq War, as well as one of the most ubiquitous faces of support for such things on TV news and debate shows in the UK. However, while most neoconservatives, within and without the Bush administration, eschewed Islamophobia and racism, Phillips pioneered and very deliberately engendered it.

The article posted in its entirety by Breivik, titled ‘The outrageous truth slips out: Labour cynically plotted to transform the entire make-up of Britain without telling us’, is from the *Daily Mail*.²⁷⁷ The article contains a variant of ‘Eurabia’, but is rather more in line with general ‘Great Replacement Theory’ type arguments. Again, to reiterate, this was published in the perfectly mainstream *Daily Mail*. Interestingly, Breivik selects an article in which Phillips doesn’t even mention Islam directly, but where she accuses Tony Blair’s New Labour government of “unalloyed treachery against the to the entire nation”.²⁷⁸ This is based on her contention that “mass immigration” was not an economic necessity, but rather a plot “to destroy Britain's identity and transform it into a multicultural society where British attributes would have no greater status than any other country.”²⁷⁹

The main enemy here, again, is not Muslims or even jihadists, but liberal democratic governments who for, their own reasons of self-interest, are involved in a conspiracy to supplant the ‘indigenous’ culture of their own country. This, in the collective ideoscape of the CJM and illiberal right, is the main cause of Islamic terrorism – the Muslims, the jihadists, are just doing what comes natural to them, namely using terror to takeover and

²⁷⁷ ‘The outrageous truth slips out: Labour cynically plotted to transform the entire make-up of Britain without telling us’, The Daily Mail, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-1222977/MELANIE-PHILLIPS-The-outrageous-truth-slips-Labour-cynically-plotted-transform-entire-make-Britain-telling-us.html>.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

‘Islamise’ non-Muslim countries, but it’s the liberals and the ‘Cultural Marxists’ who are the grand enemies. The theme here is that Islam is only the problem because the West is committing ‘cultural suicide’ from within, which is a recurring theme of the right going back to Oswald Spengler and the very roots of 20th century fascism.

In another part of his manifesto, Breivik quotes another Phillips article, now removed from her website, that directly references “cultural suicide”.²⁸⁰ Blaming the “incalculable irresponsibility of our elites”, Phillips goes on a long diatribe about the cultural ills of British society and how “lone parenthood”, “council flats”, “welfare provision” and state incentives for women “to have children without committed fathers” has led to the social decline of the UK and is “nothing less than cultural suicide.”²⁸¹

The context here is that Breivik via Phillips is supporting the case that halcyon days of the ‘high culture’ of the West have been polluted from within and Islam, like an opportunistic infection, is poised to take advantage of Western weakness. Liberal democracy, and its promises, have failed and there has to be a resurrection of tradition and strength within the West. Moreover, it syncs with Breivik’s anti-feminism and misogyny, defined by his self-defined fear that “the patriarchal social order will be replaced with a matriarchy.”²⁸²

Phillips further elaborated on this “cultural suicide” and its linkages to Islam during the GWOT by espousing the Eurabia and Islamisation-style conspiracy theories. Though she doesn’t mention either by name, it is clearly the central conceit of her hysterically titled 2006 book titled *Londonistan: How Britain Is Creating a Terror State Within*. The book was published by the conservative American publisher Encounter Books, founded by David Horowitz’s ally Peter Collier.

Londonistan is a vitriolic polemic of deliberately engendered Islamophobic hysteria where the central claim made by Phillips is that Britain has become “a global hub of the Islamic jihad” and that the 7/7 attacks were a result of this.²⁸³ For Phillips’, the blame lies with the usual staples of illiberal thinking namely “vast immigration” and multiculturalism.²⁸⁴ In *Londonistan*, Phillips’ solution to this “drift towards social suicide” is quite simple: illiberalism – illiberalism built around, even though she doesn’t acknowledge the term, a state

²⁸⁰ Breivik, p. 361.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

²⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁸³ Melanie Phillips, *Londonistan* (Encounter: New York, 2006), p. 182.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

of exception, where Human Rights laws are a hindrance and normal liberties must be suspended.²⁸⁵ Phillips wants to repeal the Human Rights Act, create courts with special powers to deal specifically with Islamic terrorists, allow the state to decide who Muslims can and can't marry and prosecute anyone "advocating an Islamic takeover of the West" with "sedition, subversion and even treason".²⁸⁶

Phillips is operating at a much higher level on the media-intellectual food chain than Horowitz, Spencer and Fjordman, let alone Breivik, but her ideological obsessions are identical. Her central thesis is that the liberal-left have become so compromised by its collusions with and engendering of 'Islamisation', that the only solution is to suspend or illiberally alter democracy. What we see being fostered in Breivik and within CJM is a general ideology of illiberalism – one that utilises the threat of 'Islamification' only to take a more general aim at liberal society. In combination with this, we see the ideas of the CJM all through the mainstream media during the GWOT.

It's worth noting here that even the 'Eurabia' conspiracy theory was, at this time, not at all on the ideological fringes. In November 2005, the mainstream right-wing magazine *The Spectator*, then under the editorship of future British Tory prime minister Boris Johnson, dedicated an entire issue to 'Eurabia', complete with a cover showing a map of Western Europe with the Islamic crescent superimposed over it.²⁸⁷ The headline read 'Eurabian Nightmare', while the content contained multiple articles by Islamophobic GWOT enthusiasts such as the *Fox News* stalwart and Islamophobe Mark Steyn.²⁸⁸

The magazine was a clear attempt at incitement and a radical attempt to normalise what would later become known as counter-jihadism in, at the very least, the British right. However, it had global reach. Breivik, in his manifesto, actually cites one of the articles contained in the 'Eurabian Nightmare' edition of the magazine, namely 'The Myth of Moderate Islam' written by the right-wing evangelical Christian Patrick Sookhdeo.²⁸⁹

We see similar transitional forms of illiberal GWOT ideology in *Fox News*, the news station that was considered to be unerringly loyal to the Bush administration and the GWOT. *Fox*

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

²⁸⁷ 'Spectator reveals 'Eurabian Nightmare'', *Islamophobia Watch*, <https://www.islamophobiawatch.co.uk/spectator-reveals-eurabian-nightmare/>.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁹ Breivik, p. 293.

created a confusing mixture of the ‘official’ GWOT narrative combined with its own radical deviations. It frequently entertained CJM extremists such as Spencer and Horowitz, as well as many individuals associated with Christian right.²⁹⁰ Authors who would often not just vilify Muslims in general but tie the GWOT to a more general illiberal attack on liberalism and liberal democracy, as noted in Breivik’s manifesto and the catalogue of CJM authors he cites. In fact, Breivik cites articles from the *Fox News* website, while many of the articles Breivik republishes by Fjordman contain statistics and interviews sourced to *Fox News*.

This is again where the lines between ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ become blurred. As mentioned earlier, the Bush administration never adopted anything close to a general ideology of illiberalism. However, it dipped into such an ideology enough, whether by association through *Fox News* or its own attempts to utilise populism to garner support for its policies, to sufficiently muddy the waters. The Bush administration, via its *quid pro quo* relationship with *Fox News* and its reliance on illiberal proponents of the CJM, was normalising such views by proxy.

Randa Elbih makes the claim that Islamophobia, via outlets such as *Fox News* during the GWOT, became a “source of entertainment” for American audiences, even if the value of such entertainment is to elicit fear in the viewing public.²⁹¹ It also introduced audiences not simply to Islamophobia, but it introduced them to the idea that Islamic jihadism was being engendered by non-Muslim political opponents. To reiterate, many of Breivik’s views, other than those calling for direct violence, could be heard on *Fox News* and read in mainstream media outlets – to the extent that he cites it numerous times. It introduced audiences to the adversarial idea that the GWOT was in fact a partisan issue between terrorist-appeasing liberals and terror-destroying conservatives. It is no surprise that *Fox News* went from being considered the mouthpiece of the Bush administration to the champion of the Tea Party and now to the home of Trump and his brand of overt illiberalism.

What was being cemented here was a new and very definitive ideology of the right – though most of the centre-right would lose interest in such conspiracism after the heat of the GWOT died down, it was becoming and eventually became a definitive part of the ideology of the illiberal right.

²⁹⁰ Randa Elbih, ‘How Islamophobia Became Entertainment’, *Counterpoints* Volume: 360 (2018), p. 133.

²⁹¹ Elbih, ‘How Islamophobia’, p. 167.

However, it took these transitional figures and platforms for this to occur during the GWOT era.

In the same spirit as Phillips, the idea that the GWOT was not enough and it had to morph into something that simultaneously declared a war on Islam and also rethought the institutions, values and ideals of liberal democracy that allegedly aided ‘Islamisation’ or Islamic terror, wasn’t confined to the CJM and the fringe. Niall Ferguson, then a widely celebrated Harvard history professor, major author and leading mainstream conservative public intellectual, and who is also cited in Breivik’s manifesto, began endorsing and publicly writing about the ‘death of the west’ and Eurabia-esque ideas in the mainstream media during the GWOT.

The article written by Ferguson quoted by Breivik is an op-ed titled ‘Hatred of America unites the world’ from the *Daily Telegraph* in February 2007. Breivik cites Ferguson’s statistical assertion that ‘radical Muslims’, actually favour democracy, with the inference being that Western liberal democracy could actually be the means through which ‘radical Islam’ gains its most devastating foothold.²⁹² This is almost identical to Breivik-via-Fjordman’s contention quoted earlier about how democracy works against Western civilisation. Ferguson, of course, never quite has the conviction to conclude that Muslims perhaps ought to be excluded from democracy or democracy itself must be curtailed to stop ‘Islamists’, but Breivik certainly reaches that heavily suggested, natural conclusion.²⁹³

Ferguson, in the same article, goes onto use statistical trickery to infer that the problem isn’t simply with terrorists who support a particular radical Islamic ideology, but rather with all Muslims across the world.²⁹⁴ Notably, the article also endorses Bat Ye’or’s far-right Eurabia conspiracy theory, (about which he also wrote a blurb for her 2005 book *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis*).²⁹⁵ To contextualise, ‘Eurabia’, though its main author might be Jewish, embodies many of the same ideas as the Nazi conspiracy theory of Judeo-Bolshevism. Instead of ‘Judeo-Bolsheviks’, the enemy is liberals and ‘Cultural Marxists’ who appease and engender ‘Islamisation’ via Islamic immigration. Ferguson would go on to write other articles during

²⁹² Breivik, p. 560.

²⁹³ ‘Hatred of America Unites the World’, *The Daily Telegraph*, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/3637925/Hatred-of-America-unites-the-world.html>.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

the GWOT consequential to his embracing of ‘Eurabia’, predicting the death of Christian Europe and “Islamic colonisation”.²⁹⁶

One can accept that these ideas were bubbling away among fringe activists like Breivik and the CJM, but these were ideas that, after 9/11 and the launching of the GWOT, were endorsed and espoused by mainstream GWOT-supporting figures like Ferguson.

The conclusions and inferences are the same ones Breivik reaches and makes – Europe is in decline due to immigration and the result will be ‘colonisation’ by Muslims. The word ‘colonisation’ not only bringing to mind violence and exploitation, but something that the illiberal right thrive on, namely victimisation. Breivik’s manifesto, much like Orbán’s rhetoric on Islam and Soros, is essentially one long tale of how he, and his culture, have been victimised by forces seemingly out of his control.

Through the radicalised ideology of the CJM, Breivik considers that merely by the fact of his status as a non-Muslim, he is both victim and crusading warrior. The differentiation between he and the Bush administration, or the mainstream narrative of the GWOT, is that he sees the ‘cultural Marxists’ and ‘multiculturalists’, i.e., the elite, to be as much in the camp of the enemy as Islam.

The obvious conclusion is that people like him, who live in a rigged veneer of a democracy that is under the control of the enemy, and who are ripe for enslavement by Islamisation or, indeed, death by way of Islamic terror, must become the frontline soldiers in this war. However, as touched upon, Breivik makes a further conclusion, which is that liberal democracy must end if Western civilisation is to survive.

Given the timeline of Breivik writing or compiling his manifesto, roughly between 2008-2011, it ought to be of no surprise that he looked to Putin’s Russia for the model to which Europe should aspire for its post-liberal future. By this point, as discussed previously, Putin had begun to advertise Russia as a bastion of illiberalism contra the liberal democratic West. As discussed in the previous chapter, Putin, using the excesses of the GWOT as a rationalisation for what became Russia’s own crusade against liberal democracy, often justified in the name of fighting terror.

²⁹⁶ ‘Decline and fall of the Christian empire’, The Sunday Times, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/niall-ferguson-decline-and-fall-of-the-christian-empire-5j70qmh8q8b>.

Putin advertised himself, and the Russian model, as standing in stark contrast to what illiberals depict as the permissive, hedonistic, egalitarian, matriarchal West. Breivik writes in his manifesto that “[w]e will reform our democratical [sic] model from a ‘mass-democracy model’ to a model more resembling the Russian system of administered democracy.”²⁹⁷ Breivik claims that this Russian-style system of ‘administered’ democracy will be a definitively illiberal one, writing:

“Campaigns will be initiated consisting of affirmative action of nationalistic minded individuals (anti-multiculturalists) to all broadcasting/news/media .. A minimum of 50% of all journalists should be nationalist oriented individuals (anti-multiculturalist). The news/media coverage of national and international political issues especially concerning security, defence, culture, social structures and immigration/deportation should reflect the new political climate.

Multiculturalist media programs which are directly or indirectly undermining national cohesion or the political doctrines related to newly adopted birth policies will be prevented ... There will be certain censoring of anti-national/Marxist programs... Destructive lifestyles must not be glorified as it undermines the new policy which includes the revitalisation of cultural confidence and a strengthening of national cohesion. Sex and the city lifestyles must not be glorified as it undermines the nations [sic] goal to increase the average birth rate from 1,5 to 2,1-2,3 ... feminist birth policy will allow the continuation of displaying and glorification of certain negative lifestyles.”²⁹⁸

One will note that beyond ‘Islamification’, his invective is directed towards “destructive lifestyles”, by which he means single parenthood, feminism and LGBT people, and ‘Sex and the city’ lifestyles, by which he means female independence, which he sees only through the lens of promiscuity. This is Breivik’s vision for society: a mixture of a state of exception, with news censorship and the ideological engineering of the media, all to, ‘reimpose’, as he sees it, white, Christian, patriarchal, heteronormative civilisation onto the Western world.

The point for Breivik was to usher in a new ideology of illiberalism, tapping into the informal nexus of different post-9/11 anti-liberal groups, most notably the CJM. When one looks at Europe and America today, one can’t help but see echoes of Breivik’s vision for the West. In

²⁹⁷ Breivik, p. 789.

²⁹⁸ Breivik, p. 1168.

both places, the identitarian anti-liberal, anti-multicultural ‘nationalist right’ is capable of taking power and have taken power.

When in power or close to it they have taken definitive and sometimes extreme turns against Muslim immigration, immigration in general under the auspices of conspiratorial narratives such as GRT, Eurabia and Islamisation. Not that Breivik should be given credit for this illiberal turn in any sense at all, but the fact is that he and his views were merely symptomatic of an illiberalizing process that was occurring.

In other words, in that part of his ‘manifesto’, which is essentially a compendium of CJM ‘intellectuals’, propagandists and polemicists, where Breivik points to what is to be done, he is not so much trailblazing as he is describing an ideology already emerging from around him. An ideology conditioned by the GWOT, but with its own radicalised Islamophobic ‘Clash of Civilisations’ dynamic that very soon emerged as a general ideology of illiberalism and anti-liberalism.

Breivik definitively emerged out of a movement that placed Salafi jihadism, and its Islamophobic demonology of Islam, front and centre of its ideology. Since that movement was itself a ‘shadow’ movement of the GWOT, it’s this connection and its complex interplay with the emergence of modern illiberalism that is most of interest here.

It might be curious to some that on that horrific day July 22, Breivik decided to target not a Mosque or any of Oslo’s Muslim neighbourhoods, but the centre of Norway’s political class, as well as a youth camp on Utoya Island run by the AUF, affiliated with the then ruling Labour Party. Of course, most of the CJM, including Spencer and Fjordman, condemned Breivik’s attacks, but that they shaped the ideological narrative that justified them in Breivik’s mind is almost undeniable. Thus, from the perspective of the CJM, there is a twisted but clear logic behind these non-Muslim targets, given Breivik’s endorsement of Spencer’s notions of non-Muslim ‘dhimmi’ politicians working with or in service of the ‘jihadists’ and the wider idea that the ‘cultural Marxists’ were deliberately bringing in Muslims for their own nefarious purposes. Indeed, Breivik, when interviewed by police, rationalised the targeting of the youth by claiming all were ‘political leaders’.²⁹⁹ I doubt it’s coincidental that Breivik put so much emphasis on what in his mind was de-indoctrinating the youth from ‘cultural Marxism’ and ‘multiculturalism’, as a means to save Western

²⁹⁹Hammerby and Bjorgo, ‘The Long-Term Impacts of Attacks: July 22, 2011 Attacks in Norway’, *Perspectives on Terrorism* Volume: 15 (2021), p. 2- 3.

civilisation, and that he chose children and teenagers as his victims attending a social democratic youth camp.

His conception of his victims on Utoya as ‘political leaders’ was not the result of some sort of psychosis. On the contrary, within the ideology of the CJM, it had a twisted logic. His political-ideological contention that they were actually—by way of their activism in a pro-immigration, pro-multiculturalism organisation—the future enslavers of him and his people and the current indoctrinators of today’s youth. Breivik conceived of them as the ‘Cultural Marxists’ of tomorrow and the offspring of the ‘Cultural Marxists’ of today. The CJM identifies these children, by way of their political affiliations and beliefs, as political enemies as much as Breivik, but the leap that Breivik took was to target them as enemy combatants and murder them, which is a leap that even he conceded that most of his fellow travellers in the CJM would likely denounce.³⁰⁰

Breivik’s attack was an attack on liberal democracy itself. If he had wanted to terrorise Norway’s Muslims, in the manner attempted by, as a point of contrast, the Breivik-admirer Brenton Tarrant who murdered 51 people during terror attacks on two mosques in Christchurch in 2019, there was ample opportunity for him to do so.³⁰¹

Instead, Breivik wanted to strike at the heart of liberalism in Norway, Europe and perhaps the entire Western world – this was not a declaration of war against Muslims, but against the system, namely liberal democracy, that Breivik saw as being the primary reason why Islam allegedly posed such a threat. Indeed, according to Hemmingby and Bjorgo, who wrote an analysis of Breivik’s motives based on unlimited access to protocolled transcripts from the police investigative interviews of him, Breivik’s attacks constituted a “strategy of massive shock attack”.³⁰² The purpose of his attack was radicalising Norway’s politics towards illiberalism, specifically attempting to appeal to the moderate conservatives who had thus far rejected the ideology of the CJM.³⁰³

As they put it, Breivik thought the attacks would function as “a provocation leading to a persecution of the moderate cultural conservatives and their radicalisation.”³⁰⁴ In other

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³⁰¹ ‘Oslo terrorist manifesto, cited as ‘inspiration’ for Christchurch terrorist, banned’, *NZ Herald*, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/oslo-terrorist-manifesto-cited-as-inspiration-for-christchurch-terrorist-banned/SG2NTHX4K6OTL55NY5GSHHD6I/>.

³⁰² Hammerby and Bjorgo, ‘The Long-Term Impacts of Attacks’, p. 2- 3.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

words, Breivik thought that the state backlash against his attacks would fall upon ‘conservatives’ in general, leading to their ‘awakening’ and embracing of the ideology outlined in his manifesto.

Breivik’s strategy is common among terrorists; however, it is more than just a dark irony that his motives perfectly mirror those of al-Qaeda in carrying out the 9/11 attacks. Not just as a declaration of war against the Western world and liberal democracy (for Breivik, his declaration of war was, by his logic, to “save the West from itself”, as Orban also put it at CPAC), but as a means to incite a backlash against moderate Muslims around the world from non-Muslims that would serve to radicalise them towards Salafi jihadism.

Though this work does not have the space to do so, it would be of great interest to look at the symbiotic relationship between Salafi jihadism and the CJM. The CJM represented the persecutory force that the Salafi jihadists depict as representing the West’s true opinions of and intent towards Muslims and Islam, while the Salafi jihadists represented what the CJM think are the advanced guard of an alleged expansive Islamic imperialism that is intrinsic to the Islamic religion itself. Each serves to radicalise and sustain the other, especially on local and national levels.

Where this is directly relevant to this work is that it demonstrates the procession of illiberal ideologies during the GWOT – to the extent that an ideology that emerged out of an opposition to Islamic terrorism following 9/11, and opposition to what the CJM considers to be a totalitarian or authoritarian, ultra-conservative violent ideology, would end up itself producing terror and embodying authoritarian, Manichean, ultra-conservative values.

Breivik himself was not oblivious to this symbiosis, remarking in his manifesto that “the areas in which Islam is growing most rapidly, such as Western Europe, have been largely denuded of their religious and cultural heritage, which leaves Islam as the only vibrant ideology available to those in search of meaning.”³⁰⁵ Again, the key aspect here is that Breivik sees his ideology and thus his actions as a corrective against the allegedly nihilistic, hedonistic West. He recognises in what he calls ‘Islam’, but which most non-Islamophobes would call ‘Islamic extremism’, the contemporaneous similarities between his own ideology and that of Salafi jihadism – as ideologies of anti-liberalism, competing to fill the void left by liberal democracy in the West.

³⁰⁵ Breivik, p. 101

Indeed, pointing towards a slightly more intricate interplay between his ideology and the Salafi jihadi ideology, Breivik writes:

“Let there be no confusion. The European Islamic Ummah is our most potent weapon in our fight against the establishment. Our objective in Phase 1 and 2 will be to manipulate this force by contributing to radicalise Muslim individuals ... The future of conservative movements is directly linked to the development of Jihadi movements and ... Islam’s influence in Western societies. It’s a symbiotic relationship.”³⁰⁶

This is perhaps the most essential aspect of Breivik’s ideology. The fight against terror, which he believes is caused by Islam’s essential violent expansionism and its presence in Europe via mass immigration, is a fight primarily against liberal democracy, its structures and the society it has produced. Though Breivik and the CJM’s ideology goes way beyond the ideology of the GWOT, it retains and distorts most of its essential features in that it considers terrorism to be a ‘civilisational’ or ‘societal’ product. The difference is that while the Bush administration believed terror was not intrinsic to Islam, but rather a direct part or by-product of anti-Western tyrannies, Breivik and the CJM believed that it was intrinsic to Islam and that there had to be a literal clash of civilisations, one that begins at home, but also that Islamic terror and its real and perceived threats were a product of the civilisational weakness of the West. The GWOT provided Breivik with his context – of a world where, to quote Bush again, “you’re either with us or with the terrorists”; a world of an amorphous mass of poorly understood ‘evil doers’ pitted against the equally ambiguous good guys, who held to obscure notions such as ‘western values’.

The leap that the likes of Breivik made was to reimagine who precisely the ‘us’ was in Bush’s infamous Manichean demarcation. To Breivik, the CJM and the illiberals, politicians like Bush were expelled from the ‘us’ and put into the ranks of those who, at best, weren’t prepared to do what is really necessary to fight Islam, or, at worst, were actually part of the problem and worse than terrorists.

The proponents of the GWOT began with an ideology that pitted liberalism against Salafi jihadism and terror, but the CJM and fellow travellers sees liberalism as being part of the reason why terror is a threat to begin with, casting what is essentially illiberalism as the saviour. The ‘evil doers’, in the mind of Breivik and his illiberal fellow travellers, are liberal

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 922.

democrats and the very system that has, according to their ideology of ‘dhimmis’, ‘cultural Marxists’, ‘multiculturalists’ and ‘globalists’, colluded with the ‘Islamisation’ of the West.

Opening with a quote attributed to Mark Twain, namely “the nation is divided, half patriots and half traitors, and no man can tell which from which”, in sub-section 3.44 of his manifesto, Breivik outlines a “Traitor Classification System”.³⁰⁷ Of the 4 types of traitors described by Breivik, and which he classifies from A – D, nowhere are Muslims included. In Breivik’s words, his system of classification is “used to identify various individual cultural Marxist multiculturalist traitors”, as well as to “easier identify priority targets.”³⁰⁸

It’s notable that the highest, as in the worst, level of traitor, category A, is essentially reserved for all those who comprise the upper rungs of the power structure of the liberal democratic state. Breivik lists Category A traitors as “political leaders (NGOs included) ... media leaders (chief editors) ... cultural leaders [and] industry leaders.”³⁰⁹

Speaking of A, B and C traitors, Breivik summarises them as those who “will deliberately contribute to destroy Western Civilisation, European cultures and identities and continue to support the Islamisation of Europe through allowing demographic warfare (mass Muslim immigration and high birth rates).”³¹⁰ He further goes on to identify them as, yet again, “cultural Marxists”, “capitalist globalists” and those “who believe in a one world philosophy.”³¹¹

The only time Breivik talks about attacking Muslim targets in Norway and the West is within the context of what he terms “manipulative proxy attacks”, which he defines as “devastating attacks against Muslim groups with the purpose of provoking a collective response or manipulate individual Muslims to choose the path of Jihad.”³¹² Breivik’s purpose here is a form of crude social engineering, where the violent radicalisation of Muslims, which he perceived as intrinsic and inevitable, can be accelerated by violence carried out against Muslims.

Interestingly, in terms of how different strands of illiberalism intertwine and intersect with one another, namely Islamophobia and misogyny here, Breivik writes that any attack on

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 930.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 931.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*

³¹² *Ibid.*, 1064.

Muslims should target “their women”, which he terms “the most prized possessions” of Muslims, in “deadly and strategic precision attacks.”³¹³ Enamoured by the idea of killing Muslim women and his conception of how this would affect the psyche of Muslim men, Breivik writes “attacking female groups is the only pragmatic approach”, calculating that “many of their husbands, sons, brothers and uncles would swear blood vengeance and subsequently join Jihadist networks.”³¹⁴ This, according to Breivik, will also cause Muslims in general to engage in ‘violent riots and various forms of Jihadi activities prematurely’, which will in turn force the media to cover it, having the effect of, in Breivik’s words, “radical[ising] more Europeans”.³¹⁵ Breivik concludes.

“This spiral will polarise societies and more Europeans will come to learn the “true face of Islam” and multiculturalism. Islamic and European reactions will then escalate the situation (added catalysts) as more and more people will join both cultural conservative movements and Jihadi groups.”³¹⁶

Breivik wants liberal democracy to be caught in a pincer movement between, on one hand, the “cultural conservative movements” and the Jihadists. Under this pressure, liberal democracy would splinter and, by way of violent civil war, Breivik’s new order of Putin-esque ‘controlled democracy’ of illiberalism would emerge out of the chaos.

In the same way that state-form illiberalism has used the GWOT, and specifically counter-terrorism legislation, intelligence apparatuses and, more generally, a ‘war on terror’ narrative, to attack liberal democracy itself, Breivik’s manifesto displays the same trajectory. So called ‘counter-jihadism’ morphs into a general ideology of illiberal values.

If we look at Breivik, we see many points of transition where the ideological demarcations of the GWOT are adhered to but ultimately transcended. Breivik’s anti-feminism and homophobia might at first seem to be unrelated to his Islamophobia, but what ties them together is his belief that it is because the West has been so depleted of its traditions, whether moral, social or cultural, that Islam presents such a danger to it.

Like 20th century fascists before him, Breivik’s resurrectionism isn’t confined to the utopian end point of the washing away of the Islamic menace and the restoration of white European

³¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 922.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Christendom. We also find within his manifesto, his desire for what he considers to be traditional patriarchal norms, which like all ideologues that aspire for a 'resurrection' is stitched together from the interwoven fabrics of history and myth, but it's too much to say that Breivik invents his grievances entirely. That is, of course, not to endorse a single word of Breivik's ideological fascinations, but rather to accept that Breivik is reacting to *something*. Whether it's his Islamophobia or his misogyny, Breivik is living in the world of Giddens' reflexive modernity, where he is a subject existing within a world of globalization and where traditional notions of ethnic and national identity, as well as sex and gender roles, are in a state of flux.

Again, Nolte's *resistance to transcendence* is relevant here – everything that Breivik hates, and thus fears, is everything that transcends his identity. He hates what he calls the 'EUSSR' (a play on European Union and USSR commonly used by Eurosceptics and illiberals, endorsing the conspiracy theory that the EU is somehow communistic and totalitarian in intent), the 'USASSR' (even in the progenitor of the GWOT, the US, at that time under the Bush administration, whose supporters Breivik quotes and considers allies, Breivik sees the hidden hand of communism), and 'cultural Marxist multiculturalists'.

He hates them because the EU, as a transnational body, is redefining what it means to be European and thus what he thinks is his own identity. He hates the US because of its economic and cultural hegemony, which he defines as 'globalist capitalism' and which he thinks spreads liberal values around the world, helplessly eroding his own 'traditional' or 'conservative' values before his eyes. He hates his own government – the 'cultural Marxist multiculturalists'. They are on the frontlines of this war against him and his identity, using as their figurative Weapon of Mass Destruction, the slow dripping poison of 'political correctness' and 'multiculturalism' to push their tradition-destroying agenda that is fostering Islamisation, which is the ultimate sully, the ultimate pollutant and death knell, of Breivik's vision of a sacred white, Christian Europe.

The GWOT not only brought out these dynamics, but it reinvented them and tied different strands of illiberal ideology together into a civilisational ideology, one that, though it often has different points of emphasis and appears in different forms, now competes with liberalism across Europe and the World. It is an ideology of counterhegemony, wherein the backlash is against not just, in purely ideological terms, the liberal triumphalism, embodied by

Fukuyama, Giddens and the ‘Third Way’ or the US as the ‘global hegemon’, but against the very real progressive gains of the period immediately after the Cold War.

The GWOT and those who enacted it did not plan for it to act as a transitional period where ideologies of illiberalism could fester in the many crevasses that it produced. However, as we can see from Breivik’s manifesto, and specifically its connection to and place within emerging illiberal ideology that was contradictorily given a platform by the centre, so to speak, at the time and that has now become normalised within modern illiberalism.

The GWOT gifted illiberalism with a whole new paradigm of the ‘siege mentality’, where Islamic terrorism could be used as a new springboard for illiberalism as an ideology of national or civilisational resurrection. Of course, it wasn’t just the GWOT, but in a truly globalised world, where the collapse of banking systems and housing markets was just as much a global event as the collapse of the World Trade Centre, no ideology, including those that are fervently ‘anti-globalist’, ultra-nationalist, isolationist, protectionist and provincialist, is bereft of global meaning.

If we were to revisit Laruelle’s excellent description of the features of illiberalism, one could identify in every feature she describes—from a rejection of multiculturalism to opposition to transnational formations and organisations—something that was included in and formed a part of Breivik’s ideology.

This is perhaps one of the key elements missing within academic work on illiberalism, namely a historical account not just simply of why illiberalism is now such a strong global phenomenon, but also of why it has assumed particular forms. In Breivik, we see not only the one of the foot soldiers, unwittingly produced, of the messy, dangerous dynamics of the GWOT, but also of the transformation of those dynamics into new forms of ideology – the ecosystem of illiberalism and the diverse lifeforms that inhabit it.

CONCLUSION

This work has attempted to if not explain the roots of modern illiberalism, at least explain how modern illiberalism came to look, think and act the way it does. While there is a growing amount of scholarly work on illiberalism, it has tended to skate over the GWOT or mention it simply as one of many factors. Even where the GWOT is explicitly tied to illiberal regimes, such as in the work of Romaniuk and Njoku, it is almost always within the lens of specific fields of study; hence what I think is the necessity for my own look at the GWOT as more than just an influence on global security policy but as an epoch-defining phenomenon.

This work has considered the many other factors and processes that have contributed to this epoch of illiberalism. However, these factors almost solely account for the *why* of illiberalism, as in its popularity due to dire economic conditions, while this work looks at both the *why* and the *what* of illiberalism. It looks at how the GWOT opened up the space wherein illiberalism rapidly amplify, find access to new logics, new methods and take on a distinctive shape.

Illiberalism, or illiberal ideologies, have always had a strong place in the world. However, particularly when it comes to illiberal states, these regimes are confined mostly to the developing world and exist in places where historical and political circumstance has meant that they are normative. Modern illiberalism, on the other hand, penetrates right into the heart of the world of liberal democracy, constantly seeking to contradict and weaken it on multiple levels. The GWOT served as a trojan horse for illiberalism to find new opportunities on the continent that birthed both liberal democracy and the European fascism of the 20th Century. Whether it's in the form of Viktor Orbán's anti-immigration stances and policies being ever more normalised and adopted by the EU, or due to it being internally colonised by illiberal forces that hold parliamentary representation or even state power.

We live in a world where the 'politics of inevitability' and the politics of liberal democratic triumph must coexist and contend with forces who believe that racist conspiracy theories like Great Replacement Theory and Eurabia are more of a concern to the world than climate change. We live in a world where far from humanitarian intervention being what grips the world's conscience, its precise opposite, namely anti-humanitarian intervention, is now more predominant, assertive and normal.

A very simple question lies at the core of my work, namely: how did it come to this? At almost every turn, with every avenue of historical investigation of modern illiberal phenomena, some linkage or consequential imprint of the GWOT was always present.

Though it was not within the limits of this work to delve fully into an ideological history of post-Cold War liberalism, I have managed to demonstrate not just the deleterious effects of the GWOT on liberal democracy, but how the GWOT itself emerged from a mode of liberal and liberal democratic thought that accompanied the collapse of the USSR – the GWOT ideology. It is almost a cliché to reference Fukuyama’s infamous ‘end of history’ thesis only to then, citing the rise of Russia or Trumpism or Brexit, say that history has returned or ideology has taken its revenge. However, sometimes cliches hold true. Fukuyama, as I referenced, was quick to see that in the GWOT all of the opportunities that could have been sustained by the liberal democratic world to better secure a more progressive future were being almost entirely lost by the GWOT.

It might trouble liberal intellectuals to imagine that the road to Abu Ghraib or Guantanamo Bay or extraordinary rendition, the state of exception, was due to an abundance and not a lack of ideals.

The ‘thin liberalism’, conceived in triumph after the fall of the USSR, and considered readymade for export and, with the might of the US behind it, almost providentially guaranteed to lead to success, formed the major assumptions of the GWOT ideology and itself led to a ‘thin illiberalism’. Which is to say an illiberalism that seeks to be counterhegemonic and utilises the ‘War on Terror narrative’ for its own illiberal ends, such as Putin’s Russia, and which relies on many of the same assumptions, namely, to quote Fukuyama writing critically of the neoconservative policy of the Bush administration during the GWOT, “that history can be pushed along with the right application of power and will.”³¹⁷

In no other scholarly work, will you find an analysis of Russia’s intervention in Syria through the lens of the GWOT and the manner in which Russia justified such an intervention using the precedent set by the GWOT and borrowing and adapting the ‘War on terror narrative’ of the US. The same is true of Orban’s Hungary in its self-styled ‘war on terror’ against Islamic immigration and those liberal forces that the regime claims is deliberately fostering it. Even

³¹⁷ Fukuyama, ‘America’, pp. 54 – 55.

more surprisingly, given the obvious relation between the two, in no other scholarship will you find an analysis of Breivik's manifesto and counter-jihadism solely through the lens of the GWOT as radicalising and illiberalizing factor.

This is what I have defined in this work as the ecosystem of illiberalism, where the GWOT doesn't have to be directly related to particular illiberal occurrences or movements, but in which it undoubtedly provided the perfect conditions for them. One even, quite paradoxically, can see illiberals who have no doubt emerged out of the GWOT's ecosystem of illiberalism, such as Donald Trump, as briefly touched upon in the section on Breivik and the links between the CJM, the Tea Party and MAGAism, with his explicit Islamophobia but his opposition to the Iraq war and the Bush-era Republican Party. As I attempted to explain, utilising Nolte's idea of fascism as resistance to transcendence, it makes sense that such illiberalism would come to reject the GWOT ideology and its glorification of global liberal democracy.

The importance of looking at these phenomena through the lens of the GWOT has a dual function that this work has accomplished: 1) To better determine the motivations of and interplay between the state-form and activist-form illiberals in question, hopefully elucidating how they contrast, interact and compare, and 2) To recognise the GWOT for the epoch defining and paradigm-shifting occurrence that it was with regard to emergence of modern illiberalism. Hopefully this approach might inspire other scholars to look at other questions surrounding illiberalism through a similar lens.

There have, of course, been limitations. If given grander limits, it would have only helped this work to have utilised interviews as primary sources. Interviewing those whose thinking has both formed some of the content and been inspirational to this work, such as Fukuyama, would have been beneficial. It would have been even more interesting and perhaps fruitful to try to interview some of the ideologues of counter-jihadism to get a first-hand account of how the GWOT interacted with them and their activism. In contrast, interviewing critics of Orban and those who have been adversely affected by his illiberal 'anti-terror' legislation would have perhaps given this work more depth.

However, despite these limits, this work has attempted to fulfil the task not of comprehensively explaining the phenomenon of modern illiberalism in its totality, but rather, situating illiberalism within the context of an epoch that was majorly shaped by the GWOT and its consequences.. This work has, as Nolte would have it, attempted to further elucidate

the terrain upon which illiberalism has thrived, so that the diverse nature of the phenomenon in this epoch might more easily be understood.

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