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***CHRISTOFASCISM'S CIVILIZATIONAL CRUSADE:
CHRISTIAN LIBERTARIANISM AND MESSIANIC NEOLIBERALISM
IN THE AMERICAS***

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

LATIN AMERICAN AND LATINO STUDIES
with an emphasis in POLITICS

by

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September 2025

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ABSTRACT

Christofascism's Civilizational Crusade: Christian Libertarianism and Messianic Neoliberalism in the Americas

Gabriela Segura-Ballar

My research investigates the ideological formations and manifestations of *Christofascism* in the Americas, which I define as a fusion of the essential tenets of Christian theology with neoliberal market fundamentalism. I examine two manifestations of Christofascism: Christian libertarianism and messianic neoliberalism. *Christian libertarianism* refers to the fusion of Christian tenets with free-market capitalism. In contrast, *messianic neoliberalism* promises the Promised Land of a fully realized market society. To explore these two manifestations of *Christofascism*, I focus on Brazil and Argentina.

Rallying behind the slogan, “Brazil above everything, God above everyone,” Brazil’s *Bolsonarismo* stands out as a powerful Christian nationalist movement that is founded on the belief that free market economics are the expression of God’s economic principles. If Brazil’s *Bolsonarismo* is guided by the maxim: “God above everything,” Milei’s Argentina follows the divine guiding principle of “the market above everything,” where the market is revered as a sacred entity. Milei embodies the libertarian Messiah who will lead Argentines to the Promised Land, that is, the utopia of the total market. Through an analysis of the religious mystique and idolatrous appropriation of elements of Christianity to impose extreme free-market doctrine, my dissertation offers a critique of the sacrificial logic underpinning *Christofascism* in terms of foreign policy and political economy.

I analyze Christofascism as a “civilizational crusade” of the international far right that is united around *libertarian hyper-occidentalism*, that is, the unconditional allegiance toward ‘the West,’ embodied in the United States and Israel, at the expense of national interests. My dissertation addresses two central research questions: a) What are the colonial, capitalist, international, and religious dimensions of *Christofascism* in Brazil and Argentina? b) How is *libertarian hyper-occidentalism* manifested, and how does it allow the creation of international alliances as a crusade for ‘the West’?

To address these questions, I draw from discourse analyses and ethnography. I analyze a vast variety of primary and secondary sources associated with the neofascist right in Brazil, Argentina, and the United States. I also conducted 15 months of ethnographic research in Brazil between 2022-2023. From a methodological perspective, I adopt a relational approach that allows me to examine the national particularities of *Christofascism* while also highlighting its transnational dimensions.

My study makes three main theoretical contributions. First, from a historical and transdisciplinary perspective, it expands on the theoretical category of *Christofascism* to underpin its theological and messianic dimensions. Second, it examines how the fervent belief in Western supremacy has shaped the ideological foundations of the international far right to advance neocolonial projects that sacrifice national sovereignty. Finally, my study shows how *Christofascism* is founded on a neoliberal ‘civilizing’ mission grounded on ideologies of domination and exclusion that not only propagate politics of hatred and dehumanization but further reinforce Latin America’s neocolonial submission.

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Finally, I owe my deepest gratitude to Cesar, whose love, patience, and encouragement sustained me throughout this journey. This work is as much yours as it is mine.

Para Cesar

A la memoria de Lau, que perdura en las mariposas y en las olas del mar

El fascismo no regresa, nunca ha estado ausente ni ha sido derrotado, ni menos aún vencido. Los vencidos fueron sus primeros manipuladores en Europa. Simplemente ha cambiado el manipulador de esta arma de dominio.

Fascism is not making a comeback; it has never been absent nor has it been defeated, let alone vanquished. The first to be defeated were its first manipulators in Europe. Simply, the wielder of this weapon of domination has changed.

Leopoldo Zea, 1976

Así como Lenin dijo que el imperialismo es la fase superior del capitalismo, el fascismo pareciera ser la fase superior del neoliberalismo

Just as Lenin said that imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism, fascism would seem to be the highest stage of neoliberalism.

Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías, 2003

Tutte le idee vanno rispettate. Il fascismo, no. Non è un'idea. È la morte di tutte le idee. L'unico modo di intendere il fascismo è combatterlo.

All ideas must be respected, except fascism. Fascism is not an idea, it is the death of all ideas. The only way to understand fascism is to fight it.

Sandro Pertini, President of Italy (1978-1985)

Chapter One

1. Introduction

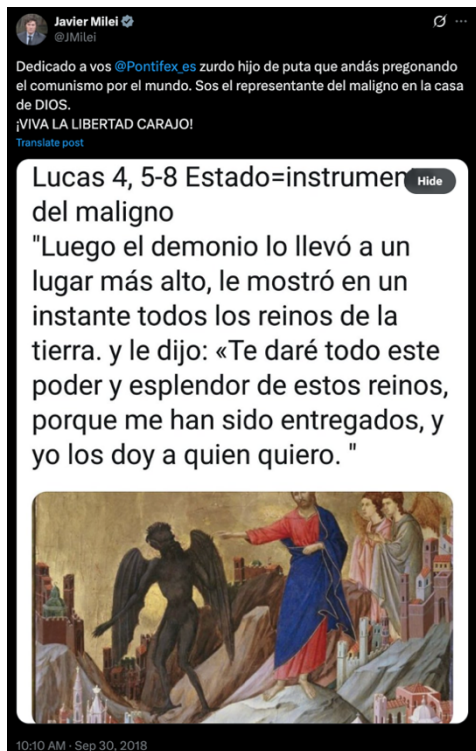


FIGURE 1. The State = Instrument of the Devil

On September 20, 2018, Javier Milei dedicated a post on Twitter dedicated to Pope Francis that read: “Dedicated to you @Pontifex_es, you leftist son of a bitch who goes around preaching communism in the world. You are the representative of evil in the house of GOD. LONG LIVE FREEDOM, DAMN IT!” (Milei, 2018). The tweet was followed by an image referencing the Biblical passage Luke 4:5-8 to equate the State as the instrument of the Devil: The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours.”

1.1. Project Description

Javier Milei has repeatedly insulted Pope Francis, describing him as the representative of the “Evil One” on Earth. Because of the Pope’s critiques of capitalism, his denunciation of the “deified market,” and his commitment to social justice, Milei

History teaches, but it has no pupils
Antoni Gramsci, 1919

It is not the task of the Pope to offer a detailed and complete analysis of contemporary reality, but I do exhort all the communities to an “ever watchful scrutiny of the signs of the times.” This is in fact a grave responsibility, since certain present realities, unless effectively dealt with, are capable of setting off processes of dehumanization which would then be hard to reverse. We need to distinguish clearly what might be a fruit of the kingdom from what runs counter to God’s plan. This involves not only recognizing and discerning spirits, but also—and this is decisive—choosing movements of the spirit of good and rejecting those of the spirit of evil.

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 2013

On this earth there are pestilences and there are victims, and it’s up to us, so far as possible, not to join forces with the pestilences.
Albert Camus, *The Plague*, 1947

accused him of “promoting communism,” which for him is a “deadly sin... an aberration” rooted in envy, resentment, and theft. In Milei’s worldview, *El Maligno*—the Evil One—is embodied by the State, which he sees as the instrument of the Devil, the Antichrist. Despite being the first Argentine pope, Milei delayed his trip to Rome for Pope Francis’s funeral. The reason? He chose instead to bestow an honorary doctorate upon Jesús Huerta de Soto during his visit to Argentina. Huerta de Soto, a Spanish economist and disciple of the Austrian School of Economics, remarked on the Pope’s death by declaring that, now in the face of God, Pope Francis would come to understand the “moral truth,” that “the State is the incarnation of the Evil One on Earth, the Antichrist.” Through an analysis of the religious mystique and idolatrous appropriation of elements of Christianity to impose extreme free-market doctrine, my dissertation offers a critique of the sacrificial logic underpinning Christofascism in the Americas in terms of foreign policy and political economy.

I define Christofascism as a civilizational project that unites the neofascist right across national borders. In Latin America, one common element of Christofascism is its fervent servility toward the United States and its unconditional support for Israel, both framed as part of a broader crusade to defend Christian/Western civilization. Argentine Juan Gabriel Tokatlian coined the idea of *libertarian hyper-occidentalism* to describe the unconditional allegiance of Milei’s government to the West, embodied by the United States and Israel, at the expense of national interests. I build on this idea to examine *Christofascism*’s crusade for Western supremacy and its sacrificial logic in the name of ‘the West.’ In addition, despite its vehement rejection of “globalism,”

Christofascism embraces a fanatical adherence to the religious doctrine of the free market.

I examine two manifestations of Christofascism in the Americas: *Christian libertarianism* and *messianic neoliberalism*. *Christian libertarianism* refers to the fusion of Christian theology with the core principles of free-market capitalism, portraying economic liberalism as divinely sanctioned. In contrast, *messianic neoliberalism* invokes the promise of reaching the “Promised Land,” a utopian vision of a fully realized market society. Within this religious framework, devotion to the “market god” becomes a religion in its own right, where the market is revered as a sacred entity. To explore these two manifestations of *Christofascism*, I focus on Brazil’s *Bolsonarismo* and Milei’s Argentina.

Rallying behind the slogan “*Brazil above everything, God above everyone*,” Brazil’s *Bolsonarismo* stands out as a powerful Christian nationalist movement that fervently embraces a form of *faith & freedom* that combines reactionary conservative values, Christian nationalism, and extreme free-market economics. The dominant ideology of *Bolsonarismo* is organized around the mantra “*liberal na economia e conservador nos costumes*” (liberal in economics and conservative in customs). Thus, this movement is not only founded on the conflation between God and nation, but also on the belief that free market economics are the expression of God’s economic principles. The (un)holy alliance between Christian tenets and extreme free-market economics is what I refer to as *Christian libertarianism*.

If Brazil's Bolsonarismo is guided by the maxim: "God above everything," Milei's Argentina follows the divine guiding principle of "the market above everything," where the market represents the "almighty invisible hand" of God. Milei sees himself as a leader predestined to eradicate "*el Maligno*" (the Evil One) from the Earth. Milei embodies the libertarian Messiah with the salvific mission of freeing the Argentine people from the clutches of the State, which is a creation of the devil itself, the Anti-Christ. This is what I refer to as *messianic neoliberalism* (Segura-Ballar, 2025a).

My dissertation addresses two central research questions: a) What are the colonial, capitalist, international, and religious dimensions of *Christofascism* in Brazil and Argentina? b) How is *libertarian hyper-occidentalism* manifested, and how does it allow the creation of international alliances as a crusade for 'the West'? From a transdisciplinary and relational approach, my project analyses *Christofascism* as a "civilizational crusade" by delving into the colonial, capitalist, international, and religious dimensions of this phenomenon. Through this lens, I examine two manifestations of *Christofascism* in the Americas: ***Christian libertarianism*** and ***messianic neoliberalism***. My study underscores the urgency of resisting neofascist forces, demonstrating how *Christofascism* normalizes ideologies of domination and exclusion as divinely sanctioned across various national contexts.

1.2. Project Significance

Although the neofascist right in the Americas has been able to redirect discontent and resentment created by neoliberal globalization, its economic agenda is aligned with

austerity and market-driven politics. This form of reactionary far-right politics is paradoxically characterized by vehemently opposing “globalism” while fanatically embracing ultra-neoliberal economics and the supreme “Invisible Hand” of the market (Slobodian, 2025). By making sense of this mutant formation of neoliberalism and the new forms of anti-democratic politics (Brown, 2018) and social conservatism (Cooper, 2017), my project contributes to emerging frameworks for studying the far right in the Global South (Cannon & Rangel, 2025; Pinheiro-Machado & Vargas-Maia, 2023; Castro-Rea & Solano, 2024), and the relation between neofascism and capitalism from a Latin American perspective (Zagni & Coggiola, 2022; Santos et.al. 2023; Prieto et.al., 2024; Serrade et.al., 2025; Finol, 2025). By bridging Latin American and North Atlantic intellectual traditions, my work offers new analytical lenses for defining and understanding the transnational far right. Originally coined by theologian Dorothee Sölle, I build and expand on the theoretical category of *Christofascism* within Latin American critical theory, fascism studies, and neoliberalism studies to account for the contradictory formations of neoliberal/Christian nationalism and ultra-neoliberal “anti-globalism.”

To make sense of this contradictory phenomenon, my project centers on the colonial, capitalist, international, and religious dimensions of *Christofascism*. Scholars have examined the rise of the far right across the Americas, yet many have overlooked the role of Western supremacy in shaping the ideological foundations of the international far right. Juan Gabriel Tokatlian (2024) coined the idea of *libertarian hyper-occidentalism* to describe the unconditional allegiance of Milei to the United

States and Israel, at the expense of national interests. One of the central contributions of my analysis is to expand on this idea and examine the role of *libertarian hyper-occidentalism* in legitimizing authoritarian political projects through appeals to Western civilizational values. I understand *hyper-occidentalism* as the sense of belonging to a superior cultural, economic, and religious civilization, ‘the West,’ allowing actors and movements that compound the neofascist right to infuse their political-economic agenda with a millenarian and mystical dimension. One of the consequences of this form of civilizational fascism is the renunciation of sovereignty. Thus, in the face of the renouncement of national sovereignty due to the fanatic embrace of neoliberal economics, *hyper-occidentalism* provides a millenarian transcendence to the nation. From this perspective, the defense of sacred ‘Western’ heritage acquires a mystical dimension and is reframed as a civilizational crusade. The sense of Western supremacy also allows the far right to create international alliances to defend traditional ‘Western’ values and the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian foundations of ‘Western’ culture against the threat represented by ‘globalism’ (Segura-Ballar, 2021).

It is worth clarifying that the idea of colonial prejudice—or the sense of Western supremacy—is not limited by any means to the far right. We can find colonial prejudice very much entrenched in the educational system, the rule of law, and the international systems that dictate and reinforce the perennial colonial relations among and within countries. However, what I argue is that the far right openly embraces and celebrates that sense of Western (colonial) superiority along with the ethical and moral

justifications that have legitimized genocide, land dispossession, and enslavement for centuries. This serves to justify the vehement opposition to any initiative that seeks to remedy the historical injustices and pervasive violence perpetrated by ‘Western’ civilization.

My research contributes to understanding the far right not as a rejection of neoliberalism or ‘globalists’ elites but as a mutant form of it (Callison & Manfredi, 2019; Slobodian, 2025). I expand on the recent debates around neoliberalism to account for the antidemocratic and illiberal mutations of free-market capitalism to perpetuate the neoliberal political project. From this perspective, my project expands on the research agenda on authoritarian neoliberalism (Jessop, 2019; Bruff, 2014; Bruff & Tansel, 2019). In Latin America, the introduction of neoliberal reforms has been implemented through a combination of free-market shock doctrine during the period of military dictatorships (Klein, 2007), authoritarianism during times of democracy, and *progressive neoliberalism* during the pink tide, which Nancy Fraser (2019) defines as a combination of corporate capitalism, social programs to alleviate poverty, and an inclusive social rhetoric. My project contributes to expanding and revisiting the different debates over neoliberalism to account for the new forms of reactionary anti-globalism and its radical pro-market agendas (Sparke, 2022, 2024). My research also looks at the intersections between neoliberalism and fascism, which makes it relevant to scholarship on right-wing, far-right, and fascism studies. Finally, one of the central contributions of this study is shedding light on the religious and theological foundations of the contemporary manifestations of *Christofascism* in the Americas.

1.3. How to conceptualize the rise of the far right?

The rise of far right and neofascism has become one of the most pressing issues in global politics today. This has been reflected in the need to analyze and theorize this phenomenon's singularities and continuities. The proliferation of studies from the social sciences and humanities has expanded the field and categories to account for this phenomenon's complexity and its different manifestations. For instance, when examining where the resurgence of the far right in the United States comes from, Quinn Slobodian (2024) distinguishes two approaches that have dominated scholarly production. One locates the origins of the far right in *culture*: racism, chauvinism, xenophobia, white identity politics, or a longing for 'eternity,' etc.¹ This literature primarily focuses on *identity* issues with barely any reference to capitalism. As Slobodian points out, "the assumption seems to be that far-right ideology is either post- or pre-material: it inhabits a space of culture detached from issues of production and distribution" (Slobodian, 2024, p. 2). In contrast, "the other school of interpretation finds the origins of the US far right in the spirit of capitalism itself" (Slobodian, 2024, p. 2).

Following the work of Slobodian, I consider that the resurgence of the far right must be understood as emerging out of the economic: out of capitalism itself. Yet, we cannot lose perspective that the economic dimension overlaps with issues of culture,

¹ Some of the references mentioned by Slobodian are: Ashley Jardina, *White Identity Politics* (2019), Benjamin R. Teitelbaum, *War for Eternity* (2020); Cas Mudde, *The Far Right Today* (2019), Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America* (2018); David Neiwert, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump* (2017); Mike Wendling, *Alt-Right: From 4chan to the White House* (2018); Alexander Minna Stern, *Proud Boys and the White Ethnostate: How the Alt-Right Is Warping the American Imagination* (2019); George Hawley, *Making Sense of the Alt-Right* (2017).

tradition, race, and religion in different forms that, in the end, serve to perpetuate the neoliberal status quo. As Slobodian points out, the far right commits and doubles down on “social Darwinist principles of struggle in the market and translates them through hierarchical categories of race, nationality, and gender” (2024, p. 2). In addition, the neofascist right is a product of the spirit of capitalism itself, but like all manifestations of mutant neoliberalism (Callison & Manfredi, 2019), it manifests differently depending on the particular places, territories, and regional contexts. For this reason, it is important to consider the cultural, historical, and national particularities as well as the economic and material conditions. At the same time, the neoliberal far right deploys theological, biblical, symbolic, and discursive mechanisms to exploit the discontent created by austerity and neoliberal economics, taking it away from the neoliberal system and redirecting it to the “globalist” menace in an inflammatory and apocalyptic manner.

Considering the vast existent literature to account for the resurgence of far-right politics, it is beyond the scope of this section to account in detail for this vast field. However, it is worth distinguishing some of the main concepts and theoretical frameworks that have been developed to account for the rise of the far right and why the theoretical category of *Christofascism* is relevant to account for this phenomenon. One of the most significant fields that have gained prominence to account for the rise of the far right is *right-wing populism*. Theoretical debates on populism are not new.²

² For instance, see Ionescu & Gellner (1969), Laclau (1979, 2005, 2015), Betz (1994), Weyland (2001), and Panizza (2005). Some of the most significant contemporary theories on populism are Ernesto Laclau (1979, 2005, 2015), Cass Mudde (2004, 2016), and Chantal Mouffe (2018). See also Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (2014) (See also:

In fact, renowned populism scholar Cas Mudde distinguished the many variants of the term populism since the early 2000s (2002). Some of the current variants are authoritarian populism³ (Morelock, 2018; Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Peters, 2018), right-wing and radical-right populism (Mouffe, 2005; Mudde, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2017; Odmalm & Hepburn, 2019; Rovira-Kaltwasser & Taggart, 2022; Scott, 2019), neoliberal populism (K. Weyland, 1999), reactionary populism (González-Ruibal et al., 2018), nationalist populism or populist nationalism (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2019), and civilizational populism (Yilmaz & Morieseon, 2022, 2022).

Regarding the populist radical right, Mudde has stated that this “is one of the most studied political phenomena of the postwar western world” (2017, p. 1). Since the Trump election and the Brexit referendum in 2016, there has been an increase in scholarship on *populism* to account for the rise of the radical right, especially in the Global North. Mudde even considered populism as “the concept that defines our age” (2018). While some argue that populism poses a threat to modern liberal democracy (Mounk, 2014), others argue that it is an essential component of it (Mudde & Rovira-Kaltwasser, 2012, 2013). Mudde defines populism as a thin-centered ideology that

Hawkins et al., 2019; Rovira Kaltwasser et al., 2017), Carlos de la Torre (2015, 2019), and Kurt Weyland (2001) (See also: K. G. Weyland & Madrid, 2019).

³ In 1979, Stuart Hall coined the term *authoritarian populism* to describe the shift to the right in British politics and the emergence of Thatcherism as a new political force, which he defines as “an exceptional form of the capitalist state—which, unlike classical fascism, has retained most (though not all) of the formal representative institution in place, and which at the same time has been able to construct around itself an active popular consent” (1979, p. 15). As Hall (1985) explains, the concept *foregrounds* the political-ideological dimension of Thatcherism, from the analysis of the political conjuncture, mid-1960s/mid 1970s, advanced in his 1978 book *Policing the Crisis*. Bob Jessop, Kevin Bonnett, Simon Bromley, and Tom Ling contributed to “Authoritarian Populism, Two Nations, and Thatcherism,” where they took issue with the *authoritarian populism* concept and its shortcomings in understanding Thatcherism (Jessop et al., (1984). Hall wrote a reply to address some aspects of their argument, where he further elaborates on the development of the concept and its delimitations (1985) to which Jessop et al. also replied (1985). Hall also elaborated further on the concept in “Popular-Democratic versus Authoritarian Populism” (1980).

considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups: ‘the pure people’ and ‘the corrupt elite,’ where politics should then be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people (Mudde, 2004; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). For Mudde, populism is one of the three features of the populist radical right, along with nativism and authoritarianism (2007, 2017). In the case of Bolsonarismo, political scientists Marisa Von Bülow and Rebecca Neaera Abers argue that Brazil’s radical-right populism is more than an ideology: it is a social movement (2022).⁴

Despite the remarkable proliferation of theory on populism, does the concept really help us grasp the complexities of the rise of the far-right? The *Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research*, an international institute guided by popular movements and organizations, published a dossier titled “The False Concept of Populism and the Challenges Facing the Left” (2024) where the researchers pose the question: Why is the far right considered populist, given that it did not rupture with the neoliberal consensus? For the Tricontinental, while the Washington Consensus was the neoliberal consensus in the 1990’s,

Today, the term needs to be broadened to include a few key aspects, such as the need to accept capitalism as eternal, shrink the aspects of the state that provide social welfare and regulate business, expand the repressive apparatus of the state to prevent any challenge to the status quo, and acknowledge the centrality of the United States as the leader of the world system. (2024, p. 4)

⁴ On populism in Brazil, see also Rangel and Dultra (2019) and Andrade (2020).

Focused on the Global North, the researchers analyze how the term ‘populist’ has been used to distinguish the ‘anti-liberal’ aspects of the far right, that is, its strong conservative religiosity and traditionalism. However, this ‘anti-liberalism’ does not usually refer to other illiberal aspects such as its support for the state’s repressive apparatus (Tricontinental, 2024, p. 10). Thus, although the far right might have ‘anti-neoliberal’ rhetoric to cater to ‘the people,’ its agendas reinforce the neoliberal consensus. The term ‘populist’ has been used to describe the far right because it presumably speaks to the working class and the lower middle class by claiming that these sectors have been ignored by the ‘globalists.’ However, the idea of representing the ‘people’ against the ‘elites’ is just a rhetorical maneuver, that is, “a pseudo-break with the neoliberal consensus” (Tricontinental, 2024, p. 22). Considering

the contradictions set in place by the neoliberal pact will not allow the far right of a special type to act in a truly populist manner against the institutions of neoliberalism...the concept is insufficient if it implies the possibility of a necessary rupture from the neoliberal consensus. (Tricontinental, 2024, pp. 30, 23)

The Tricontinental recognizes that the conditions that paved the way for the rise of the far right were the 2008 economic crisis, referred to as the Third Great Depression, which reinforced permanent austerity on the working class and the lower middle class, and the neoliberal pact that does not allow any policy debate that strayed outside their consensus. This neoliberal consensus is characterized by a technocratic form of government that “is the opposite of a democracy, but which nonetheless uses the trappings of liberal democracy to exercise power” (Tricontinental, 2024, p. 20). Although the resurgence of the far right can be analyzed as the result of the fascist

solution to the capitalist crisis, the Tricontinental does not consider the new far right as fascist, because it “has not appeared, as fascism did a hundred years ago, to defeat working-class struggles and the communist movement, nor does it have any problem with the formal institutions of democracy” (2024, p. 11). For Executive Director of the Tricontinental, Vijay Prashad, the word “fascism” is usually used to deny the intimacy between liberals and the far right, so he refers to this New Right as a “far right of a special type” because it is a new kind of right-wing that is not necessarily concerned with overthrowing the norms of liberal democracy (2024, pp. 9, 5).

Prashad’s reflection leads to the question: is fascism a relevant category to understand the resurgence of the far right today? In any case, there is no doubt that the election of Donald Trump in 2016 and the following ascendance of reactionary governments such as Bolsonaro in Brazil and Viktor Orbán in Hungary, invigorated the debate over fascism.⁵ In 2017, renowned scholar of fascism studies Robert O. Paxton published an essay titled “American Duce,” where he dismissed affixing the label *fascist* to Trump; instead, he called the Trump regime a *plutocracy* (2017). A few years later, after the events occurred on January 6, 2020, Paxton removed his objection to the fascist label and called Trump a fascist for his incitement of the invasion of the Capitol.⁶ Paxton compared Trump and Trumpism to historical fascism and argued that the label was not just acceptable but necessary (2021). In “Neofascism in the White

⁵ On Trump’s neofascism, see, for example, Cornell West (Democracy Now, 2016), Henry Giroux (2017), John Bellamy Foster (2017), and Judith Butler (Salmon, 2016).

⁶ In the *Anatomy of Fascism*, Paxton defines fascism “as a form of political behavior marked by obsessive preoccupation with community decline, humiliation, or victimhood and by compensatory cults of unity, energy, and purity, in which a mass-based party of committed nationalist militants, working in uneasy but effective collaboration with traditional elites, abandons democratic liberties and pursues with redemptive violence and without ethical or legal restraints goals of internal cleansing and external expansion” (2004, p. 218).

House” (2017) sociologist John Bellamy Foster also drew some parallels between the Trump phenomenon and that of Nazi Germany by highlighting the support of sectors of the lower-middle class to Trump or the petty bourgeoisie. For Foster, “the fact that fascism was historically rooted in the lower middle class or petty bourgeoisie is one of the most firmly established observations in the entire literature on fascism’s rise, both in the 1930s and today, encompassing both Marxist and non-Marxist thinkers” (2017).

The frequent drawing of parallels with fascism interwar fascism has prompted a reaction among historians, some of whom reject the use of historical analogies in contemporary contexts. For example, scholar Dylan Riley, author of *The Civic Foundations of Fascism in Europe* (2017), has criticized the “explosion of historical analogizing” between Trump’s presidency, as well as other reactionary governments, and the era of classical fascism. For Riley, although we can learn much about our contemporary period by studying historical fascism, “a lot of it will be learned by way of contrast rather than commonality” (Jacobson, 2022). In any case, drawing on the lessons of previous manifestations of fascism would also require specifying what we understand by fascism in the contemporary context of radical neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism can be understood as a form of authoritarian religion. The dogmas associated with this secular religion have imposed a neoliberal social order that has destroyed forms of organization based on mutuality, interdependence, and solidarity. When the socioeconomic and political structure of society is based not on the principles of love or justice but on the worshiping of power and control, authoritarian forms of religion can thrive. As Dorothee Sölle observed, when the humanistic forms of religion

disappear, “it is the authoritarian bonds which mostly persist in a life that is understood as dominated by technocracy” (Sölle, 1982, p. xiv). In the Americas, this dynamic has fostered a conflation between neoliberalism—as an authoritarian form of religion—and a reactionary instrumentalization of the Christian religion, along with its fascist manifestations. For example, neoliberalism’s exaltation of extreme individualism deepens the sense of alienation and isolation that Christian fundamentalism seeks to exploit. In the contemporary context, radical neoliberalism functions not only as an authoritarian secular religion, but as a religion in its own right, complete with its own mythology, prophets, canonical texts, evangelical fervor, and theological symbols. I refer to *Christofascism* as a civilizational project that fuses Christian tenets with free market doctrine, an idea that I expand upon in the following section.

1.4. Defining *Christofascism*

In 1970, German theologian Dorothee Sölle coined the term *Christofascism* in *Beyond Mere Obedience*⁷ (1982) to explain the embrace of Nazism by some sectors of the Christian Church in Germany. Sölle later expanded on this concept in *The Window of Vulnerability*⁸ (1990), warning of the growing fascist tendencies of Christian fundamentalism in the United States. Sölle condemns the instrumentalization of religion to incite hatred and dehumanization of ‘the other’ while mobilizing believers

⁷ According to the blog New Transcendentalist, this book was originally published in 1968 in German titled *Phantasie und Gehorsam: Überlegungen zu einer künftigen christlichen Ethik* (trans. “Imagination and Obedience: Reflections on a Future Christian Ethic”) which was released in English in 1970 as *Beyond Mere Obedience*), then again in 1982 with a new foreword and again in 1990 (with another updated foreword) as *Creative Disobedience* (New Transcendentalist, 2022).

⁸ The book is also a translation of the book in German titled *Das Fenster der Verwundbarkeit: theologisch-politische* (1987). For a further discussion of Sölle’s chapter on Christofascism, see Morrison (2024).

“into battles, into crusades.” It was this exploitation of religion by the religious right—used for purposes entirely at odds with Christian values—that led Sölle to formulate the concept of *Christofascism* (1990, p. 138). The term captures how Christianity is manipulated to reinforce an “ideological mixture of nationalism, militarism, family ideology, hostility to working people, and blind hatred of communism” (Sölle, 1990, p. 140). Ultimately, under *Christofascism*, Christianity is subordinated to “hate and the will to destroy,” transforming it into a fascist religion (1990, p. 140).

Christian fundamentalism is a form of religious obscurantism that opposes liberal democracy and secularism. In his 1950 *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, Eric Fromm distinguished between authoritarian and humanistic religion. While the principle of humanistic religion is the power of love and reason, the essential element of authoritarian religion is obedience to God, which is a symbol of force and domination. The same principle applies to authoritarian secular religions where the object of worship is power, the nation, or the authority of the market (Fromm, 2013). Although the humanistic elements and anti-authoritarian tradition of early Christianity are still present, the principles of Christian fundamentalism fit into the definition of an authoritarian religion, especially when it allies itself with secular power (Fromm, 2013), such as the one represented in the political-economic project of neoliberalism.

For Dorothee Sölle, “the main virtue of an authoritarian religion is obedience” (1982, p. xiii). Blind obedience to the gospel of the market is a distinguishing element of Christofascism. As a form of authoritarian secular religion, neoliberalism requires a religious emphasis on obedience that goes beyond a fascist cult of the leader. This is

blind obedience to the ‘Almighty Invisible Hand’ of the market (Parenteau, 2015). Thus, the market becomes a religion with its own mythology, prophets, evangelical zeal, and theological symbols (Cox, 2016). Christian fundamentalism precepts go hand in hand with the worship of the market, and even when neoliberal ideology does not lean on religious principles, religious obedience and total submission to the neoliberal order and the market forces of the economy are still unquestioned. As Sölle points out, “the dangers of the religious ideology of obedience do not come to an end when religion itself loses its spell and binding power” (1982, pp. xiii-xiv). Neoliberalism is a religious ideology of obedience. As Sölle highlights, “obedience operates in the barbaric ethos of fascism, but also in that of technocracy as well” (1982, p. xiv).

Sölle developed the term Christofascism in the context of the rise of the fascist Christian right in the United States and the role of the extreme-right religious organization, the Moral Majority. Founded by Baptist minister Jerry Falwell in 1979, the Moral Majority later aligned with Ronald Reagan and his blend of faith, freedom, and free enterprise.⁹ Sölle refers to Falwell’s book *Listen, America!* (1980) who presents Milton Friedman as a proponent of God’s message. Falwell not only connected the free enterprise system to what the Founding Fathers envisioned for a free society but also located the free enterprise system in the Bible. For Falwell, “ownership of property is biblical. Competition in business is biblical. Ambition and successful

⁹ For a historical account of the events that lead to the creation of the Moral Majority, see Kruse’s *One Nation Under God* (2016). For an analysis of the Christian right in the United States, see Hedges’s *American Fascists* (2007).

business management is clearly outlined as part of God’s plan for His people” (1980, p. 12).

In his analysis of the not-so-distant ideological creation of the United States as a Christian nation, Kevin M. Kruse (2016) analyzes how corporate America was able to link capitalism and Christianity by creating, boosting, and aligning with religious organizations and leaders to spread the idea that Christian values only exist in the capitalist system of free enterprise. For Kruse, these groups “saw Christianity and capitalism as inextricably intertwined and argued that spreading the gospel of one required spreading the gospel of the other” (2016, p. 8). Kruse refers to the articulation of this religious ideology as Christian libertarianism (Kruse, 2016), that is, the affirmation of the essential tenets of free market capitalism by Christian theology.¹⁰

Christian libertarianism represents an inversion of the Christian message of love and justice. In reality, the Christian right in the Americas embraces a fascist religion based on obedience to a God that represents power, subjection, and hierarchy. Neoliberalism also constitutes an authoritarian religion based on unquestioned authority to a God of hate that negates justice and hates equality. This is the Market God. Thus, the worshipping of the market spurs from a *theology of hate* (2020) and a *theology of violence* (Freire, 1970), which both have their origins in a *theology of colonialism*. For Enrique Dussel, the latter is a manifestation of *inverted Christianity*, that is, the turning of Christianity into a religion of exclusion and Conquest rather than Liberation and Justice. As a colonial theology, inverted Christianity has characterized

¹⁰ See, for example, the core values of the Libertarian Christian Institute, which can be found on its website.

the modern destructive utopia that started in 1492 with the ‘discovery’ and ‘conquest’ of the Americas in which the victims of the West’s civilizing violence became a necessary sacrifice for human progress¹¹ (1992). For Sölle, the Christofascist religion worships a God that loves war and death (1982, p. xv). Thus, as a *cult of the market* (Boldeman, 2007), Christofascism is built upon a doctrine of domination, founded upon what Franz Hinkelammert (2017) and Juan José Bautista (2012) refer to as the modern rationality of death.

Christofascism and its devotion to the almighty ‘invisible hand’ of the market is built upon a colonial doctrine of domination that demands extreme sacrificial violence. The rationality of the market is a rationality of death (Bautista, 2012). The necrophilous logic of market centrism and its expansion to all aspects of human life has to do with its ‘inevitable’ and ‘universal’ character. As a secular theology, neoliberalism presents itself as a self-evident truth; the natural and moral condition of humankind. As Susan George argues, the sacralization of the market “is still made to seem inevitable, like an act of God, the only possible economic and social order available to us” (1999). This is what Hinkelammert (2018) refers to as *market totalitarianism*, that is, total domination of the neoliberal religion of the market, which, as a profane religion of violence and aggressiveness, provides all the existential and spiritual principles. For Hinkelammert, thinkers of neoliberalism, especially Hayek, sacralize the market and confer on it the same attributes that Christian theology confers on God; thereby

¹¹ Dussel differentiates between the ‘concept of modernity’ (the emancipatory definition) from the ‘myth of modernity’ (the justification of an irrational praxis of violence). Modernity as a ‘myth’ has always justified civilizing, genocidal violence (in the 16th century to impose Christianity, in the 20th, democracy and the free market) (1992, p. 80).

establishing the idolatry of the market. For Hayek, the market is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. The market becomes a God, a God that has the right to kill. Therefore, any attempt to intervene in the market brings barbarism and represents a Christian heresy. Consequently, the enemies of the market are demonized and turned into enemies of God: the Antichrist (Vergara, 2002).

1.5. Methodology

To address my research questions, I draw from discourse analysis and ethnography. Thanks to a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Fellowship, I conducted 15 months of ethnographic research in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Brasília, the most critical metropolitan areas that supported Bolsonaro's election in 2018 and 2022. My on-site research allowed me to follow closely the presidential campaign of 2022 within Bolsonarismo and the events that led to the coup attempt of January 8th, 2023. Between 2022 and 2023, I conducted participant observation at public events such as conferences, political demonstrations, rallies, and protests, which enabled me to build my own visual documentation of Bolsonarismo. As part of my ethnographic fieldwork, I also conducted 37 interviews with activists, deputies, political advisors, and even secretaries. Some of these took the form of informal conversations, such as while waiting to be received by a deputy (which at times never happened) or when the interviewee declined to be recorded.

Conducting ethnographic research on the far right, particularly with figures in positions of power, presents unexpected challenges, some of which I reflect on in this

collaborative piece (Cheikhali et.al. 2024). Conducting interviews and engaging in conversation with political militants provided a valuable immersion into Bolsonarismo. However, I have chosen to analyze the content of these interviews in greater detail in a future project, where I can more fully explore the material and the experience of these interactions as an autoethnography. As such, the interview content will not be included in the chapters that follow. However, this project will draw from the participant observation component of my fifteen-month ethnographic research in Brazil.

I employ a critical discourse analysis that understands discourse, both written and spoken, as a form of social practice and as constitutive of and constituted by social and political “realities” (Barker & Galasiński, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). I analyze primary sources such as speeches, manifestos, official documents, think tank reports, news articles and investigations, and political messaging. I also conduct critical discourse analysis of blogs, websites, and social media platforms (X, Instagram, and Facebook) of individuals, groups, and organizations associated with the neofascist right in Brazil, Argentina, and the United States. As Argentine scholar Gabriel Giorgi (2018) argues, the rise of the reactionary right is inseparable from the transformation of the technologies, circuits, and publics of online writing. My proficiency in English, Spanish, and Portuguese has enabled me to analyze the transnational far right both discursively and in its articulations.

My study adopts a relational approach. For Gillian Hart this entails connecting distinctively different nodes in globally interconnected historical geographies, as sites in the *production* of global processes in specific spatio-historical conjunctures, rather

than as just recipients of them (2018, p. 373). In addition, these connected forces and “processes need to be situated in relation to changing forms of US imperialism since the 1980s that redefined the relations of the US to different regions of the non-Western world” (Hart, 2024, p. 296). From this perspective, the study of the transnational right in Latin America requires looking at the specific forms of US imperialism and the historical dialectic relations between the US and Latin American far-right actors (Cowan 2018, 2021; Castro-Rea & Solano 2024).

A connective approach also entails a dialectical approach in terms of social relations of structure, actors, institutions, spatio-temporal contexts, power, and discourse. For Matthew Sparke, a relational approach makes possible connections across space and territories while also allowing for comparison (2020, p. 96). In addition, a relational approach for analyzing the far right in the Global South can also contribute to avoiding “falling prey to the territorial traps of whole-country or world-region categorizations” (Sparke, 2020, p. 97). Finally, a relational/connective approach has allowed me to examine the national particularities of Christofascism while also highlighting its transnational dimensions by putting them in a global context. My focus is on *articulation*, which Jamie Pech defines as “the synthesis of multiple determinations; intersecting processes of conditioning and causality; prioritizing mutual and relational constitution over unilateral determination or the simple primacy of internal or external causes” (2024, p. 469).

1.6. Plan of Dissertation

My dissertation consists of nine chapters, including the introduction (Chapter 1), the conclusion (Chapter 8), and the bibliography chapter (Chapter 9). These chapters are divided into two sections. Section I, “Locating Christofascism Theoretically and Historically,” comprises four chapters that offer an extended and detailed account of the different historical and ideological components and dimensions of Christofascism. In Chapter 2, I analyze the colonial, capitalist, and international character of fascism. In Chapter 3, I analyze capitalism as a religious doctrine of domination. In Chapter 4, I delve into the crusade for Western supremacy at the center of Christofascism by tracing the origins of the *civilizational* construct ‘the West’ in the *myth* of Western modernity. Finally, in Chapter 5, I trace back the origins of Christofascism’s doctrine of domination in the Christian doctrine of discovery.

Section II, “Christofascism in the Americas,” is comprised of two long chapters where I analyze the manifestations of Christofascism in Brazil and Argentina. In Chapter 6, I examine how Bolsonarismo’s project of *Christian libertarianism* embraces a form of *faith & freedom* that instrumentalizes Christian theology to advance ultra-free-market economics. In Chapter 7, I analyze Milei’s radical libertarianism as a form of fundamentalist religion centered on the worship of the market. In this form of *messianic neoliberalism*, Milei becomes the messiah who will lead Argentina to the Promised Land, conceived as the utopia of the *total market*.

SECTION I

Locating *Christofascism* Theoretically and Historically

Chapter Two

2. The Colonial, Capitalist, and International Character of Fascism



FIGURE 2. Musk's chainsaw



FIGURE 3. Libertarian Party UK

The chainsaw has become a symbol of anarcho-capitalist fundamentalism. First popularized by the golden chainsaw of Milei—the most prominent exponent of the neofascist right emboldened by Trumpism—it has now attained an idolized status within his movement. In February 2025, Milei *gifted Elon Musk* a customized gleaming chainsaw during CPAC. The chainsaw was engraved with the phrase “¡Viva la Libertad Carajo!” which is Milei’s catchphrase that translates as “Long Live Freedom, Damn It!” Musk took the chainsaw onstage for his appearance at CPAC (Licon, 2025). The chainsaw symbolizes death and destruction, that is, the destruction of the State and ‘leftists,’ a symbolism that has been exported and appropriated by the international far right, as exemplified by the third image posted on X by the UK Libertarian Party (LibertarianPartyUK, 2025). The symbol of the party is the gryphon, a mythological creature with the body of a lion and the head and wings of an eagle, which draws from heraldic imagery to evoke nobility, strength, and freedom. It was mentioned in the post’s comments that the image of the gryphon holding a chainsaw might become the official logo of the UK Libertarian Party.

Whoever is not willing to talk about capitalism should also keep quiet about fascism.

Max Horkheimer, 1939 (2005)

Fascism can be combated as capitalism alone, alone, as the nakedest, most shameless, most oppressive, and most treacherous form of capitalism.

Bertholt Brecht, 1935 (2018)

Ningún gobierno lucha en contra del fascismo para destruirlo. Cuando la burguesía ve que el poder se les escapa de sus manos, alzan el fascismo para defender sus privilegios. Al Fascismo no se le discute, se le destruye.

No government rises against fascism to vanquish it. When the bourgeoisie feels power slipping through their fingers, they summon fascism to guard their privilege. Fascism is not to be reasoned with — it must be destroyed.

Buenaventura Durruti

It cannot be denied that Fascism and similar movements aiming at the establishment of dictatorships are full of the best intentions and that their intervention has, for the moment, *saved European civilization. The merit that Fascism has thereby won for itself will live on eternally in history.* But though its policy has brought salvation for the moment, it is not of the kind which could promise continued success. *Fascism was an emergency makeshift.* To view it as something more would be a fatal error.
Ludwing von Mises, 1985

In his efforts to back far-right movements around the world and interfere in national elections, Elon Musk interviewed Alice Weidel, candidate of the far-right party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) and openly endorsed her as the only alternative that “can save Germany.” In the interview, Weidel described her party as libertarian and conservative and denounced that Hitler was not right-wing or conservative. For Weide and Musk, since Hitler “nationalize industries” and “imposed taxes,” Hitler was, in fact, the opposite of a conservative: a “communist”¹² (Musk, 2025). Despite Hitler’s genocidal anti-communism and the fact that the idea and policy of “privatization” could be traced back to Nazi Germany (Bel, 2006a, 2006b), the equation of communism as a form of fascism is not a far-right’s revisionist delusion, but a mainstream view within liberal and Western Marxist historical and theoretical accounts of fascism that revolved around the category of *totalitarianism*.

In *Western Marxism* (2024), Italian historian Domenico Losurdo thoroughly examines Hannah Arendt’s *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) to dissect the

¹² Weidel said that Hitler was an “antisemitic socialist” because he “envied” the Jews and “enforced” his envy on the German people as a “socialist measure” just like Stalin. She applied the same logic to the current moment when she denounced the movement against the genocide in Gaza, or what she referred to as “ Hamas supporters,” as “antisemitic.” Therefore, she equated “leftists” as the “real fascists.” Weidel also emphatically reaffirmed her support for Israel and that “we need to protect its existence” as well as the “Jewish people” from “Muslim crime.” Weidel went as far as to say that the AfD is “the only protector” of the Jewish people in Germany. Since Musk sees himself as a warrior in defense of “free speech,” Weidel affirmed that the first act of Hitler was to end free speech in Germany by controlling the media, imposing censorship, and shutting down “pro-semitic media” (Musk, 2025).

contradiction of Arendt's category of *totalitarianism*. Arendt's book is divided in three sections: Antisemitism, Imperialism, and Totalitarianism. By locating the roots of the Jewish Holocaust in the history of genocide, colonialism, and imperialism, Arendt uses the category of totalitarianism to define the nexus between Nazism and colonialism, and imperialism and anti-semitism.¹³ In other words, the genesis and development of Nazism has to be traced back to the history of imperialism and colonialism of the British empire and other Western powers (Losurdo & Rockhill, 2024, p. 149) From this perspective, “‘totalitarianism’ was the power exercised by the so-called superior races over the peoples of color of the colonial world” (Losurdo & Rockhill, 2024, p. 145). Thus, “the first model of totalitarian power was exercised over the colonized peoples, who were dehumanized through racist ideology, decimated and enslaved” (Losurdo & Rockhill, 2024, p. 149).

In the third part, however, influenced by the political climate at the outbreak of the Cold War, the category of “racial imperialism” was substituted by the category “totalitarianism” allowing to subsume the Soviet Union with Nazi Germany. This ideological operation ultimately served “to lessen the role of colonialism and to embellish the liberal West” (Losurdo & Rockhill, 2024, p. 156).¹⁴ Here, “what was decisive was the removal of the linkage of the Third Reich to the colonialist and

¹³ Arendt also develops this argument in the essay “Imperialism: Road to Suicide” (1946).

¹⁴ As Losurdo explains, this vision also reaffirmed Orientalist prejudices that associated “Eastern totalitarianism” with the Soviet Union or Mao's China as well as racist assumptions of a “mythic Orient.” Thus, except for Hitler's Germany, the colonialist West—as genocidal as it was way before the rise of Hitler to power—was “absolved of the charge of totalitarianism.” This ideological operation, instead of condemning imperialism and colonial domination, also allows blaming the victims, the colonial peoples fighting for their liberation (2024, pp. 142–143, 157–160). An example of the mainstream Orientalist approach in Western Marxism is the work of Slavoj Žižek. As Losurdo points out, “we have seen Žižek paint Mao Zedong as a despot so ferocious and capriciously bloody as to make us think of the most grotesque orientalist stereotypes” (2024, p. 143).

imperialist tradition, of which it sought to be the more intransigent heir” (Losurdo & Rockhill, 2024, p. 149). Hitler’s Germany’s extreme racist and colonial ideology underpinned its imperialistic policies and the pursuit of colonial domination by a so-called pure white Aryan race. Despite representing the “highest stage of imperialism,” Nazi Germany was put at the same level as the Stalinist USSR, which was “the main protagonist of the struggle against Nazi imperialism and inspiration to the anticolonial movements of national liberation” (Losurdo & Rockhill, 2024, p. 150). As Losurdo argues, in the context of the Cold War, the artificial totalitarian equivalence of Soviet communism to Nazi Germany, has not only the goal of destroying the USSR, but also of casting a shadow over the worldwide antifascist Resistance and the anti-colonial revolutionary movement, “in which a leading role was played by political and social forces explicitly identified with Bolshevism” (2015, p. 4). The linking of the Soviet Union to the Third Reich also confers “a positive role on the entire anti-totalitarian West” including countries that were colonial empires such as Great Britain and France (2024, pp. 150–151).¹⁵ Thus, this ideological operation allowed the colonialist West to become “the champion in the struggle against the new totalitarianism” (Losurdo, 2004, p. 30) represented in the USSR and the world anticolonial revolution.

¹⁵ For Losurdo, another example of the anti-communist dominant ideology removed from the colonial world advanced by key texts of Western Marxism, is Antonio Hardt and Michael Negri’s *Empire*, for whom “it is a tragic irony that nationalist socialism in Europe came to resemble national socialism” (2000, p. 112). For Losurdo, “in retracing the history of the first half of the twentieth century, the two authors erase the struggle between colonialism and anticolonialism, or between the reaffirmation and the abolition of colonial slavery, ending up with the positions of the Western champions of the Cold War, determined to criminalize communism, absolving and reducing to trivia colonialism and imperialism” (Losurdo & Rockhill, 2024, p. 152). Losurdo also points out that Hardt and Negri also reprised a thesis advanced by Arendt, which is nothing else but the “most blatant erasure of history,” that is, “that colonialism and imperialism are foreign to the United States” (2024, pp. 162–163). On Hardt and Negri’s *Empire*, see Losurdo & Rockhill (2024, pp. 182–185).

At the lead of this battle against the godless USSR and totalitarianism was the United States. However, history shows how the horrors of capitalism and imperialism were extended to the US historical regime of white supremacy and neocolonial domination. In his *Blood in my Eye* (1972), George Jackson analyzed the structural similarities between European fascism and repression in the United States and referred to the US as “the Fourth Reich.”¹⁶ This has two manifestations. First, as Losurdo reminds us, the United States’ genocidal crusade against its Indigenous peoples and its regime built on white-supremacist terror, served as an inspiration to the program of colonial conquest and extermination of Nazi Germany,¹⁷ including its scientific endeavors to save the “white race.”¹⁸ Was not the Ku Klux Klan in the South, an

¹⁶ For a historical account of fascism in the United States after the First World War and into the Second, see George Seldes’ *Facts and Fascism* (2009). On the role of corporate America in propagating and profiting from fascism, see Pool and Pool’s *Who financed Hitler* (1979), Simpson’s *The splendid bond beast* (1995), and Black’s *The Nazi Nexus* (2009).

¹⁷ In “Towards a Critique of the Category of Totalitarianism” (2004), Losurdo offers a concrete historical analysis of how the Southern United States was the main model of a “racial state” for the Nazi’s racial and eugenic program. On the influence of the US model in the Nazi project, Losurdo cites Nazi theorist and ideologue, Alfred Rosenberg: “‘In the United States’—Rosenberg writes in 1937—‘the Negro question is on top of all crucial questions’; and once the absurd principle of equality has been eliminated concerning the blacks, there is no reason why they should not reach ‘the same resolution for the yellows and Jews, as well’” (2004, p. 47). The US was also the main point of reference for a German continental empire. As Losurdo points out, “Germany was called upon to follow this example, expanding to Eastern Europe as to a sort of Far West and treating the ‘indigenous people’ in the same way as the redskins were treated” (2004, p. 47). Even the categories and key Nazi terminology, such as the “Final Solution” was inspired “by white Americans in their relationship with Native-Americans and African-Americans” (Losurdo, 2004, p. 49). For the historical importance of the analogue of the “American West” and the “Nazi East,” see Kakel (2014).

¹⁸ The US was also a model for “racial hygiene.” For Danae McGregor, “the extent to which American eugenics was successfully implemented heavily influenced the German interest and experimentation in their emerging theory of eugenics” (2013, p. 71). On the US influence on racial eugenics even before the Nazi rise to power, Losurdo mentions prominent eugenicist Géza von Hoffmann and his work *Die Rassenhygiene in den Vereinigten Staaten von Nordamerika* (Racial Hygiene in the United States of North America). This relationship went both ways. “After Hitler’s rise to power, the most radical followers of the American eugenic movement looked up to the Third Reich as a model and even traveled there on an ideological and research pilgrimage” (Losurdo, 2004, p. 48). On the relations between German racial hygienists and American eugenicists, see Stefan Kühl’s *The Nazi Connection* (1994). Regarding these Nazi connections, Alfred Rosenberg also admired influential American theorist of white supremacy, Lothrop Stoddard who identified the “subhuman” as the “inferior,” that is, “persons beneath or below the standard of civilization.” These are the “hordes of savages and barbarians,” the “vast residue of unadaptable, depreciated humanity, essentially uncivilizable and incorrigibly hostile to civilization” (1922, pp. 23–24). In *The Revolt Against Civilization. The Menace of the Under Man* (1922), Stoddard identifies “the enemy to liquidate once and for all as the ‘Jewish-Bolshevist regime of Soviet Russia’” (Cited in Losurdo & Rockhill, 2024, pp. 153–154). Stoddard calls for the “extirpation” of the “enemies of civilization,” the “inferior elements” (1922, p. 21), a sentence

organization that seemed to anticipate the ‘Blackshirts’ of Italian fascism and the ‘Brownshirts’ of German Nazism?¹⁹ (Losurdo, 2014, p. 338). Second, as a continuation of the Western colonial tradition, the Monroe Doctrine and the Manifest Destiny colonialist doctrines gave the US legitimization to intervene in every corner of the world “in the name of the struggle against totalitarianism” (Losurdo, 2004, p. 29). In reality, this struggle serves as cover for ensuring world domination and the supremacy of US global capitalism.

In *Fascism and Dictatorship*, Nicos Poulantzas opens the first chapter quoting Max Horkheimer, who wrote in 1939, “whoever is not willing to talk about capitalism should also keep quiet about fascism.” For Poulantzas, “strictly speaking, this is incorrect: it is he who does not wish to discuss imperialism who should stay silent on the subject of fascism” (1979, p. 17). In other words, to understand the phenomenon of fascism, it is necessary to “dwell on the question of imperialism” (1979, p. 17). For Losurdo, Horkheimer’s great saying could be reformulated as “whoever is not willing to talk about colonialism should also be quiet about capitalism and fascism” (2024, p. 123). In his influential *Discourse on colonialism* (2000), Aimé Césaire also made this argument. As “supreme barbarism,” Nazism has been inflicted towards non-European

also aimed at the Jewish-Bolsheviks when he says “more and more we are coming to see that hatred of civilization is mainly a matter of heredity; that Bolsheviks are mostly born and not made” (1922, p. 224). This argument is also developed in *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* (1921). On the influence of Stoddard on the top Nazi racial hygienists and the highest ranks of the Nazi hierarchy, including Hitler, see Köhl (1994). On the United States’s influence on the racist practices of Nazi Germany, see Black (2012) and Whitman (2018).

¹⁹ As an army fighting for the restoration of white supremacy, Nancy MacLean points out that any account of the second Klan that fails to consider the common ground of the Klan with other European fascist movements is bound to yield a limited understanding of its place in history (1995, p. 179). For MacLean, “not only in its world view, but also in its dynamics as a social movement, the Klan had much in common with German National Socialism and Italian Fascism” (1995, p. 181).

peoples for centuries and it was legitimized and cultivated for those who were now Nazism's victims: the center of Western, Christian civilization. Thus, Hitler's sin was not that his application of colonialist procedures, but that he applied them into colonialist Europe itself. It is not the crime against man, but the crime against the *white* man (2000, p. 36). This implies that "the non-humans of the world can be subjected to the most brutal forms of dispossession, enslavement and colonial carnage" (Rockhill, 2020a).

In his theological critique of Christian fascism, Dorothee Sölle, highlights some elements of the concept of fascism present even in so-called formal democracies, such as militarism, racism, sexism, and "the neo-colonial exploitation of the peoples of the Third World" (1990, p. 139). The brutality and barbarism of fascism and Nazism in the interwar period and the new Christofascist manifestations, have to be understood in the context of "the long and deep history of colonial butchery, which has brought capitalism to every corner of the world" (Rockhill, 2020a). For George Jackson, fascism can be defined as "totalitarian capitalism" (1972). As Gabriel Rockhill points out, fascism is a product of the capitalist system "whose precise forms vary depending on the structural phase of capitalist development and the specific sociohistorical conjuncture" (2020a).

Expanding on Jackson's work, Rockhill argues that when defining fascism it is necessary to consider that the "violence of capitalist social relations takes many different forms—direct repression, economic exploitation, social degradation, hegemonic subjection, etc.—" (2020a). Rockhill rejects the bourgeois notion of

fascism and the ideology of fascist exceptionalism which serves to conceal fascism's deep roots in the capitalist system and its structural and systemic character. For Rockhill, the bourgeois notion of fascism is built upon the ideological construction of a false antagonism between fascism and liberalism. Liberalism is usually presented as the complete opposite of fascism so the fight against fascism is defined as the struggle for liberalism (2020b).²⁰ However, time and time again fascism has been deployed "to protect capitalism, while claiming to be saving democracy from communism" (Parenti, 1997, p. xiii).

As Rockhill points out, both fascism and liberalism are united in "their undying devotion to the capitalist world order" (2020b). Rockhill quotes Bertolt Brecht when he says that "the intellectuals cast a veil over the dictatorial character of bourgeois democracy not least by presenting democracy as the absolute opposite of fascism, not as just another natural phase of it where the bourgeois dictatorship is revealed in a more open form" (Cited in Rockhill, 2020b). This argument was also developed by Leon Trotsky in 1971, for whom "bourgeois democracy transforms itself legally, pacifically, into a fascist dictatorship. The secret is simple enough: bourgeois democracy and fascist dictatorship are the instruments of one and the same class, the exploiters"

²⁰ As Rockhill explains, the ideology of false antagonisms also supports one of the founding myths of 'the West' and the contemporary international order, that is, the belief that fascism was defeated in World War Two by liberal democracies, and the United States in particular. As Rockhill points out, far from being eradicated, fascism was redeployed using a "cover of liberal democracy" in order "to serve its primary historical mission: to destroy godless communism and its threat to the capitalist civilizing mission" (2020c). On how the US has tried to erase the leading role of the Soviet Union in defeating Nazi Germany in World War II, see the discussion between historian Peter Kuznick and journalists Max Blumenthal and Ben Norton (Moderate Rebels, 2020).

(Trotsky, 2024, p. 516).²¹ In sum, as Rockhill argues, as two modes of capitalist governance, “liberalism and fascism, contrary to what the dominant ideology maintains, are not opposites. They are partners in capitalist crime” (2020d). Therefore, they are both driven by profound anti-communism, which for Parenti, is “the most powerful political force in the world”²² (1969, p. 3).

For Rockhill, following the ideology of false antagonism, the concept of fascism has been itself a site of social and ideological struggle (2020a). Thus, instead of analyzing fascism as an anomaly (the logic of fascist exceptionalism) it is necessary to go beyond its epiphenomenal traits (the liberal approach) in order to account for its structural and systemic dimensions. Vicente Navarro reminded us that “fascism is not an extreme development, limited in time and place, that occurred a long time ago. Quite the contrary. Fascism is extended, generalized, and exists everywhere” (1996). Therefore, accounting for fascism requires a radical analysis of the multiple forms of governance integral to capitalist rule (under a liberal cover) and the variegated forms of population control. A radical critique also entails a materialist perspective—relational in a concrete, material sense, that is, objectively situated in class struggles—of the violence of capitalist social relations which takes many different forms—direct

²¹ The idea of fascism as the dictatorship of finance capital was pointed out by the Communist International. As stated by the Executive Committee in 1933, “fascism is the open, terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinist and most imperialist elements of finance capital” (Cited in Griffin, 1995, p. 262).

²² In *The Anti-Communist Impulse*, Parenti analyzes in depth the ideology of anti-communism. According to Parenti, “endowed with an imposing ideology, and a set of vivid images and sacred dogmas, it commands the psychic and material resources of the most potent industrial-military arsenal in the history of mankind. Its forces are deployed on every continent, its influence is felt in every major region, and it is capable of acts which—when ascribed to the communists—are considered violent and venal. *Our fear that communism might someday take over most of the world blinds us to the fact that anti-communism already has*” (1969, pp. 3–4. Emphasis added).

repression, economic exploitation, social degradation, hegemonic subjection, etc. (Rockhill, 2020a).

As a manifestation of capitalism, fascism has an intrinsic international dimension, as was recognized by the Communist International in 1922, which acknowledged how the fascist forces were organized on an international scale (Cited in Griffin, 1995, p. 260). As Jackson put it, “at its core, fascism is capitalistic and capitalism is international. Beneath its nationalist ideological trappings, fascism is always ultimately an international movement” (1972, p. 157). For Poulantzas, imperialism constitutes the stage of the capitalist system on the international level, a phenomenon that has economic, political, and ideological implications (1979, p. 22). When analyzing the inter-war economic and political crisis and its role in the appearance of fascism, Poulantzas analyzes the imperialist stage as the transition, in the imperialist countries, toward the dominance of monopoly capitalism (1979, p. 53).

Regarding the international quality of the different forms of capitalist, fascist, and repressive governance, the United States has played a key role. As Rockhill explains, under the banner of democracy and freedom, the American empire was instrumental in the internationalization of fascism.²³ According to Rockhill, the “international expansion of fascist modes of governance has led to a proliferation of concentration camps, terrorist and torture campaigns, dirty wars, dictatorial regimes, vigilante groups

²³ To defeat the Soviets, the United States needed the help of former Nazis, recruiting an estimated four thousand Nazi agents to work for the CIA. Approximately ten thousand Nazis were able to immigrate to the United States in the post-war period. High functionaries of the Nazi state were also rehabilitated in Germany and Italy to support the CIA’s anti-communist crusade (Rockhill, 2020c). Therefore, in reality, “the U.S. did not defeat fascism in WWII, it discretely internationalized it” by “integrating fascists into the global war against communism” (2020c). For a historical account of the thousands of Nazis who came to the United States after World War II, see Eric Lichtblau’s *The Nazis Next Door* (2014) and Annie Jacobsen’s *Operation Paperclip* (2014).

and organized crime networks around the world” in order to “destroy those who had actually fought and won the war against fascism: the communists (Rockhill, 2020c). For Michael Parenti, “if America has an ideology, or a national purpose, it is anti-communism” (1969, p. 4). As Parenti put it, “for most of the century U.S. foreign policy has been devoted to the suppression of revolutionary governments and radical movements” (1997, p. 23) sanctioning and normalizing mass violence all around the globe.²⁴

Michael Parenti analyzes fascism as a *false revolution*. For Parenti, “fascism is nothing more than a final solution of class struggle, the totalistic submergence and exploitation of democratic forces for the benefit and profit of higher financial circles.” As a false revolution, “fascism cultivates the appearance of popular politics and a revolutionary aura without offering a genuine revolutionary class content” (1997, p. 17). In his comprehensive account of fascism’s historical trajectory, Robert O. Paxton also emphasizes this idea. Despite the revolutionary rhetoric for national unity and revival, early fascist regimes never attacked wealth and capitalism. For Paxton, aligned with their mission of national aggrandizement and purification, fascist revolutionaries

²⁴ In the name of “freedom” and “democracy,” the United States has deployed a counterrevolutionary interventionist policy that has sponsored mass murders and state terrorism constituting “the single greatest purveyor of violence in the world” (Parenti, 1997, p. 34). As William Blum pointed out, “every social experiment of any significance of the twentieth century—without exception—has either been crushed, overthrown, or invaded, or corrupted, perverted, subverted or destabilized, or otherwise had life made impossible for it, by the United States” (2022, p. 20). According to a report by the Congressional Research Service, the United States launched at least 255 military interventions between 1991 and 2023. The report documented another 218 US military interventions from 1798 to 1990, for a total of 473 US military interventions since 1798 (CRS, 2023). Extending from China and Greece in the 1940s to Afghanistan and Iraq in the 1990s, a few million people have died, and many more millions have been condemned to lives of misery and torture as a result of US interventions (Blum, 2022, p. 16). According to some estimates, only in the post-9/11 era, the United States was responsible for up to six million direct and indirect deaths (Ahmed, 2021). This is what Blum refers to as the *American holocaust* (2022). For studies of US massive violence and global network of repression, see the masterful work of William Blum’s *Killing Hope* (2022) and *America’s Deadliest Export: Democracy* (2023). See also Stone and Kuznick’s *The Untold History of the United States* (2019).

wanted a “revolution of the soul,” by letting economic and social hierarchies and the distribution of property largely intact (2004, pp. 141–142). In 1936, Walter Benjamin also highlighted how the introduction of aesthetics in political life was a fascist strategy of giving the masses an expression while preserving the property structure (2006). Paxton argues that the revolutionary character of early fascist movements could be attributed to their anticapitalistic rhetoric. However, “while they denounced speculative international finance (along with all other forms of internationalism, cosmopolitanism, or globalization—capitalist as well as socialist), they respected the property of national producers, who were to form the social base of the reinvigorated nation”²⁵ (2004, p. 10).

In *Fascism and Dictatorship* (1979), Nicos Poulantzas elucidates some essential features of fascism as a specific political phenomenon. Poulantzas makes two clarifications. First, fascism is a form of State and of regime at the extreme ‘limit’ of the capitalist State. Second, fascism corresponds to a specific conjecture of the class struggle (1979, p. 57). For Poulantzas, one of the defining features of fascism is the role of the lower middle class or petty bourgeoisie which, at the economic level, corresponds to *small-scale production* and *small-scale ownership*, that is, a strata that does need to sell their labor to capital.²⁶ According to Poulantzas, “the rise of fascism corresponds to an economic crisis for the entire petty bourgeoisie” (1979, p. 247).

²⁵ For Paxton, fascism could still be called “revolutionary” if we assign the word a different meaning. For example, “fascism redrew the frontiers between private and public, sharply diminishing what had once been untouchably private” (2004, p. 11).

²⁶ To understand the relationship between the fascist parties and the petty bourgeoisie, Poulantzas distinguishes between the steps in the rise and rule of fascism. During the first step of the rise of fascism, the fascist party was the real representative of the petty bourgeoisie even in an ideological sense. Once fascist rule is established, the fascist party represents overwhelmingly the real interests of the bourgeoisie (1979, pp. 249–250).

Poulantzas argues that only Antonio Gramsci and Leon Trotsky had a really correct understanding of the relationship of fascism to the petty bourgeoisie (1979, p. 245). Gramsci, “while emphasizing that fascism was ‘the servant of capital and of the landowners,’ was *the first* to point out (in 1921) that fascism was at the same time ‘the ultimate political incarnation of the petty bourgeoisie’” (Cited by Poulantzas, 1979, p. 245n7).²⁷ Trotsky also wrote that “fascism is a specific means of mobilising and organising the petty bourgeoisie in the social interests of finance capital” (1971, p. 632).

The rise of fascism also corresponds to an ideological crisis of the petty bourgeoisie. Although fascist ideology ultimately serves the interests of big capital (imperialist ideology), “it should be remembered that fascism exploits ideological elements peculiar to the petty bourgeoisie in revolt” (Poulantzas, 1979, p. 254). Some elements of fascist ideology explained by Poulantzas are *corporatism*, *obscurantism*, ‘*anti-intellectualism*,’ and *cult of the leader* and of hierarchical authority where “the leader’s command is the only rule of law” (1979, p. 254). In addition, the resurgence of *moral ideology*, *nationalism*, and *militarism*, accompanied by the ‘abstract’ cult of violence, suits imperialist big capital. First, moral ideology disguises “the massive State intervention in favour of big capital at the monopoly capitalist stage” (1979, p. 254). Second, the exaggerated cult of the mystical entity of the ‘nation’ (ties to ‘the soil’ and of ‘blood’) functions as a rejection of class struggle (1979, p. 255). Here it is important

²⁷ See Gramsci’s essays on fascism in Beetham’s *Marxists in the Face of Fascism* (2019).

to highlight the role given to the *family* and *education* by monopoly capitalism.²⁸ Finally, “the petty bourgeoisie combines nationalism with the authoritarian, hierarchical, leader-cult aspect, in accordance with the interests of expansionist big capital” (1979, p. 255).

Although the elements elucidated by Poulantzas were focused on the rise of fascism in the interwar period, these are still relevant today. Yet, it is important to contextualize the phenomenon of fascism in the current conjuncture. If fascism can be considered the major political innovation of the twentieth century (Paxton, 2004, p. 3), then current manifestations of fascism correspond to *twenty-first-century fascism*, an idea advanced by scholars William I. Robinson and Mario Barrera to account for the surge of the Right as an insurgent force in many countries. According to Robinson and Barrera, the “proto-fascist Right seeks to fuse reactionary political power with transnational capital and to organise a mass base among historically privileged sectors of the global working class” (2012, p. 8) which plays the role of the petty bourgeoisie of the twenty-century fascism. As Robinson explains, this mass base is composed of “white workers in the Global North and urban middle layers in the Global South, that are experiencing heightened insecurity and the specter of downward mobility and socioeconomic destabilization” (2019b, p. 168). In sum, “the core of 21st century fascism is the

²⁸ For Poulantzas, the role assigned to the *family* and *education* suits big capital. “The role of the family is related to the representations and aspirations of a petty bourgeoisie characterized by isolation and family organization of its economic in its economic life, and by its search for a social unite immune to class struggle” (1979, p. 255). The particular role given to *education* by big capital also “allows it to intervene in the education and training of the labour force necessary to monopoly capitalism” (1979, p. 255).

triangulation of transnational capital with reactionary and repressive political power in the state and neo-fascist forces in civil society (Robinson, 2019a, p. 290).

Considering that fascism is a *particular response to capitalist crisis*, 21st-century fascism corresponds to the proto-fascist response to the crisis. While making clear that 21st-century fascism is not a repetition of its predecessor,²⁹ Robinson and Barrera explain that as a response to crisis, 21st-century fascism shares some facets of classical fascism. For example, “fascism in both its twentieth- and twenty-first century variants is not just a political response to capitalist crisis, but also in and of itself a project in the function of accumulation and profit-making that brings the state together with capital” (2012, p. 21). Thus, Robinson and Barrera underscore a broader feature of both variants of fascism: “reactionary political forces in the state open up accumulation opportunities for capital in crisis, and capital, in turn, develops an interest in a system of violence and coercive control” (2012, p. 21). This is what Robinson refers to as the *global police state* that is manifested as *militarized accumulation* or *accumulation by repression*³⁰ (2020). For Robinson,

21st-century fascism and a global police state involve a triangulation of far-right, authoritarian, and neo-fascist forces in civil society, reactionary political power in the state, and transnational corporate capital, especially speculative finance capital, the military–industrial–security complex, and the extractive industries, all three of which are in turn dependent on and interwoven with high-tech or digital capital. (2019b, p. 173)

²⁹ For Robinson and Barrera, “the ability of dominant groups to control and manipulate space and to exercise an unprecedented control over the mass media, the means of communication and the production of symbols, images and messages means...that repression can be more selective...and also organised juridically so that mass ‘legal’ incarceration takes the place of concentration camps” (2012, p. 22).

³⁰ For Robinson, these are twin dimensions of the global police state: “*militarized accumulation*, or accumulating capital and seizing resources through war and conquest, and *accumulation by repression*, or accumulating capital by mass repression of the working and popular classes” (2024b). For a further discussion, see Robinson’s *The Global Police State* (2020).

Twenty-first century fascism also has to be understood in the context of a new form of imperialism. Samir Amin rejects the notion of globalization and expands on the idea of *collective imperialism* to account for the transnationalization of the leading corporations.³¹ As Samin argues, “the deployment of true historical capitalism has always been globalised and has always been polarised and to this end, imperialist” (2011). For Robinson, *collective imperialism* in reality corresponds to the re-colonization of the world by transnational capital³² (2019a). The United States, as the super-imperialist power of transnational capital and the global police state,³³ has unleashed a “permanent global warfare,” that is, a global war economy that wages war and interventions everywhere which appears to be “the twenty-first century fascist variant of what were the external military conquests and formal territorial expansionism of twentieth-century fascism” (Robinson & Barrera, 2012, p. 22).

For Robinson and Barrera, 21st-century fascism has to be understood as a result of the neoliberal ‘counter-revolution’ in which the unprecedented growth of social inequality and the penetration of the logic of accumulation and commodification in every aspect of social life have created hundreds of millions of people expropriated from the means of survival. From the perspective of dominant groups, this poses the challenge of “how to contain the mass of supernumeraries and the marginalised and the

³¹ For Samir, this process “implies a rallying towards a common political project: working together to manage the downtrodden world (global South), and to this end, placing it safely under the military control of the US armed forces and their subaltern allies” (2011).

³² According to Robinson, one limitation of Samin’s perspective is its nation-state/interstate framework. See Robinson (2019a).

³³ For Robinson, “the events of September 11, 2001 in the United States were a turning point in the construction of a global police state” (2019b, p. 161).

resistance of downwardly mobile majorities”³⁴ (2012, p. 8). As Robinson argues, “the need for dominant groups around the world to secure widespread, organised mass social control of the world’s surplus population and rebellious forces from below gives a powerful impulse to projects of 21st century fascism.” This need is accompanied by a shift from social welfare to repressive social control or police states to advance a neo-fascist project,³⁵ which for Robinson and Barrera (2012, p. 10) is characterized by

- The fusion of transnational capital with reactionary political power.
- Militarization and extreme masculinization.
- Economic destabilization and concomitant social anxiety among privileged strata of the working and middle classes.
- A mass social base among economically insecure and socially disaffected sectors.
- A scapegoat that serves to displace and redirect social tensions and contradictions, and serves to justify a racist mobilization.
- A fanatical millennial ideology involving race/culture supremacy embracing an idealized and mythical past.
- Charismatic leadership.

Some of these elements are common to fascist ideology. Poulantzas highlighted some of these elements as manifestations of the crucial link between capitalist crisis and fascist movements. Parenti also specified some features of fascism and fascist ideology. The first is the rational use of irrational ideology, where the rational manipulation of irrational symbols serves a class-control function. A focus on the

³⁴ Robinson argues that “one new structural dimension of 21st century global capitalism is the dramatic expansion of the global superfluous population—that portion marginalised and locked out of productive participation in the capitalist economy and constituting some 1/3rd of humanity” (2011).

³⁵ For Robinson, the rise of the global police state and the new technologies of death and destruction—inextricably linked to the new opportunities for accumulation through violence—have a contingent end game: extermination. As Robinson argues, “Gaza, the Congo, and other hellscape are real-time alarm bells that genocide may become a powerful tool in the decades to come for resolving capital’s intractable contradiction between surplus capital and surplus humanity” (2024b). The criminalization of the poor and the dispossessed have tendencies towards genocide. On the political economy of twenty-first century genocide, see Robinson (2024a).

epiphenomenal and irrational features of fascism can overlook “the rational politico-economic functions that fascism performs” (Parenti, 1997, p. 11). A second feature of fascism is its rejection of “egalitarianism, democracy, collectivism, and pacificism as doctrines of weakness and decadence” (1997, p. 12). This is also manifested as a cruel elitism that implies a contempt for the weak (Eco, 1995). A third feature of fascism is its “atavistic appeals to the mythical roots of the people” (Parenti, 1997, p. 12). Additionally, mysticism plays a key role in suppressing class politics, reinforcing fascism’s ideological control. Moreover, fascism’s national chauvinism, racism, sexism, and patriarchal values also serve as a form of class control in which conservative class ideology sees all forms of social equality as a threat to hierarchical control and privilege (1997, pp. 14–16). Fascist doctrine also stresses monistic values: one people, one rule, one leader. This is “a totalistic, monistic experience as a people, all of us, rich and poor, working together for some greater glory. Conveniently overlooked is how the ‘glorious sacrifices’ are borne by the poor for the benefit of the rich” (Parenti, 1997, p. 13).

Regarding fascism’s emotional appeal and irrational character, Paxton argues that the rightness of fascism did not depend on the truth of any of the propositions advanced in its name (2004, p. 16). This is what Georg Lukács referred to as the *destruction of reason*.³⁶ In his famous essay on eternal fascism, Umberto Eco also argued that one way to define fascism is as *irrationalism* because of its rejection of distrust for complex

³⁶ In his masterful work, Lukács studies the philosophical driving forces behind Germany’s path to Hitler. For Lukács, the development of irrationalism came about as reactionary answers to the exacerbation of class struggle where the “distortion of the facts, calumny and demagoguery increasingly superseded honest scientific polemics” (1980, p. 7).

and critical reasoning and the intellectual world (1995). Today, neofascist ideology also rests on irrationality based on “a promise to deliver security and restore stability that is emotive, not rational” (Robinson, 2019b, p. 171). As Robinson and Barrera argue, “twenty-first century fascism is a project that does not, and need not, distinguish between the truth and the lie” (2012, p. 22). Building on Walter Benjamin’s idea of the introduction of *aesthetics* into political life by fascism,³⁷ Paxton argues that “fascism’s deliberate replacement of reasoned debate with immediate sensual experience transformed politics” (2004, p. 17). Just as classical fascism appealed to emotions and psychological factors that led to the surrendering of freedom,³⁸ Robinson and Barrera highlight that 21st-century fascism also involves a major social, psychological, and cultural component. In 1936, Benjamin warned that the ultimate fascist aesthetic experience was war. Today, neofascist culture also normalizes and glamorizes warfare and social violence, and generates a fascination with domination that is portrayed even as heroic (Robinson, 2017). Accompanied by the “cult of violence,” Umberto Eco argues that in Ur-fascist ideology, “heroism is the norm,” and “this cult of heroism is strictly linked with the cult of death” (1995). Fascism’s rationality of death is very much associated with capitalism as a doctrine of domination that demands religious sacrifice and worship, as I will analyze in the next section.

³⁷ See “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility” (1936) in Benjamin’s selected writing edited by Eiland and Jennings (2006a).

³⁸ In *Escape from Freedom*, Erich Fromm analyzes how “the modern man still is anxious and tempted to surrender his freedom to dictators of all kinds, or to lose it by transforming himself into a small cog in the machine, well fed, and well clothed, yet not a free man but an automaton” (1994, pp. xiii–xiv).

Chapter Three

3. Capitalism as a Religious Doctrine of Domination



FIGURE 4. The Sacrilegious Candidate

William Jennings Bryan was the Democratic candidate who lost the general election to William McKinley in 1896. Bryan delivered a famous speech at the 1896 Democratic convention known as the “Cross of Gold” speech, in which he passionately argued for the free coinage of silver to address the economic hardship caused by the gold standard. At the time, advocates of bimetallism considered that silver would expand the money supply, benefiting farmers, laborers, debtors, and the overall economy. He referred to the economic and political elites who defended a rigid gold standard as “the idle holders of idle capital,” and closed his speech with the following passage: “*We shall answer their demands for a gold standard by saying to them, you shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns. You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold*” (Bryan, 1986). Bryan was referring to the fetishistic character of capital and an oppressive monetary system, which was willing to sacrifice the welfare of the nation and crucify the poor. For daring to defend the struggling masses, Bryan was depicted as “the sacrilegious candidate.” A political cartoon published in the *Judge* magazine in 1896, portrays Bryan wearing a cape, standing on an open bible, facing front with a large cross cradled in his left arm and holding the crown of thorns overhead. In the background, on the left is a vandalized church, on the right is a man wearing a liberty cap and ragged cape, and waving a banner labeled “Anarchy.” The cartoon includes the statement: “No man who drags into the dust the most sacred symbols of the Christian world is fit to be president of the United States” (Hamilton, 1896).

Capitalism is entirely without precedent, in that it is a religion which offers not the reform of existence but its entire destruction.

Walter Benjamin, 1920s (2004)

What has been negated or secularized in the profane theology of “In God we trust” (which should be written instead as “In gold we trust”) is a god or fetish immersed in everyday life and not the God of the Christian Sunday, the Jewish Sabbath, or the Muslim Friday prayers. The true divinity here is gold,

for capital is an everyday god who constitutes the ontological-economic foundation of modern existence.

Enrique Dussel, 2024

Ese Dios que regatea, que vende la salvación, que todo lo hace en cambio de dinero, que manda las gentes al infierno si no le pagan, y si le pagan las manda al cielo, ese Dios es una especie de prestamista, de usurero, de tendero. ¡No, amigo mío, hay otro Dios!

*That God who bargains, who peddles salvation, who weighs every soul against a coin, who condemns the poor to hell and grants heaven to those who pay, that God is no more than a moneylender, a usurer, a merchant of faith.
No, my friend, there is another God!*

José Martí

Can capitalism be analyzed as a (*secularized*) authoritarian religion?³⁹ In the early 1920s, Walter Benjamin wrote “Capitalism as Religion” (2004), which for Giorgio Agamben is “one of Benjamin’s most penetrating posthumous fragments” (2007, p. 80). In this short text, Benjamin examines the similitude and structural kinship between capitalism and Christianity, “attributing to capitalism an essentially religious structure” (Herlinghaus, 2009, p. 24). The idea that capitalism is structurally religious is Benjamin’s “diagnostic formula by which the essence of capitalism as well as of Christianity is defined” (Hamacher, 2002, p. 89). According to Benjamin, “capitalism is not solely a secularization of the Protestant faith, as it is for Max Weber, but is itself a religious phenomenon, which develops parasitically from Christianity” (Agamben,

³⁹ Under the religion of capital, there is also no separation between sacred and the profane. Thus, capitalism as a cult, without truce nor mercy in its totalizing impetus, is founded on the unprofanable. “The capitalist religion, in its extreme phase aims at creating something absolutely unprofanable” (Agamben, 2007, p. 82). In other words, as Foffani and Ennis explain, the capitalist cult constitutes itself as a de-miraculous (*desmiraculizado*) cosmos, destroying the world to the extent that it completely alienates it, constituting its own a space without an outside (2016, p. 183). Giorgio Agamben distinguishes between profanation and secularization. For Agamben, “secularization is a form of repression. It leaves intact the forces it deals with by simply moving them from one place to another. Thus the political secularization of theological concepts (the transcendence of God as a paradigm of sovereign power) does nothing but displace the heavenly monarchy onto an earthly monarchy, leaving its power intact” (2007, p. 77). William Rasch defines secularization as follows: “God creates the universe, but not Himself. Law creates laws, but not legality *per se*. The sovereignty of any autonomous, operationally closed, self-reproducing system is the same as, and as paradoxical as, God’s own sovereignty. Once this is realized, God disappears, having done His job” (2016, p. 80). When analyzing Benjamin’s “Capitalism as Religion” fragment, Rasch resorts to the “dialectic of secularization” to analyze the incomplete secularization process of modernity (2016, p. 80).

2007, p. 80). In Benjamin's words, "Capitalism has developed as a parasite of Christianity in the West...until it reached the point where Christianity's history is essentially that of its parasite—that is to say, capitalism" (2004, p. 289).

For Benjamin, three aspects define the religious structure of capitalism. First, capitalism is a purely cultic religion, perhaps the most extreme and absolute that ever existed.⁴⁰ Second, the cult is permanent "in which work coincides with the celebration of the cult" (Agamben, 2007, p. 80). Third, as a religion of despair, the cult makes guilt all-pervasive. In other words, the capitalist cult is a cult of guilt because it "is not directed toward redemption from or atonement for guilt, but toward guilt itself" (Agamben, 2007, p. 80). For Hamacher, the third trait shows decisively "the essentially religious structure of this economic form and life form" (2002, p. 90). In other words,

capitalism is not only a cult and a permanent cult of immediacy; it is both of these, both cult and permanent, only because it functions by accruing guilt...With this trait of the religion of capital, that it produces, accumulates, and universalizes guilt, the fusion now emerges with greater clarity, of its economic, juridical—and to this extent moral—and psychological aspects. (Hamacher, 2002, p. 90)

As a cult that creates guilt, guilt becomes "capitalism—and perhaps modernity—very own destructive matrix" (Herlinghaus, 2009, p. 25). For Burkhardt Lindner, the historical perspective of the Benjamin's sketch is based on the premise that, in the system of capitalist religion, 'mythical guilt' cannot be separated from 'economic

⁴⁰ According to Werner Hamacher's analysis, "the obsessive attribution of an economic index to every detail of conduct-according to the scales of capital and salvation-turns this structure into a cult of meaning that is 'extreme' in terms of both its universality and intensity. It is a cult of the 'immediate' significance of everyday activities, a cult in which every individual is not only the means but is also, as means, already an end, a purpose, a value, and a meaning. Benjamin describes this immediate relation to the *God Capital* as 'the concretion' of the cult" (2002, p. 87. Emphasis added).

debt’⁴¹ (2003, p. 207. Cited by Benjamin, Foffani & Enis, 2016, p. 181). As Hermann Herlinghaus explains, capitalist society fuses guilt “with indebtedness to an extent that it becomes a central ingredient of life’s and nature’s organization by the market” (2009, p. 25). In other words, “economic debt becomes immanent in life and society as a natural, sensuous-suprasensible, and even desired state of guilt” (Herlinghaus, 2009, p. 27).

Since the 1960s, Latin American liberation theologians have developed a radical critique of capitalism as an idolatrous religion that sacrifices the poor. From a Marxist perspective,⁴² theology of liberation understands capitalism as the dominant economic, social, cultural, and political force that defines the nature of oppression in Latin America.⁴³ For Enrique Dussel, the capitalist system “subjugates the poor one, who can be a nation, a social class, a race, women, children, youth. The poor one is not respected

⁴¹ Benjamin refers to the “demonic ambiguity” of the German word *Schuld*. According to Herlinghaus, “the word means both ‘guilt’ in its traditional sense of Latin *culpa*, and ‘debt’ as financial or economic liability” (2009, p. 26). For William Rasch, if one “saw the spirit of capitalism as a form of secularized Calvinism, one could see debt (*Schuld*) as secularized sin, a version of guilt (*Schuld*), that is carried to all corners of the globe and to all corners of the soul by money” (2016, p. 85). As Hamacher explains, under the capital and guilt religion (or God as guilt), “it is the ambiguity, namely, by which financial debts (*Schulden*) always serve as an index of legal, moral, and affective guilt (*Schuld*)—and by which every guilt manifests itself in debts, and every debt in guilt” (2002, p. 90). As a form of economic guilt, debt means “the lack of credit, and thus the lack of credibility, the material sign of good faith, which is an equally universal burden, for without debt there could be no growth, no capitalist expansion” (Rash, 2016, p. 85).

⁴² For Dussel, the Latin American sociological and economic Marxism of dependency will occasion the epistemological breach on theology of liberation (1993b, p. 88). Dussel explains that the theology of liberation is the first theological movement to adopt Marxism in the world history of Christian theology. Marxism is adopted by the theology of liberation not only because it allows to *interpret* reality, but also because it justifies its *transformation*, even its revolutionary transformation (Dussel, 1993b, p. 91, 92). Regarding the adoption of Marxism by liberation theology, see Dussel (1988, 1993b); Dussel, Hodgson & Pedrozo (1992); Assmann (1972, 1985); Richard (1972, 1987); Míguez-Bonino (1975b, 1976, 1981); Segundo (1976, 1979); Boff, C. (1987); Hinkelammert (1986); Maduro (1982); Cardenal (1976); and Pérez-Esclarín (1973, 1978). For further analysis on Marxism and liberation theology, see Conway (1973); Moreno (1977); Berryman (1987); Kee (1990); Löwy (1993, 1996); Ferreter (2003); Turner (2007); and McLaren & Jandrić (2018).

⁴³ Argentine Ivan Petrella helpfully narrates liberation theology’s approach to analyzing capitalism in three stages: in the first stage, liberation theology used dependency theory as its theoretical framework. In the second stage, liberation theology used world-systems analysis, as formulated by Immanuel Wallerstein, to respond to the oppressions caused by capitalism. In the third and current stage, it suffers from an under-theorization of capitalism (2016, p. 70) (regarding the last stage, see Sung, 1994).

as the other, but is considered a thing within the system, as something to be used... The using of another as a thing is the *only* sin; there is no other” (1976, p. 288. See also Dussel, 1973). In his 1971 *Theology of Liberation*, Peruvian theologian and Dominican priest Gustavo Gutiérrez argues that “sin is evident in oppressive structures, in the exploitation of humans by humans, in the domination and slavery of peoples, races and social classes. Sin appears, therefore, as the fundamental alienation, the root of a situation of injustice and exploitation” (1973, p. 103). According to Valpy Fitzgerald, the “economics of liberation theology” is very different from other traditions in the Christian approach to economics. As the author argues, “the inclusion of the prophetic critique of the market economy within ethical discourse through concepts such as the ‘right to life’ and ‘structural sin’ is clearly an important step forwards in a radical theology—not least because it permits a popular hermeneutic derived from the everyday experience of the poor” (2007, p. 261). In a world of “inhuman misery” and “anti-evangelical poverty,” the “preferential option for the poor” is a central axis of liberation theory because poverty means *death* and *oppression*⁴⁴ (Gutiérrez, 1993; p. 236; Boff & Boff, 1987, p. 25-26). Therefore, dependency theory⁴⁵ and the analysis of capitalism were foundational for liberation theology to the point that Argentine theologian José Míguez-Bonino remarked that “it was the social

⁴⁴ Gutiérrez interprets the biblical meaning of poverty as a “scandalous condition.” Across scripture, the existential situation of people living in material poverty is presented in tandem with a denunciation of poverty as antithetical to the Reign of God and an identification of its causes (1973a, p. 165). See also Gutiérrez (1983, 1984, 1986, 1987, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1997, 2003, 2009); Assmann (1975, 1983); Sobrino (1979, 1984a, 1984b, 2008); Tamez (1986); Boff & Pixley (1986, 1989); Moreno (1986); Ellacuría (1993); Boff, L. (1997, 1988); and Gutiérrez & Müller (2015).

⁴⁵ Liberation theology makes use of dependency theory to conclude that only a radical rupture from capitalism will end the cause of dependence (Petrella, 2016, p. 77). For an analysis of the influence of dependency theory on liberation theology, see Sung (1994); Conway, J. (1973); Garret (1988); Robertson R. (1988); Roth (1988); Goizueta (1988); McGovern (1987, 1990); and Campos & Souza (2015).

scientists' reflection on 'dependence and liberation' which awakened us to a basic *biblical* motif"⁴⁶ (1981, p. 175).

Liberation theology's critique of the structures of oppression is also a response to a Eurocentric/colonial theology—which has been largely a European/white theology—that is abstract, ahistorical, and functional to oppressive structures and ideologies.⁴⁷ Uruguayan theologian Juan Luis Segundo pointed out that traditional Western theology is a perfect example of a theology adapted to the particular ideological interests of dominant social classes (Ferm, 1986b, p. 25). The departure of Western *theology of violence*⁴⁸ for its role in legitimizing and sacralizing the structures of domination also takes the form of a radical critique of idolatry.⁴⁹ For Chilean theologian Pablo Richard, domination is fundamentally idolatrous (1998a). In his *Atheism and Liberation* (1978), Spanish/Venezuelan Antonio Pérez-Esclarín argues that the idolatrous God in which the oppressors believe “is the God of the white conqueror, the God who expects submission from those who are enslaved...the God of the colonizers who denies humanity and equality to the colonized” (1978, p. 57-58). This is the God that Dussel

⁴⁶ For Leonardo Boff, the rejection of capitalism is oriented to liberation in the framework of a different society (1981, p. 125. See also 1991). For further statements on the capitalist system by Latin American liberation theologians, see Sobrino (1984a); Ellacuría (1993); Boff, L. (1995, 1996, 1997); Richard (1997, 1998b, 1999); and Hinkelammert (1994, 1996, 1998 1999, 2017).

⁴⁷ On white theology, see Freire's “In Praise of a *Black Theology of Liberation* by James Cone” (1985b), which then became the foreword of the second edition of Cone's *Black Theology of Liberation* (1986). See also James Cone's “Theology's great sin: silence in the face of White supremacy” (2012b); and Perkinson's *White theology: Outing supremacy in modernity* (2004). On Paulo Freire and black theology and liberation theology, see Kirylo (2011b).

⁴⁸ For Paulo Freire the *theology of violence* is built on the violent act in which some men or classes prevent others from *being*. It is an act that goes beyond hate, it is a lack of love. This theology is based on a bourgeois mentality and a necrophiliac world view (1974, 1985b). Regarding the church, Freire argues that “it is a missionary church, in the worse sense of the world—a necrophiliac winner of souls; hence, its taste for masochistic emphasis on sin, hellfire, and eternal damnation (1985a, p. 131).

⁴⁹ For discussions on capitalism as idolatrous and as religion, see also Antonio Pérez-Esclarín's *Atheism and Liberation* (1978); Hinkelammert's “The Economic Roots of Idolatry” (1983); Richard's “Biblical Theology of Confrontation with Idols” (1983a); and Assmann's *La idolatría del mercado* (1997). See also Richard (1983b); Hewitt (1992); Sung (1989, 2007, 2011, 2014, 2018); and Míguez, Rieger & Sung (2009).

calls the *God of Domination*, the *God of the Empire*. These are the *idols of oppression* (Richard *et.al.* 1980). Regarding the idolatrous perversion in the name of God, Richard argues that the conquerors were all Christians, and colonization was carried out in the name of God. Those responsible for slavery were also Christians and were supported by Christian European nations; the Church, for its part, legitimized slavery for centuries. And all military dictators and, in general, those responsible for economic, political, and ideological oppression have normally been Christians (1998a, p. 85).

The dominant theology/idolatry presents us with an image of God that is *racist*, *sexist*, and *dominating* (Richard, 1998a, p. 87). As scholar Deane W. Ferm argues, far better to be an atheist than to believe in that kind of God! (1986b, p. 49). In his *Our Idea of God* (1980),⁵⁰ Segundo takes a critical approach to this God, the God of Western society.⁵¹ Segundo poses the question, “is it not possible that when we say ‘I believe’ we are making an act of faith in capitalism, injustice, suffering, and egoticism?” (1980, p. 180). For Segundo, idolatry—the worship of false gods—is a greater threat than atheism (1970, 1980). Therefore, one who chooses atheism rather than accepting a God allied to capitalism may actually be adoring a God truer than our own (Segundo, 1980).

⁵⁰ Segundo's *A Theology for Artisans of a New Humanity* is a series of five volumes: *The Community Called Church*, *Grace and the Human Condition*, *Our Idea of God*, *The Sacraments Today*, and *Evolution and Guilt*. The version in Spanish was originally published by Ediciones Carlos Lohlé, Buenos Aires, in collaboration with the Pedro Fabro Center, Montevideo—*Teología abierta para el laico adulto*: I. *Esa comunidad llamada Iglesia* (1968); II. *Gracia y Condición humana* (1969); III. *Nuestra idea de Dios* (1970); IV. *Los Sacramentos hoy* (1971); V. *Evolución y Fe* (1983-84). The first version in English was published by Orbis Books in 1974.

⁵¹ See also Gutiérrez's *The God of Life* (1991) or *El Dios de la vida* (1989).

According to Richard, discerning the true God from false idols involves explaining *in which* God one believes in, or *from which* God one is an atheist⁵² (1998a, p. 86).

For liberation theologians, idolatry is the root of *social sin*,⁵³ which has no limits: the system oppresses and kills unlimitedly with a good conscience. Thus, idolatry is the social force of death that gives life continuously to social sin (Richard, 1998a, p. 88). The rationality of the dominant system is always maximum gain, and the death of the poor is rational to this logic. Theology of liberation, as a theology of life, is opposed to this rationality of death, which also means to be in danger of death.⁵⁴ As Richard

⁵² On this topic, see Dussel's "Marx's atheism and that of the prophets of Israel" in *The Theological Metaphors of Marx* (2024). The original Spanish version of this work can be found in Dussel (1975).

⁵³ For Gustavo Gutiérrez, "In the liberation approach sin is not considered as an individual, private, or merely interior reality—asserted just enough to necessitate 'spiritual' redemption which does not challenge the order in which we live. Sin is regarded as social, historical fact, the absence of fellowship and love in relationship among persons, the breach of friendship with God and with other persons, and therefore, an interior, personal fracture. When it is considered in this way, the collective dimensions of sin are rediscovered" (1973a, p. 102-103). On social and structural sin, see Vidal (1989).

⁵⁴ Liberation theology symbolizes a historical break with the Church being linked with the ruling oligarchy, the military, and the government. Consequently, thousands of the laity and clergy were threatened, tortured, imprisoned, and killed (Kirylo, 2011a, p. 186). Dussel dedicates his work *A History of the Church in Latin America* (1974), to "the Christs of Latin America: To the martyred Bishop of Nicaragua, Monseñor Antonio de Valdivieso (d. 1550), assassinated by the oppressive violence of the sixteenth century. To the martyred priest of Recife, Padre Antonio Pereira Neto (d. 1669), assassinated by the coercive violence of the twentieth century." Colombian priest Camilo Torres (1929-1966) became a guerrilla fighter to fight against injustice, exploitation, and oppression. On his first armed excursion as a *guerrillero*, Torres was shot and killed by Colombian army bullets. Colombian priest Jesús Héctor Gallego (1938-1971) was also assassinated in Panama for his work organizing peasant cooperatives. Argentine priest Carlos Mujica (1930-1974) was assassinated for his opposition to injustice and violence of the Argentine government. He was gunned down by an operative of the Argentine Anticommunist Alliance (AAA). Colombian priest Iván Betancourt (1940-1975) and North American Jerome Cypher (1941-1975) were tortured and then executed along with twelve other leaders from poor farmer communities who called for land reform in Honduras. American priest James Francis Carney, known as "Padre Guadalupe," was also assassinated in Honduras in 1983. He was captured by a Honduran death squad working with American troops and thrown alive from a helicopter. Salvadorian priest Rutilio Grande (1928-1977) was assassinated by the security forces of El Salvador for making the Catholic faith real for very poor people. He was the first priest assassinated before the civil war started and a close friend of Salvadoran Monseñor Óscar Arnulfo Romero (1917-1980). After Grande's death, Monseñor Romero changed his conservative attitude toward the government and urged the government to investigate the murder. Inspired by Grande's ministry and sacrifice, Monseñor Romero spoke out against poverty, social injustice, assassinations, and torture. In 1980, Romero was assassinated while celebrating mass along with four female American missionaries. Spaniard/Salvadoran Ignacio Ellacuría (1930-1989) was assassinated with seven others for their criticism of El Salvador's military and the ongoing civil war. In 1989, he was gunned down by U.S. trained members of the Salvadoran army at his residence at the university, along with five other Jesuits with whom he lived (Segundo Montes, Juan Ramón Moreno, Ignacio Martín-Baró, Amando López, and Joaquín López), their housekeeper, and her daughter. On the Salvadoran cases and the definition of martyrdom in Latin America, see

explains, the fundamental theological task of liberation theology in Latin America has not been to prove the existence of God but to discern the true God from false idols. Jon Sobrino puts it clearly:

The experience of God and witness to a just life becomes ever clearer in Latin America because structural injustice is there given explicit or implicit theological sanction. The presently prevailing structures—a capitalism of dependence and national security, whatever their forms—function as real deities with divine characteristics and their own cult. They are deities because they claim attributes that belong to God alone: ultimacy, definitiveness, and inviolability. They have their own cult because they demand the daily sacrifices of the masses and the violent sacrifice of any who resist them. (1984a, p. 166)

Thus, the true danger of the Christian faith is not atheism, but the idolatrous manipulation of the true God, which has resulted in historical domination by idolatrous oppressors (Richard, 1998a, p. 85-86). Dussel urges us to be atheists of this kind of God, the God of the oppressor, the God of capitalism, the fetish of money. He argues that “we cannot be good Christians unless we are good atheists of the fetish” (1976, p. 290).

Enrique Dussel has analyzed extensively the theological positions embedded in Marx’s thought. Marx unveils capital, commodity, money, etc., as religious, gods, divine forms. For this reason, Dussel considers that Marx effects a *religious critique* of political economy by uncovering “the mechanisms of *domination* of capitalism as fetishist structures that are demoniacal, satanic and idolatrous. The ‘fetishist character’ of capital is precisely its strict religious statute” (2003b, 122). As Dussel clarifies,

Thiede (2017). For an account of the United States involvement in the rise of fascism, torture and murder, and the persecution of the Catholic Church in Latin America, see Lernoux (1982).

Marx's critique is not simply a critique of religion as such. It is a critique of fetishistic religion.⁵⁵

Dussel recognizes the importance of the work of Mexican philosopher and exegete José Porfirio Miranda, who leans in the direction of the argument that Marx was subjectively a Christian believer⁵⁶ (2024, p. 87). However, in *The Theological Metaphors of Marx* (2024), Dussel proposes a different strategy of argumentation. In this work, Dussel analyzes how Marx's 'theological metaphor' or 'metaphorical' religious discourse allowed him to elaborate not only a philosophical-economic critique of capital but also a critique of 'mundane' religion, that is, "the religious affirmation of the apparently secular character of capital itself" with "its worshippers, its mass and its holocausts, reflected in the vivifying circulation of the fetish, nourished by human blood" (2024, p. 129-130). In other words, Marx develops not only a political economy critique but also a theological critique of capital. Thus, it is not only a critique of religion for legitimizing domination or of Christianity for justifying capitalism (the

⁵⁵ Marx borrowed a concept from the religious world to explain the process wherein a social relationship of production is transformed into an object. In his two-part essay, "The Concept of Fetishism in Marx's Thought," Dussel provides a textual "rereading" of Karl Marx's theory of fetishism. Dussel rereads this concept according to Marx's scattered but significant comments on religion as they extend throughout his work. In Part I, "Elements for a General Marxist Theory of Religion" (2003a), Dussel demonstrates Marx's differentiation between a critique of the essence of religion and its manifestations, arguing that there is a space in Marx for an anti-fetishized liberatory religion. In Part II, "Toward a Theory of Fetishism in General" (2003b), he provides a methodological account of such a religion, as well as a panorama of the content of this essence of religion. These accounts provide the basis for more clearly identifying both religious fetishism and the fetishist character of capital. According to Dussel, "to the false consciousness, interest would seem to be the fruit of money: value created from nothing by the power of capital. God on earth, fetish, Moloch—inasmuch as, in reality, the life of such a fetish is the blood of workers offered in the holocaust of the accumulation of value. Fetishized, autonomized or absolutized (separated from the relation where it is only a term) we reach the final consequence of this 'secular' or 'worldly religion'" (Dussel, 2003b, p. 121).

⁵⁶ José Porfirio Miranda argues that the sense of justice that gives origin to the thought of Marx is the same ethical principle in the Bible. For Miranda, there is a strong parallel between Marx's moral imperative and the Christian understanding of God's moral character. See Miranda's *Marx y la Biblia. Crítica a la filosofía de la opresión* (1973. Translated into English, 1974) and *El Cristianismo de Marx* (1978), also translated into English (1980). See also (1982, 1986). On Miranda's interpretation of Christianity and communism, see (1977, 1982, 1986).

bourgeois version of Christianity), but a critique of fetishistic religiosity. As Dussel analyzes, through ‘metaphorical’ references, Marx critiques the fetishistic religion of capital. By developing a theory of fetishism as ‘metaphorical’ theology, Marx reveals the religious structure of capital.

As Dussel points out, under Marx’s theological logic, fetishism constitutes the mechanism for the absolutization of capital as such. In other words, the “rendering of *a part* (capital) of the *whole* (capital labor) constitutes the fetishistic character of the matter” (2024, p. 55). Thus, Marx discovers a ‘religious’ dimension hidden in the constitution of fetishism, that is, a hidden, secular ‘god’ at the profane level.⁵⁷ It is “an autonomous power that has taken on a life of its own, and which begins to take on all the attributes of a ‘god’: a subject that has created itself out of nothingness, eternal and infinite in space (destroying all barriers until it arrives at the global market), a civilizing power that is the source of equality and divine providence” (2024, p. 57). Against fetishism, Marx raises a positive *theology of dominion* based on biblical symbolism, in which he treats capital as a fetish, an idol, Moloch, Mammon. By developing an anti-fetishist theology, he treats capital as a demonic force, the anti-God. “The Antichrist is capital itself, as the universal mediator of objectified, alienated labor: the alienation of the life of living labor” (2024, p. 103). Therefore, from Marx’s theological logic, “God (the Devil) is Money, and those who worship Him must do so with spirit and truth”

⁵⁷ The analysis of the fetishistic character of capital explains “why Marx never said ‘God is Dead.’ Instead he affirmed that capital is an emphatically living ‘god’” (Dussel, 2024, p. xxx). As Dussel explains, Marx’s emphasizes how “god” (the fetish) lives off the life of the world’s poor: “The total thingification, inversion, and absurdity [is] that of capital as capital..., which renders compound interest, and takes on the appearance of a kind of Moloch that demands the world as a whole as its victim, offered in sacrifice [*Opfer*] on its altars” (Marx & Engels. *Teorias del plusvalor*, 1980. Cited by Dussel, 2024, p. xxx).

(Dussel, 2024, footnote 111, p. 217). This is what Dussel refers to as a satanic Christology where money is referenced as Christ but serves as the Antichrist. This translates into a *demonic Trinity*—profit, rent, and wages, all of them the Beast—which in its satanic metaphorical sense is an *anti-Trinity*⁵⁸ (2024, p.101, 104).

The critique of fetishistic religion (European-modern Christian morality) is also a critique of capitalism as a religion of domination. As Dussel points out, the ‘social relation’ (constitutive of capital) is a ‘relation’ of domination, of extraction of life, which is both fetishistic and idolatrous (1993c, p. 173). Marx identifies capital as the ‘social relation’ of domination conditioning *sin*, understood as a practical-productive economic and ethical relationship (rich-poor, dominator-dominated), where the practical dominator constitutes the structural, historical, and economic sinner. Thus, the act of domination, as an original historical evil, forms a practical, ethical, and historical structure of sin. Sin is the death of the other, and in the process of negating the other, the dominator is constituted as divine, as the only one. According to Marx, “this primitive accumulation plays in political economy about the same part as original sin in theology...And from this original sin dates the poverty of the great majority that, despite all its labor, has up to now nothing to sell but itself” (Capital, I. Cited by Dussel, 2024, p. 132). This ‘structural’ social relation is a product of historical institutional social relations. In other words, it is a ‘constitutive sin’ that has a historical-social

⁵⁸ According to Dussel, “behind fetishized capital, land and wage labor, is the fetishization of value as such—as the origin of these three fetishes, these three gods, this-worldly, secular *trinity* like the three faces of Moloch, the Beast, like the parody of an inverted Christianity...Each fetish, each face of Moloch has its fruit, its pleasure, its pay and all by virtue of their own value: capital, the profit; land, the rent; and wage labor, its salary...All these fetishized forms (separated from their origin) hide their base: the living work or labor that has created them. The denial of the relation to living work or labor is the origin and possibility of their fetishization (Dussel, 2003b, p. 121).

origin. Whereas for Hobbes, Locke, or Smith, the *a priori* social relation of domination is the ‘state of nature,’ for Marx, on the other hand, this ‘state of nature’ was already *historically perverted*: there was an original, historical sin—and isn’t the ‘original sin,’ in all good and serious theology, a *historical* fact, not a circumstantial one, but *a priori* and structural?⁵⁹ (Dussel, 1993c, p. 168).

Hobbes will project the *existing* reality because his ‘state of nature’ “is nothing but the same emergent capitalist reality that is projected abstractly as if it represented an ahistorical, eternal human nature” (Dussel, 2024, p. 83). This is a model of the so-called society of the possessive market, where the egoism of self-interest coincides with love for one’s neighbor and with the common good. The ‘state of nature’ of Hobbes is nothing else but the expression of how English society was beginning to organize all of its existence centered on the ‘market.’ It will be John Locke who will develop this model, that of individualism, which sanctifies the holiness of property, within an explicit *Christian* utilitarianism (Dussel, 1993c, p. 147). Later, Adam Smith organizes all of the bourgeois ‘ethos’ as a manifestation of the Gospel’s ethical essence (Dussel, 2024, p. 86). The ‘state of nature’ will include the capitalist’s domination over the worker as the fundamental principle of the natural order, desired by God. As Dussel says, the accumulation of money now becomes the human, universal, eternal ‘state of nature’ created by God. “This God who had created man in this way now directed him

⁵⁹ In this sense, Miranda argues that “Marx and Paul coincide in their intuition of the totality of evil: Sin and injustice form an all comprehensive and all-pervasive organic structure. Paul calls this totality *kosmos*. Marx calls it ‘capitalism’...The most revolutionary historical thesis, in which, in contrast with all Western ideologies, the Bible and Marx coincide, is this: Sin and evil, which were later structured into an enslaving civilizing system, are not inherent to mankind and history; they began one day through a human work and can therefore, be eliminated (1974, p. 250, p. 254).

‘providentially’ toward his ends, which culminated in the bountiful, natural competition of the market. This is the ‘invisible hand of God’ that makes competition sacred in the market and transforms it into an exceptionally theological field of endeavor” (Dussel, 2024, p. 85).

By delving into Marx’s ‘metaphorical’ religious discourse, Dussel analyzes the capitalist political economy of the version of capitalist political economy developed by Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Thomas Robert Malthus, and others and how it “serves to *conceal the unethical essence of capitalism*” by “*interpreting capitalism in such a way that it no longer appears contradictory to the most authentic and prophetic forms of Christianity*” (2024, xxvii. Emphasis added). Finally, despite capitalism’s anti-Christian character, an inverted version of Christianity has also served to legitimize it. This corresponds to a colonial and neocolonial form of Christianity (Bonino, 1975a).

Gustavo Gutiérrez argues that the expansion of Christianity—understood as something doctrinal, institutional, and cultic—in the Western world has been linked with the expansion of the Western world itself, when Western civilization also began to dominate the rest of the world (1976, p. 309). For Gutiérrez, “this Christianity as it expanded is marked by a Western culture and by the white race of the West. At the same time that religion, Christianity, and the West expanded there arose simultaneously a different mode of production which we, of course, call capitalism (1976, p. 310). In the next section, I will discuss the geopolitical and cultural construct of Christian/capitalist civilization and its function to justify Western supremacy.

Chapter Four

4. A Crusade for Western Supremacy: The ‘West’ and the Myth of Western Modernity



FIGURE 5. “The West,” according to the Hudson Institute

This image is the cover of the Annual Report 2023 of the Hudson Institute (2024). The flags of the United States, Israel, Ukraine, and Taiwan can be seen as a representation of “the West” according to the geopolitical interests of the US. As stated in the letter from the Chair of the Board of Trustees and the President and CEO in 2023 that introduces the Report, “The Institute’s team of experts produced powerful work on aiding Ukraine; deterring Communist China; supporting Israel against barbaric terrorist enemies; forging closer US ties with Japan, Taiwan, and other key Asian allies and partners; promoting US energy security; and deploying new defense concepts and technology to strengthen American hard power” (2024, p. 2. Emphasis added). In the section titled “Countering the Chinese Communist Party,” the report states that “as China becomes more aggressive, both economically and militarily, in its quest to lead a new, *anti-Western world order*, Hudson worked to ensure that the US is prepared to engage in and win a competition against the CCP” (2024, p. 5. Emphasis added). The Report also pays tribute to former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who passed away in 2023, by reproducing the remarks delivered by him at the Hudson’s 2015 Global Leadership Gala, where he stated: “the worrisome aspect of the current situation is that the *borders between Europe and other civilizations seem to be collapsing*, and that one can see in a not-too-distant future a transformation of these societies which will change the fate of the world” (2024, p. 91. Emphasis added).

Gracias a la llegada de los españoles, América Latina pasó a formar parte de la cultura occidental y a ser heredera de Grecia, Roma, el Renacimiento y el Siglo de Oro y, en resumidas cuentas, de sus mejores tradiciones: los derechos humanos y la cultura de la libertad.

Thanks to the arrival of the Spanish, Latin America became part of Western culture, that is, an heir of Greece, Rome, the Renaissance, the Golden Century, and, in sum, its best traditions: human rights and the culture of freedom.

Mario Vargas Llosa, 2018

We must not worship the state, and it is Christianity, above all, that frees men from faith in the state. The creed of Chalcedon, formulated in 451 A. D., is the foundation of Western liberty: Christ, and He alone, serves as full mediator between God and man. Christian civilization must be built

on the implications of this creed. *The state must protect Christian civilization from rival religious views which would deify the state.*
Gary North, 1982

Europe is a garden...Most of the rest of the world is a jungle, and the jungle could invade the garden...in order to protect the garden, the gardeners have to go to the jungle...Keep the garden, be good gardeners. But your duty will not be to take care of the garden itself but [of] the jungle outside.
Joseph Borrell, former European Union foreign policy chief, 2022.

There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another.
Walter Benjamin, 1940 (2006b)

In February 2025, Alex Karp, CEO of Palantir, along with Nicholas W. Zamiska, Chief Executive Officer at Palantir, released a book that became a New York Times best seller, in which they argue about the importance of collaboration between the software industry and government. For the authors, Silicon Valley has an obligation

to participate in the defense of the nation and the articulation of a national project—what is this country, what are our values, and for what do we stand—and, by extension, to preserve the enduring yet fragile geopolitical advantage that the United States and its allies in Europe and elsewhere have retained over their adversaries. (Karp & Zamiska, 2025, p. xiv)⁶⁰

Karp sat with far-right pundit Bari Weiss at the University of Austin to discuss the book in a conversation titled “Alex Karp’s Fight for the West.” When addressing a question,

⁶⁰ Palantir is an example of the flow of venture-capital funding into defense-technology companies. Palantir was set up in 2003 with seed money from the CIA’s venture capital arm, In-Q-Tel (IQT). According to Nick Corbishley, Palantir “is one of the darkest companies in the tech sphere. While it is making significant inroads in the corporate world, its main line of business is to provide data-mining technology to support US military operations, mass surveillance, and predictive policing. Its technology is also used by ICE to identify illegal migrants before detaining and deporting them” (2023c). The case of Palantir is also an example of how that the Big Tech industry is hoping to profit from US war on China. This is also the case of Anduril Industries, a company of AI-enabled weapons that has established itself as a significant Pentagon contractor (Erwin, 2025). Anduril was founded by far-right billionaire Palmer Luckey, a former Facebook executive. In August 2024, the Wall Street Journal featured an interview with Luckey, where he argued that “these weapons are needed for a potential conflict with China, which the Pentagon two years ago announced is the greatest danger to U.S. security.” Luckey said in the interview that “we keep our eyes on the prize, which is great-power conflict in the Pacific” (Weinberger & Somerville, 2024). Anduril was named after the sword “Flame of the West,” which is a reference to the Lord of the Rings, just like Palantir. Both Palantir and Anduril were co-founded by Peter Thiel, far-right billionaire who has strongly supported by Donald Trump. Thiel is an extreme China hawk who advocates for banning Chinese competitors to US Big Tech monopolies (Norton, 2025a, 2025e)

Karp stated: “I don’t believe that all cultures are equal...In fact, I’m saying this nation is incredibly special and we should not view it as equal, we should view it as superior” (The Free Press, 2025).

This is an example of the sense of superiority that characterizes the far right in the Americas, which comes from a sense of belonging to a superior cultural and religious civilization: ‘The West.’ As a *civilizational* category, *the West* also allows the far right to create a transnational bond anchored on “white settler solidarity,” which, as historian Gerald Horne (2014) argues, is based on class collaboration. International class and colonial collaboration are at the core of Christofascism and its crusade for the survival of ‘the West.’ For example, for Arthur Herman, Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute, refers to “our” Western and Judeo-Christian heritage to argue that, in the face of “ Hamas’s unprovoked attack” and Israel’s “struggle against evil,” “Israel’s Existential Struggle Is Also the West’s”⁶¹ (2023). For Hudson, regarding the existential battle for ‘the West,’ that is, Judeo-Christian civilization, it is time to recognize

that systematic attacks on the West and Western values—expressed through critical Marxism, radical feminism, the transgender ideology, and the entire fabric of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)—would eventually turn against Jews and Judaism. After all, this was true of anti-Western, illiberal ideologies of the past, including fascism, Nazism, and Communism. It is now true of their successors, from radical Islam to today’s radical “woke” left. (2024)

⁶¹ This is also the perspective of Pete Hegseth, US Secretary in the second Trump administration, for whom Israel constitutes “an icon of freedom” and the “front line of Western civilization.” In his book *The American Crusade*, Hegseth argues that “if you don’t understand why Israel matters and why it is so central to the story of Western civilization—with America being its greatest manifestation—then you don’t live in history. America’s story is inextricably linked to Judeo-Christian history and the modern state of Israel. You can love America without loving Israel—but that tells me your knowledge of the Bible and Western civilization is woefully incomplete. If you’re going to crusade, you need to know the totality of your mission” (2020). He closed his chapter on Israel stating that, “for us as American Crusaders, Israel embodies the soul of our American Crusade” (2020).

These examples illustrate the far right's crusade for Western supremacy. The dogma of Western supremacy is rooted in colonialism, and the latter has its origins in the dogma of Christian supremacy. In other words, the idea of White (racist) superiority is linked to the idea of Western (colonial) superiority, and both have religious origins (Raju, 2021a). While far-right actors across the Americas rhetorically reject white supremacy and racism, they openly defend an exclusionary social system built on a false idea of equality where every individual is rewarded based on their own merit. Most interestingly, these actors openly profess a sense of civilizational or Western superiority (colonial prejudice) that covertly reinforces the sense of White superiority (racist prejudice).

It is worth clarifying that the idea of colonial prejudice (or the sense of Western superiority) is not limited to the far right by any means. We can find colonial prejudice very much entrenched in the educational system, the law systems, and the international systems that dictate and reinforce the perennial colonial relations and structures among and within countries. However, what I argue is that the far right openly embraces and celebrates the sense of Western (colonial) superiority, along with the ethical and moral justifications that have legitimized genocide, land dispossession, and enslavement for centuries. This takes the form of vehemently opposing and attacking any initiative that looks to expose and remedy the persistent violence and inequality created by 'Western civilization.'

4.1. Defining ‘Western Civilization’

‘Western civilization’ is the kind of self-explanatory concept that never needs to be explained. When praised by far-right factions, it usually evokes ideas of ‘the West against the Rest’ that were popularized by Samuel. T. Huntington (1993a, 1993b). However, even when it is praised by more moderate political forces, the concept of ‘Western civilization’ reinforces ideas of difference and exclusion based on the cultural superiority of ‘the West.’ The idea of ‘civilization’ usually invokes an “autochthonous religious-cultural space existing from time immemorial” (Mazumdar, 2009, p. 43). However, as Silvia Federici argues, “Western Civilization is a recent ideological invention, dissimulating under a cultural mantle the worldwide expansion of capitalist relations” (1995, p. xii). As an ideological and cultural project to legitimize the advance of capitalism, the notion of the ‘Western tradition’ is actually an incoherent fabrication (Graeber, 2007).

Western ‘culture’ and ‘civilization’ are usually used interchangeably, and both are equated to ‘European’ culture and history, that is, ‘the civilization of Western Europe’ or ‘European civilization’ or even ‘Western Christendom.’⁶² However, the equation of ‘Europe’ with the ‘West’ is misleading. In fact, ‘Western Civilization’ and ‘European History’ are “conflicting, and incompatible concepts” (Davies, 2007, p. 46). To avoid this confusing conflation, I will begin by distinguishing what is usually understood by ‘Europe.’ While ‘Europe’ can be seen as a tangible geo-political reality, “Europe is a

⁶² See, for example, McNeill’s *History of Western Civilization: A Handbook* (1986).

protean idea and not something self-evident”⁶³ (Delanty, 1995, p. 3). As Gerard Delanty argues, “‘European’ identity, as an ethno-cultural and political project, preceded the formation of the idea of Europe as such...The idea of Europe when it did emerge was embedded in Christendom having become virtually coterminous with the notion of the Occident, which preceded the idea of Europe”⁶⁴ (1995, p. 16).

Is the idea of ‘Europe’ different than ‘European identity’? If it is, what is then the ‘identity’ of ‘Europe’? For political scientist John M. Hobson, “European identity has always been forged in a global context”⁶⁵ (2004, p. 24). Since the ‘self’ does not actually exist, it needs to construct an external, imaginary ‘other’ against which a homogeneous ‘self’ could be constructed (Hobson, 2004, p. 107). During the early medieval period, Islam was invented as an *evil, immanent, universal threat*. As Rana Kabbani notes, “Islam was seen as the negation of Christianity...The Islamic world was seen as Anti-Europe” (1986, p. 5). This is the ‘other’ against which European Christendom defined itself as the ‘Defender of the One True Faith.’ For Hobson, the ‘idea’ of *Europe-as-Christendom* or as the representational birthplace or ‘defender’ of the Christian faith, is the first phase of European identity formation (2004, p. 112). As Samir Amin argues, in the medieval context, “an artificial, unchanging Euro-Christian identity is invented and contrasted with Arab-Islamic” (2009, p. 203). This European

⁶³ For John M. Hobson, “Europe has always been an idea—something which has been constructed and reconstructed over time... according to a moral definition that reassigns the geographical boundaries of what constitutes ‘Europe’ at any point in time. Ultimately, such a moral definition is founded on how ‘Europeans’ like to imagine themselves” (2004, p. 111-2).

⁶⁴ In *Inventing Europe* (1995), Delanty traces the historical process whereby Europe was constituted as a cultural idea and transformed into a political identity.

⁶⁵ From a world-systems perspective, “Europe was *created* precisely because the world was invented” in the XV century (Wallerstein, 2005, p. 353).

Christian identity led to the ‘first round’ of Crusades (1095-1291), which prompted the ‘second round’ of medieval Crusades: the so-called ‘voyages of discovery’ (Hobson, 2004, p. 25).

In *A Study of History*⁶⁶ (1974) influential historian Arnold J. Toynbee portrayed Western civilization as rooted in Western Christianity. In other words, Toynbee “reconnected the ‘civilizational’ category ‘West’ back to Western Christianity, prevalent in Western Europe, which is the part of Europe that exclusively participated in colonisation and is consequently wealthier”⁶⁷ (Raju, 2021a, p. 148). In *The rise of Christian Europe*, historian Hugh Trevor-Roper also associated ‘the vitality of Western civilization’ directly to the fact that Christendom “had in itself the springs of a new and enormous vitality” (1965, p. 21). Post-Cold-War theorists like Huntington (1996a, 1996b) built on Toynbee’s theory by equating the ‘West’ with ‘Christian civilization’ (this is the basis of the politics of current far-right movements). Thus, *occidental* culture became synonymous with *Christian* culture, and Christianity became the basis of European identity. Although there is nothing *occidental* about Christianity,⁶⁸ Christianity was appropriated to fit into “a *civilizational* category: the West” (Raju,

⁶⁶ This work on universal history is divided into twelve volumes that were published between 1934 and 1961.

⁶⁷ As Raju explains, “according to Toynbee, every universal state must have a universal church, and Western Christianity is the religion associated with the only surviving universal state. This is the West for which capitalism is a cultural value according to Huntington” (2003, p. 499). Thus, Christianity would be the “universal church” developed out of “Hellenism.”

⁶⁸ The construction of Europe as Christendom is an imagined or invented identity the suppressed the real origins of Christianity. As other non-Western developments, Christianity was appropriated and subsequently Westernized and Europeanized to be represented as the bulwark of Western civilization (Holton, 2011, p. 45). Christianity, like Hellenism and Islam, is Oriental in origin. As Dussel argues, Christianity was born in the Semitic world of Judaism (just like Islam). It is Asian, and geographically and culturally completely ‘oriental,’ due to its location in the Roman Empire (the most Oriental part of the Empire). Therefore, the notion of an *occidental and Christian culture (civilization)* is an ideological and contradictory syncretism that is *antisemite* (Hitler and the *integrismos* of the center and the periphery), and *antisocialist* (since the triumph of the Leninist Revolution, the *Orient* will become real Socialism). *Orient-Occident* is the ideological bipolarity of the Cold War at the end of the so-called Second War (which, in reality, was an inter-capitalist war of the Center) (Dussel, 1994, p. 173).

2021b, p. 78). As Amin argues, from a religious fundamentalist perspective, “the uniqueness of Christianity had to be magnified and adorned with particular and exclusive virtues that, by simple teleology, account for the superiority of the West and its conquest of other peoples” (2009, p. 173). The Christian West also refers to capitalist civilization. Christianity and capitalism are united in the common expression of Western Christian civilization (Amin, 2009, p. 179).

Central to a European imperial identity associated with the rise of the ‘triumphant West’ is that Europe’s ‘Otherness’ is precisely a creation of Western modernity and imperialism, in which European and Western identity is constructed upon the creation and exclusion of its own opposite: the *Orient*. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this racist construct came to dominate European imagination (Hobson, 2004, p. 7). As Hobson argues, “Orientalism constructs a permanent image of the superior West (the ‘Self’) which is defined negatively against the no less imaginary ‘Other’—the backward and inferior East” (2004, p. 7). Thus, “imagining the East to be backward, passive and childlike in contrast to the West as advanced, proactive and paternal was vital in prompting the Europeans to engage in imperialism”⁶⁹ (2004, p. 25). The colonial imaginary of the *Orient*’s moral, intellectual, and racial inferiority justified the imperial ‘civilizing mission,’ that is, ‘the white man’s burden.’⁷⁰

⁶⁹ For Hobson, “the West was imagined as being inherently blessed with unique virtues: it was rational, hard-working, productive, sacrificial and parsimonious, liberal-democratic, honest, paternal and mature, advanced, ingenious, proactive, independent, progressive and dynamic. The East was then cast as the West’s opposite Other: as irrational and arbitrary, lazy, unproductive, indulgent, exotic as well as alluring and promiscuous, despotic, corrupt, childlike and immature, backward, derivative, passive, dependent, stagnant and unchanging” (2004, p. 7). As Hobson argues, this process of identity formation and the invention of a racist identity lay at the base of European imperialism (2004, p. 219).

⁷⁰ As Hobson points out, “Western identity was constructed in such a way that the East could not be tolerated for its imagined deviancy. The Europeans came to view imperialism as a ‘civilising mission’ whereby the ‘moral duty’ of

In *Colonising Egypt*, Timothy Mitchell analyzes that the Oriental is what makes possible a European identity and power. In Mitchell's words, "the domination of the West over the non-Western world depended on this manner of creating a 'West', a singular Western self-identity" (1991, p. 166). Mitchell builds on Edward Said's influential work *Orientalism*. Said defines Orientalism as "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (1979, p. 2). Thus, the Orient is not only an integral part of European civilization and culture, but it has also helped to define 'Europe' (or the West) (1979, pp. 1-2). The Eurocentric ideological construction of a mythical Orient is given immutable traits that serve to define the Occidental world as its opposite image. Fictitious spatial and cultural boundaries that separate a rational West from an irrational East were established.⁷¹ To separate these unreconcilable differences that stemmed back in time to Ancient Greece, Europe even gained continental status, therefore reinforcing European exceptionalism. "By positing a continental division between Europe and Asia, Western scholars were able to reinforce the notion of a cultural dichotomy between these two areas—a dichotomy that was essential to modern Europe's identity as a civilization" (Lewis & Wigen, 1997, p. 36).

Western man was to bequeath to the East the gift of civilisation" (2004, p. 240). For example, in the *Martyrdom of Man* (1872), British historian W. Winwood Reade wrote that Turkey, China and the rest would someday be prosperous. "But those people will never begin to advance . . . until they enjoy the rights of man; and these they will never obtain except by means of European conquest" (1872, p. 504). In 1907, British statesman and foreign secretary Lord Curzon stated, "In the empire, we have found not merely the key to glory and wealth, but the call to duty, and the means of service to mankind" (cited in Thornton, 1959, p. 82).

⁷¹ For Lewis & Wigen, "the binary division of the world into an immense Eastern and an exiguous Western section is an anachronistic product of European cultural egotism" (1997, p. 68-9). On the spatial and geographical aspects of the false binarism Asia-Europe (i.e. East-West, Orient-Occident), see Lewis & Wigen (1997).

What is then ‘Western civilization’? The ‘Grant Narrative’ of the rise of ‘Western civilization’ is a triumphant account of Western achievement from the Greeks onward (Burke, 1998, p. 3). These triumphalist accounts of ‘Western civilization’ are characterized by drastic historical selectivity and unfounded, pejorative generalizations marked by a wide array of prejudices and unwritten assumptions, and the biased priority that is given to positive and uplifting aspects of an imagined past and a predetermined history (Davies, 2007, pp. 48-49, 54). As historian Norman Davies points out, “the really vicious quality shared by almost all accounts of ‘Western civilization’ lies in the fact that they present idealized, and hence essentially false, pictures of past reality” (1998, p. 28). Certainly, all positive things and everything that is considered ‘civilized’ is attributed to ‘Western civilization.’ ‘The West’ is presented as “the road to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” (Wolf, 2010, p. 7). It is also seen as “the site of the triumph of the scientific spirit, rationality, and practical efficiency, just as it is the world of tolerance, diversity of opinions, respect for human rights and democracy, concern for equality—at least the equality of rights and opportunities—and social justice” (Amin, 2009, p. 180). This distorted myth-making scheme is misleading because, as Eric R. Wolf argues, “it turns history into a moral success story...of how the winners prove that they are virtuous and good by winning” (2010, p. 5).

‘The West’ is a *civilizational* and imperial category and not a geographical entity or ‘reality.’ For example, Australia belongs to ‘the West.’ But Portugal, Ireland, and Norway, three countries on Europe’s western border, do not belong to this *civilizational*

construct because they do not belong to the idea of ‘the West’ as *superior*. Davies locates the origin of the ‘Western civilization’ category in American academia in the early twentieth century⁷² in the context of the ‘imperial variant’ of the West⁷³ and the influence of the White-Anglo Saxon Protestant (WASP) elite.⁷⁴ The design of the ‘Western civilization’ scheme aimed to trace the roots of English, French and German greatness. While it outlined the cultural interests of these late imperial powers, it also disdained any other aspects of history and civilization (Davies, 2007, pp. 51-2). As Davies points out, ‘Western civilization’ is an American invention, an imagined history, a myth that is neither western nor civilized. It constitutes “a metaphysical construct, and ideology, a conceit, an identity game, an intellectual invention designed to promote the interests of its inventors. It abstracts everything from Europe’s past that is compliant with those interests, and consigns the rest to oblivion” (2007, p. 46).⁷⁵

⁷² On the history of the ‘Western tradition’ curricula in American universities, see Weber (1998).

⁷³ In *Europe* (1998), Davies distinguishes a dozen variants of ‘Western civilization’ (1998, pp. 22-25). “These variants of ‘the West’ recur and reappear in new forms over the ages” in which “each positive western variant is defined against a correspondingly negative variant of the east” (Davies, 2007, p. 53). According to Davies, “In the nineteenth century, one comes to what has been called the ‘imperial variant’ of the West. By this, one refers to the complex developments, including the Industrial Revolution, social modernization, technological advance and colonial expansion, which first enabled Britain to become ‘the workshop of the world’ and which then pushed France and Germany into leading and rival positions on the continent. One suspects that it was the prestige of this imperial-industrial triangle that gave rise to the mania for ‘Western civilisation’ in the first place” (Davies, 2007, p. 55).

⁷⁴ For Davies, the *imperial variant* of Western civilization in the nineteenth century took place in the nineteenth century during the long European Peace prior to 1914. The *WASP variant* of Western civilization assumed that the USA was the equal of Europe’s imperial powers. This variant came to fruition through the common interests of the USA and the British empire, as revealed during the First World War. The *American variant* of Western civilization coalesced after the Second World War and grew from the older Anglo-Saxon variant, but outgrew its European origins (1998, pp. 23-4).

⁷⁵ These imperial and intellectual instruments were adapted and further developed in the context of the Cold War to contrapose the modern, democratic, *civilized* West and the barbaric, tyrannical, *uncivilized* East (see Davies, 2007, pp. 39-42).

Distorted and misleading constructs of the ‘West’ and *Occident* have epistemic and political consequences. First of all, conventional accounts portray an idea of an ‘autonomous’ or ‘pristine’ West that has alone pioneered the creation of the modern world (Hobson, 2004, p. 1) in complete opposition to the East since the time of Ancient Greece. This conventional approach ignores all the connections, linkages, interrelationships, and interdependencies with other societies, especially the so-called primitives, that is, peoples ‘without history’ (Wolf, 2010, pp. 4-5). The insistence on the *uniqueness* of the quintessential West has not only ignored the central contributions of ‘non-Westerners’ to modernity but has also appropriated the whole idea of modernity as a European phenomenon. For example, for David S. Landes, “Europe (the West) has been the prime mover of development and modernity” (1998, xxi). These Eurocentric accounts not only confirm ‘Western superiority’ but also marginalizes the history and contributions of other civilizations to the ‘modern world.’⁷⁶ In *The Theft of History* (2007), social anthropologist Jack Goody analyses the consequences of the theft of achievements of other cultures by the West. As Goody (2007) points out, the occidentalist and Eurocentric accounts of the ‘uniqueness of the West’ have assumed unquestionably the belief that ‘the West,’ as the ‘rational standard of civilization,’⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Hobson “argues that the East (which was more advanced than the West between 500 and 1800) provided a crucial role in enabling the rise of modern Western civilization.” In other words, “without the helping hand of the more advanced East in the period from 500 to 1800, the West would in all likelihood never have crossed the line into modernity” (2004, p. 2, 19).

⁷⁷ By focusing on the period 1500-1900, Hobson shows that the idea that the ‘rational, liberal, civilized’ states of Europe explained the rise of the West is actually a product of Eurocentric imagination (2004, pp. 283-293). In reality, “no Western state was democratic before the twentieth century...as late as 1900 genuine political democracy in the West remained a Fiction” (Hobson, 2004, p. 290, 293).

‘invented’ ideas such as ‘humanism,’ ‘democracy,’ market ‘capitalism,’⁷⁸ ‘industrialization,’⁷⁹ ‘civilization,’⁸⁰ and ‘invention’⁸¹ itself. Even the very notion of the economy or economic development has been regarded as a Western invention (see, for example, Landes, 1998). ‘The West’ is also considered the birthplace of ‘individualism’ and ‘freedom,’ and ‘pluralism’ is its defining feature.⁸²

⁷⁸ Western thinkers have attributed ‘capitalism’ as uniquely European and have located its supposed ‘origins’ in the roots of ‘European culture.’ The acknowledgement of the interconnectedness of the historical processes that led to the genesis of capitalism is replaced by what Samir Amin refers to as a ‘twofold mythic construct.’ “On the one hand, it amplifies the uniqueness of so-called European history, while, on the other hand, it endows the history of other peoples with opposing ‘unique’ traits. In this way, it succeeds in concluding that the miracle of capitalism could only have been a European one” (Amin, 2009, p. 155). Focusing on Western thinkers such as Fernand Braudel and Max Weber, Goody analyzes the common assumption that the West invented ‘capitalism.’ Weber, for example, “comes to the conclusion that he saw the development of the scientific spirit as more significant in the west and as linked to its notions of rationality. Take the process of disenchantment of the human mind which marked the growth of meaningful scientific knowledge by the process of intellectualization. This process has, he writes, ‘continued to exist in Occidental culture for millennia’ and constitutes ‘progress’. That notion of progress, of ‘continuous enrichment of life’, is the key to civilized man, and was essentially western” (Weber, 1949, p. 139. Cited by Goody, 2007, p. 181). Thus, the features associated with ‘capitalism’ (e.g., rationality, dynamism, innovation, progress) are unilaterally linked to the West. Even ideas like ‘freedom,’ ‘bourgeoisie,’ and ‘free markets’ are treated as uniquely European features, ignoring that these features were present in other cultures. In fact, these “features that we now tend to view as a product of the Industrial Revolution were in fact present much earlier, and not only in Europe” (Goody, 2007, p. 202). Still, Eurocentric historians, “looking back teleologically after the Industrial Revolution, have overlooked these parallel developments and tried to account for later advantage in terms of imagined earlier ones” (Goody, 2007, p. 304). Even the use of term ‘capitalism’ tends “to suggest some kind of long-term, privileged position for the west” (2007, p. 305). Thus, as Goody argues, an explanation of capitalism “had to have something to do with the structural superiority of the western ‘mind’” (Braudel, 1984, p. 581. Cited by Goody, 2007, p. 198). The Western bias that sees ‘true capitalism’ as a uniquely European creation and the appropriation of the whole nature and ‘spirit of capitalism’ is what Goody regards as ‘the theft of capitalism.’ Goody even questions if “we really need the concept of capitalism, which always seems to push the analysis in a eurocentric direction” (2007, p. 211). In addition, from an ideological and Eurocentric standpoint, a teleological and ahistorical approach is applied to find the distant origins of capitalism in ancient times and to draw a direct line from Antiquity to nineteenth-century Europe, which only confirms the alleged superiority of the West (see Goody, 2004).

⁷⁹ Neither the process of industrial manufacture nor the emergence of finance capitalism that made industrialization possible originated in Europe (Goody, 2007, pp. 196-205). In *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization*, Hobson examines the Afro-Asian origins of British industrialization and the racist imperial appropriation of Eastern resources in the story of the rise of the West (2004, pp. 243-280).

⁸⁰ Goody analyzes Norbert Elias’s *The Civilizing Process* “to query Elias’s confinement of civilization to a purely European context,” which Goody regards as ‘the theft of civilization’ by Europe (2007, p. 155), in terms of ‘modern’ progress and ‘civilized’ behavior. By extension, the ‘other’ is seen as static and deviated.

⁸¹ In *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* (1998), historian David S. Landes attributes to Europe the “invention of invention.”

⁸² For Samuel P. Huntington, in contrast to centralized bureaucratic empires, the West has had a pluralistic civil society for more than a millennium (1996b, p. 32). As Graeber points out, this argument does not only not recognize that “China and India,” for example, “in fact had, for most of their histories, a great deal more religious pluralism than Western Europe”; but also ignores “that none ever came up with such distinctly Western ways of enforcing uniformity as the war of extermination against heretics, the Inquisition, or the witch hunt” (2007, p. 335). Davies argues that if we were to draw up a list of the products of European history, it would start with religious persecution and it would end with totalitarian absolute contempt for human life (1998, p. 26).

The quintessential example of this racist paradigm is Samuel P. Huntington's *clash of civilizations* (1993a, 1996a). For Huntington, "Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state have little resonance in other civilizations" (1993a, p. 40). However, as anthropologist David Graeber notes, "'the West' only really took any kind of recognizable form in the nineteenth or even twentieth centuries, since in any previous one the overwhelming majority of 'Westerners' would have rejected just about all these principles out of hand—if, indeed, they would have been able even to conceive of them"⁸³ (2007, p. 333). For instance, the idea that Europe is the birthplace of democracy seems self-evident. As Hobson notes, "Europe and the West is (re)presented as democratic throughout its long rise to power" (2004, p. 290). For example, for Slavoj Žižek democracy is without question "the true European legacy from ancient Greece onward"⁸⁴ (1998, p. 1009). However, democracy is not a special invention of 'the West' since democratic practices have existed everywhere.⁸⁵ In fact, democracy did not definitely take on an unambiguously positive value in Europe until the nineteenth century⁸⁶ (Goody, 2007, p. 52). "After

⁸³ In addition, as Arrigi, Ahmad, and Shih note, "it is hard to find a single one [of these ideals] that was not denied in part or full by the leading Western powers of the epoch in their dealings either with the peoples they subjected to direct colonial rule or with the governments over which they sought to establish suzerainty. And conversely, it is just as hard to find a single one of those ideals that was not upheld by movements of national liberation in their struggle against the Western powers" (1997, p. 25. Cited by Graeber, 2007, p. 348).

⁸⁴ As Hobson notes, "Eurocentrism typically extrapolates backwards the modern conception of political democracy all the way to Ancient Greece. It then fabricates a permanent picture of Western democracy" (2004, p. 290).

⁸⁵ According to Graeber, democratic values or ideals do not belong to one particular moral, intellectual, or cultural tradition. Democratic *practices*—processes of egalitarian decision-making—are also not a 'Western' feature since these have occurred pretty much anywhere. These "are not peculiar to any one given 'civilization,' culture, or tradition. They tend to crop up wherever human life goes on outside systematic structures of coercion" (2007, p. 331).

⁸⁶ In *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization*, Hobson demonstrates that no state in Europe was democratic or liberal before the twentieth century (2004, pp. 283-293).

all,” as Graeber points out, “without Athens, there would be no way to claim that ‘the Western tradition’ had anything inherently democratic about it” (2007, p. 365). Certainly, it was unbridled imperialism, not democracy, which laid at the heart of the European project (Davies, 2007, p. 55).

The triad of values “individualism, freedom, equality” is also considered to be European cultural heritage and part of the ‘modern’ West. However, these values are not confined to Europe even though Europe has appropriated these notions (Goody, 2007, p. 260-61). These ideas were taken from other civilizations and made part of the West by suppressing their origins. Thus, “a great deal of the knowledge as we know it today, in great many areas, camouflages the seminal contributions of Asia and Africa to the flourishing of culture and arts, science, and mathematics” (Razak, 2011, p. 24). Thus, the overall assumption that the West has pioneered the creation of the modern world and the insistence on the radical divergence between the Occident and its Others have the purpose of constructing a notion of a ‘pristine’ West that is exceptional and superior.

The construction of modernity as a Western creation also encompasses the appropriation of the ‘past.’⁸⁷ As Goody argues, “the past is conceptualized and presented according to what happened on the provincial scale of Europe, often western

⁸⁷ For Goody, the West has appropriated the very calculation of time (in the past and in the present) and applied it to the rest of the world. The imposition of temporal categories seeks to create “our perception of an advanced, forward-looking west and a static, backward-looking east” (2007, p. 18). These temporal categories are intertwined with Eurocentric spatial categories and representations of the world. Just as a ‘distinctly Christian tempo’ dominates our notions of time, our distorted conceptions of space go back to the Christian ‘mapping’ of the world and the early stages of Western colonization of the world (Goody, 2007, pp. 14-21). In addition, as Amin argues, North-South, Occident-Orient cleavages, are “presented as permanent, self-evident, and inscribed in geography (and therefore—by implicit false deduction—in history)” (2009, p. 168).

Europe, and then imposed upon the rest of the world” (2007, p. 1). In addition, European history is understood as ‘world history.’ While the ‘modern world’ is conflated with the ‘pristine’ West, the progressive story of world history is also conflated with the Rise and Triumph of the West (Hobson, 2004, p. 2). This is what Mazumdar refers to as the civilizational model of world history (2009). Thus, ‘modern’ history is understood as a triumphant account of Western achievements that is the result of its ‘innate’ qualities. As Graeber points out, “the entire history of the West can be framed as a story of ‘inventions’ and ‘discoveries’” (2007, p. 338) without recognition of the incorporation and appropriation of the accumulated knowledge of ‘non-Westerners.’ For example, Trevor-Roper argues,

The new rulers of the world, whoever they may be, will inherit a position that has been built up by Europe, and by Europe alone. It is European techniques, European examples, European ideas which have shaken the non-European world out of its past—out of barbarism in Africa, out of a far older, slower, more majestic civilisation in Asia; and the history of the world, for the last five centuries, in so far as it has significance, has been European history. I do not think that we need to make any apology if our study of history is European-centric (1965, p. 11).

The civilizational model of world history supposes the imposition of historical concepts and periods (e.g. Antiquity, feudalism, capitalism) based on Europe’s perceived particular trajectory, but that is but an ideological sequence of solely European events (Goody, 2007, p. 6). This purely Western sequence is the result of a linear idea of ‘progress.’ The Eurocentric historical periodization has established a unique line of development that goes from Antiquity to feudalism, to the Renaissance, to Capitalism. Eurocentric periodization and sequencing of ‘world history’ that are confined to Europe have the purpose of confirming the West’s long-term superiority.

The ‘eternal West,’ unique since the moment of origin, is an imaginary transhistorical construct invented by modern ideology to justify the vision of ‘Western history’ as “a progression from Ancient Greece to Rome to feudal Christian Europe to capitalist Europe” (Amin, 2009, p. 166). For Samir Amin, this mythical, Eurocentric construct:

(1) removes Ancient Greece from the very milieu in which it unfolded and developed—the Orient—in order to annex Hellenism to Europe arbitrarily; (2) retains the mark of racism, the fundamental basis on which European cultural unity was constructed; (3) interprets Christianity, also annexed arbitrarily to Europe, as the principal factor in the maintenance of European cultural unity, conforming to an unscientific vision of religious phenomena; and (4) concurrently constructs a vision of the Near East and the more distant Orients on the same racist foundation, again employing an immutable vision of religion. (2009, p. 166)

This is a teleological way of interpreting history, “that is, interpreting the past from the standpoint of the present, projecting contemporary, advantage back on to earlier times” (Goody, 2007, p. 6). In other words, at least since the nineteenth century, the West has assumed a superiority and has projected that superiority back in time, creating a teleological history to justify the inferior treatment of ‘others’ in the present (Goody, 2007, p. 286). For example, the claim that the Ancient Greeks are the origin of modern (i.e. Western) civilization goes unquestioned. But, as Wallerstein points out, “the reasons for such claims cannot be located in what happened in the past but in what is happening in the present” (1991, p. 236).

4.2. The myth of Hellenic ancestry: ‘Greece’s glory is ours’

What are the supposed origins of *Occident* or ‘European’ history? Conventional Eurocentric accounts of European/Western civilization locate its ‘roots’ in ancient Jerusalem, Athens and Rome: primarily the Jewish and Christian tradition, on the one hand, and the classical Greek and Roman tradition on the other. The idea of ‘Antiquity,’ viewed as a period and as a type of society, accounts for the singularity of the traditions inherited from Greece and Rome. The Western notion of a ‘purely European Antiquity’ “posited the emergence of Antiquity in Europe and nowhere else” (Goody, 2007, p. 304). This singular stage, unique to the West, is also viewed as having given rise to Western capitalism. Antiquity is also considered to be the beginning of the political system of the ‘polis’ and ‘democracy’ itself. This is what Goody refers to as ‘the invention of Antiquity’ (Goody, 2007). As Goody argues, “the theft of history by western Europe began with the notions of Archaic society and Antiquity, proceeding from there in a more or less straight line through feudalism and the Renaissance to capitalism” (2007, p. 26).

Ancient Greece is seen as the largest single source of European culture (Bernal, 1995). In *Black Athena*, Martin Bernal refers to the widespread interpretation of the inflated role of Ancient Greece as the ‘Aryan model,’ which is motivated by the racist desire to neglect the connections with Ancient Phoenicia and Egypt and their important role in the formation of Ancient Greece. In other words, the ‘Aryan model’ is a modern

Eurocentric construct of Greece as purely European.⁸⁸ This ‘fabrication of Ancient Greece’ serves at least two purposes. First, the account of the origins of ‘the West’ in *Hellenic* civilization allows the skipping of the Western or Christian Dark Ages.⁸⁹ As Amin argues, “the Renaissance is separated from Classical Greece by fifteen centuries of medieval history. How and on what basis is it possible, under these circumstances, to claim continuity in European culture?”⁹⁰ (2009, p. 169). Second, the invention of Ancient Greece elevates difference and exclusion across time and space, exacerbating the imaginary oppositional construct of a freedom-loving West and a tyrannical East. Inflating the role of Greece and the great rejection of the connections between Greece and Semitic and Afro-asiatic cultures serve the purpose of legitimizing long-term Western superiority. Certainly, the supposedly intellectual and moral superiority of the

⁸⁸ Downplaying the significant contributions and influences of these civilizations to the Greeks has not only relegated them to the margins of history but also to ‘barbarian’ status (Goody, 2007, p. 64). For Bernal, the Aryan model made “the history of Greece and its relations to Egypt and the Levant conform to the worldview of the nineteenth century and, specifically, to its systematic racism” (1987, p. 442).

⁸⁹ This also reinforces the ideology of separate, irreconcilable civilizations based on their *eternal* differences. As Mazumdar argues, the idea of ‘European civilization’ which opposition to ‘the East’ stemmed back in time to Ancient Greece, systematically erases eight hundred years of Europe’s Arab Muslim history, not to mention the Muslim contributions to the Renaissance (2009, p. 59).

⁹⁰ The Renaissance is usually seen as a revival or even a continuation of classical Antiquity (through humanism). However, as Goody argues, the coming of Christianity and the collapse of the Roman Empire led to a sharp break with Antiquity in post-Roman times. “In Europe following the classical period, the Christian church had been involved in setting aside a great deal of classical learning, stigmatized as pagan, as forbidden or as redundant to their beliefs, not only in the fields of the arts (viz., sculpture, theatre, and secular painting), but also in science (e.g. medicine)” (2007, p. 295). The severe and significant break required a *rebirth* in the West, “but not in the east where there had been no such formidable gap in urban culture. Indeed it was the east which helped to restore the west” (Goody, 2007, p. 295). According to Goody, “it was the east, which had not experienced the decline of the western Roman empire, that stimulated the Renaissance, since it did not go through the same disastrous collapse of ‘culture’ as western Europe.” In other words, “throughout Asia, the east did not need the same rebirth since it did not have the same death...It neither had the extensive material collapse nor did it have in the same way a restrictive, hegemonic religion (2007, p. 296). There were also earlier ‘renascences,’ such as the contributions made by Islam in Spain. And most importantly, “such rebirths were not a purely European phenomenon” (2007, p. 295). For a ‘de-centered’ account of Western Renaissance and the contributions of Arabs and Jews to this cultural movement, see Burke (1998).

West comes from the idea of superiority of the Greeks⁹¹ in terms of *math*⁹² and all *scientific* knowledge⁹³ as well as *classic* culture.⁹⁴ Goody points out that the Greek's "position was always assessed from the standpoint of the later European dominance of the world, that is, teleologically" (2007, p. 31). In other words, there is "a strong

⁹¹ For example, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), Germany's towering intellectual, contributed to the adoration of Greek intellectual superiority. As historian Nell Irvin Painter points out, "Goethe's prestige made ancient Greek intellectual superiority so dominant that German intellectuals began to claim ancient Greek bodies and culture as their true ancestors" (2010, p.64).

⁹² For instance, "Western historians have long claimed that 'real' math was invented by Greeks" (Raju, 2018, p. 266), an idea reproduced by mathematics educators (see, for example, Brodie, 2016). For example, Euclid, the purported "discoverer" of calculus is commonly visualized as a Greek white man (Euclid of Alexandria, n.d.). However, the Euclid's *Elements* comes from Alexandria in Africa. As Raju has repeatedly demonstrated, the *Elements* has been falsely attributed to Euclid (2009, 2013, 2021a, 2021b). In fact, "it is more likely that the anonymous 'author of the Elements' was a Black woman" (2018, p. 267. See also Raju, 2013). As Ragu argues, "scientific knowledge in translated Arabic texts was indiscriminately attributed to the early Greeks, without evidence" (2021a, p. 127). The supposed "discovery" of all scientific knowledge by Western civilization was nothing else than the appropriation of world scientific knowledge (in Arabic books to Greeks), that is, a monumental operation of *knowledge grab* of all pre-Crusade knowledge (Raju, 2021a).

⁹³ For example, the unquestioned assumption that the 'West/Whites discovered all science' is founded on the story of the Greek origins of science, which "rests solely on the believed inferiority and non-inventiveness of others, that they added nothing" (Raju, 2014). By offering a counter-history of the idea of 'Western science,' Raju studies the Western appropriation of scientific (pagan) knowledge. Raju argues that "from the beginning of the Christian Dark Age to the beginning of the Crusades, the story of the Greek origins of science was nowhere to be found... The story of a Greek origin of Arabic books, thus, appropriated to Europe all pre-Crusade knowledge which the Arabs and Persians had gathered from *all over the world*, and developed further" (Raju, 2009, p. 25). In *Euclide and Jesus* (2013), Raju analyzes how the Church connected mathematics to Christian doctrine, leading to a subtle religious bias in mathematics, and to its racist history. Raju shows that "just as Crusading history sought to suppress Muslim achievement, racist history systematically suppressed African achievements, attributing them all to Greek." Thus, this "false history of science was used to initiate colonial education in support of colonialism" (Raju, 2018, p. 268). Most interestingly, as Raju argues, the systematically false history of *science* was concocted by the Church during the Crusades, which attributed the beginning of science to early Greeks (2021a, p. 143). As Raju explains, "the Crusading church wanted to lay claim to valuable scientific knowledge, exactly as it later laid claim to all land in Americas and Australia" (2021a, p. 144). By attributing the origin of all scientific knowledge to early Greeks, the Crusading Church captured and appropriated indiscriminately Arabic and Muslim knowledge and deemed it as a 'Christian inheritance,' even though the evidence for purported Greek contribution to science does not exist (Raju, 2009; 2021a; 2021b).

⁹⁴ For instance, the field of classics is revered as the foundation of 'Western civilization.' Ancient Greeks and Romans are traditionally held up as the originators of (white) Western culture. This also has an aesthetic dimension. In the eighteenth century, Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–68), the German scholar who is often called the father of art history, contented that "the whiter the body is, the more beautiful it is," and that "color contributes to beauty, but it is not beauty" (Talbot, 2018. See also Bond 2017a, 2017b). Thus, "color in sculpture came to mean barbarism, for they assumed that the lofty ancient Greeks were too sophisticated to color their art" (Painter, 2010, p. 61). As Painter argues, Winckelmann elevated Greek statuary into emblems of beauty creating a new white aesthetic (2010, p. 61). Moreover, ancient white marble statuary not only symbolize the equation of whiteness with beauty, but also show the idea of a superior rationality that distinguished white/Western aesthetic from non-Western art, or the superiority of one form of knowledge over another (Castro-Gómez, 2008). As Grosfoguel (2011). explains, there is "an aesthetic hierarchy of high art vs. naïve or primitive art where the West is considered superior high art, and the non-West is considered as producers of inferior expressions of art institutionalized in Museums, Art Galleries and global art markets." For a reconstruction of the German invention of white Hellenism, see Bernal (1987).

element of teleology behind the European claim that its tradition distinguished itself in earlier times when its subsequent superiority was seen as having its origin” (2007, p. 287). Hellenocentrism supposes the superiority of the European inheritance from Greece over all others. The invention of ‘science,’ ‘art,’ and ‘rational’ philosophy, are regarded as Greek inventions as well as ‘politics’ itself⁹⁵ along with the values of ‘democracy,’⁹⁶ ‘freedom,’⁹⁷ and the ‘rule of law.’⁹⁸ For example, in *Greece in the making*, historian Robin Osborne says

It is not entirely a European myth that in the classical Greek world we find the origins of very many features which are fundamental to our own western heritage. Whole modes of thought and expression have their fount and origin in Greece between 500 and 300 Bc, self-conscious abstract political thought and moral philosophy; rhetoric as a study in its own right; tragedy, comedy, parody, and history; western naturalistic art and the female nude; democracy as theory and practice. (2009, p. 2)

⁹⁵ For example, in his 1973 *Democracy Ancient and Modern*, Classical scholar Moses Finley, argued that “it was the Greeks, after all, who discovered not only democracy but also politics, the art of reaching decisions by public discussion.” In other words, “the Greeks were then—and this no one will dispute—the first to think systematically about politics, to observe, describe, comment and eventually to formulate political theories” (2019, p. 8). Others have also attributed to the Greek the ‘discovery of politics’ (see Meier, 1990). For Slavoj Žižek, the idea of ‘politics proper’ “is a phenomenon that appeared for the first time in ancient Greece” (1998, p. 988).

⁹⁶ It is commonly assumed that ‘democracy’ is a distinctively ‘Western’ idea that began its history in ancient Athens. For example, Finley argues that “the Greeks, and only the Greeks, discovered democracy in that sense, precisely as Christopher Columbus, not some Viking Seaman, discovered America” (2019, p. 8). Although Finley recognizes the existence of prior examples of democracies, “their impact on history, on later societies, was null.” However, as Goody argues, the Greeks “did not invent the practice of democracy. Representation in one form or other has been a feature of the politics and struggles of many peoples.” In reality, this idea “represents a totally European and literary appropriation of history, of the ‘discovery’ of democracy” (2007, p. 50).

⁹⁷ There is also the unquestioned assumption that the notion of ‘freedom’ as a European attribute, was inherited from the Greeks. Just as the Greeks discovered ‘democracy,’ they also ‘discovered individual freedom.’ As Finley argued, “the Greeks, it is well known, discovered both the idea of individual freedom and the institutional framework in which it could be realized. The pre-Greek world—the world of the Sumerians, Babylonians, Egyptians, and Assyrians; and I cannot refrain from adding the Mycenaeans—was, in a very profound sense, a world without free men, in the sense in which the west has come to understand that concept” (1959, p. 164). The Greek’s ‘discovery’ of freedom is a Eurocentric invention used to justify the Western monopoly of freedom (Goody, 2007).

⁹⁸ The ‘rule of law’ is not associated with the Greek but with the Roman tradition. For example, the widespread idea that individual property rights were a creation of Roman law confirms that these are an invention of the West. This Eurocentric idea, however, overlooks the contributions of other cultures and civilizations to the idea of the ‘rule of law’ and ‘individual property rights.’

Osborne goes on to suggest that the Greek laid the foundations of the western world, so when studying Ancient Greece, “we study also the conditions of our own emergence as a civilized society and as civilized individuals in the western world” (2009, p. 3). Osborne goes as far as to say that classical Greece “created the modern western world” (2009, p. 17). In reality, the modern world ‘created Greece’ in the eighteenth century to reaffirm the uniqueness of Europe’s history and ancestry. Thus, the invention of a European Antiquity coming directly from Greece allows to proclaim a phase in the history of the world that is unique to Europe. This same ideological process is also evident in the construction of ‘Western modernity,’ as I will explore in the following section

4.3. The Myth of ‘Western Modernity’

Modernity is usually portrayed as a purely European and Western phenomenon associated with (industrial) capitalism.⁹⁹ According to Enrique Dussel, the concept of modernity rose to prominence at the end of the fifteenth century or the beginning of the sixteenth in works such as Amerigo Vespucci’s 1503 *Mundus Novus*. However, the terms *new* and *modern* only suited the culture of *Occidental Europe*¹⁰⁰ (1994, p. 173). In fact, the usual interpretation of *modernity* is understood as European *common sense* that sets the parameter and criterion of rationality and humanity (Dussel, 1994, p. 61).

⁹⁹ According to Dussel, in the eighteenth century, the association of modernity to (industrial) capitalism is included in the equation that goes as follows: Modernity = Europe + Occident + Capitalist. For example, Max Weber understood *modernity* through the process of bureaucratization, secularization, and other phenomena associated solely with capitalism (Dussel, 1994, p. 173).

¹⁰⁰ As Dussel argues, the fusion between the idea of *Hellenicity* and the idea of *Europe-as-center* (which originated in 1492) in the eighteenth century, allowed the creation of *Occidental Europe* as a concept and as an ideology (1994, p. 172)

Generally, *modernity* signifies rational emancipation, a process that involves leaving behind a state of ‘self-incurred immaturity’ by means of reason as a necessary process of the human condition (Kant, 1992). The concept of emancipating reason—expressed in the triplet of liberty, equality, and property—is traditionally accepted as exclusively European, in which Europe becomes the starting point and the center of modernity and rational emancipation. Western modernity is also characterized by its claim of universality. *Eurocentrism* is precisely a European particularity with pretensions of universality (which also entails the violent imposition of *occidental culture* on other particularities)¹⁰¹ (Dussel, 1994, p. 31n45). Certainly, hegemonic interpretations of modernity are unanimously founded on profound Eurocentric fallacies that obscure the real origin and the ‘myth of modernity.’

The birth of modernity is usually located in the European seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; this is the period of Enlightenment and of the birth of capitalism (Amin, 2009, p. 13). Dussel’s, however, offers a different conceptualization of modernity by locating its ‘birth’ in 1492 when a real worldwide expansion took place in connection with control over the Atlantic (1993a, 1995, 1996, 2000). For Dussel, this is when “Europe could constitute itself as a unified ego exploring, conquering, colonizing an alterity that gave back its image of itself” (1993a, p. 66). In this process, the peripheral colonial world was constituted but at the same time occluded. In other words, modernity began when Europe affirmed itself as the ‘center’ of the World (and

¹⁰¹ For Dussel, “modern European ethnocentrism is the only one that might pretend to claim universality for itself. Modernity’s Eurocentrism lies in the confusion between abstract universality and the concrete world hegemony derived from Europe’s position as center” (2000, p. 471).

the ‘beginning’ and absolute ‘end’ of Universal History), and the corollary constitution of other cultures as its ‘periphery’ (Dussel, 2000, p. 471). This constitutive alterity of modernity, the ‘other side’ was dominated, exploited, and concealed. Thus, 1492, “marks the origin of a process of concealment or misrecognition of the non-European” (Dussel, 1993a, p. 66). Latin America entered ‘world history’ in 1492 when it became the *first colony* (the first ‘periphery’ before Africa and Asia) of modern Europe.¹⁰² For Dussel, Latin America “was not ‘dis-covered’ (*descubierto*), or admitted, as such, but concealed, or ‘covered-up’ (*encubierto*)” (199a3, p. 66).

Dussel demonstrates that “the experience not only of ‘discovery’ but especially of ‘conquest’ is essential in the constitution of the modern ego...a subjectivity that is the ‘center’ and ‘end’ of history”¹⁰³ (1993a, p. 74), that is, the modern subjectivity itself. This modern *ego* is originally the subjectivity of the ‘Conquistador,’ a violent *ego* shaped by the quasi-divine superiority of the European ego (*Yo-Europeo*). Therefore, a violent and military modern ego (*Yo-moderno*) is constituted as a conquering ego (*Yo-conquistador*) in the praxis of domination (Dussel, 1994, p. 46). For this reason, Dussel (1994, 2000) explains that the *ego conquiro* (I conquer) *imposed* its will on the indigenous populations of the Americas. The ‘Conquest’ is an extremely violent

¹⁰² This is the absolute origin of the first world-system (Dussel, 1994). In *The Modern World-System*, Wallerstein states that “the Americas became the periphery of the European world-economy in the sixteenth century while Asia remained an *external arena*” (2011, p. 336). Wallerstein defines a world-system as an economic-material entity based on an extensive division of labor and that is divided into core-states and peripheral areas (2011, p. 348-49).

¹⁰³ In 1958 *La invención de América* O’Gorman questions one of the foundational myths of Western culture: the Discovery of America in October 1492. O’Gorman deconstructs the unquestioned narratives of the ‘discovery’ that have founded traditional history and historiography. For O’Gorman, the idea that the American continent was ‘discovered’ “reduces itself to an absurdity when it reaches the limits of its logical possibilities. The reason for this absurdity is the substantialistic concept of America as a thing in itself” (1961, p. 45). See also Dussel’s “From the Discovery to the Invention of the New World” in Dussel (1995).

affirmation of the *ego conquiro*. This is the first modern ‘will-to-power’ (*voluntad de poder*), and it preceded for more than a century the Cartesian *ego cogito*. In other words, the colonizing *ego* becomes a conquering *ego* toward the modern *ego cogito*. It is a process that culminated in Descartes’s 1636 presentation of the *ego cogito*, the absolute origin of solipsistic discourse (Dussel, 1995, p. 48). Hence, the ‘discovery’ and the ‘Conquest’ of the Americas allowed the Other to be ‘dis-covered’ (*des-cubierto*), the Other who became raw material to be conquered, colonized, modernized, and then immediately ‘covered’ (*en-cubierto*) in his dignity and identity.¹⁰⁴ In sum, 1492 marks the first moment of the historical constitution of modernity. It is when Europe (Spain and Portugal) constituted the Other as dominated under the control of the *Conquistador*, and of the dominium of the ‘center’ over the ‘periphery’ (Dussel, 1994, p. 11).¹⁰⁵

As I mentioned, the hegemonic ‘concept’ of modernity refers to emancipation through modern reason. However, it also entails that other peoples and cultures will follow the path of a *superior* civilization (major premise of Eurocentrism), a process in which *modernization* becomes the emancipation of barbarism and even a moral obligation that, if necessary, requires violent means to be imposed by the missionaries

¹⁰⁴ From a Eurocentric/modern perspective, Latin America remained outside ‘World History’ until it was ‘discovered,’ so 1492 marks its ‘beginning’—thus, the (Eurocentric) construction of ‘Pre-Columbian’ history does not count as ‘world history.’ However, from the underside of modernity, 1492 also marks the loss of freedom and identity, and the beginning of extended death and desolation of indigenous peoples and cultures in the Americas (the ‘end of the world’). The humanity of the colonized Other was denied, and his alterity was destroyed. The ‘denied alterity’ is the victimized side of modernity, constituting the other modernity. As Dussel argues, “For Hegel Europe was the origin and goal of history, while for the Indians Europe’s modernizing presence spelled the termination of their world. The meaning of things is reversed when one views them from modernity’s other face” (1995, p. 161n25).

¹⁰⁵ For Dussel, major contemporary thinkers of the “center” (Europe and North America) have not only dismissed the discovery of the Americas as the constitutive fact of modernity, but they also discount the importance of Spain and Portugal between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries. As Dussel argues, at the end of the fifteenth century Spain was the only European power with the capacity for external territorial conquest, but the hegemonic “concept of modernity occludes the role of Europe’s own Iberian periphery, and in particular Spain, in its formation” (1993a, p. 71).

of civilization.¹⁰⁶ In other words, the civilizing mission of modernity also entails the ‘emancipation’ of inferior and primitive peoples and cultures from their own (culpable) ‘immaturity.’¹⁰⁷ Thus, the ‘conquest,’ and the process of domination and violence that it entails, becomes an emancipatory act. The ‘*conquistador*’ is then a ‘*libertador*.’ Here is where Dussel differentiates between the ‘concept of modernity’ (the emancipatory definition) from the ‘myth of modernity’ (the justification of an irrational praxis of violence). The violent praxis of domination inflicted on the barbarian Other serves towards the emancipation of the barbarian Other in the ‘modernizing’ and ‘civilizing’ process (Dussel, 1994, p. 70). Thus, “after the innocent Other’s victimization, the myth of modernity declares the Other the culpable cause of that victimization and absolves the modern subject of any guilt for the victimizing act” (1995, p. 64). The perpetrators of violence are not only exonerated and exculpated from any blame, but they are also cleansed and revered on the basis of their civilizing mission. For Dussel, the emancipating ‘myth of modernity’ enacts a giant *inversion*: “the innocent victim becomes culpable and the culpable victimizer becomes innocent”¹⁰⁸ (1995, p. 67). In

¹⁰⁶ The infinite sense of superiority gives Europe the “absolute right” of subjugating the rest of the world. For example, the French *Noir Code* of 1685 (a product of the French Revolution), and the abominable conditions imposed by France on Haiti for daring to enact the ideals of the French Revolution, looked to safeguard the “right” of the oppressor. Is not this an example of modern irrationality?

¹⁰⁷ The victims of modernity are not only culpable of their own barbarity but also of resisting the *emancipation project*. The culpability of the barbarians resides in their ‘opposition’ to modernization [sic] and Christianization” (Dussel, 1996, p. 61s26). As Dussel argues, “the conquered victims are culpable for their own violent conquest and for their own victimization. They should have abandoned their barbarity voluntarily instead of obliging the victimizing conquistadores to use force against them. Hence, so-called underdeveloped peoples double their culpability when they irrationally rebel against the emancipatory conquest their culpability deserved in the first place” (1995, p. 66).

¹⁰⁸ According to Dussel, the myth follows these steps: “(a) Modern civilization understands itself as most developed and superior, since it lacks awareness of its own ideological Eurocentrism. (b) This superiority obliges it to develop the most primitive, uneducated, barbarous extremes. (c) This developmental process ought to follow Europe’s, since development is unilineal according to the uncritically accepted developmental fallacy. (d) Since the barbarian opposes this civilizing process, modern praxis ought to exercise violence (a just colonial war) as a last resort in order to destroy any obstacles to modernization. (e) This domination produces its diverse victims and justifies its actions

sum, as Dussel points out, “modernity defined itself as an emancipatory project with respect to the ‘us,’ but did not realize its mythical-sacrificial character with respect to the ‘others’” (2000, p. 474-75). *Enlightened reason* was confined to Western Europe (more precisely, white male Christian Europeans). Outside Europe, modernity constituted a victimizing and destructive ‘myth’ to legitimize devastating domination and the irrationality of sacrificial violence. C.K. Raju, mathematician, philosopher, and historian of science, argues that

The West has boasted of an ‘age of enlightenment’. What was that strange Western ‘enlightenment’ which not only permitted genocide + slavery but allowed Westerners to celebrate and take pride in the mass killing and inhumane treatment of other human beings and then to call this spreading of ‘civilization’? (2021a, p. 130).

Modernity as a ‘myth’ has always justified civilizing, genocidal violence—in the 16th century to impose Christianity, in the 20th, democracy and the free market (Dussel, 1994, p. 80). The civilizing mission of modernity has a *sacrificial character*: the victim of violence is a necessary sacrifice for human progress (Dussel, 1994, p. 474). In 1550, Bartolomé de Las Casas utterly rejected the irrationality of the origin of modernity and the injustice inherent to its sacrificial praxis.¹⁰⁹ De Las Casas exposed

as a sacrifice, an inevitable and quasi-ritual act. Civilizing heroes transform their victims into holocausts of a salvific sacrifice, whether these victims are colonized peoples, African slaves, women, or the ecologically devastated earth. (f) For modernity, the barbarian is at *fault* for opposing the civilizing process, and modernity, ostensibly innocent, seems to be emancipating the fault of its own victims. (g) Finally, modernity, thinking itself as the civilizing power, regards the sufferings and sacrifices of backward and immature peoples, enslavable races, and the weaker sex as the inevitable costs of modernization” (Dussel, 1995, pp. 136-37).

¹⁰⁹ Dussel traces the origin of the “myth of modernity” to the philosophical and theological dispute between Bartolomé de Las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda. In the Great Debate of Valladolid (1550-1551), Sepúlveda presents four arguments to justify Europe’s domination and violence as *necessary* (Just War) in the name of civilization. The arguments were: the Indians are barbarous; Indians commit crimes against natural law; Indians oppress and kill innocent persons; war may be waged against infidels in order to prepare the way for preaching the faith. In contrast, de Las Casas argues in favor of the dignity and innocence of indigenous peoples and rejected the validity of any argument justifying any initial or *Just War* against them. Thus, de Las Casas vindicates the real

the fallacy of modernity for attributing a supposed immaturity and culpability to peoples, in order to legitimize the *modern*'s aggression (Dussel, 1994, p. 72). For the first time, the origin of the 'myth' of modernity that legitimized the '*Conquista*' (and subsequent 'modernizations') is confronted. The constitutive, irrational praxis of violence of modernity (concealed by modern reason) was exposed. And, the victimized Others are not only not culpable of the violence inflicted on them, as De Las Casas points out, but the real culpable are the supposed *innocents*: the civilizing European heroes (Dussel, 1994, p. 80). Prophetically, De Las Casas premonished "the brutal violence that 'modernity' will scatter throughout the peripheral, colonial world"¹¹⁰ (Dussel, 1995, p. 172). The civilizing and exculpating myths of modern violence have been enacted from the colonial 'Just War' to the infamous Kipling's 'white man's burden.' The 'civilizing mission' behind the 'holy' Spanish and Portuguese conquest of the Americas, to the US Manifest Destiny, and the Monroe Doctrine, to Israel's colonial war and genocidal occupation of Palestine, the 'missionaries of civilization' have enacted the sacrificial-mythical character of modernity and the irrationality of conquering violence. The myth of modernity conceals the sacrificial violence and

emancipatory meaning of modernity by discovering and exposing the concealed irrationality behind the attribution of culpability of the Other and the justification of violence (Dussel, 1994, p. 77-78). For a study of the Valladolid disputation, see Hanke (1974).

¹¹⁰ Modernity's cruelty, barbarism, and irrational violence continues to be invisible, concealed, to its emancipative, rational, enlightened side even in contemporary times. The prevalent racism that justified the holocaust against the Jews under Nazism (and the refined and systematic way of exterminating them), is also constitutive of modernity and its premise of superiority of the white race over inferior races. The indigenous populations of the Americas were the victims of the first holocaust of the violent "myth of modernity." As David E. Stannard argues, "the destruction of the Indians of the Americas was, far and away, the most massive act of genocide in the history of the world" (1992, p. x). C.K. Raju points out, "there is no law against the denial of *this* holocaust" (2021a, p. 136). On the holocaust in the Americas, see Churchill, 1997; Pagán, 1992; Stannard, 1992. The commerce of millions of Africans slaves under the slaving/colonial order is also constitutive of modernity. The institution of slavery and its irrational violence was accepted and justified by *emancipatory reason*. Around five million of enslaved Africans died in slave ships. This is the second holocaust of modernity (Dussel, 1994, p. 153n14. See also Pagán, 1992).

exculpates modernity's atrocities. Thus, the victims of modernity are "victims of an irrational act that contradicts modernity's ideal of rationality" (2000, p. 474). The religious origins that provided the foundations for the widespread sacrificial violence of the myth of modernity can be traced back to the colonial Doctrine of Discovery, as I will examine in the next section.

Chapter Five

5. Tracing Christofascism's Doctrine of Domination: The Christian Doctrine of Discovery



FIGURE 6. From the Spanish caravel to Apollo XII

This is the official crew insignia for Apollo 12, the United States' second lunar landing mission in 1969 (NASA, 2009). Instead of the Cross of the Order of Christ that would mark the conquest of the Americas and the emblem of the age of "discovery," the spatial caravel ship has the US flag. According to the description of the logo, "As the clipper ship brought foreign shores closer to the United States and marked the increased utilization of the seas by this nation, spacecraft have opened the way to the other planets" (NASA, 2009). A caravel ship was also used for the logo of the STS-30 of 1989, that is, the 29th NASA Space Shuttle mission, and the fourth mission for Space Shuttle Atlantis. According to the description of the logo, "A Spanish caravel similar to the ship on the official Magellan program logo commemorates the 16th century explorer's journey and his legacy of adventure and discovery" (NASA, n.d.-a). According to the NASA website, the Magellan mission of 1989, which also has a caravel in its logo, "was the first spacecraft to image the entire surface of Venus and made several discoveries about the planet" (NASA, n.d.-b).

In reaffirming our heritage as a free nation, we must remember that America has always been a frontier nation. Now *we must embrace the next frontier, America's manifest destiny in the stars*. I am asking Congress to fully fund the Artemis program to ensure that the next man and the first woman on the Moon will be American astronauts, using this as a launching pad *to ensure that America is the first nation to plant its flag on Mars*.

Donald Trump's State of the Union Address (The White House, 2020a)

Think about this country. I don't know of any other country in the world that was settled predominantly by people who were coming to practice their faith. They came here because they were not allowed to practice their particular faith in their own country, and so they came here mostly from Europe, and they set up a country that was based on Judeo-Christian principles. When I say Judeo

Christian, the Mosaic Laws, the 10 commandments, and the teachings of Jesus Christ, the morals and teachings of Jesus Christ. That's what our founding documents are based upon.

It's in our DNA...*We came here and created a blank slate. We birthed a nation from nothing. I mean, there was nothing here. I mean, yes, we have Native Americans, but candidly, there isn't much Native American culture in American culture.*

Rick Santorum, former US Senator (Young America's Foundation, 2021)

President, thank you for your warm welcome. Thank you for this occasion, which is on April 17, and April 17 marks *the anniversary of the agreement that allowed Christopher Columbus to make his trip*. And I say to remember how ancient are our ties, but also to remind that we both share another fight, which is the fight against the woke and DEI ideology that would like to erase our history...I was saying it before, such a *Western nationalism*...But, I know that when I speak about [the] *West*, mainly

I don't speak about a geographical space, I speak about the *civilization*, and *I want to make that civilization stronger...the goal for me is to make the West great again*

Georgia Meloni, Prime Minister of Italy, remarks at the White House (PBS NewsHour, 2025)

After Trump's State of the Union Address in 2020, James Morhard, Deputy Administrator of NASA under the first Trump administration, posted on Twitter, "Manifest Destiny was the belief that the United States was destined to promote democracy & free enterprise across North America. Tonight, President Trump said, 'America's Manifest Destiny in the stars.' We go to the Moon & then Mars to share those same values with all humankind" (Morhard, 2020). In the Inaugural Address of his second administration, Trump stated, "The United States will once again consider itself a growing nation—one that increases our wealth, *expands our territory*, builds our cities, raises our expectations, and *carries our flag into new and beautiful horizons. We will pursue our Manifest Destiny into the stars, launching American astronauts to plant the Stars and Stripes on the planet Mars*" (The White House, 2025a. Emphasis added). Matt Anderson was nominated by the Trump administration to be Deputy Administrator of NASA. When he received Trump's nomination, he posted on X:

I will proudly help lead the men and women of this agency as we race to return Americans to the Moon, *plant Old Glory on Mars*, and usher in a new Golden Age of innovation, solidifying American space leadership. America won the Space Race to the Moon inspiring the world and achieving ‘the impossible’ in the process. Under President Trump, we *will win today’s Space Race and put America First on the Final Frontier!* (Anderson, 2025. Emphasis added).

The Tricontinental locates the origins of religious fundamentalism of the US Christian right in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a reaction to science, humanism, and the values of modernity that emerged from the Enlightenment. This reactionary project was linked to the idea of ‘Manifest Destiny,’ “which developed in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century and held that the conquest of the American West by US colonisers was God’s wish” (Tricontinental, 2022, p. 10). This colonialist vision was adapted by the Christian right in the second half of the twentieth century to provide legitimation to US imperialist action around the world, including in Latin America (Tricontinental, 2022, p. 10), and it remains a colonial doctrine invoked to this day. For Robert J. Miller, as a moralistic expansion, “Manifest Destiny grew naturally out of the principles and legal elements of the Doctrine of Discovery” (2006, p. 115). For Masilo Lepuru, the doctrine of Discovery is also the foundation of the Christian racist fantasy of the civilizing mission (2025). Building on these insights, I argue that, to trace the origins of Christian fundamentalism that lent legitimacy to the civilizing mission of colonial doctrines such as Manifest Destiny and the Monroe Doctrine, as well as the fascist colonial projects from the twentieth century onward, we must go back to the creation of the colonial doctrine of *discovery-as-conquest* and the Church’s sanctifying of the divine *right of domination* over peoples and territories.

Inspired by the *holy conquests* of the Crusades, the discovery Vatican bulls of the fifteenth century laid the religious foundations for a colonial doctrine of domination, the legacy of which persists to this day.

Even before the so-called “discovery” of the Americas, the Catholic Christian Church claimed the spiritual lordship of the whole world. As Thomas McMahon points out, popes authorized war against non-Christians a millennium before Columbus (2022). In the 15th century, the Church issued a series of papal bulls or decrees that extended dominion to the Catholic nations of Europe over “discovered” lands during the Age of Discovery. “Along with sanctifying the seizure of non-Christian lands,” the papal bulls listed below “encouraged the enslavement of native, non-Christian peoples in Africa and the New World” (Indigenous Values Initiative, 2018a).

- 1436 *Romanus Pontifex* (Pope Eugenius IV): Slavery of non-Christians
- 1452 *Dum Diversas* (Pope Nicholas V): War against the Enemies of Christ
- 1455 *Romanus Pontifex* (Pope Nicholas V): Sanctifying the Right to Conquest
- 1493 *Inter caetera* (Pope Alexander VI): Cutting One Half of The World

The first Papal bull of consequence was the 1436 *Romanus Pontifex*¹¹¹ which “granted to Portugal full title to any territories in the African region ‘acquired or to be

¹¹¹ The intense competition between Portugal and Castile over the African trade in the 1430s, resulted in violent attacks on the native population of the Canary Islands. The Pope promulgated papal bulls (*Creator Omnium* and *Regimini Gregis Dominici* in 1434, and *Sicut dudum* in 1435) to protect the natives who had converted to Christianity. Thus, the Pope banned further conquest of the Islands in order to settle the Spanish and Portuguese claims to control and colonize the *barbarous* Canarians. Following the crusading tradition, the Pope intervened, relying on “medieval Church legal doctrine on the diminished rights of self-rule belonging to non-Christian pagan peoples” (Williams, 1991, p. 61). King Edward I of Portugal wrote an appeal to Pope Eugenius IV to continue his conquest on behalf of Christianity arguing that “the infidel Canarians’ lack of the accouterments of Christian European civilization proved that they were barbarians” (Williams, 1992, p. 69). In 1436, the Pope granted the appeal by issuing the bull *Romanus Pontifex*, “confirming Portugal’s exclusive rights to colonize not only the Canaries, but other parts of infidel-held Africa as well” (Williams, 1991, p. 62). In other words, the bull authorized the subjugation and colonization of the African people by granting “Portugal exclusive control of the Islands to civilize and convert the Canary Islanders to the ‘one true religion’ and ‘for the salvation of the souls of the pagans of the islands’” (Miller, 2019, p. 36). According to Mohamed Adhikari, the role of Portugal and especially of Spain

acquired' by the Crown" (Williams, 1991, 63). Through this bull, the Catholic Church legitimated the origins of the Portuguese trading and slaving empire on the West African coast.¹¹² As Raju argues, "the church had authorized the slavery of non-Christians, significantly *before* the beginnings of the transatlantic slave trade" (2021a, p. 137). The legal ideology of crusading conquest and colonization embedded in *Romanus Pontifex* was reissued and reaffirmed throughout the fifteenth century constituting the origin of the papal sanctioning of Christian subjugation and enslavement over non-Christian peoples all over the world.

In 1452, Pope Nicholas V issued the papal bull *Dum Diversas* to recognize Portugal's rights to territories it had "discovered" along the West Coast of Africa. The papal decree also authorized Portugal's King Alfonso V to "invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens (Muslims) and pagans whatsoever, and other enemies of Christ...to perpetual slavery," as well as to "appropriate" all "dominions,

in the conquest of the Islands resulted in "the annihilation of the aboriginal societies of the Canary archipelago...[and] represents modern Europe's first overseas settler colonial genocide" (2017, p. 1), becoming "a prelude to orgies of human destructiveness" that followed (Stannard, 1992, p. ix. See also Tostado, 2023). In *Born in Blackness*, Howard W. French suggests that the genocide that Spain committed against the Guanches on the Canary Islands could be an even more important milestone to mark the dawn of a new era, even more important than Columbus famous voyage in 1492 (2021, p. 59).

¹¹² The doctrine of "discovery" legitimized the papal sanctioning of Christian enslavement and power over non-Christian. For this reason, discovery and slavery cannot be separated. Between 1415 and 1517, approximately 100 papal letters were issued to Spain and Portugal addressing newly discovered lands in the Atlantic Ocean region (Muldoon, 2005, p. 81). In general, the Vatican papal bulls and papal decrees of the fifteenth century dealing with African slavery "endorsed the forced serfdom of black Africans carried out by the Portuguese Crown" (Pagán, 1992, p. 194). After Portugal conquered Ceuta in 1415, Pope Martin V issued *Sane charissimus* (1418) to appeal to Christian kings and princes to support João I of Portugal in his Crusade against Africa to fight and conquer the Saracen Muslims and other non-believers. Like in the Crusades of the Middle Ages when the Papacy bestowed dominium over non-Christian territories, Martin V granted the right of possession to King João I as a reward for his Crusade against Africa, by granting that the right to own the territories would exclusively belong to the King and his successors (Adiele, 2017, p. 272). *Sane charissimus* constitutes the first foundational papal bull that supported the invasion of Africa (Adiele, 2017, p. 268). As Adiele argues, this "is a Crusade Bull declaring war on Africa and served as a papal legitimization of the Portuguese economic and politically motivated military raids in Africa" (2017, p. 269). In 1419, Martin V also issued the bull *Cum charissimus* to reinforce *Sane charissimus* and confirm his blatant support to the king of Portugal in his war against the so-called "enemies" of the Christian faith (Adiele, 2017, p. 273). The aftermath of the crusade and discovery Vatican bulls of the fifteenth century was the mass enslavement of Black Africans by Europeans for over 350 years.

possessions, and goods, and to convert them to...their use and profit” (Indigenous Values Initiative, 2018a). *Dum Diversas* constitutes the papal sanctioning of colonialism, genocide, and slavery as a divine moral cause. The enslavement of Africans was its immediate result. The idea that the enslavement of infidels (non-Christians) would secure the salvation of their souls served to legitimize Portugal’s domination over the Atlantic slave trade. As C.K. Raju argues, “the church had authorized the slavery of non-Christians, significantly *before* the beginnings of the transatlantic slave trade: so our focus should be not on the trans-Atlantic nature of the subsequent slave trade, but on the relevant church dogmas responsible for its origins and the various forms of the manifestations of that same dogma today” (2021a, p. 137).

In 1455, Pope Nicholas V issued *Romanus Pontifex*¹¹³ (not to be confused with the 1436 bull of the same title), which declared war against all “infidels” and “perfidious enemies of Christ” situated “even in the most remote and undiscovered places” in order to subject them to Christian dominium. This bull gave Portugal the eternal right over “undiscovered lands,” sanctioning and protecting Portugal’s further expansion and *right to conquest*¹¹⁴ non-Christian lands “in the name of Christ” and against the

¹¹³ The rights given to Portugal in *Dum Diversas* (1452) and *Romanus Pontifex* (1455) were reaffirmed by the papal bull *Inter caetera*, decreed by Pope Calixtus in 1456 (not to be confused with the 1493 bull of the same title). *Along with guarantying Portugal’s African colonizing monopoly*, the bull *Inter caetera* of 1456 granted Portugal’s military Order of Christ (the successor organization of the Knights Templar) ecclesiastic control over those non-Christian territories. This military Order of Christ was responsible for all the military conquests and slave raids in West Africa recorded by Prince Henry the Navigator in both Africa and India (Adiele, 2017, p. 369). In 1460, Pope Pius II also gave his support for the activities of the Portuguese in Africa in the Bull *Dum tuam Singularem*. In 1481, Pope Sixto IV issued the bull *Aeterni regis* which confirmed the bulls *Romanus Pontifex* (1455) and *Inter caetera* (1456) and ratified the Treaty of Alcáçova signed by Spain and Portugal in 1479. The latter gave Portugal exclusive rights over its conquered territories in the Atlantic and those to be “discovered.”

¹¹⁴ The *right of conquest*, that is, the notion that a state is entitled to claim sovereignty over conquered territory in virtue of a war or military victory, is a racist doctrine that constitutes one of the oldest customary rules of international relations. For a study of the theoretical foundations of the right of conquest, its historical importance both in the establishment of the European colonial empires and in the relations between the European states themselves, see Korman, 1996.

“enemies of the faith,” and to “dispose” their “property and their other dominions” “acquired or to be acquired” (Indigenous Values Initiative, 2018b). *Romanus Pontifex* also became the basis for Portugal’s later claim to the lands in the “New World.”¹¹⁵

In 1493, Spain countered Portugal’s claim and sought papal approval when it seemed that Columbus had discovered the western route to Asia. Thus, in 1493, Pope Alexander VI decreed the bull *Inter caetera*¹¹⁶ to grant Spain “only” those lands that at the time of their “discovery” were not in the *possession* of another “Christian king.” The bull granted Spain’s “all-encompassing power, authority and jurisdiction” over those lands in the name of Christendom with the goal of “securing the salvation of souls and subduing the barbarous nations and bringing them back to the faith itself” (Indigenous Values Initiative, 2022). In other words, Spain was granted papally conferred rights to colonize, civilize, and Christianize the indigenous peoples of the New World (Williams, 1991, p. 66). The Pope established a line of demarcation for the spheres from the North to the South Pole (along 38 degrees west latitude). Thus, the Pope sanctified the division and ownership of around half the world by establishing that “discovered” and “undiscovered” non-Christian lands to the west of the line were

¹¹⁵ After Columbus first voyage, King João II of Portugal claimed Columbus’s “discovered” lands on the grounds of Papal bull *Aeterni regis* of 1481 and the Treaty of Alcáçova of 1479.

¹¹⁶ Issued on May 4, 1493, *Inter caetera* superseded two previous bulls: *Inter caetera* and *Eximiae devotionis*, dated May 3. The bull *Dudum siquidem* of September 26, 1493, supplemented the *Inter caetera* of May 4. These Vatican bulls are known as the bulls of donation, also called the Alexandrine Bulls (McMahon, 2022). However, as Thomas McMahon points out, “Christians were invading non-Christian countries long before Columbus. By focusing on the papal bulls of donation in 1493, we ignore and forget how popes authorized war against non-Christians a millennium before Columbus. The papal bulls of donation in 1493 were the last in a series of similar bulls over a span of 500 years” (2022, p. 8). On the history of the relations of the Catholic Church and “infidels” during the Middle Ages, see Muldoon (1979). For a comprehensive history of the Alexandrine Bulls in the context of the Middle Ages, see Weckmann (1949).

to be Spanish possessions and those to the east belonged to Portugal.¹¹⁷ As scholar Antonia Malchik argues, “the rulers were, in fact, given express encouragement to claim not only lands and resources, but ownership of non-Christian people themselves” (2022). Hence, “the *Dum Diversas*, the *Romanus Pontifex* and the *Inter Caetera* came to serve as the basis and justification for the Doctrine of Discovery, the global slave-trade of the 15th and 16th centuries, and the Age of Imperialism” (Indigenous Values Initiative, 2018a. Emphasis added).¹¹⁸

European powers claimed absolute rights of domination over indigenous, non-European lands based on Eurocentric ideas of European and Christian superiority. The Catholic Church granted ownership of the non-European world and justified colonialism in the name of a divine design to spread Christendom. Thus, God becomes the supreme justification for the supposedly secular mission of modernity (Dussel, 1994, p. 56). Christian European monarchs were God’s “missionaries” who assumed the burden of carrying Western civilization and Christianity to the savages. Thus, the papal bulls divinely sanctioned the superior right of Christian discovery, which meant the exclusive right to conquer and possess, in other words, the right of invasion and

¹¹⁷ Spain and Portugal immediately started negotiations that resulted in the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) (Tordesillas in Portuguese). The latter moved the demarcation line further west (47°37' W). The treaty recognized Portugal’s right to colonize part of the New World and claim to what would later become Brazil. Pope Julius II gave the treaty formal papal sanction in a bull of 1506. In the Treaty of Zaragoza (1529), the dividing line was extended through both poles which divided the Pacific Ocean and its islands and lands, encompassing the entire world.

¹¹⁸ The Discovery Doctrine is still embedded in the legal frameworks and systems of colonial and colonized parts of the globe, and it has never been renounced. However, there have been international calls to revoke the Discovery Doctrine. For example, the Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery calls on the Christian Church to address the extinction, enslavement, and extraction done in the name of Christ on Indigenous lands (see Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery, n.d.). In addition, in 2012, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues held an open debate on “the enduring impact of the Discovery Doctrine on indigenous peoples and the right to redress for past conquests covered under articles 28 and 37 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples” (Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2012). On March 30th, 2023, the Catholic church, by way of a Vatican press release, officially repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery (Holy See Press Office, 2023). However, the papacy failed to repeal the papal bulls that serve as the foundation of the Doctrine.

subjugation of non-Christian peoples in the name of “our Lord Jesus Christ.” Papal bulls justified morally and legally Christian European domination, constituting the landmarks of Western colonialism and Christendom’s Doctrine of Discovery. Certainly, the bloodthirsty papal orders allowed the achievement of the “economic objectives of genocide (for land grab) and slavery (for labour grab)” (Raju, 2023). As native American scholar Steven T. Newcomb argues, “discovery dissolved the territorial sovereignty of non-Christian peoples, thereby rendering their lands subject to Christian invasion, conquest, and possession” (1993, p. 312).

The principle of Christian discovery and Christian dominium behind the rampant, brutal conquest and colonization of the non-European world in the modern era can be traced to early medieval times, and in particular, to the Crusades,¹¹⁹ which were “Just Wars” fought for the “defense” of Christianity¹²⁰ (Miller, 2011). According to Law professor Robert J. Miller, “in justifying the Crusades, the Church established the idea of a worldwide papal jurisdiction which...led to the idea of justified holy wars by Christians against Infidels” (2012, p. 855). The legal principle that allowed Christians “to invade a land that infidels possess,”¹²¹ legitimized Christian Europe’s subjugation

¹¹⁹ For an illustrative timeline of the doctrine of discovery since the Crusades, see Heinrichs’ “Dates of Discovery and Dispossession” in Woelk & Heinrichs (2023). See also “Timeline of the Doctrine of Discovery” in Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery (2023).

¹²⁰ The idea of “Just War” as compatible with Christianity (also defended by Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda to justify legally and morally the right of conquest, colonization and forced conversion of the “New World”) can be traced back to St. Augustine’s writing on holy war (see Mattox, 2006). Building on the ideas of St. Augustine’s ideas, Thomas Aquinas developed the Just War theory centuries later. On the medieval legal intellectual origins of the Discovery Doctrine, see Williams (1991, 1992).

¹²¹ Miller explains that in 1245 the canon lawyer Pope Innocent IV wrote the legal commentary *Commentaria Doctrissima in Quinque Libros Decretalium* on the rights of non-Christians that concluded that it was legal for Christians to justify the invasion of non-Christian lands and dispossess pagans of their *dominium*. The commentary was very influential in the development of the Discovery Doctrine later on (2011, pp. 855-56). Douglas Lind (2020) refers to the discovery doctrine as a theological and political principle of *terra infidelibus* (‘land belonging to infidels’) which was an incipient discovery idea that authorized the expropriation of lands belonging to non-Christian peoples during the Middle Ages. As Lind argues, “the papal doctrine of *terra infidelibus* sought to justify

of all peoples of the “uncivilized” world. The papal bulls and subsequent treaties¹²² in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries distributed ownership of the non-European world, licensing Spain and Portugal to claim practically any “conquered” land in the Americas, Africa, and Asia. For scholar Robert A. Williams, “Columbus’s voyage of ‘discovery’ on behalf of Spain thus introduced the medieval Christian European legal tradition of Crusading conquest against normatively divergent non-Christian peoples to the New World” (1991, p. 66)

In the following centuries, England, Holland, and France also applied the Doctrine of Discovery to claim rights in North America, Oceania, and elsewhere.¹²³ For instance, under a humanitarian (civilizing) mission, the Conference of Berlin of 1884 instituted a license to colonize that resulted in the scramble for Africa,¹²⁴ that is, the invasion,

the taking of land occupied by unbelievers to the Christian faith by promising the redemption of sins and a glorious afterlife” (2020, p. 58). The papal idea of discovery, in the sense of *terra infidelibus*, was at the heart of the colonization of the Americas because it justified the colonization of the lands of distant foreign infidels by European expansionists.

¹²² For example, the Treaty of Alcáçova signed by Spain and Portugal in 1479 is a milestone of European colonialism. It not only marked the end of the War of the Castilian Succession between Portugal and Castile, but also divided the Atlantic Ocean and overseas territories into two geographical spheres of influence, laying the foundation of European expansion and the Age of Imperialism of the following centuries. The treaty also ensured Portugal’s monopoly over the Atlantic slave trade and hegemony over the exploration of Africa. The Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) enacted Pope Alexander’s bull *Inter caetera* but extended west of the papal demarcation line. It divided much of the Western hemisphere and granted definite rights to Portugal and Spain over the “New World.” The Treaty of Zaragoza (1529) further codified the division of the whole non-Christian world, by extending the Tordesillas Line across the globe. Four centuries later, the Berlin Conference (1884-85) divided Africa into colonial spheres of influence.

¹²³ On the legal foundations upon which subsequent Christian European nations and their successor states justified their privileges of power and aggression in the non-Christian world, see Williams (1992).

¹²⁴ As Thierno Bah states, the 1885 Berlin Conference laid down the principle of effective occupation that led to the conquest and partition of Africa in the following fifteen years. Apart from Switzerland, all European countries were represented, as were the United States of America and Turkey (Bah, 2016, p. 135). Africa was divided into 50 colonies by seven Western European powers. “By 1900, European nations had added almost 10 million square miles of Africa—one-fifth of the land mass of the globe—to their overseas colonial possessions. Europeans ruled more than 90% of the African continent” (David, 2011). Britain alone annexed African territory that accounted for more than 30% of Africa’s population. The Berlin Conference also recognized Leopold II of Belgium’s control and exploitation of Congo (a territory that was 80 times the size of Belgium). Ironically, the following Brussels Anti-Slavery Conference of 1889-90 established further colonial expansion. The Brussels Conference Act only reinforced “colonial practices, notably in Congo, through African trade and ‘civilisation’” (Realfonzo, 2023). The Belgian colonization of Congo resulted in widespread severe atrocities against Congolese people that led to one of the worst genocides in world history (Pavlakakis, 2022). Decades later, due to the US-backed destabilization in the region,

division, and annexation of most of Africa under the imperative of “civilizing” and “converting” purportedly backward peoples of Africa.¹²⁵ The scramble of Africa is yet another example of “the entanglement of missionary Christianity with the belief in entitlement when it comes to Christian (and eventually white, European, etc.) claiming of resources” (Malchik, 2022).

Through the centuries, the colonial justifications for the imperial subjugation of barbarians evolved from a civilizing mission to convert infidels by bringing faith and “salvation,” to the expansion of Christian commerce in order to civilize non-Europeans.¹²⁶ As scholar Antony Anghie argues, in an effort to “educate and rescue,” trade became “an indispensable part of the civilizing mission itself; the expansion of commerce was the means by which the backward natives could be civilized” (2005, p. 97). As the international law of colonialism, the Christian discovery doctrine was transformed into secular international law,¹²⁷ including the incorporation of new

Congo suffered a second “economic” genocide (Alula, 2009). For a comprehensive history of the legalized land-grab and robbery in Africa by imperialist powers, see Pakenham (1992), and Harlow & Carter (2003).

¹²⁵ Under a “civilizing mission” banner, the Berlin Conference officialized the eagerness for the conquest of Africa that started in the 1870s and that it reflected in the creation of the International Association for the Exploration and Civilization of Central Africa, founded in Brussels in 1876. In 1879, the Association was replaced by the International Congo Society which was founded by Leopold II of Belgium for the exploitation of the Congo. The International Congo Society paved the way for the creation of Leopold II’s Congo Free State in 1885 just after the Berlin Conference.

¹²⁶ As scholar Anthony Pagden argues, commerce would replace conquest, and enlightened rationalism and view of progress “would replace evangelization and the crasser forms of cultural domination” (1995, p. 10). On the connection between Christianity and commerce and the missionary missions in Africa in the nineteenth century, see Porter (1985) and Lantigua (2020).

¹²⁷ The Doctrine of Discovery is one of the earliest examples of international law at a time when law and religion were not separated, and imperial nations looked at the papacy to settle disputes. Over the centuries, it emerged as the secular international law of Discovery. As Newcomb argues, “rather than being a ‘doctrine’ as such,” the Discovery Doctrine “was more akin to a set of customary rules that guided the conduct of the nations of Western Europe as they endeavored to locate and to appropriate non-Christian lands (1993, p. 335). Since its origins, international law has justified colonial exploitations as means of accomplishing its “civilizing mission.” On the imperial history of international law, see Anghie (2005).

elements like *terra nullius*¹²⁸ (vacant or unowned land) to justify the divine right of occupation, and the “logic of elimination” (Wolfe, 2006) of “savages”.¹²⁹ Despite the secularization process that led to the invention of modern international law and the new justifications for colonialism and land dispossession, the religious foundation of the discovery principle remains undeniable (Newcomb, 1993, p. 307). As native American scholar Steven T. Newcomb argues, the Christian subjugation of non-Christian peoples underpins (Christian) international law¹³⁰ because it is constructed over a claim of a right of domination, that is, the divine rule over non-Christian peoples (1993, 2008a). For Williams, “the Doctrine of Discovery and its discourse of conquest assert the West’s lawful power to impose its vision of truth on non-Western peoples through a racist, colonizing rule of law” (1992, p. 325). As the Conqueror’s rule of law, the Discovery Doctrine justified ravenous land theft and mass-scale devastation,

¹²⁸ Lands were “empty” and available for Discovery claims if they had not yet been occupied by Christians. As Miller argues, “England, Holland, France, and the United States relied on this element at different times to claim that lands actually occupied and used by Indigenous nations were legally vacant or *terra nullius*, and open for appropriation” (2011, p. 864). Australia was one the strongest advocates of the legal concept of *terra nullius* (see Buchan & Heath, 2006). If the medieval papal principle of *terra infidelibus* authorized the appropriation of land belonging to “no one” or non-Christians (“no one” meant no Christian, or no one but infidels), in Australia the British applied an expanded and unvarnished idea of *terra nullius* to justify the displacement, degradation, and servitude of the indigenous population (Lind, 2020, p. 49). As Lind argues, the British “followed the Church’s precedent of disregarding an entire category of indigenous others ‘discovered’ in foreign lands as ‘no one’ for purposes of land ownership” (2020, p. 49). The idea of “null and void” lands “played a significant role in legitimizing the erasure of the native population in virtually every settler colony, and laying down the ‘legal’ and ‘moral’ basis for seizing native land” (*Decolonize Palestine*).

¹²⁹ Constructions of the “savage” to justify the appropriation of indigenous lands have been behind projects of settler-colonialism (Buchan & Heath, 2006). The Zionist’s slogan “*a land without a people for a people without a land*” is a colonial and ideological formulation of the concept of *terra nullius* that legitimizes the elimination of the “savages.” *The colonial concept of terra nullius is linked to the problem of the disappearance of the other. Within Zionism, terra nullius refers to the “continuing social production of collective displacement-and replacement”* (Svirsky, 2010, p. 221).

¹³⁰ What is now referred to as “international law” was previously known as the “law of nations” (originally the Christian nations of Europe), also known as the “law of Christendom.” As part of the “law of Christendom,” the principle of “discovery” (and its concomitant international Framework of Dominance) granted a right of conquest, sovereignty, and dominance over “newly discovered (non-Christian) lands,” and complete subjugation of the indigenous peoples of the Americas, Africa, and Asia (Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2012).

enslavement, and genocide of indigenous populations all over the world.¹³¹ Certainly, the pervasive legal and theological fictions of the Doctrine of Discovery are still deeply rooted in European-derived legal discourse and the West's "rule of law" (e.g. Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, New Zealand, and the United States) which gave justification to settler colonialism, which for Noam Chomsky "is by far the worst kind of imperialism, because it gets rid of the native population. Other kinds of imperialism exploit them, but settler colonialism eliminates them, 'exterminates' them, to use the words of the Founding Fathers" (Chomsky & Barsamian, 2013, p. 4).¹³² Thus, the Discovery Doctrine principles have given cover to the logic annihilation of peoples along with the historical, cultural, and symbolic proof of their existence, and have continued to provide legitimacy for Just Wars and genocidal interventionism in the name of "Western" values. For example, in April 1999, Tony Blair delivered his famous speech in Chicago to advocate for military intervention in Kosovo. Titled "The Doctrine of the International Community," Blair stated in his speech,

¹³¹ In the Americas, the European and white American destruction of the indigenous peoples was the most massive act of genocide in the history of the world (Stannard, 1992). As historian David Stannard argues, "for the genocide in the Americas, and in other places where the world's indigenous populations survive, has never ceased" (1992, p. xiii). On the five hundred years of imperial crime on an infamous scale, see Chomsky (2015).

¹³² Western settler-colonized states maintained a medieval-derived legal legacy grounded on the "European Christian conqueror's superior rights of self-rule and jurisdiction over the territory and resources held by non-Christian 'savages'" (Williams, 1991, p. 68). The conqueror's rule of law, "begins with the Doctrine of Discovery and its discourse of conquest, which denies fundamental human rights and self-determination to indigenous tribal peoples...In the United States, the doctrine has proved itself to be a perfect instrument of empire" (William, 1992, p. 325). As Newcomb argues, "the discovery-as-conquest doctrine was the principle that supposedly displaced Indian rights to complete sovereignty, as independent nations, and allowed the United States, as Great Britain's successor, to assume dominion over the entire country, regardless of the territorial possessions of Indian nations" (1993, p. 331n185). On the immunizing function of law and legal discourse in the Western colonizing enterprise, see Williams (1992). On the legal foundations of the Discovery Doctrine in the US, see Robertson (2005) and Echo-Hawk (2018). For a comparative law analysis of the application of the Discovery Doctrine in colonial settler societies, see Miller (2011) and Miller et al. (2012).

This is a *Just War*, based not on any territorial ambitions but on *values*...Now our actions are guided by a more subtle blend of mutual self-interest and moral purpose in defending the values we cherish. In the end, *values and interests merge*. If we can establish and spread the values of liberty, the rule of law, human rights, and an open society, then that is in our national interests too. *The spread of our values makes us safer*. (Blair, 1999)

The global application of the Doctrine of Discovery and its concomitant framework of dominance continues justifying the legal, political, and economic dispossession and subjugation of indigenous peoples worldwide, constituting “a continual reaffirmation of colonialism” (Miller, 2011, p. 850).¹³³ In the United States, as early as the 1790s, Thomas Jefferson, then serving as Secretary of State, invoked the doctrine of discovery as international law and thus applied it to the nascent republic. For Miller, Jefferson set the American Manifest Destiny in motion. As he argues, “Jefferson was thinking of a continental American empire early on and used the Doctrine of Discovery and other legal and political tools to assist in this expansion” (Miller, 2006, p. 59). For example, as Miller shows, Jefferson was the first person to formulate an official federal policy of Indian removal. “Jefferson [also] called for the extermination of any Indians and tribes that dared to oppose his expansionist policies and dared to defend their homelands and cultures from being overrun by the United States” (Miller, 2006, p. 78).

¹³³ Colonial-settler states and multinational corporations continue applying the doctrine of discovery to justify the denial of self-determination to Indigenous nations, and the appropriation of land and resources in indigenous territories around the world. As Newcomb argues, Indigenous “nations have been denied their most basic rights to sovereignty and territorial integrity simply because, at the time of Christendom’s arrival in the Americas, they did not believe in the God of the Bible, and did not believe that Jesus Christ was the true Messiah. This basis for the denial of Indian rights in federal Indian law remains as true today as it was in 1823” (1993, p. 309). In the US, as scholar Philip Arnold argues, “these religious ideas became the foundational building blocks of white supremacy and Manifest Destiny that we are dealing with today” (Bernardi, 2022). On the ongoing injustices of the discovery doctrine and white American Christian exceptionalism, see Echo-Hawk (2018) and Charles & Rah (2019).

The principles and legal elements the Discovery Doctrine were also invoked in the 1823 US Supreme Court decision of *Johnson v. M'Intosh*,¹³⁴ one of the most influential legal precedents in the United States and international law, which “covertly incorporated into U.S. law and politics the idea of the absolute dominion of Christian dominators (*dominorum Christianorum*)” (Newcomb, 2018b). This is how the framework of dominance issued in the Vatican papal bulls of 1493 became the “law of the land.”¹³⁵ In other words, *Johnson v. M'Intosh* turned discovery and its baseline principles into a legal doctrine to justify the dispossession of lands. Thus, the law of discovery turned into Manifest Destiny, that is, the idea that the United States was destined by Divine Providence to dominate the whole continent in order to fulfill God’s ordained mission. The decision transformed an imperial ideology—a right of property acquired on the basis of discovery, which is nothing else than colonial land-grabbing—into a principle of law that has enabled the legal justification for the displacement and extermination of millions of Indigenous people worldwide. Certainly, as a doctrine of domination and dehumanization, Christian discovery is part of the insidious legacy of Christendom that remains present to this day. As Malchik argues,

“I saw it; now it’s mine,” backed by the violence of state power, justified the taking, and with it came sets of values over how land, food, water, and everything else is used, shared (or not), and cared for (or not). The doctrine carries within it a hunger for profit and a near-obsession with the right to wring dry every drop of life itself in the pursuit of wealth. Along with more ancient systems of power and hierarchies,

¹³⁴ By means of *Johnson v. M'Intosh* the U.S. Supreme Court *applied legal principles developed during the Crusades to deny indigenous claims to their ancestral lands*. Under Chief Justice John Marshall, the Supreme Court ruled that the United States has any dominion over Indians on the basis of Christian discovery. Most famously, “Chief Justice John Marshall slipped in ‘civilized’ to equate with ‘Christian’ and wrote that *discovery* of land was equivalent to *ownership* of it.” In other words, “discovery gave exclusive title to those who made it.” Under this logic, *discovery* equates to the right of *possession* (Malchik, 2024). On the sordid history of this landmark decision, see Echo-Hawk (2018).

¹³⁵ See papal bulls and European treaties bearing in the history of the United States in Davenport (1917).

it defines how humans are allowed to survive in and relate with our world. We still live under that rule, and while a few benefit from it, none of us can be protected from its effects in the long run. (2024)

In sum, the pervasiveness of the Discovery Doctrine in international law to justify imperial expansion¹³⁶ or settler colonialism,¹³⁷ is still applied infamously under the guise of a moral obligation to bestow civilization and Christianity. As Anghie argues, “the civilizing mission is inherent in one form or another in the principal concepts and categories which govern our existence: ideas of modernity, progress, development, emancipation and rights” (2005, p. 114). And it is under the banner of advancing those ideas that the most extreme and vicious forms of violence against “uncivilized” peoples are legitimized. This is what Dussel refers to as the “myth of modernity” and its sacrificial violence in the name of civilization, Christianity, and the almighty hand of the market, which continues to manifest in its cruder forms in contemporary Christofascist projects.

¹³⁶ The colonial origins of three traditional international law principles—the right of conquest, the right of discovery and occupation, and the freedom of the seas—have facilitated and legitimized the colonization of peoples and their lands, and the appropriation and plunder of the natural resources in their territories.

¹³⁷ For example, the occupation and annihilation of Palestinians by Israel is a continuation of the history of invasion and forced imposition created by the discovery framework of dominance.

SECTION II

Christofascism in the Americas

Chapter Six

6. “*Conservative in Customs and Liberal in Economics*”: Brazil’s Bolsonarismo and the Unholy Alliance between Libertarianism and Christianity

6.1. Introduction

In recent years, the neofascist turn in the Americas has been marked by the return of God, a demand for social order, and the need to restore the traditional family. Although the extreme right has historically been associated with the Catholic Church, we have been witnessing a neofascist and reactionary turn characterized by the increased role of evangelical churches, Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal (Goldstein, 2020). Evangelical powers have fought against progressive governments throughout the region. “In the name of God,” these actors have even supported *coup d'états* against left-leaning governments, such as those perpetrated against Dilma Rousseff in 2016 and Evo Morales in 2019. Although the growing influence of evangelical churches might seem like a recent phenomenon linked to the growing political influence of the Christian right, this process goes back to the 1980s and the goal of US conservative sectors and the intelligence service of intervening in Latin America during the Cold War to contain the influence of liberation theology.¹³⁸

¹³⁸ The Santa Fe documents delineated the US foreign policy towards Latin America during the Cold War by “reproclaiming” the Monroe Doctrine “to survive subversion.” In 1980, the United States government, then led by President Jimmy Carter, issued the Santa Fe I Document, titled *A New Inter-American Policy for the Eighties, calling for a new aggressive foreign policy in Latin America*. According to the document, since Latin America belongs to the “Western community,” it needed to “defend the West” by countering Marxism and liberation theology and its threat against “private property and productive capitalism” (The Committee of Santa Fe, 1980). According to Charles T. Strauss, “The document affirmed an older ‘Doctrine of National Security,’ a foreign policy principle that

The rising influence of right-wing Christian movements also serves to perpetuate the neoliberal status quo. Far-right politics have to be understood in the context of the destabilizing effects of market-driven globalization. However, instead of tackling and addressing neoliberal globalization and supreme market rule as the source of social despair (e.g. obscene inequality, the crippling of the welfare state, and the destruction of social and labor protections), the Christian far right has channeled the anger and discontent created by economic despair and reframed a class struggle as an apocalyptic battle against an evil specter that threatens to taint the sanctity and purity of the pristine ‘nation’ and the Judeo-Christian way of life.¹³⁹ Thus, by instrumentalizing a fundamentalist interpretation of Christianity, the far right has capitalized on the grievance and resentment created by neoliberal globalization and mapped them onto a moral crusade and a spiritual war against those who endanger the very existence of the ‘Christian’ nation: immigrants, leftists, racial and sexual minorities, and feminists.

A fundamentalist reading of the Bible also serves to legitimize the imposition of a social order based on neoliberal market fundamentalism, that is, the belief in free-market economics, limited government, and radical individualism as the self-

had originated in the Nixon and Ford Administrations and prescribed proactive steps that the U.S. government should take to disarm communist threats abroad” (2015, p. 168). In 1989, Ronald Reagan’s administration issued the Santa Fe II Document titled *A Strategy for Latin America in the 1990s* outlining the US foreign policy imperatives with regard to Latin America (The Committee of Santa Fe, 1989).

¹³⁹ The recent renewal of the doctrine of the return to the “Judeo-Christian” foundations is associated with the US Christian right and its rejection to liberalism, secularism, and Muslims. As Goldman argues, “today, it’s commonplace for the Christian Right to invoke the idea of ‘Judeo-Christian values,’ and for America to once again become ‘one nation under God.’” These groups, and numerous others, have moved from describing the values they fight for as “Christian” to “Judeo-Christian.” For example, as Goldman points out, although religious conservatives have been issuing online voting guides for “concerned Christians” for a while now, but since the 2011 general election there has been something new: a national “*Judeo-Christian Voter Guide*.”

organizing principles of society. This exclusionary vision is combined with a dehumanizing discourse to legitimize reactionary policies and agendas.

Religious fundamentalism also functions as a rationale for opposing state intervention aimed at promoting the public good. Any progressive initiative that seeks to advance social justice and human rights is seen as part of a ‘communist conspiracy’ aimed at destroying the civilizational foundations and the ‘natural’ white/capitalist/patriarchal societal structures of the ‘Judeo-Christian West.’ The far right envisions the authoritarian-neoliberal organization of society combined with a moral crusade to restore the values of “Judeo-Christian” nations: ‘Western’ tradition, Christian hierarchy, and free-market rule. To analyze this form of *Christofascism*, I analyze Bolsonarismo Brazil, which, for Manuel Loff, constitutes Latin America’s most complete and refined version of the far right (2019).

In 2018, Jair Bolsonaro was elected President of Brazil under the slogan “*Brasil acima de tudo, Deus acima de todos*” (Brazil above everything, God above everyone). Even though Bolsonaro lost the election to Lula da Silva’s Workers’ Party in 2022, I argue that *Bolsonarismo* has become a powerful Christian nationalist movement that is organized around an authoritarian form of religion based on obedience to a God that represents power and subjection. It is a God that negates justice and hates equality. Theologian Juan José Tamayo describes this phenomenon as a *theology of hate* (2020). At the start of Bolsonaro’s administration, former Minister of Foreign Affairs Ernesto Araújo wrote in the US magazine *The New Criterion*, “God is back and the nation is back: a nation with God; God through the nation” (2019a). The worship of a God of

hate and the conflation of God and nationalism are some of the distinctive traits of *Christofascism*.

Bolsonarismo's Christian nationalism not only conflates *God* and *nation* but also fervently embraces a form of *faith & freedom* that combines reactionary conservative values and extreme free-market economics. The dominant ideology of Bolsonarismo is organized around the mantra "*liberal na economia e conservador nos costumes*" (liberal in economics and conservative in customs), that is, a syncretic combination of economic liberalism and social conservatism (Keller & Keller). This ideology is also encapsulated in the slogan "*Deus, pátria, família e Liberdade*" (God, Nation, Family, and Liberty), in which liberty corresponds to the liberty of the almighty hand of the market, the liberty of God, the only liberty that exists. Thus, Bolsonarismo is founded on the belief that free-market economics are not only compatible with Christianity but are, in fact, expressions of God's economic principles. The (un)holy alliance between Christian tenets and extreme free-market economics is what I refer to as *Christian libertarianism*, where a fundamentalist and reactionary version of Christianity is used to preserve and unleash the power of capital.

6.2. The Rise of Bolsonarismo

In Brazil, the Workers' Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores* – PT) epitomized the pink tide that preceded the rise of the far right in the world's fourth-largest democracy. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's administration (2003-2010) was characterized by economic growth and income distribution. An estimated 40 million people were pulled out of

poverty, and many gained access to consumer goods for the first time. The 2008-9 crisis did affect Brazil, but governmental policies allowed a very fast recovery. However, the changing international scenario and austerity politics added additional challenges to Dilma Rousseff's first term in office (2011-2014). However, these do not explain the political reaction that led to the 2018 general election. We have to consider the role of the economic elite, conservative parties, and segments of the judiciary in fabricating an all-encompassing crisis (economic, political, and constitutional) to undo the PT legacy of social progress and undermine the Workers' Party (Rousseff, 2019; Rocha et.al., 2021; Santos & Feldmann, 2022). This fictitious crisis prepared the way for the illegitimate coup of Rousseff in 2016. The aftermath of the 2016 impeachment resulted in the beginning of the "age of austerity" under the administration of Michel Temer (2016-2018), pushing the country into an economic crisis.¹⁴⁰ The fictitious crisis, combined with the effects of austerity politics, prepared the way for the imprisonment of Lula da Silva in 2018. As a clear operation of *lawfare* with the direct involvement of the United States,¹⁴¹ the imprisonment of Lula looked to prevent him from running in the 2018 presidential election and preceded the rise of far-right authoritarian president, Jair Bolsonaro.

In 2018, Jair Bolsonaro became President of Brazil to fight against "globalism." Bolsonarismo and other far-right movements, such as MAGA, can be analyzed as a

¹⁴⁰ For example, while unemployment had reached its bottom level of 4.3 percent in 2014, it rose to 6.9 percent in 2015 and kept growing ever since. By XXX, Brazil had 12.7 million unemployed and 27.5 million unemployed. GDP fell by 3.5 percent in 2015 and 3.3 percent again in 2016 (Gabbuti & Broder, 2019).

¹⁴¹ As was reported by The Intercept, the US Department of Justice collaborated actively and secretly in the sprawling anti-corruption campaign known as Operation Car Wash, directed to undermine the Workers' Party (Fishman, Viana &, Saleh, 2020).

backlash against globalization. However, instead of addressing neoliberal globalization as the root cause of systemic inequality, instability, and insecurity, Bolsonaro's movement was able to turn widespread political alienation and discontent into a cultural war that took the form of a holy war against "globalism." From the perspective of far-right movements, "globalism" is defined as an international, communist, and evil conspiracy embarked on by godless elites who seek to impose a global big government with the purpose of abolishing national frontiers, individual liberties, freedom of religion, and private property, that is, the pillars of 'Western' civilization. The ultimate goal of "globalists" would be world domination and total social control. What is interesting is that there is a correct identification of a global capitalist class whose concentration of power and wealth and quest for total domination threaten the sovereignty and self-determination of nations and the means of survival of humanity. For Jorge Majfud, in the stage of ultra-capitalism, financial dictatorship can be brutal in dispossessing an entire country and even the whole world. However, due to its high level of abstraction, resistance can only be perceived through its consequences, which are rarely attributed to their true cause (Majfud, 2025). In the case of Bolsonarismo, the cause of real suffering is directed at the godless "international left," an amorphous force of evil that internally is represented in the PT and any who criticizes traditional hierarchies.

The reframing of globalization as a cultural war also serves to divert attention from class struggle. By removing the struggle from its economic and material foundations, neoliberal globalization is constructed as an international cultural menace and

worldwide conspiracy that seeks to destroy the traditional social fabric based on the Judeo-Christian values of Western nations, that is, nationalism, family values, individual liberties, and private property. In Brazil, instead of waging war against capitalist elites, the battle against “anti-globalism” is reframed as a spiritual war between good and evil to recuperate Brazil from an international “communist conspiracy.” This cultural war manifests as an existential battle against internal and external enemies (Rocha, 2021). Internally, the cultural menace is represented in the PT’s social policies, progressive perspectives on gender, and the advances of racial and sexual minorities, as well as the moral enemies that threaten the ‘Christian’ nation: leftists, racial and sexual minorities, and feminists. Externally, the war is directed towards all those who are seen as part of an international Machiavellian, secret, and evil plan to impose communism: countries (e.g. Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua, and China), leaders (e.g. Nicolás Maduro), international organizations (e.g. the United Nations and UN agencies such as the World Health Organization - WHO), international initiatives (e.g. Agenda 2030, and Global Pact for Migration), and regional integration forums to counter US domination in the region, such as the São Paulo Forum, which is seen as “the world’s largest and most impactful Marxist international organization” (Gonzales, 2023).¹⁴²

¹⁴² The São Paulo Forum’s origin can be traced back to a call made by former presidents Lula and Fidel Castro to all leftist parties, movements and organizations to reflect upon the events in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The first meeting was held in the city of São Paulo, in July 1990, which resulted in the São Paulo Declaration. At the following meeting, held in Mexico City in 1991, the name “São Paulo Forum” was adopted, setting in motion a coordination of Latin American and Caribbean political parties and movements opposing neoliberalism and imperialism and committed to the regional integration, sovereignty, and self-determination of Latin America and the Caribbean (MHAIS, 2020). Since then, the Forum has taken place every one or two years, in different countries alternately. After a four-year break due to the pandemic, the São Paulo Forum resumed activities in 2023 with an event organized in Brasília around the theme “Regional integration to advance Latin American and Caribbean sovereignty” (Sampaio C., 2023).

In addition, the Brazilian far right not only does not question the economic and material tenets of neoliberal globalization, but it also embraces and adopts free-market economics and austerity politics in a fanatic fashion, vehemently renouncing any claim to national economic sovereignty. Thus, Christian nationalism functions to provide the sole source of patriotic and national loyalty, pride, and identity. Religious fundamentalism also serves to divert attention to the social disintegration and economic despair caused by neoliberal globalization, serving the interests of the capitalist elites (Sparke, 2022). On the one hand, “being liberal in economics” becomes integral to Christian identity. Thus, the questioning of God’s ‘invisible hand’ is framed as an existential battle, a holy war to defend God’s divine economic plan. The Christian far right is virulently anti-state, which takes the form of vigorously opposing any notion of the social or the public good because. State intervention is deemed an unholy communist affront to God’s economic principles. While the Christian far right viciously attacks the welfare role of the state as well as redistributive social policies and progressive agendas that seek to address rising inequalities, it also promises prosperity for individuals, a direct path to individual salvation, and a sense of moral superiority. For example, the prosperity gospel, that is, the translation of faith into prosperity, abundance, and financial wealth, aligns with the religious libertarian’s tenets of Bolsonarismo. I argue that this Christofascist trend constitutes the ultra-

Mike Gonzales, Senior Fellow at the Heritage Foundation, referred to the São Paulo Forum as a “Marxist radical body” and denounced the 2023 declaration for praising China, Russia, Cuba, and Venezuela (Gonzales, 2023).

reactionary way out of the crisis incurred by neoliberal globalization, which functions to keep the system intact while perpetuating the necropolitical social order it creates.

6.3. Defending the Millenary Occidental Culture



FIGURE 7. The United States, Israel, and Brazil: Three flags united
São Paulo, the Army Headquarters, 15 November 2022, personal archive.

According to Manuel Loff, the radical right has always been attached to the white and Christian West (2019). Shared ‘Judeo-Christian’ values and the sense of civilizational superiority allow the far-right in the Global North and the Global South to see themselves as part of the same ‘Western’ tradition. For Pablo Stefanoni, the defense of ‘the West’ in Europe means taking action against the “great replacement,” which translates into “civilizational paranoia” (2021). Thus, while in Europe, the immigrant, Muslim ‘other’ is constituted as the maximum danger to ‘the West,’ in Latin America, “cultural Marxism” is the threat that seeks to destroy ‘Western’

civilization.¹⁴³ In Brazil, Bolsonaro is venerated as a ‘Messiah’ (*o Mito*, or ‘the Myth’) or *Bolsomito* (the coupling of the first part of his name to the epithet ‘mito’), the savior and liberator who came to rescue Brazil from the moral decadence represented by cultural Marxism, which constitutes the main threat to Christian/Western/Capitalist civilization.

For Andrew Woods (2024), cultural Marxism is a *civilizational discourse* that serves as an ideological tool to unify the transnational far right’s common mission of defending an idealized vision of Western Civilization. This can be referred to as *Western civilizationalism* (Woods, 2024) or *Western supremacist civilizationism* (Malacalza & Doval, 2024). Thus, “far-right civilizationalism” (Stewart, 2020) and “civilizational anxieties” (Stefanoni, 2021) allow the far-right to join forces transnationally against anti-Christian enemies, creating an intricate 2.0 extreme right global network (Forti, 2022; Goldstein, 2022). To account for this central tenant of the contemporary far right, I build on the idea of *libertarian hyper-occidentalism*, which was proposed by Argentine scholar Juan Gabriel Tokatlian to refer to the unconditional allegiance to the West at the expense of national interests. *Libertarian hyper-occidentalism* allows us to examine how the sense of belonging to a superior cultural, economic, and religious civilization, ‘the West,’ enables the far right to unite forces to defend Judeo-Christian foundations of the natural, traditional order of ‘Western’ civilization. The establishment of transnational alliances seeks to defend the ‘Christian’

¹⁴³ As Woods argues, *Marxismo cultural/Cultural Marxism* “refers to a set of right-wing conspiracy theories that accuse a group of German Marxist thinkers known as the Frankfurt School (and their followers) of infiltrating universities and other cultural institutions to spread the ‘ideologies’ of multiculturalism, political correctness, and environmentalism” (2024, p. 248).

nations against the threat represented by the ‘globalists.’ On the one hand, defending the perennial values of the Judeo-Christian tradition gives a civilizational and millennial transcendence to national identity. On the other hand, the defense of Christian nationalism is placed in the broader context of loyalty to ‘Western’ Civilization. Thus, reaffirming Christian/Western nationalism manifests as a civilizational crusade.

Hyper-occidentalism and the ‘cultural war’ also allow the concealment of white supremacy. The dogma of Western supremacy created during colonialism originated from the dogma of Christian supremacy. In other words, the idea of White (racist) superiority is linked to the idea of Western (colonial) superiority, and both have religious origins (Raju, 2021). While far-right actors across the Americas rhetorically reject white supremacy and racism, they openly defend an exclusionary social system built on a false idea of equality where every individual is rewarded based on their own merit. Most interestingly, these actors openly profess a sense of civilizational or Western superiority (colonial prejudice) that covertly reinforces the sense of White superiority (racist prejudice). For example, in the United States, alt-right and neo-Nazi far-right organizations have been on the rise. Although these organizations explicitly espouse racist ideologies, they have attracted people of color to their ranks, which can be described as a “multiracial far-right.”¹⁴⁴ In many cases, the identification of Latinos

¹⁴⁴ For scholar Cristina Beltrán, white supremacy in the US has become multiracial. The MAGA movement, for example, is characterized by its significant Black and Latino representation. This form of “far-right diverse inclusion” accounts for a phenomenon that Beltrán calls the ideology of “multiracial whiteness,” that is, the promise that non-white participants “can lay claim to the politics of aggression, exclusion and domination” (2021). For Beltrán (2021), “multiracial whiteness reflects an understanding of whiteness as a political color and not simply a racial identity—a discriminatory worldview in which feelings of freedom and belonging are produced through the

and young black conservatives with issues such as traditional-family values, anti-immigration, anti-abortion, gun rights, and limited government takes the form of “Western chauvinism” (Segura-Ballar, 2021). In other words, defending the Christian nation in the face of the civilizational menace represented by ‘globalism’ is situated within the larger framework of Western nationalism. Thus, what matters is upholding “Western” values and the defense of Western civilization. The far-right notion that “race isn’t a factor”¹⁴⁵ denies the existence of white supremacy (racist prejudice), while it vindicates Western supremacy (colonial prejudice). This ideological operation also allows the far right to vindicate an exclusionary economic-political system organized around Judeo-Christian-capitalist values: individual freedom, traditional families, private property, and God. For the far right, white supremacy only serves as cover for

persecution and dehumanization of others.” Thus, under the politics of multiracial whiteness, “the politics of exclusion, violence and demonization are available to all” (Beltrán, 2021).

¹⁴⁵ Born in 1989, black conservative activist commentator, and influencer Candace Owens published an article at the *Stanford Advocate* in July 2016 stating that police shootings of black men in the US are not about racism but about ignorance (Owens, 2016). Regarding the inexistence of racism, Owens argued in an interview that “there’s nothing that I cannot do as a black woman sitting in this chair or in this society, in this country that you can do as a white man. It’s all about our choices.” See interview with Candace Owens on the *American Thought Leaders* show (2019a). In 2017, Owens posted a video titled “I Don’t Care About Charlottesville, the KKK, or White Supremacy” with the description “Black people have scarier things on the horizon than the almost endangered species of white supremacy” (2017). Ironically, despite Owens’s denial of the existence of white supremacy (Cummings, 2019), she was named in a manifesto by the white nationalist who killed 50 people at two mosques in New Zealand in March 2019. The shooter credits Owens with helping him to “push me further and further into the belief of violence over meekness” (Tarrant, 2019). In April 2019, Candace Owens gave a testimony before the House Committee on the Judiciary at the hearing titled “Hate Crimes and the Rise of White Nationalism” (2019). For her, the hearing was not about white nationalism, racism, or hate crimes, it was “about fear-mongering, power, and control.” For Owens, the hearing should have focused on real issues and real concerns in Black America. In September 2019, at the congressional hearing “Confronting Violent White Supremacy” before the House Oversight Committee, Candace claimed that “white supremacy and white nationalism would not crack the list of the top 100 issues facing African American communities today.” She argued that the real issues are hostility towards masculinity, black-on-black crime, abortion rates, and illegal immigration. Regarding masculinity, she claimed that “right now, we have a social environment that is hostile toward men and does not inspire masculinity or being a man and what it means to be a father figure in a household.” Owens told lawmakers that instead of focusing on white supremacy they should instead focus on “God and religion and shrinking government” (House Oversight Joint Subcommittee Hearing on Confronting White Supremacy, 2019. See also Behrmann, 2019, and Touchberry, 2019).

the “victimization mentality.”¹⁴⁶ The denial of systemic racism sees any form of affirmative action as (invertedly) racist. Thus, in contrast to the “victim mentality,” the far right vindicates a “victor mentality,” that is, a meritocratic system built on a false idea of equality and color-blind individualism, in which every individual is rewarded based on their own merit. In Brazil, Bolsonarismo’s ideology of nondiscrimination is also combined with meritocracy ideology, which sustains white supremacist power relations (Melo & Schucman, 2022).

The far right in Brazil utterly denies the existence of systemic racism. However, this is not restricted to the far right. One of the keystones of Brazilian national identity has been the myth of “racial democracy,” which denies the existence of racism while obscuring very real forms of racial discrimination.¹⁴⁷ This ideology of nondiscrimination has maintained intact the racist roots of oligarchical rule and

¹⁴⁶ In the United States, the rejection of a “victimization mentality” is very powerful not only among Second Amendment rights activists but also among prominent young black conservatives. For example, Candance Owens is known for criticizing the Black Lives Matter movement for playing the “oppression card.” “Victimhood,” for Owens, “has become a cancer to our society” (see video in Shannon, 2019). When referring to her own experience, Owens says: “I could have played the black card and absolve myself of all responsibility for my own stupid decisions.” She refused to play the “black card.” For her, the problem is that “... if you are born black and you don’t accept your natural status as a victim, then the validity of your blackness is immediately called into question.” For her, being “American” is the only card she has ever been interested in playing (Owens, 2018). In October 2018, Owens launched Blexit—the term is a portmanteau of “black” and “exit”—mimics Brexit, the word used to describe the United Kingdom’s withdrawal from the European Union. The Blexit movement, a campaign to encourage African Americans to abandon the Democratic Party which she refers to as a “plantation” in which African Americans have been “mentally enslaved” (Owens, 2019b). For Owens, “liberal policies and ideals are actually harmful to African Americans and hinder their ability to rise above poverty, live independent and successful lives, and be an active part of the American Dream” (2020). Blexit, in contrast, promotes the values of family, culture, belief, freedom, progress, and strength (Blexit, n.d.).

¹⁴⁷ The myth of racial democracy has been described as an ideology of nondiscrimination and the prejudice of not having prejudice. This denial of racial discrimination is generally understood as the defining element of the myth (Bailey, 2008). As sociologists David FitzGerald and David Cook-Martin argue, “Just as political liberalism historically proclaimed equality for all, but understood ‘all’ to be white propertied males, racial democracy espoused harmonious relations among all Brazilians while in practice protecting the privilege of the light-skinned” (2014, p. 260). According to sociologist Stanley R. Bailey, the United States was the central counterpoint for the myth’s development. As Bailey argues, “This myth was a source of national pride during much of the 20th century, as Brazilians compared their reality to that of a segregated and racially violent United States” (2004, p. 729). On racial democracy, Bailey (2009), Alberto (2014), and Da Costa (2014).

pervasive authoritarian cultural politics. In the case of Bolsonarismo, anthropologists Jaime Amparo Alves and João Costa Vargas (2018) argue that one crucial factor of Bolsonaro's popularity is the country's long, enduring, and foundational odium of black people, which is continuously renewed and reactivated.¹⁴⁸ Bolsonarismo's racism is manifested through anti-blackness and the advocacy for 'iron fist' policies that directly criminalize and dehumanize black people. In addition, the romanticization of the past of slavery and the colonial historical legacies is a feature of Bolsonarismo's racial prejudice. Brazil maintained slavery for 350 of its 500 years of existence, making it the last country in the world to abolish this abominable institution.¹⁴⁹ Anti-blackness is also a reaffirmation of white identity (Jardina, 2019), where whiteness is reaffirmed as a "performative act of reclaiming privilege" (Pinho, 2021, p. 73). While the reaffirmation of white privilege may resonate with international actors who espouse white supremacy, the myth of racial democracy serves to obscure the racial prejudice that underpins it.

David Duke, US neo-nazi and former Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) endorsed Bolsonaro in 2018. Duke supports the preservation of what he considers to be Western culture and traditionalist Christian family values (Neiwert, 2010). Duke also endorsed Donald Trump during the 2016 election and congratulated him for not

¹⁴⁸ For historian Nell Irvin Painter, the acting of anti-blackness by people of color is a way of enacting whiteness (2019).

¹⁴⁹ As historian Carl N. Degler (1971) argues, Brazil is the only country in the New World that rivaled the United States in size and in the importance of slavery in its history. It is estimated that 500,000 African slaves were imported into the United States and British North America (Thomas H., 1997). In contrast, four to five million slaves were imported to Brazil from the 1530s to 1850, half of all Africans sold into slavery and ten times as many as were shipped to the United States were destined for Brazil (Bergad, 2007). Brazil was the last country in the Western hemisphere to relinquish slavery. When Brazil became a republic in 1889, just a year after the full abolition of slavery, it had the largest African origin population in the Americas (FitzGerald & Cook-Martín, 2014, p. 259).

condemning the KKK and white supremacist violence. Duke praised Bolsonaro during one of his radio programs in October, 2018, when he stated: “He sounds like us... he looks like any white guy in America—for that matter Portugal or Spain or Germany or France or the UK.”¹⁵⁰ During the program, Duke declared that “nationalist movements which are basically pro-European are definitely sweeping the world,” and he called Bolsonaro’s rise part of that trend (Darlington, 2018). On former Twitter, Bolsonaro refused Duke’s endorsement by evoking the myth of racial democracy: “I refuse any kind of support coming from supremacist groups. I suggest that, for consistency, they support my adversary the candidate of the left party, who loves to segregate the society! This is an offense with Brazilian, the most beautiful and mixed-race people in the world” (Bolsonaro J., 2018).

I argue that, for *Bolsonarismo*, white supremacy is covertly perpetuated from the perspective of Christian/civilizational superiority. Bolsonaro’s rejection of Duke’s endorsement illustrates that, while the far right in Brazil employs the ideology of non-discrimination to reject accusations of white supremacy and racism, they openly profess a sense of civilizational or Western superiority (colonial prejudice) that covertly reinforces the sense of White superiority (racist prejudice). In other words, the myth of “racial democracy” is instrumentalized to reaffirm the colonial and religious supremacy, which conceals the sense of racial superiority of *Bolsonarismo*. The embrace of Christian nationalism has a fundamental role in this operation. In his

¹⁵⁰ Duke also said, Bolsonaro is “talking about the demographic disaster that’s in Brazil and the massive crime that exists in that. For example, the black boroughs and so forth of Rio de Janeiro” (Darlington. 2018).

administration, Jair Bolsonaro adopted religious nationalism and elevated a pseudo-Christian ethnic-nationalist community over any other minority (Casarões & Farias, 2022). For Bolsonaro, Islam and African religions should be banned, as they are antithetical to the “national faith” and operate as an “open door to terrorists” (Leal, 2017). Thus, the valuable members of the nation, the *cidadãos de bem*, that is, the “good citizens,”¹⁵¹ are those who uphold the Judeo-Christian values, that is, the white Christian citizens. Inspired by the US, Christian nationalism refers to “a cultural framework—a collection of myths, traditions, symbols, narratives and value systems that idealizes and advocates a fusion of Christianity with American civic life” (Whitehead & Perry, 2020). For Gerson Leite de Moraes (2024), Christian nationalism and neofascism in Brazil should be understood as a process of ‘*mimetização*’, that is, a form of mimicry inspired by the United States. The idea of ‘*mimetização*’ involves an active process of imitation and ideological adaptation of a US political ideology grounded in the vision of a Christian social order, in which only those “chosen by God” can govern (Whitehead & Perry, 2020; McDaniel, Nooruddin & Shortle, 2022). For example, according to Jair Bolsonaro, since Brazil is “a Christian country,” non-Christians should stay out of political life as they are not “true citizens” (Leal, 2017). Since the beginning of his government, Jair Bolsonaro promised to make Judeo-Christian principles a top priority in his administration. Thus, the nationalistic Christian

¹⁵¹ For José Fernando Andrade Costa (2021), “*cidadãos de bem*” is a figure of speech aligned with an ideological discourse that reinforces a dichotomy between “good citizen” and “banditry.” As an ideological discursive strategy, it also reinforces markers of race and class, in which the “*cidadãos de bem*” is represented in the upper-middle-class white men. Another marker becomes the yearning for possession and carrying of firearms which is aligned to the narrative of self-defense of the “good citizen” against “bandits.” For Costa, “*cidadãos de bem*,” shows a “social pathology of citizenship” because it makes evident “a fractured and hierarchical society between first and second category citizens” (Costa, 2021, p. 8).

identity is defined by the embrace of Judeo-Christian values, which is a quintessentially American construct (Cohen, 1969).¹⁵² I argue that Christian nationalism is reframed as Western nationalism, wherein loyalty to ‘Western’ civilization becomes integral to the national identity of the Christian nation. For the Christian citizen, defending ‘Western’ values entails not only protecting the nation, but also upholding ‘the West’ as a broader civilizational identity. Thus, the defense of the Christian nation is reframed as a civilizational crusade for ‘the West.’

The unrestricted alignment with ‘the West’ is at the core of Bolsonarismo’s project of imposing a Christian nationalist order. On February 25, 2024, during a demonstration in support of Jair Bolsonaro, First Lady Michelle Bolsonaro delivered a speech full of references to the Old Testament, followed by a prayer. The main message of Michelle’s speech was the following: “For a long time, we were negligent to the point of saying that politics and religion should not be mixed. And evil took over—evil occupied that space. The time has now come for liberation...” (Poder 360, 2024). The

¹⁵² The idea of the Judeo-Christian tradition was first promoted in the late 1930s, when President Franklin Roosevelt popularized it in response to the efforts of liberal Christians and Jews who began to characterize the Western religious tradition as “Judeo-Christian” to combat the rising tide of anti-Semitism. As scholar Shalom Goldman argues, “with the swing to the Right of the 1950s, American conservatives began to deploy ‘Judeo-Christian’ in the fight against ‘Godless Communism.’” Thus, during the Cold War, the idea of “Judeo-Christian tradition” was used as a proxy for “Western values” in opposition to atheist Communism. The cultural significance of the phrase continued to grow. According to historian Andrew Preston, Ronald “Reagan reconfigured the Judeo-Christian civil religion from what it had been since the 1930s a way to foster inclusiveness—into a rhetorical device to attack liberalism and secularism” (2012, p. 582). In the 1983 annual convention of the National Parent-Teacher Association, Reagan stated “I know this may be laughed and sneered at in some sophisticated circles, but ours is a Judeo-Christian heritage, and ours is a loving and living God, the fountain of all truth and knowledge” (cited in Preston, 2012, p. 582). Thus, as scholar Mark Silk argues, the religious right “appropriated the term in the 1980s as a label for the values they were pushing in the new American culture war.” During the 1990s, the term was commonly used in the so-called culture wars over abortion and same-sex marriage and remains popular among evangelical conservatives today (Holzel, 2016). “In the post-9/11 world of the Bush presidency,” as Goldman argues, “American Islamophobia flourished and ‘Judeo-Christian’ has become a term of exclusion, rather than inclusion” (2011). On the different meanings the idea of Judeo-Christianity has taken, see Zubovich (2016). On the history of Judeo-Christian America, see Gaston (2012) and Haynes (2017).

idea of liberation from evil means the submission of the State to Christian fundamentalism. According to historian João Cezar de Castro Rocha, this represents a core mission of Bolsonarismo, the return to the absolute monarchy and divine rule. As Rocha points out, this project also reveals the centrality of the theology of dominium within Bolsonarismo, which, as Christian nationalism, was originally developed in the United States and adopted in Brazil (Rocha, 2024). One of the leading exponents of the theology of dominium is Gary North, who was also a prominent advocate of the Austrian School of Economics.

In the “Intellectual Schizophrenia of the New Christian Right,” Gary North proposes to build a new Christian social order where biblical law can be implemented. Constructing this order institution by institution is what he calls “Christian reconstruction” (1982). North denounces that a society that is open to all religions is, in fact, “a society closed to the God of the Bible and His law-order.” For North, the “doctrine of religious liberty” is only used “to enthrone an anti-Christian social order,” because “Christians wind up giving ‘equal time’ in society to the devil” (1982, pp. 23-4). In other words, “the myth of neutrality, when coupled to the argument for religious liberty, produces a concept of the kingdom of God which is radically anti-biblical” (1982, p. 23). “True religious liberty is exclusively public liberty for people to obey the social laws of the Bible” in every sphere of life. Since “liberty is granted to the Christian by God, not by the state,” the state must be a “restrained institution under the sovereignty of God (1982, p. 32). For North, the State is a satanic institution that

threatens freedom. For this reason, “Christian self-government is basic to the survival of the free society” (1982, p. 35).

6.4. Brazil and the Soul of the West



FIGURE 8. Make Brazil Great Again

Meme shared on social media.



FIGURE 9. Fox News, come to Brazil!

São Paulo, the Army Headquarters, 12 December 2022, personal archive.

Former Foreign Minister, Ernesto Araújo, espouses the core causes that unite the far right across the Americas: hyper-occidentalism, anti-globalism, and anti-communism. Araújo was a disciple of Olavo de Carvalho (1947-2022), a Brazilian former astrologist and self-proclaimed philosopher who became a long-time conspiracy theorist of the far right (Duarte, 2019; Teitelbaum, 2020). Carvalho not only laid the intellectual foundations of Bolsonarismo, but, as Felipe P. Loureiro points out, he also “held large sway over government appointments during the beginning of the Bolsonaro administration—including the case of Araújo himself and that of the President’s

Foreign Policy Advisor, Filipe Martins” (2023, p. 2). For Loureiro, Carvalho and Araújo are examples of “conspiracy theory entrepreneurs,” that is, those who “can make a living out of spreading conspiracy theories in both the off- and online worlds” (Harambam, 2020). In the case of Araújo, it is even more significant because of the material resources and symbolic power he held in his institutional position. Although Araújo did not complete his mandate,¹⁵³ he held for more than two years, the highest post in the country’s foreign affairs, only below the president himself, which positioned him as one of the leading figures of Bolsonarismo.

The former Ministry based the administration’s foreign policy on religious considerations to combat “globalism” and the supernatural evil force of “cultural Marxism” (Robinson A., 2019; Arantes 2020; Woods, 2024). Araújo wrote extensively against globalism on his blog *Metapolítica 17*.¹⁵⁴ In the description of his blog, Araújo stated “I want to help Brazil and the world to free themselves from the globalist ideology.” For Araújo, “globalism is economic globalization that is now driven by cultural Marxism, which is, essentially, an anti-human and anti-Christian system. Thus, faith in Christ today means to fight against globalism.”¹⁵⁵ From this perspective, globalist and cultural Marxist ideologies are seen as attempts against a supreme order given by God that is founded on traditional values and hierarchies that sustain a social

¹⁵³ Araújo stepped down in March following criticism regarding the slow pace of vaccine imports during the second wave of COVID-19 (Colleta, Uribe & Carvalho, 2021).

¹⁵⁴ Accessed on December 1, 2021, the site *Metapolítica 17* (<https://www.metapoliticabrasil.com/>) is now inactive. However, most of the articles found in his website, were published in Araújo (2019d, 2021).

¹⁵⁵ The idea of *Marxismo Cultural* became a major ideological element for the far-right to oppose the Workers Party (PT) government (Woods, 2024, p. 240). For example, public colleges and schools are seen as centers of cultural Marxism and indoctrination. This justifies the attack and dismantling of public education, which was one of the main achievements during the PT administrations (Sovik, 2018).

order that is mythical, immutable, and ahistorical. The foundation of this Christian social order, as well as of the nation, is the traditional family. Any attempt against the traditional roles between men and women undermines the traditional family, which is considered the pillar of Western/Christian civilization. In addition, any attempt that threatens “natural” inequality based on class, gender, race, and religion becomes an offense against nature and God’s social order.

Two years before being appointed as Foreign Minister, Araújo published an influential essay titled “Trump E O Ocidente” (Trump and the West)¹⁵⁶ at the Brazilian Journal of Foreign Policy (2017).¹⁵⁷ Araújo’s article was inspired by President Donald Trump’s speech delivered in Warsaw, Poland, on July 6, 2017. In Warsaw, Trump claimed that the future of Western freedom was at stake and urged the audience to defend Western civilization. According to Trump, “today we’re in the West, and we have to say there are dire threats to our security and to our way of life.” For Trump, without strong families, values, and faith, the West will not survive (The White House, 2017). Trump also stated, “We must work together to confront forces, whether they come from inside or out, from the South or the East, that threaten over time to undermine these values and to erase the bonds of culture, faith and tradition that make

¹⁵⁶ This article was later translated into English and published by the Center for Security Policy (Araújo, 2019b). According to the Center, “Brazil is emerging as a strong ally of national sovereignty and Western civilization” (Waller, 2019). The Center for Security Policy is an organization led by Frank Gaffney, a former Reagan Pentagon official and aide to Senator Scoop Jackson. Its mission is “to secure freedom for American citizens of today and tomorrow.”

¹⁵⁷ The journal, edited by the Institute for International Relations Research (IPRI, for its Portuguese acronym), brings together articles by diplomats and scholars on key issues and agendas in international relations. For a detailed analysis of Araújo’s article, see Schargel (2023).

us who we are” (The White House, 2017).¹⁵⁸ When Trump warned Poles about forces “from the south or the east, that threaten... to erase the bonds of culture, faith, and tradition,” he was talking not about Christianity but about Christendom: a particular religious civilization under siege by non-white, non-Christian “invaders.”¹⁵⁹ This religious civilization is built upon Judeo-Christian values.

In his “Trump E O Occidente,” Ernesto Araújo regards Trump as the savior of the West, closer to Reagan and Churchill, the “great defenders of freedom and civilization against savagery and oppression” (2019b). Araújo praises Trump for his vision of the West which is based on the recuperation of a symbolic past, and the history and culture of Western nations. For Araújo, Trump embodies a cry of nationalism and faith to defend the “Western soul.” Spiritual defense is necessary to avoid the disappearance of Western identity. For Araújo, Trump knows what is at stake: the spiritual survival of the West. Thus, only Trump can still save the West and restore its soul. In his words,

¹⁵⁸ Trump’s civilizational rhetoric and quest to lead the defense of the West also reflects a vision of America (or rather, North America) as the summit of Western civilization and as the leader of the Judeo-Christian West. Trump’s speech in Warsaw inevitably evoked Samuel P. Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” (1993a, 1996a). For Huntington, “the survival of the West depends on Americans reaffirming their Western identity and Westerners accepting their civilization as unique not universal and uniting to renew and preserve it against challenges from non-Western societies” (1996a, pp. 20-21). Under this view, the “survival” of the West is at stake, so the West must protect itself from outsiders. Trump claimed in his speech that “the fundamental question of our time is whether the West has the will to survive. Do we have the confidence in our values to defend them at any cost? Do we have enough respect for our citizens to protect our borders? Do we have the desire and the courage to preserve our civilization in the face of those who would subvert and destroy it?” (The White House, 2017).

¹⁵⁹ Dussel locates the origins of Christendom in the beginning of the fourth century in the Roman Empire. This is when Christianity fetishistically replaced the philosophical and religious foundations of the Hellenistic-Roman empire. Christianity became the new hegemonic *culture*. In other words, it became *Christendom*. With the *invasion* and conquest of America, Europe not only became the seat of culture but also of Christendom. For Dussel, European Christianity (central and Eurocentric Christianity) constituted *imperial Christendom*. If the soldiers who crucified the Crucified were from an oppressive empire that killed the Just One, the Spanish soldiers from central Christendom were now the oppressive soldiers (as analogically Israel was in the Roman Empire), and they killed the indigenous peoples in the name of a metropolitan, distant, Roman Christianity (Dussel, 2017, pp. 324, 328).

“Trump does not want to westernize other civilizations; all he wants is for Western civilization to be left in peace to restore and rediscover its vitality” (2019b).

Inspired by Trump’s speech at Poland, Araújo also praises the greatness of Western history and denounced the anti-Western forces that reject the past as well as heroes, faith, and family. According to the former Minister, “the real huge danger is the disappearance of Western identity itself” (2019b). Araújo drew on Trump’s crusade to argue that Brazil’s essence is Western. Because Brazil was the result of the Portuguese voyages, Brazil “has deep, sacred roots linked to the deepest mysteries of the Western soul as manifested in the Portuguese nation” (Araújo, 2017). According to Araújo, the Brazilian nation came to embody the vitality of the Western spirit. This is an example of Western nationalism, where nationalism is understood in the context of the legacy of Western Civilization. For the former Minister, the human soul is nationalistic, and the history of the West only has meaning and only embodies a destiny in the context of national feeling. Thus, “Brazil would not have to feel uncomfortable if it were to try to reclaim the soul of the West based on national sentiment” (Araújo, 2017). Araújo was interviewed in the American Thought Leaders Show,¹⁶⁰ where he reaffirmed the idea that Brazil is part of the “spiritual West,” and he stated that “the main pillar of our culture and society is the Western tradition” (2019c). For Araújo, Brazil is a country that needs to assert itself in the world for freedom, democracy, and Western values. For this reason, he claimed that Brazil should be part of NATO in order to establish a north-

¹⁶⁰ American Thought Leaders is a program of the right-wing news website The Epoch Times. On the occasion of Jair Bolsonaro’s visit to the White House on March 19, 2019, Ernesto Araújo was interviewed by host Jan Jekielek. The 40-minute interview was titled “On Brazil Joining NATO and Defending the Soul of the West” (Araújo, 2019c). Araújo’s interview was titled “On Brazil Joining NATO and Defending the Soul of the West” (2019c).

south ‘Western’ alliance (2019c). Aligned with this vision, on July 31, 2019, the Trump administration designated Brazil as a major non-NATO ally¹⁶¹ (The White House, 2019c) and suggested that Brazil could be designated a “NATO ally” later on (The White House, 2019a).

As Benjamin Cowan argues, the transcendental role of Brazil in saving the West has a long record. Historically, the Christian conservatives in Brazil “saw themselves as part of a series of global struggles for the soul not only of their country but of the West and the world” (2021, p. 8). A crusade to save Western civilization is also central to Bolsonarismo. On November 21, 2019, Jair Bolsonaro launched the new political party *Aliança pelo Brasil* (Alliance for Brazil) in Brasilia. Although the party was not able to collect the required signatures to be placed on the ballot (Bragon, 2022), the party’s manifesto outlines the core tenets of Bolsonarismo. The party committed to the defense of the free market and the repudiation of socialism, communism, and “gender ideology.” On its website, it was stated that the party would be a trench in the defense of Judeo-Christian values, national sovereignty, democracy, and entrepreneurship as the driving force of our economy. In its statute, it was stated that the party will look to safeguard the gradual and natural evolution of society for the permanent protection of life since conception, family, individual freedoms, self-defense, private property, free enterprise, and the cultural and religious values of Brazilians (*Aliança pelo Brasil*,

¹⁶¹ In the Americas, Argentina and Brazil are the only countries designated Major Non-NATO Allies (MNNA). According to the US Department of State, “the Major Non-NATO Ally designation is a powerful symbol of the close relationship the United States shares with those countries and demonstrates our deep respect for the friendship for the countries to which it is extended. While MNNA status provides military and economic privileges, it does not entail any security commitments to the designated country” (Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, 2025). Argentina was designated a major non-NATO ally in 1998, during the administration of Carlos Menem.

2019a). The party was presented as a conservative party committed to freedom and public, social, moral, and legal order, as well as to the historical, moral, and cultural traditions of the Brazilian nation.

The party pledged to fight for the restoration of Brazil's traditional values and culture. This involves the embrace of "Western" nationalism, that is, the recognition of Brazil's Western inheritance, such as the Lusitanian and Hispanic traditions, Roman Law, Greek philosophy, and Judeo-Christian morality (Aliança pelo Brasil, 2019b). The party's education proposals aimed to propagate and disseminate the Brazilian and Western cultural heritage. The political plan that would guide the Alliance's action also defended God's place in the history and soul of the Brazilian people, who are a religious people educated on the basis of Christianity. The party would commit to freedom of religious expression, especially in the public sphere. Additionally, in order to guarantee moral order, the party would commit to preserving Christian values, memory, and Brazilian culture. The document stated that the relationship between this nation and Christ is intrinsic, fundamental, and inseparable. For this reason, the party took as its founding values the Gospel and Western Civilization. The latter is the heiress of the virtuous encounter between the cities of Jerusalem, Athens, and Rome. The party was aware that for the Brazilian people, God is the guarantor of true human development since the dignity of the human person stems from the fact that all fellow Brazilian citizens are children of God, endowed by Him with inalienable rights (Aliança pelo Brasil, 2019b).

The sense of Western supremacy is very much linked to an imaginary of a pure Judeo-Christian civilization portrayed in a fictional version of the European Middle Ages as the nation's true past (Pachá, 2019). For example, the six-part series *Brasil: A Última Cruzada* (Brazil: The Last Crusade) presents a mystified version of colonialism and the Reconquista, drawing a direct link between the Brazilian nation and the Christian crusades. During Bolsonaro's administration, the Ministry of Education broadcast these documentaries during prime time on the state channel TV Escola (Saldaña, 2019). The series was produced by *Brasil Paralelo* (2017), a media company that offers a conservative subscription-based streaming service founded in 2016 to produce revisionist documentaries about Brazil's history. For Georg Wink, *Brasil Paralelo* constitutes the most successful cultural agent of the New Right in Brazil (2021, p. 249).

Medieval imagery and symbols of the 'Knight Templar,' like the crusader cross, are common in public and online spaces of Bolsonarismo. This symbology also reaffirms the holy crusade of saving Brazil in which every Brazilian, as a true Christian citizen, must become a 'Knight Templar' to honor 'our ancestors' who saved Christianity from savage Muslims and now must fight against the new threat to Christianity: cultural Marxism. An imagined pure medieval past also serves to justify an aggressive reaction towards progressive actions to overcome racism and inequality that threaten white, patriarchal, and Christian hierarchies. Thus, a civilizational crusade becomes the only solution to obliterate those who endanger the sanctity and purity of the Western tradition of the Brazilian 'Judeo-Christian' nation.



FIGURE 10. A Brazilian Knight Templar
Meme shared on social media.

6.5. “God Bless Brazil, God Bless Israel”

Christian nationalism and the civilizational crusade for ‘the West’ have also influenced the Bolsonaro administration’s foreign policy. For instance, in an event with evangelical leaders, Bolsonaro stated that Brazil’s votes in the United Nations should follow the Bible (Castro, 2019). The influence of religious considerations is also explained by Bolsonaro’s close relationship with evangelical groups, which were themselves aligned with conservative cabinet members (Guimarães et al., 2023). As I have mentioned, *libertarian hyper-occidentalism* is manifested as unrestricted alignment with ‘the West.’ In the Americas, the Christian far right has reconfigured and influenced foreign policy to align unrestrictedly with Israel and the United States. In Brazil, allegiance to Israel is a key component of evangelical foreign policy, which serves to reinforce Brazil as a Christian-white-chosen nation aligned with Judeo-

Christian civilization. In the speech delivered by Michele Bolsonaro on February 25, 2024, she concluded her remarks by saying:

Only the Lord is the King of Kings, and no gates of hell shall prevail against our nation. I praise Your name and thank You, Father. I ask that Your eyes be upon our lives and that *Your true shalom dwell within the walls of Israel. We bless Brazil. We bless Israel, in the name of Jesus.* Amen. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Glory to God... (Poder 360, 2024. Emphasis added).

As a Congressman, Jair Bolsonaro gave a speech at the Hebraica Club in Rio de Janeiro in April 2017. He vilified Islam and African religions, and he simultaneously asserted that Jews, by contrast, “are Christians” (Leal, 2017). In November 2018, as President-elect, Bolsonaro reiterated his plans to move Brazil’s embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, joining the United States (Associated Press in São Paulo, 2018) and Guatemala (see Table 1). For Jair Bolsonaro, moving the embassy to Jerusalem was not merely a campaign pledge, but his commitment of loyalty to God (Vilela, 2019; Cartin, 2020). In the first-ever visit of an Israeli Prime Minister to Brazil, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu attended Bolsonaro’s inauguration in January 2019, where Bolsonaro presented him with the highest national decoration for visitors. Netanyahu referred to Bolsonaro as a “true friend” (Netanyahu, 2018).

TABLE 1. Israel's Central American Allies

In United Nations Resolution 181, **Guatemala** was the second country in Latin America after the United States to vote in favor of Israel's creation as a Jewish state. Guatemala was also the first Latin American country to move its embassy to Jerusalem on May 16, 2018, two days after the US moved its mission to the Holy City. To thank the then President Jimmy Morales, the Jerusalem municipality illuminated the Old City walls with flags of Guatemala, Israel, and the United States (The Associated Press, 2018). In May 2018, the Guatemalan Congress passed a law marking May 14 as "Israel-Guatemala Friendship Day." This is a mutual sentiment between these two states. In 2013, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, "Guatemala did participate in the foundation of Israel, so that has led the foundations for a tradition and the unity between our two peoples" (Ahren, 2017). In May 2018, the Guatemalan Congress celebrated the good bilateral relationship between both countries at the executive, legislative, and judicial levels on the occasion of the 75th commemoration of the independence of Israel. The cooperation at the local government level was also highlighted. The press release said that in 10% of the country's municipalities, there are streets, avenues, squares, and parks with the name: "Jerusalem, Capital of Israel" (Zeceña, 2018). Previously, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had also said that "in just about every town in Israel there is a Guatemala Street because we remember Guatemala's friendship and the friendship and leadership of your UN ambassador at the time of the decision on the Partition Resolution, and so Guatemala was etched into our hearts then" (Ahren, 2017). The ties between these two countries date back to Israel's founding. In terms of military cooperation, Israel assisted the military juntas ruling Guatemala to combat counterinsurgency during the 1970s (Rubenberg, 1986).

In 2015, during the administration of Juan Orlando Hernández (2014 – 2022), **Honduras** and Israel signed a cooperation agreement to "strengthening defense and security capabilities" through the Armed Forces. In March 2019, the Hernández administration recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, following a trilateral meeting held in Brasília, Brazil, between the US Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and President Hernández when they agreed to "strengthen political relations" (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020). In Honduras, influential evangelical pastor Roy Santos, leader of the church Manantial de la Mies, prophesied that Hernández was going to be President as part of a divine design. Roy Santos belongs to the Latino Coalition for Israel and has been a member of the Iberoamerican Parliament for Israel (Silva, 2019). According to Santos, the reason Hernández was chosen by God to be President was to "break the course" cast upon Honduras during the regime of Tiburcio Carías Andino when Honduras abstained from voting before the UN for the creation of the state of Israel (Silva, 2019). The Honduran embassy was moved to Jerusalem in May 2021.

Bolsonaro made an official visit to Israel from March 31 to April 3, 2019. At the reception ceremony, he opened his comments with the Hebrew phrase "*Ani ohev et Israel*" (I love Israel). Netanyahu praised Bolsonaro for his "faith in our shared heritage" and his commitment to improving Israeli-Brazilian ties (TOI Staff, 2019). According to their Joint Declaration, "The two leaders affirmed that the partnership between Brazil and Israel is based upon our shared values of freedom, democracy, market economy, justice and peace, and our mutual determination to achieve prosperity for our peoples" (Ministério das Relações Exteriores, 2019b). During his trip, Bolsonaro visited the Western Wall, practiced target shooting, and signed cooperation agreements (Kresh & Bilenly, 2019). On April 11, Bolsonaro reaffirmed his intentions

of moving the embassy to Jerusalem at an event with evangelical leaders organized by celebrity pastor Silas Malafaia, one of the most influential figures of Bolsonarismo,¹⁶² for whom Bolsonaro was God's chosen man to lead Brazil (Thomas, 2019). One of the guests was the American pastor John Hagee, from the organization Christians United for Israel. At the event, Bolsonaro cited the Biblical verse John 8:32: "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," to explain why his government would vote with Israel and the United States at the UN. He also stated that "our commitment is to find a way to transform our country into what Israel is—a country of faith" (Castro, 2019).

During his visit to Israel, Bolsonaro participated in a meeting with investors where he announced the opening of an office in Brazil to promote business (Kresh & Bilenly, 2019). During the event, then Foreign Minister Ernesto Araújo, presented Brazil's "new foreign policy...that is based on our identity." He referred to the visit as a "pilgrimage" aimed at showing "the world a new friendship between Brazil and Israel." According to Araújo, this "new friendship...will bring us closer to our cultural roots and historic roots." The Minister also referred to Jerusalem as the "perfect symbol of what we want to accomplish," especially, "the spiritual dimension" (Araújo, 2021, pp. 169–170). In December 2021, the Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (APEX, for its Portuguese acronym) opened an office in Jerusalem. Eduardo Bolsonaro attended the event and gave a speech. Regarding the Bolsonaro administration's

¹⁶² According to Andre Pagliarini, "The two leading figures of this most far-reaching brand of evangelical Christianity are Silas Malafaia, linked to the World Assemblies of God Fellowship through his Victory in Christ ministry, and Edir Macedo of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God. Both are linked to a tradition referred to as Neo-Pentecostalism" (2023, p. 182).

intention of moving the Embassy to Jerusalem, he referred to the Bible and said that they “were not going to make something extraordinary. We are going to do the normal thing, to recognize your capital as your capital.” Paraphrasing the Bible, he added, “We believe that those who bless Israel will be blessed—and those who curse Israel, will be cursed” (Bolsonaro E., 2019). Eduardo Bolsonaro shared a short video of the event posted by Netanyahu on X, which says “Brazil and Israel have never been so close” (Bolsonaro E., 2019). A week before his visit, Eduardo posted a picture on the occasion of his brother’s birthday, Carlos Bolsonaro. The photo shows Carlos and Eduardo on a trip to Israel in 2016, wearing T-shirts of the Mossad and the Israel Defense Forces, respectively (Bolsonaro E., 2019).

The fusion of the Israeli flag and Judaic symbols with Brazilian nationalistic symbols is one of the distinctive traits of Bolsonarismo. They were visible in official events during the Bolsonaro administration. In August 2019, during a large evangelical gathering in Brasilia, Jair Bolsonaro stated: “This Israeli flag is not here by chance. Our origins, our traditions, our culture are Judeo-Christian. There’s nothing that can deny that Israel exists because it is a people who have faith in God. It is an example for us all. We want to follow its path... Brazil is one people, one race, one nation, one heart—and one and a half flags: Brazil and Israel” (Portal do Governo Brasileiro, 2019). In the second round of the national election in 2022, First Lady Michelle Bolsonaro cast her vote wearing a T-shirt displaying the Israeli flag. This picture was in her official Instagram account along with this line: “*Que as bênçãos do nosso Deus estejam sobre o Brasil e sobre Israel. Deus, pátria, família e liberdade*” (May the blessings of our

God be upon Brazil and upon Israel. God, homeland, family and freedom) (Bolsonaro M., 2022). The far-right's devotion to Israel serves to legitimize an authoritarian and reactionary ideology of Brazil as a promised land 'blessed by God.' As theologist Ronilso Pacheco (2022) argues, this is a strategy of a global movement of the extreme right to recuperate reactionary Israel as an idealized "chosen nation." According to scholar Michel Gherman, the idea of an "imaginary Israel" serves to construct a Brazilian nation imagined as a space exclusively for whiteness. This imaginary is also characterized by the sanctification and justification of violence, which includes the liberalization of firearms, alongside the exaltation of ultracapitalism and Christian nationalism (Gherman, 2022).



FIGURE 11. Brazil and Israel: One Flag
São Paulo, Av. Paulista, 7 September 2022, personal archive.

6.6. Brazil and the US against *socialism*



FIGURE 12. Our Flag will Never Be Red. Out Communism!

São Paulo, the Army Headquarters, 11 November 2022, personal archive.

FIGURE 13. Brazilian people against communism!

São Paulo, Av. Paulista, 7 September 2022, personal archive.

In the battle to defend the “millenary occidental culture,” the alliance and unrestricted support for the United States is unequivocal. Jair Bolsonaro’s first bilateral trip as President was to the United States. On March 19, 2019, Donald Trump received Jair Bolsonaro at the White House, a meeting in which both leaders emphasized their “shared values.” In their joint press conference, Trump stated that “for two centuries, the American and Brazilian people have been united by shared values including an enduring love of faith and family and country” (The White House, 2019a). Bolsonaro, for his part, defined himself, in contrast to Lula, as a “not anti-American” president. Bolsonaro expressed his admiration for Ronald Reagan and said that he wanted to bring to Brazil his administration style, which could be summarized as: “People should say what the government can do, and not the other way around” (The White House, 2019a). Jair Bolsonaro concluded his remarks by saying “that Brazil and the United States stand

side by side in their efforts to ensure liberties and respect to traditional family lifestyles, respect to God, our Creator, against the gender ideology or the politically correct attitudes, and against fake news... We want to have a great America, yes, and we also want to have a great Brazil” (The White House, 2019a). The Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) praised Bolsonaro’s visit to Washington and sat down with him for an exclusive interview. After years of “leftist rule” and “aggressive anti-American and anti-Israel foreign policy,” the Network celebrated Bolsonaro’s “Judeo-Christian principles.” After the interview, President Bolsonaro met with a group of prominent American evangelical leaders. Among them, the CBN’s Pat Robertson and Gordon Robertson, and evangelist Reinhard Bonnke (Thomas, 2019).

The alliance between Jair Bolsonaro and Donald Trump also aimed to improve the conditions for US corporations. According to Trump, Jair Bolsonaro’s “vision for freeing the private sector and opening the economy is the right way for Brazil to achieve strong economic growth. And *our great companies are ready to go when that table is flat and free*” (The White House, 2019a. Emphasis added). Donald Trump also “welcomed Brazil’s ongoing efforts regarding economic reforms, best practices, and a regulatory framework in line with the standards of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). President Trump noted his support for Brazil initiating the accession procedure to become a full member of the OECD” (The White House, 2019b). As a result of the bilateral meeting, both countries made a number of trade-related commitments. They also agreed to deepen their partnership through the United States-Brazil Security Forum. They signed the Technology Safeguards

Agreement, which would enable United States companies to conduct commercial space launches from Brazil. The two leaders also announced a new phase of the United States-Brazil CEO Forum, which would be driven by industry and private sector representatives from the United States and Brazil. They also establish a United States-Brazil Energy Forum to facilitate energy-related trade and investment, as well as the creation of a \$100 million Biodiversity Impact Investment Fund largely financed with private-sector capital, which is “critical to the development of sustainable, market-oriented productive models in the Amazon” (The White House, 2019b).

Promoting “economic freedom” to benefit transnational capital was a priority during the Bolsonaro administration. Paulo Guedes, Minister of Economy, is a staunch advocate of the full privatization of all state-owned enterprises. Under his leadership, political economy was centered on implementing radical reforms and reduce the State by merging and privatizing all public institutions, including the Brazilian Petroleum Corporation – Petrobras (Carneiro & Colon, 2018). Guedes holds a PhD from the University of Chicago, the birthplace of the Chicago Boys—economists who, in the second half of the 20th century, influenced the devastating neoliberal reforms imposed in countries such as Chile, the United States, and the United Kingdom. During his postgraduate studies at the University of Chicago—where Milton Friedman, the intellectual father of the Chicago Boys, was the leading figure—Guedes developed close ties with several Chilean students who would later play key roles in Pinochet’s military regime. In the early eighties, Guedes moved to Chile to learn firsthand about the reforms that the Chicago Boys were promoting in the country during the military

dictatorship, which later became a pioneering case of neoliberal extremism on the global stage (Montes, 2018). In August 2018, Guedes mentioned in an interview that he took part in all of Brazil's economic debates in support of implementing in the country the same reforms that were carried out in Chile (Betim, 2018). Guedes' intention was to emulate the pro-market reforms implemented in Chile during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet.¹⁶³ This vision was central to the Bolsonaro administration. For example, in his speech at Davos on January 24, 2019, his first international trip, Bolsonaro's stated that his government aimed to "restore our values and open up our economy...We will defend family principles and true human rights; we will protect the right to life and private property" (Ministério das Relações Exteriores, 2019a). In his speech at the UN National Assembly on September 24, 2019, Bolsonaro stated that the free market, concessions, and privatization were already a reality in Brazil (Ministério das Relações Exteriores, 2019c).

The foreign policy alignment of the Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro administrations was centered on combating "socialism" across the Americas. Although there was a concern about Cuba and Nicaragua, Trump and Bolsonaro formed an alliance against a strong common enemy in the Western hemisphere: Venezuela (Guimarães & Silva, 2021). In Jair Bolsonaro's official visit to Washington, Bolsonaro and Trump discussed Venezuela as one of their "mutual priorities." For Bolsonaro,

¹⁶³ Paulo Guedes's website says that "During the 4 years as Minister of Economy of Brazil, Paulo Guedes implemented a series of structural reforms that not only made it possible to cushion the shocks of the Great Epidemic and the War in Ukraine but also promoted growth and economic dynamism. The reforms are also responsible for the fiscal balance that has recovered the confidence of national and international players in the Brazilian economy (Guedes, n.d.).

Reestablishing democracy in Venezuela is also a shared interest between our two administrations. The dictatorial regime in Venezuela today is part of a broader international coalition, known as the ‘São Paulo Forum,’ which nearly conquered power throughout Latin America in recent times. However, by democratic means, we were able to rid ourselves of that project in Brazil. (The White House, 2019a)

In their joint press conference, Trump called “on members of the Venezuelan military to end their support for Maduro, who is really nothing more than a Cuban puppet, and finally set their people free” (The White House, 2019a). When addressing a question regarding the possibility of a military intervention to remove Maduro from power, Trump said that “all options are open.” It is worth mentioning that the Trump administration was considering launching a military invasion of Venezuela since at least August 2017 (The New York Times, 2017) (see Table 2). Bolsonaro was also asked if Brazil would allow a US base or US military personnel or a military presence in Brazil to provide support on the border with Venezuela, to which he answered that on “the issue of the Venezuelan dictatorship, Brazil will be *more than willing and ready* to fulfill this mission and take freedom and democracy to that country” (The White House, 2019a. Emphasis added). According to Guimarães and Silva, the most significant affinity between Trump and Bolsonaro was their shared hostility towards Nicolás Maduro (2021).

Brazil’s aggressive stance toward Maduro’s Venezuela also aligned with that of the United States on the issue of Venezuelan immigration. As a presidential candidate, Bolsonaro suggested on several occasions to send Venezuelan immigrants to refugee camps (Soares, 2018; Corrêa, 2018). Following the United States, one of the first actions of the Bolsonaro administration was to withdraw from the Global Pact on

Migration, signed in December 2018 under the administration of Michel Temer (Fellet, 2019). On January 9, 2019, a day after this announcement, Bolsonaro posted the following:

Brazil is a sovereign country in deciding whether or not to accept migrants. Anyone who comes here must be subject to our laws, rules, and customs, and must also sing our anthem and respect our culture. Not just anyone enters our home, nor will just anyone enter Brazil through a pact adopted by others. No to the Migration Pact! (Bolsonaro J., 2019)

Trump and Bolsonaro's anti-Venezuelan crusade was also synchronized in international forums. For example, on September 24, 2019, at the UN National Assembly, both Bolsonaro and Trump dedicated much of their speeches to the call for fighting against "the specter of socialism" in the region, by promoting the overthrow of Venezuela's government. Bolsonaro stated, "We worked with other countries, among them the USA, so that democracy is re-established in Venezuela, but we also work hard so that other countries in South America do not experience this foul regime." They would do this by combating "the São Paulo Forum, a criminal organization created in 1990 by Fidel Castro, Lula, and Hugo Chávez to disseminate and implement socialism in Latin America" (Ministério das Relações Exteriores, 2019c). Trump, for his part, stated that his administration was "committed to supporting those people in the Western Hemisphere who live under brutal oppression, such as those in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela." Again, Trump referred to Maduro as "Cuban puppet," and added, "We await the day when democracy will be restored, when Venezuela will be free, and when liberty will prevail throughout this hemisphere" (The White House, 2019d).

Trump's crusade to bring "freedom and democracy" to Venezuela materialized as a coup plot to steal the country's natural resources. In January 2019, the Donald Trump administration launched a coup attempt in Venezuela by appointing little-known right-wing opposition politician Juan Guaidó as the supposed "interim president" of the country, despite the fact that he had never received a single vote in a presidential election. As has been reported, the coup plots against Venezuela have been justified under the Monroe Doctrine and are motivated by taking control of Venezuela's state-owned massive oil reserves, the largest in the world, in favor of US corporations.¹⁶⁴ (Norton, 2019) (see Table 3). The Jair Bolsonaro administration also recognized Guaidó as the legitimate president of Venezuela.¹⁶⁵ This was also the position of the Lima Group, which played a central role during Bolsonaro's presidency. The Lima Group was a group of countries of the Organization of American States (OAS), self-anointed as the Lima Group, which was created with the sole mission of overthrowing the Venezuelan government (see Table 4).

¹⁶⁴ Venezuela's massive oil reserves were nationalized by former President Hugo Chávez, who launched the country's leftist Bolivarian Revolution. Venezuela's state-owned oil company PDVSA used the revenue from the oil sales in order to fund social programs, public housing, transportation, health care, and education (Norton, 2023). As Bove, Gleditsch, and Sekeris (2016) demonstrated, countries with large oil reserves are more likely to suffer wars and foreign military interventions.

¹⁶⁵ Brazil was one of the 57 countries that recognized Guaidó as Interim President, mostly EU countries and key US allies. Among these countries were: Bolivia, Brazil, the United States, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Israel, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Paraguay (US Department of State, 2020).

TABLE 2. “We Should Get the Oil”: Trump’s Anti-Venezuela Crusade (Part I)

John Bolton served as US National Security Advisor between 2018 and 2019 during the first Trump administration. It has been reported that Trump fired John Bolton in September 2019, partially due to his failure in the Venezuela coup attempts (Norton, 2022c). Although Bolton did not succeed in bringing about regime change in Venezuela, it is worth analyzing his commitment.

In January 2019, Bolton publicity demanded that Venezuela’s elected President Nicolás Maduro step down (Bolton, 2019a). Bolton also threatened to send thousands of US troops to Colombia, hinting at an attack on Venezuela (Norton, 2022b). In an interview with Fox, Bolton also admitted that the US government and North American corporations aimed to exploit Venezuela’s oil reserves. Bolton stated bluntly that “It will make a big difference to the United States economically if we could have American oil companies really invest in and produce the oil capabilities in Venezuela” (Fox Business, 2019. See also Norton, 2019).

In February 2019, Bolton called for the Venezuelan military to launch a coup against President Maduro (Bolton, 2019b). In March 2019, in an interview for CNN, Bolton stated bluntly that the Trump administration was “not afraid to use the word Monroe Doctrine.” Bolton continued to say, “This is a country in *our hemisphere*. It’s been the objective of American presidents going back to Ronald Reagan to have a *completely democratic hemisphere* (CNN, 2019. See also Jativa, 2019).

In 2020, Bolton published a 500-page memoir detailing the coup attempt against Venezuela. Referring to Venezuela’s ties with China, Russia, Iran, and Cuba, Bolton declared, “America had opposed external threats in the Western Hemisphere since the Monroe Doctrine, and it was time to resurrect it” (Bolton, 2020, p. 247). Bolton also stated that Trump had “interest in Venezuela’s oil fields” (2020, p. 252) and that “we should take the oil in Venezuela after ousting Maduro” (2020, p. 363). According to Bolton, Trump wanted “assurances regarding post-Maduro access to Venezuela’s oil resources, trying to ensure that China and Russia would not continue to benefit from their deals with the illicit Chavez-Maduro regime” (2020, p. 252).

Bolton recalled numerous stories that showed how Trump’s Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, a former Goldman Sachs banker and hedge fund manager, was most concerned about the interests of US corporations (Norton, 2022c). For example, Bolton revealed that he urged Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, ex-CIA Director, “to have State more fully support the effort against the state-owned oil company.” Bolton “worried Mnuchin was [still] holding out, which [Pompeo] agreed to do” (Bolton, 2020, p. 257).

Bolton also revealed he pressured the UK government to illegally freeze more than \$1 billion of gold reserves that Venezuela held in the Bank of England (2020, p. 255). Bolton stated that “these were the sorts of steps we were already applying to pressure Maduro financially” (2020, p. 255). Bolton also celebrated sanctions as instruments of US financial warfare, declaring that “they’re about using America’s massive economic power to advance our national interests. They are most effective when applied massively, swiftly, and decisively, and enforced with all the power available” (Bolton, 2020, pp. 267). The Trump administration’s goal “was to shut off Venezuela’s oil revenue” (Esper, 2022, p. 302). When boasting of the devastating sanctions the US imposed in Venezuela, Bolton wrote “we had Maduro by the windpipe and [we] needed to constrict it” (Bolton, 2020, pp. 266). Illegal US sanctions escalated into a full embargo in August 2019, which exacerbated the economic crisis (Norton, 2022c). According to the United Nations’ top expert on sanctions, Alena Douhan, the unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States and the European Union resulted in the shrinking of the Government’s revenue by 99%, with the country currently living on 1% of its pre-sanctions income” (OHCHR, 2021).

Bolton concluded the chapter on Venezuela, lamenting that the various US-sponsored coup attempts in Venezuela failed. The last sentence is “Venezuela will be free” (2020, p. 280). On July 12, 2022, Bolton admitted in another CNN interview that he “helped plan coups d’etat” in Venezuela and “other places” (CNN, 2022).

On June 10, 2023, Trump made public his intention to control Venezuela’s large oil reserves during the time of his administration. At a Republican Party rally, Trump boasted that he wanted to “take over” Venezuela, and “we would have gotten all that oil” (Norton, 2023b). As President, Trump also made this admission regarding Syria. In a January 2020 interview on Fox News, Trump boasted that he was militarily occupying Syria’s crude-rich regions in order to “take the oil” (Norton, 2023b. See also Bove et.al., 2016).

TABLE 3. “We Should Get the Oil”: Trump’s Anti-Venezuela Crusade (Part II)

In addition to sanctions, the Trump administration also considered military options. Mark Esper, Secretary of Defense under the first Trump administration, revealed that top US officials frequently discussed military strikes on Venezuela, attacks by special operations forces, training and arming insurgents to launch an invasion, and cyberwarfare (Norton, 2022a). Esper published a 750-page memoir titled *A Sacred Oath* (2022), dedicating a chapter to Venezuela, where he acknowledges the very aggressive actions taken by the Trump administration against Venezuela.

According to Esper, “Trump had been fixated on Venezuela since the early days of his administration, with an eye toward using military force to oust Maduro. It was August 11, 2017, when he spoke about the ‘many options for Venezuela,’ including military ones” (2022, p. 294). Esper revealed that it was due to the State Department pressure that “dozens of other countries recognized Guaidó as the legitimate president of Venezuela” (2022, p. 294), and that the State Department also pushed the OAS to back the unelected coup leader (Norton, 2022a).

The former Defense Secretary also acknowledged that Guaidó attempted a violent coup d’état on April 30, 2019, using “a group of Venezuelan military officials and civilian personnel in an uprising to remove Maduro” (2022, p. 295). Esper lamented that “The failure of Guaidó and his fellow plotters marked the end of a critical phase in the Trump administration’s attempts to rid the Venezuelan people of Maduro” (2022, p. 295). Yet, “getting rid of Maduro still seemed to be a bucket list item for Trump,” and “again and again, Trump would ask for military options” (2022, p. 295, p. 297). When referring to Trump fixation with overthrowing Venezuela’s government, Esper wrote, “he once said ‘we should get the oil’ when military action was discussed, and on other occasions wanted to make sure the United States had ‘full access’—unfettered as well by any previous agreements with Russia or China—to the country’s resources if Maduro was dislodged by us. It was consistent with the view he took about the United States gaining control of the oil fields in eastern Syria when we were dealing with the issue of American support to the Syrian Democratic Forces in the fall of 2019” (2022, p. 295).

In February 2020, Trump invited Guaidó as a special guest to his State of the Union address, in which the unelected Venezuelan coup leader was given a standing ovation by virtually all members of Congress, Republicans and Democrats alike. Esper disclosed that he, Guaidó, and fellow coup plotters discussed plans for the United States to train fighters in Colombia to later launch an attack on neighboring Venezuela (Norton, 2022a), that is, “a smaller, special operation targeted directly at Maduro” (Esper, 2022, p. 301). Three months later, in May 2020, dozens of right-wing insurgents attempted an invasion of Venezuela, known as Operation Gideon. They were led by two former US Army special operations commandos (Norton, 2022a). As reported by Ben Norton (2022a), the invasion was organized by a Florida-based mercenary firm, Silvercorp USA, in coordination with the CIA, the National Security Council (NSC), and the Department of the Treasury. According to Esper, the NSC Senior Director for the Western Hemisphere, Mauricio Claver-Carone, “was pressing the hardest for military action,” in “outright advocacy for aggressive action” (2022, p. 302, p. 306). Bolton disclosed in his memoir that he personally appointed Claver-Carone (2020, p. 249).

In his memoir, Esper also listed the many actions the US military was taking to threaten Venezuela. These included Naval “operations off the coast of Venezuela” and “Air Force B-52 bomber training flights” that were “partnering with allied air forces in the region as a show of force” (2022, p. 308).

In September 2019, Trump fired John Bolton and replaced him with another bellicose veteran of the George W. Bush administration, Robert C. O’Brien. Esper revealed that “O’Brien and his team were pushing hard for some type of military action against Cuba and Venezuela to cut off Caracas’s access to goods and cash” (2022, p. 303). Esper also revealed that the NSC proposed again to pursue a military operation in Venezuela including the further disruption of the country’s energy supplies to provoke more unrest (2022, p. 321-322). In addition, “O’Brien went straight for the jugular, proposing a military strike on...a seaport in northeastern Venezuela, where a large complex for loading and unloading petroleum products on and off ships is located” (2022, p. 322). Esper acknowledges they discussed launching “a military assault on Venezuela” including “an air strike or the use of Navy SEALs” (2022, p. 322). Esper also wrote that “NSC staff pushed the idea of a blockade” and considered “interdicting ships that are carrying Venezuelan oil,” suggesting “that the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard identify these ships, stop them, and seize them” (2022, pp. 302-303). This culminated in August 2020, when the US government intercepted four tankers and illegally seized 1.1 million barrels of fuel being sent to Venezuela, allegedly by Iran (Norton, 2022a). This criminal action was praised by Esper as a “great initiative by Justice and State” (2022, p. 324). In addition to intercepting foreign ships, Esper noted that the Trump administration heated up the hybrid war on Venezuela by accusing the Maduro government, without any evidence, of “narco-terrorism” and drug trafficking. According to Esper, this idea was proposed by Trump’s Attorney General William Barr, a former CIA agent and longtime member of the far-right theocratic sect Opus Dei (Norton, 2022a).

Although Esper was fully committed to overthrowing the government of Maduro, he preferred other options such as cyber-operations and other “irregular warfare options,” in which “the United States had a long history” (2022, p. 323). According to Esper, General Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, “also thought we should look at irregular warfare options, such as the U.S. training and arming of Venezuelan expatriates” (2022, p. 323). The rest of this paragraph was redacted by the Department of Defense).

TABLE 4. The Lima Group

The Lima Group was an alliance of right-wing governments established in August 2017 in an attempt to isolate Venezuela in the same way that the OAS once did with Cuba in 1962 (Pagliccia, 2019), in alignment with the United States and Europe in their anti-Venezuela crusade (Mancilla, 2018).

The ultimate goal of the Lima Group was to reinstate a conservative regional order by countering the Union of South American Nations and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (UNASUR and CELAC, for their Spanish acronyms), in order to eradicate all forms of progressive politics in the region. For scholar Alfredo Serrano Mancilla (2018), the Lima Group embodied a highly dangerous paradigm in regional foreign relations—one that contravenes international principles recognizing the right of peoples to self-determination.

The Lima Group was originally a coalition of twelve right-wing governments out of 33 OAS member States—Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and Peru. After the *coup d'état* against Evo Morales in December 2019, Jeanine Áñez's Bolivia joined the group. On January 4, 2019, the Lima Group released a declaration not recognizing Maduro's presidency—Santa Lucia endorsed the declaration. Mexico did not endorse it. Mirroring Washington, the declaration included the imposition of direct punitive sanctions aimed at financially strangling and politically isolating Venezuela. The Lima Group statement went as far as to demand President Maduro not to take possession on January 10, 2019, to begin his second mandate for the period 2019-2025 and even urged him to resign (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2019). According to the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign (VSC), the Lima Group statement was abjectly in line with the US aim of "regime change," a key objective of US foreign policy towards Bolivarian Venezuela since 1999 and massively intensified under Donald Trump and US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo (VSC, 2019).

In the spirit of Plan Condor, although the US did not formally belong to the Lima Group, it clearly determined its policy. For example, as the VSC (2019) reported, the Lima Group welcomed Mike Pompeo by videoconferencing into their meeting before issuing their disgraceful statement. Although the Group does not exist anymore in its original form, an alliance of right-wing governments continues promoting regime change in Venezuela in alignment with the United States' aggressive interference in Latin America.



FIGURE 14. The US & Brazil can work together to stop socialism
Tweet of Matt Schlapp, 20 January 2020 (Schlapp, 2020).

Unrestricted support for the United States also translates as devotional admiration for Donald Trump, who became a model and ideological figurehead for Bolsonarismo. For example, in October 2019, the first Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) took place in the city of São Paulo, Brazil.¹⁶⁶ Eduardo Bolsonaro, Federal deputy for the state of São Paulo and the son of President Jair Bolsonaro, repeated a gesture that the US president made in his speech at the 2019 CPAC in the US. In the Brazilian CPAC, Eduardo Bolsonaro hugged the Brazilian flag and asked: “Guess who I’m honoring?” (Guimarães L., 2019). Eduardo Bolsonaro was also invited as a speaker to CPAC 2020, which had the theme “America vs Socialism” (Mencimer, 2020). Matt Schlapp, Chairman of the American Conservative Union, tweeted that Brazil and the US can work together to stop socialism (see Figure 14).¹⁶⁷

Previously, I cited the idea of *mimetização* proposed by Gerson Leite de Moraes (2024) to explain Bolsonarismo’s mimicry of US Christian nationalism. The idea of ‘mimetização’ can be applied more broadly to describe the active process of imitation and ideological adaptation of the US far-right, particularly as expressed in the MAGA movement. For example, appropriation of US symbols and discourse by the Brazilian far right is very common in public rallies and demonstrations in which the presence of US and Trump aesthetics (e.g. US flags, Gadsden ‘Don’t Tread on Me’ flags, and MAGA-inspired paraphernalia and imagery such as ‘Make Brazil Great Again’ hats)

¹⁶⁶ It was attended by leading US conservatives like the Matt Schlapp, chairman of American Conservative Union (ACU) and his wife Mercedes Schlapp, Utah senator Mike Lee, Fox News commentator Walid Phares.

¹⁶⁷ On the occasion of Jair Bolsonaro’s visit to the White House on March 19, 2019, Eduardo Bolsonaro was interviewed by Jan Jekielek and Stephen Gregory from the right-wing news website The Epoch Times. The 69-minute interview was titled “Purging Brazil of Socialism, an Ongoing Battle” (Bolsonaro E., 2019b).

are fused with Brazilian nationalistic symbols appropriated by Bolsonarismo. US far right and anti-communist aesthetics and discourse also inspire costumes, imagery, protest signs, and banners, which, in most cases, are written in English, not Portuguese (see Figures 17 and 18). One of the most significant US-inspired tenets of Bolsonarismo is the appropriation of the supposed sacred right to bear arms, which Bratich refers to as the “gun-worshipping death cult of 2nders” (2021). The worship of guns has taken the bizarre form of a Brazilian Second Amendment. The US-inspired worship of guns is part of the broader trend of embracing “Western” values which are conflated with radical individualism and the absolute right of the *cidadão de bem* (the Christian/neoliberal citizen) to self-defense. Bolsonarismo’s crusade for liberty is shaped by the defense of freedom for and under the divine market, where freedom takes a necrophilic logic, as I will analyze in the next section.



FIGURE 15. Wearing the *Don't Tread on Me* flag

São Paulo, the Army Headquarters, 6 November 2022, personal archive.



FIGURE 16. Wearing the Brazilian and US flags

São Paulo, the Army Headquarters, 2 November 2022, personal archive.



FIGURE 17. They will never take our freedom

São Paulo, Av. Paulista, 7 September 2022, personal archive.



FIGURE 18. The world needs to know we are fighting for our freedom

São Paulo, the Army Headquarters, 2 November 2022, personal archive.

6.7. *Necrofreedom* as the Neoliberal Freedom to Kill

Neoliberalism constitutes a *political rationality* that implies a whole new organization of the social. For Wendy Brown, neoliberal rationality extends and disseminates market values to all institutions and social action (2015). This includes the meanings of freedom. For Verónica Gago, “neoliberalism’s strength as governmentality lies in including freedom, which in modernity threatened all order, in the very heart of a new apparatus of *free order*” (2017, p. 160). This *free order* is not only willing to sacrifice democracy in the name of *freedom*, but *life* itself.¹⁶⁸ From the perspective of neoliberal rationalities, freedom of the market is equated to freedom in

¹⁶⁸ Destruction and the sacrifice of nature, communities, costumes, human life and dignity, is a distinctive attribute of neoliberalism; however, these are only the possible conditions of capitalism since its inception. Capitalism, as a “brutal machinery of death” (Giroux, 2020), entails an inevitable and quasi-ritual act of human sacrifice (Dussel, 1995). Under exploitative and predatory neoliberalism, “the international Moloch-machine,” as Eduardo Galeano (1997, p. 265) argues, “has kept on grinding: countries at the service of commodities, people at the service of things.” In neoliberalism, the subsumption of life to capital and the unbounded destructive tendencies of capitalism are exacerbated. This is what LeVine (2020) refers to as “hyper-racialised necrocapitalism.”

general, which makes it “almost impossible for anybody to even imagine freedom outside of the market order” (Gounari, 2006, p. 85). Any attempt to safeguard the collective good is seen as a threat to freedom of the market—the only possible freedom. Thus, neoliberal rationalities institute an impoverishing and impoverished concept of freedom, which is not only conceived as the absence of coercion in trade but also constitutes the first condition of human happiness (Torres, 1999).

Neoliberal culture has infused these meanings of freedom in all societal dimensions. A complex network of actors and billionaires has “marshaled their great wealth to infuse an anti-public-good/pro-market extremism throughout our culture” (Lappé, 2018). These actors have funded think tanks, higher-education centers, media strategies, lobbying, and electoral campaigns, as Jane Mayer’s shows meticulously in *Dark Money* (2016). As Juan Torres argues, neoliberalism invokes a sense of freedom that does not admit another reference of human nature other than the economic (1999). For example, the framing of the COVID-19 pandemic solely as an economic crisis—and not a social, ecological, or public health crisis—by reactionary governments, social actors, and individuals was only a reflection of the entrenchment of neoliberal culture and its obsession with the free market.¹⁶⁹

As a philosophy of savage capitalism that opposes any ethic of the common good, neoliberalism rejects any idea of sympathy or compassion for the suffering of others

¹⁶⁹ In the context of the pandemic, the disdain for life had devastating necropolitical consequences. Jair Bolsonaro downplayed the health crisis and demanded to “re-open” the economy (BBC, 2021a). Bolsonaro politicized the pandemic framing it as a polarizing culture war (Basciano, 2021; Llanos and Bülow, 2020; Mendonça, 2020; Sakamoto, 2020), which exacerbated Brazil’s racial necropolitics (Araújo M., 2020), the pervasive colonial logics of “letting/making die” (Mbembe, 2003), and the “necropolitics of abandonment” (Dos Santos et al, 2020).

and absolutely denies the principles of life. For liberation theologian and economist Franz Josef Hinkelammert in order to sustain this savage capitalism, bourgeois society confirms the auto-destructive tendency of market society (1995, pp. 140-141). It opts not for life in response to the market, but for the mystique of death. In collective suicide, this mystique is transformed into a project. Thus, as Vergara argues, although neoliberalism has presented itself as a project that would free society from the state Leviathan, in reality it has turned the market into the new Leviathan in which life is sacrificed in the name of freedom (2002, p. 18).

For Hinkelammert, the religion of the market can now be directly the preaching of suicide. But it is still a religion: not a religion of life, but of death. It is the religion whose God is death...To reach this God, you have to kill: first others and then yourself (2017, p. 67). J. Achille Mbembe (2003) analyzes the work of contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death by putting forward the notions of *necropolitics* and *necropower*. Defending freedom of the market is imbricated with “authoritarian freedom” (Brown, 2018) and “neoliberal necrophilia” (Gounari, 2014), taking the form of what I call *necrofreedom*. I argue that when entrenched with neoliberal rationalities, the “letting/making die” (Mbembe, 2003) logics of the market take the active form of “killing or letting kill,” which translates as macabre demand for the right and *freedom to kill*—especially criminally stereotyped young blacks (Rey & Muniz, 2020).

For *Christian libertarianism*, the market is deified along with the private sector, and private property—properties rights are even above the right to live. At a subjectivity level, any threat to the right of property is decoded as an attack on

individual freedom. For this reason, good neoliberal citizens become the absolute protectors of this organizing principle of life—even if they do not own any property. Therefore, “true” freedom means “peaceful enjoyment of one’s life and property” (De Dijn, 2020), which translates as the right to bear arms. I mentioned that Jair Bolsonaro launched the political party *Aliança pelo Brasil* in 2019. One of the central goals of the party was to defend the right of the *cidadãos de bem* to carry firearms. In this regard, the party committed to fighting tirelessly until all Brazilians (the Christian citizens) have the inalienable right to possess and bear arms guaranteed, for their own defense and the protection of their property and freedom (Aliança Pelo Brasil, 2019b). Bolsonaro also announced the party’s number as 38, mirroring a revolver caliber. During the launching event, Bolsonaro’s supporters posed with a symbol of the party made of bullet shells (Arbex et al, 2019).

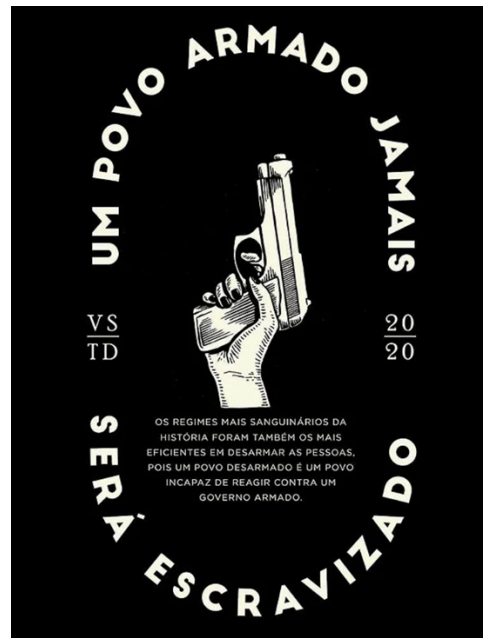


FIGURE 19. God and guns

FIGURE 20. Um povo armado jamais será escravizado

Images circulated online for commercial use (T-shirts, stickers, etc.).

Under the slogan “*Povo armado jamais será escravizado*” (an armed people will never be enslaved), Bolsonaro and his sons have galvanized gun culture in Brazil since the presidential campaign of 2018. Bolsonaro’s trademark campaign sign was a pistol hand gesture, even in a country with one of the world’s highest rates of gun deaths. On January 15th, 2019 (just two weeks after taking power), Bolsonaro signed a decree making it easier for Brazilians to keep weapons at home and increasing the validity of gun licenses from five years to ten. During Bolsonaro’s presidency, over 30 decrees and regulatory measures promoting firearm access were enacted (Resende, 2021), which expanded gun access to an unprecedented level. According to the Federal Police, the number of guns registered quadrupled between 2018 and 2021, going from 51.027 to 204.314 in 2021. The importation of arms also tripled from 2018 to 2021 (Mões, 2022). Shooting clubs also proliferated all over the country with names such as Defender, Invictus, and Freedom Shooters. As historian Aquille Mbembe points out, this illustrates “a new social division [that] has arisen separating those who are protected (because armed) from those who are not” (2019, p. 35). Building on Mbembe’s idea of the “link of enmity,” Pele explains that “in a society where the possession and non-possession of weapons define one’s social value, all social bonds are destroyed” (2020). The increasing arms market and the loosening of gun ownership regulations also led to gun production in Brazil in partnership with foreign companies (Rodrigues, 2019). Protection, when it is shaped by a hyper-individualistic culture and stops being a matter of collective accountability, also benefits the arms industry.

The idea of the right to bear arms as sacred and inalienable is also about the reaffirmation of the right to self-defense. The US-inspired gun organization ProArmas equates the right to life and liberty to the right of keeping and bearing guns and self-defense. Their slogan is “*Não é sobre armas é sobre liberdade*” (it is not about guns, it is about freedom).” Reinforcing the idea of a neoliberal individualistic sense of protection, the ProArmas’ website states: “*Não seja vítima! A decisão de proteger sua vida, família e patrimônio cabe exclusivamente à você!*” (Don’t be a victim! The decision to protect your life, family, and property is entirely up to you!) (ProArmas, n.d.). ProArmas promotes national rallies to “defend freedom.” On July 9, 2022, ProArmas organized the national “rally for freedom” where Eduardo Bolsonaro was one of the speakers (see Figures 21 and 22). In an interview for Vice News, Eduardo stated that the “the United States is a reference when you talk about democracy, when you talk about freedom and when you talk about gun control.” He added, “here in Brazil we are building our NRA, which is ProArmas” (Green & Varjacques, 2022).



FIGURE 21. Don’t Tread on Me

Brasília, Third ProArmas National Rally, 9 July 2022, personal archive.



FIGURE 22. Encontro Nacional pela Liberdade

Brasília, Third ProArmas National Rally, 9 July 2022, personal archive.



FIGURE 23. Freedom Shooters
 Brasília, Third ProArmas National Rally, 9 July 2022,
 personal archive.



FIGURE 24. Wearing the Israeli flag
 Brasília, Third ProArmas National Rally, 9 July 2022,
 personal archive.

Marcos Zborowski Pollon, founder of ProArmas, became a Federal Deputy in 2022, receiving the highest number of votes in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul. As a candidate, Pollon said that if Lulla da Silva took power “all opponents like me will be arrested or murdered, and we will live in a dictatorship. We will simply be murdered like flies just like in Nazi Germany” (Green & Varjacques, 2022). Pollon describes himself as “*pró Deus, pró Vida e pró Armas*” (pro God, pro Life, and pro Guns). Pollon and his followers not only love US-manufactured guns but also embrace the NRA’s rhetoric and playbook. Clearly fashioned after the NRA, the goal of ProArmas is to pass the equivalent of a Second Amendment enshrining the right to bear arms (Green & Varjacques, 2022). With distinctly US overtones, Pro-Armas offers shooting courses and specialized programs such as “Introduction to self-defense” and “Hitler and disarmament.” The latter studies the book of Stephen P. Halbrook titled *Gun Control in the Third Reich* (2013). Halbrook is a Senior Fellow at the think tank, the

Independent Institute, and a prominent US advocate for the Second Amendment. The ultimate goal of ProArmas is “*recuperar a liberdade que nos foi roubada*” (recover the freedom that was stolen from us) (ProArmas, n.d.).

The worship of firearms also acquires religious connotations. For example, in December 2020, Eduardo Bolsonaro introduced a bill to deregulate all advertisement of firearms, including the use of guns on social media. The justification section of the bill begins with Jair Bolsonaro’s slogan “98,” followed by the Biblical verse Luke 22:36: “Jesus instructs his disciples that they should now take their money bags and other bags, and *if they don't have a sword, they should sell their outer garment and buy one*” (Emphasis added) (Câmara dos Deputados, 2020). Evangelical pastors also defend the carrying of firearms and their use for self-defense (Poerner, Fonseca & Correia, 2022). Passages from the Old and New Testaments of the Bible underpin the pastors’ arguments to justify the protection of family and property. Pastors even anoint firearms, as the pastor René Arian did at the Agnus Church in the city of Curitiba in order to “*guardar a população contra os homens maus...Nós pedimos que o Senhor venha nos guardar, venha nos proteger, através dessas armas*” (to safeguard the population from evil men...We ask that the Lord come to guard us, come to protect us, through these guns) (Poder 360, 2022).

On the one hand, the obligation of the *cidadão de bem* to bear arms becomes part of Bolsonaro’s anti-communist crusade. For instance, Eduardo Bolsonaro’s justification for the gun-advertisement bill continues as follows:

Disarming citizens is a strategy of oppressive governments: Without weapons, the people become easy prey for dictators. In fact, history teaches us that disarmament is a top priority for authoritarian tyrants.

Adolf Hitler in Germany, Stalin in the USSR, Mao Zedong in China, Idi Amin in Uganda, Pol Pot in Cambodia, Fidel Castro in Cuba, and even Mullah Omar, leader of the Taliban militia—before becoming recognized genocidal rulers—had one thing in common: they all followed a policy first introduced by the Third Reich: the complete disarmament of civil society. In each of these cases, the population was disarmed in order to later be controlled and massacred, on a brutal and absolute scale. (Câmara dos Deputados, 2020)

On the other hand, possessing guns becomes a mandate of Christian citizens, as soldiers of the Lord's army. Thus, the symbol of guns becomes part of the imaginary of a holy war for "*o Senhor dos Exércitos*" (The Lord of Armies). The idea of Templar knights or "altar gladiators" provides a sacred aura to possessing firearms, in which Christian citizens are prepared for the ultimate battle between good and evil. The idea of Christians as soldiers of the Lord's armies is a mantra of the March for Jesus, an international evangelical organization with representations in several countries. In Brazil, the March is organized by the National Evangelical Forum for Social and Political Action (FENASP, for its Portuguese acronym). The March for Jesus congregations organized in Brazil are one of the largest Christian gatherings in the world (Parke, 2019). In June 2019, Jair Bolsonaro participated in the March for Jesus in São Paulo, making it the first time a Brazilian president took part in the event. After his speech, Bolsonaro was in the middle of the stage holding a giant Israeli flag while a pastor made a prayer for him (the Brazilian flag was added later, behind the Israeli flag, and was not fully displayed). While on stage, Bolsonaro made a gesture with his hands as if he were holding a rifle (Marcha para Jesus, 2019). During his presidency,

Bolsonaro participated in different editions of the March for Jesus. In May 2022, Bolsonaro participated in the March organized in Curitiba, capital of the state of Paraná. During his speech, Bolsonaro referred to Brazilians as a “*povo cristão*” (Christian people) and stated “*o nosso exército é o povo brasileiro*” (our army is the Brazilian people) (Portal do Governo Brasileiro, 2022). In July 2022, Bolsonaro participated in the March for Jesus in Vitória, capital of the state of Espírito Santo. The religious demonstration featured a giant replica of a weapon, sculpted by a supporter of the president (Brasil de Fato, 2022).



FIGURE 25. March for Jesus
Rio de Janeiro, 13 August 2022, personal archive.

6.8. Neoliberal Forgetting and the Demand for Military Intervention



FIGURE 26. We need our democracy back

São Paulo, the Army Headquarters, 20 November 2022, personal archive.



FIGURE 27. SOS Forças Armadas

São Paulo, the Army Headquarters, 20 November 2022, personal archive.

In his dystopian novel *1984*, George Orwell said, in the mouth of Big Brother: “Whoever controls the past, controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past.” The (re)uses and abuses of the authoritarian past and its mythification are a characteristic of fascism (Vecchi, 2018, p. 3). Through amnesia and nostalgia, the far-right seeks to control the narratives of the past in order to justify the exclusionary and authoritarian projects of the present.

According to Terry Eagleton, amnesia & nostalgia are “terrible twins” because they represent “the inability to remember and the incapacity to do anything else” (1998, p. 314). For Manuel Loff, Bolsonarismo is, above all, a combination of nostalgia for the military dictatorship, with anti-corruption demagoguery and a political discourse focused on moral issues (2019). Certainly, one of the most significant tenets of Bolsonarismo is the historical revisionism of Brazil’s recent authoritarian past: the 20-

year dictatorship after the military coup of 1964. According to the final report of the National Truth Commission, the Brazilian dictatorship committed crimes against humanity, with 434 people killed or disappeared—although the number of victims is probably higher (Comissão Nacional da Verdade, 2014). In addition, torture was an official government policy, which led to the systematic torture of thousands of people.

In “The Re(Uses) of the Past,” Roberto Vecchi argues that

This reusing of the past requires us to reflect on how traumatic histories are collectively absorbed, and on how histories can be revised, even distorted, when they are reread. When the past is reused, its image is reinscribed through the prism of a particular, usually other, ideology with the intention of evoking a particular past and creating its counter image. (2018, p. 2)

Jair Bolsonaro, who is a former military officer himself, has expressed his admiration for the country’s repressive military dictatorship that ruled from 1964 to 1985 in numerous occasions. In 2011, former president Dilma Rousseff suspended the army’s celebrations of the military coup. In 2019, as President, Bolsonaro ordered the country’s armed forces to commemorate the anniversary of the 1964 coup, which brought the military to power. After facing criticism, Bolsonaro declared that he did not want to commemorate the coup, but only to remember it (Fernandes, 2019). Subsequently, a judge barred the planned celebration of the anniversary of the 1964 coup (BBC, 2019). In 2021, however, a judge allowed the government to maintain a note on its website that celebrates the military coup of 1964 as “*um marco para a democracia brasileira*” (a landmark of Brazilian democracy) (Valadares, 2021). As Rosana Pinheiro-Machado argues, “to commemorate the coup of 1964 is to celebrate authoritarianism, censorship and above all, torture” (2019).

Bolsonaro's exaltation of the military dictatorship goes way back before he became President. In public statements, he has defended torture and has said the dictatorship should have gone further in killing communists who threatened Brazil. Referring to the 30,000 people assassinated by the brutal military dictatorship in Argentina, Bolsonaro said in an interview in 1999 that elections would not change anything in Brazil and that, "unfortunately, it will only change on the day that we break out in civil war here and do the job that the military regime didn't do: killing 30,000" (Simões, 2018). In 2009, Bolsonaro hung a poster on his office door in Congress that said "*quem procura osso é cachorro*" (whoever looks for bones is a dog), referring to the search for the remains of suspected members of the Araguaia guerrilla group who were forcibly disappeared (Revista Fórum, 2009). In 2014, Bolsonaro honored the 50th anniversary of the military coup by installing a large yellow banner in front of the defense ministry that said "*graças a vocês o Brasil não é Cuba!*" (thanks to you, Brazil is not Cuba!). He also shot firecrackers and said Brazilians owe "*a nossa liberdade e a nossa democracia*" (our freedom and democracy) to the military (Londoño et. al. 2019).

As Vinícius Bivar argues, "alternative narratives about the military regime were instrumentalized to antagonize President Rousseff and her party" (2020, p. 235). During the impeachment vote of Dilma Rousseff, Bolsonaro, then a congressman, dedicated his vote to army colonel Carlos Alberto Brilhante *Ustra*, who headed the Doi-Codi intelligence service in the 1970s, and who became known for its sadism and cruelty when overseeing horrifying torture techniques on political prisons (Guimarães J., 2018). During the voting, Bolsonaro stated: "*pela memória do coronel*

Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, o pavor de Dilma Rousseff” (to the memory of Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, the terror of Dilma Rousseff). Ustra commanded the torture sessions against Dilma Rousseff, who was imprisoned during the military dictatorship. Bolsonaro has also referred to infamous Brilhante Ustra—the first convicted torturer in Brazil—as a “national hero” (Bolsonaro J., 2015. See also Fernandes, 2019). In 2006, Colonel Ustra published *A Verdade Sufocada - A história que a esquerda não quer que o Brasil conheça* (The Suffocated Truth - The Story the Left Doesn’t Want Brazil to Know). This and his first memoir published in 1987 *Rompendo o silêncio* (Breaking the Silence) were in part a response to the report *Brasil: Nunca Mais* (Brasil: Never Again), the most comprehensive investigation about torture carried out by citizens in their country that resulted in the publication of a report and a book in 1985 that revealed the gross violation of human rights carried out by repressive policies during the military dictatorship. Before being elected president, Bolsonaro pointed to Ustra’s book “Suffocated Truth” as his bedside book (Tolotti, 2018). As President, he recommended it to students (Cowie, 2019). For Bivar, “with the rise of Bolsonaro and the new radical right in Brazil, Ustra’s memoirs were introduced to an audience previously unfamiliar with alternative historical narratives about the military regime” (2020, p. 237).

Bolsonaro’s admiration of the military regime’s worst torturer also needs to be understood as a reaction to the politics of memory promoted under the Lula da Silva and Rousseff administrations, which culminated in the establishment of the National Truth Commission in 2011, an act that was seen as a revanchist affront by the military forces. In *Politics of Memory of the Recent Past in Brazil*, Emmanuel Frías Sampaio

points out that although the Commission's final report came out in 2014, 50 years after the coup, "it generated a 'commemorative fever' about the dictatorship" and it consolidated "politics of anti-memory" (2019, pp. 122, 128). Like recent "politics of memory" in Brazil, "anti-politics of memory," especially from the armed forces, "become state policies for influencing how collective memory in the country takes shape" (Sampaio, 2019, p. 128). Building on Nora Rabotnikof's ideas, Sampaio argues that these anti-memories or political uses of memory

are anti-memories of politics and politics of anti-memory because...they do not lead to the recovery of memory and to the construction of the truth about the recent past through accounts and beliefs that question the official discourse of the terrorist State and the reign of national security in Brazil between 1964 and 1985. (2019, p. 128).

The scope of the anti-politics of memory also has to be understood in the broader regional context. "Of the major Condor countries, only Brazil conserves its amnesty law intact, and it remains the country where the least progress has been made in pursuing crimes committed by its military dictatorship" (Tremlett, 2020).

A manifestation of the politics of anti-memory was Ustra's "Suffocated Truth," which became the sixth best-selling nonfiction book in 2016 (Meireles & Genestreti, 2016), reaching its 20th edition. In May 2018, Eduardo Bolsonaro posted a photo of himself wearing a t-shirt with the slogan "*Ustra Vive*" (Ustra lives), saying "*hoje Ustra vive nos corredores da Câmara dos Deputados*" (Today, Ustra lives in the halls of the Chamber of Deputies) (Bolsonaro E., 2018a). As Sampaio argues, this official narrative of the regime "implies a rereading of the history of the authoritarian past in which it even ceases to be considered authoritarian" (2019, p. 122). Furthermore, the

impeachment of Dilma Rousseff, “led to the gradual stoppage of the politics of memory pushed over the last two decades” (Sampaio, 2019, p. 137). As Vecchi argues, the National Truth Commission and the politics of memory under the PT governments

fueled a resentful reuse of history and so turned on its head an institutional project intended to illuminate a dark past. It opened the door for executioners, not victims, to rewrite the past. In a deeply improper semantic inversion of the narrative of the dictatorship years the perpetrators claimed the mantle of victimhood for themselves. (2018, p. 3)

Sampaio analyzes how, during this time, the “theory of two demons” arose in the debate around memory, truth, and accountability in the country. Sampaio explains that “the ‘theory of two demons’ is a criticism of the school of thought in post-dictatorship Argentina, which placed crimes against humanity committed under the auspices of state terrorism side by side with any common or political crimes committed by armed groups” (2019, p.119). In Brazil, however, as Sampaio points out, there is a “recharged theory” or even a “theory of one devil” under which the communist threat embodied the only “devil” at the time. From this perspective, the military forces were transformed into victims of left-wing terrorists. Hence, political repression was justified to save the country from the communist “demon.” For instance, in the article “*Comissão da inverdade*” (Commission of untruth), Jair Bolsonaro argued that

é notório que a esquerda quer passar para a história como a grande vítima que lutou pelo Estado democrático atual, invertendo completamente o papel dos militares, que, em 1964...intervieram para que nosso país não se transformasse, à época, em mais um satélite da União Soviética” (It is notorious that the left wants to go down in history as a great victim that mourned the current democratic state, completely inverting the role of the military, which, in 1964... intervened so that our country did not become, at the time, in one more satellite of the Soviet Union). (Bolsonaro J., 2011)

The idea that the military saved Brazil from the communist evil, is also reproduced in the two-hour documentary “1964 - O Brasil entre armas e livros” (Brazil between weapons and books) directed and produced by *Brasil Paralelo*.¹⁷⁰ Echoing the spirit of Ustra’s *A Verdade Sufocada*, the supposed experts featured in the film (mostly white men) claim to reveal the unknown “truth” about the 1964 military coup. As Georg Wink argues, this conveniently selected group of so-called “experts,” such as Olavo de Carvalho and others, “present Brazil’s past as a hidden history of heroes and their deeds, brought to light by them” (2021, p. 251). The so-called experts also downplay the violence employed by the military and argue that censorship and repression were not as severe as history books tell, which were written by people contaminated by “leftist ideas.” As Wink points out, “to avoid inconsistencies with the not considered scientific expertise on all the presented topics, this knowledge must be delegitimized from the beginning as contaminated by cultural Marxism” (2021, p. 252). The documentary refers to the cultural Marxism’s offensive against the foundations of Western civilization: “Greek philosophy, Roman law, and Judeo-Christian religion” (Brasil Paralelo, 2019). Thus, the military regime was just fighting against the communist attack on traditional/Western values. As Fico points out, the elimination of any form of dissent and the defense of democratic and Christian values was part of the military’s mission to defend Brazil’s “*democracia ocidental e cristã*” (Western and Christian civilization) (2004, p. 34). The documentary portrays the military as heroes,

¹⁷⁰ The film was directed by Felipe Varelim and Lucas Ferrugem and is available for free at *Brasil Paralelo*’s YouTube channel. The documentary was released on April 2, 2019, and as of April 2025, it has 11 million views. The film features conservative figures such as Olavo de Carvalho.

saviors, and crusaders against the supernatural evil force of communism, and even as martyrs. As Manuel Loff points out, since 1945, many of the speeches of the far-right have been characterized by transforming the perpetrator into a victim. In Brazil, the military torturers were transformed into victims of left-wing guerrillas (Loff, 2019). *Inversion* is one characteristic of the revisionist and negationist ideas of the far right. As Rosenfeld points out, by reversing the liberal narrative about guilt and innocence, the far right rejects the former and embraces the latter in order to rehabilitate notorious perpetrators and demonize their victims (2020, p. 5).

This historical-revisionist inversion has translated into calls for military intervention. During the pandemic, appeals for armed forces intervention, ignited by ultra-nationalist and anti-communist sentiments, got intertwined with opposition to governors' quarantine measures to contain the virus (Mercier, 2020). For example, in March 2020, Bolsonaro participated in a protest against Congress and the Federal Supreme Court, the "enemies of Brazil," that was promoted by his own government (Benites & Betim, 2020; Jiménez, 2020). Similar protests occurred in different cities (Gazeta do Povo, 2020). In May 2020, Bolsonaro participated in a similar rally. A group of protesters held a large banner that read "military intervention with Bolsonaro" (G1, 2020b). During the event, standing next to the Brazilian, the US, and the Israeli flags, Bolsonaro stated that "the military will always be on the side of law, order, democracy and freedom" (Gortázar, 2020; G1, 2020a).

Anti-lockdown demonstrations also took place in different cities (R7, 2020; Cateano, 2021). In April 2020, Bolsonaro joined an anti-quarantine rally in Brasilia.

Without wearing a mask, he praised protesters as “patriots” for defending individual freedoms. He also denounced state measures to contain the virus as “dictatorial” (BBC, 2021c). Ironically, a large banner reading “military intervention with Bolsonaro in power” was visible in the event (Charner, 2020). In May 2020, Bolsonaro participated in another anti-lockdown protest (Reuters, 2020). He also tweeted that “unemployment, hunger, and misery will be the future of those who support the tyranny of total isolation.” Bolsonaro continued referring to state governors and mayors who imposed lockdowns as “tyrants” (BBC, 2021b). Regarding the language of tyranny utilized by self-described patriots and authoritarian leaders, Robin Wright (2020) argues that it,

trades a structural analysis of power for a more convenient story of good and evil. Tyrants are the enemy of all, regardless of race, gender, sexuality, or religion. As the supposedly unmarked group, white people become “the people,” able to make group-specific claims under the guise of universality.

In 2022, the refusal to accept the presidential election eventually evolved into demands for military intervention. Resembling the US national election in 2020, a conspiracy theory questioning the validity of Brazil’s election results was rapidly spread and amplified through social media and right-wing outlets. I witnessed Bolsonarismo’s calls for military intervention to save Brazil from “communism.” On October 31, 2022, hundreds of Bolsonaro supporters started demonstrations and camping zones in front of military bases across the country, demanding military intervention to restore Bolsonaro as Brazil’s rightful president. I was able to visit the encampment organized in the military bases in São Paulo on several occasions.

After Lula's inauguration on January 1st, 2023, I witnessed the widespread plans for the takeover of the country's capital, Brasilia. The following weekend, Bolsonaro supporters from all over the country arrived in Brasilia and joined the protestors concentrated at Brasilia's military base. On January 8th, the protestors marched from the military base to the Three Power Plaza, a distance of 8 km. Resembling the US Capitol Attack, I witnessed how thousands of *Bolsonaristas* stormed Brasilia's Three Power Plaza, which represents the center of political power of Brazilian democracy. Portrayed by participants as a "patriots' takeover," they invaded and vandalized the National Congress, the Presidential Palace, and the Supreme Court's iconic buildings. Thus, just as the military saved Brazil from an alleged "international communist plot" in 1964, Bolsonaro's supporters demanded the Armed Forces save the country from a present-day communist takeover embodied in the re-election of progressive candidate Lula da Silva that resulted in the storming of Brazil's Capitol (see Figures 28 and 29).



FIGURE 28. Marching towards the *Praça dos Poderes*

Brasilia, 8 January 2023, personal archive.



FIGURE 29. Invading the *Praça dos Poderes*

Brasilia, 8 January 2023, personal archive.

According to Vecchi, “the past is still part of a discussion in which ideologies and reuses of the past can profoundly alter or even reverse the ways it is evoked” (2018, p. 4). The celebration of the authoritarian past has led to a form of revisionism that idealizes and romanticizes the authoritarian past while naturalizes and trivializes *barbarie*. This goes hand in hand with the normalization of neoliberal morals and values that justify a vision of society based on exclusion and intolerance. Historical revisionism gives legitimacy to the far-right apocalyptic crusade. It also serves the purposes of providing a halo of sacredness and historical immutability to savage neoliberalism, understood as the combination of free-market economics and meritocratic individualism with exclusionary ethnonationalism and the moral imperatives of religious conservatism.

In the words of Eduardo Galeano, “*sabemos que la pérdida de la memoria hipoteca el porvenir. Quien no puede aprender del pasado queda condenado a aceptar el futuro sin poder imaginarlo*” (we know that memory loss mortgages the future. Whoever cannot learn from the past is condemned to accept the future without being able to imagine it). It is our responsibility to confront these forms of politics of anti-memory that limit our imagination possibilities, to prevent these neoliberal/fascist dystopias and their regressive visions of society—built on *amnesia* and *memoricide*¹⁷¹—from becoming the norm.

¹⁷¹ Croatian physician and historian Mirko D. Grmek coined the term *memoricide* to define the intentional destruction of the memory and cultural treasure of the “other”, the adversary, the (un)known (cited in Civallero, 2007).

Chapter Seven

7. Messianic Neoliberalism in Milei’s Argentina: “The Lion of Liberty” and the Political Economy of Sacrifice

7.1. Introduction

Milei has seized power with the Bible in hand, a defining characteristic of Christoneofascism, as described by Juan José Tamayo (2020). While Milei employs an idolatrous use of the Bible to attack the principles of equality, solidarity, and compassion underlying the concept of social justice, I argue that Milei's true Bible is not the Christian Bible (or the Torah, which he claims to follow) but rather the Austrian School of economics' bible and their apostles, that is, the work of Murray Rothbard, Milton Friedman, Ludwig von Mises, and Friedrich Hayek. The writings of these libertarian economists constitute Milei's true scripture, and the market serves as his deity. This partly explains the messianic and theological rhetoric and symbolism that characterize Milei's project of anarcho-capitalist fundamentalism. Within this framework, questioning the sacredness of the “invisible hand of the market”—in other words, the omnipotent hand of God—is a heresy that demands divine punishment. Consequently, while Milei presents himself as the ultimate defender of “life and liberty” (as long as these do not infringe upon the “inviolability” of private property), he, in fact, fanatically promotes a project of death and subjugation, given that liberty is conceived as inseparable from the market and life as subordinated to the divinity of the market.

As Hinkelammert (2018) has argued, the logic of the market is the rationality of death. When questioned about income levels, Milei responded to a journalist: “If people didn’t make ends meet, they would be dead” (La Política Online, 2024d). In his speech at the Hoover Institution in May 2024, Milei stated, “There will come a time when people will starve, and so they will find a way to avoid dying. I don’t need to intervene... because, in the end, someone will resolve it”¹⁷² (Casa Rosada, 2024c). This represents the logic of human sacrifice at the altar of the market: “Let those who must die, die” (Covarrubias, 2020). As Juan José Bautista explains,

When we judge the rationality of the market from the perspective of life, this rationality appears irrational. However, when we consider this rationality within the foundations of modernity, it appears perfectly rational, despite the fact that it continuously produces death; thus, it is a rationality of death. (2012, p. 90)

In this chapter, I will analyze the political economy of Milei’s project through the lens of the logic of sacrifice. Milei promises the utopia of the total market—heaven on earth—but this first requires that Argentines endure *inferno* on Earth. In light of the recent English publication of *The Theological Metaphors of Marx* by Enrique Dussel, translated by Camilo Pérez Bustillo (2024), and on the occasion of the first 500 days of Milei’s government, I will examine Milei’s political economy of sacrifice through the perspective of theological metaphor. My argument asserts that the political economy of sacrifice manifests through the formation of *messianic neoliberalism* and *libertarian hyper-occidentalism* (Segura-Ballar, 2025a, 2025b). Under this framework,

¹⁷² In May 2022, Milei also defended the right to starve to death. In a televised debate, regarding the election between not eating and being exploited for 14 or 18 hours, Milei said that “you can choose to starve and die” (Perfil, 2024).

not only are the rights and lives of the poor—and those who were previously “taken into account” (Ipar, 2024)—sacrificed in the name of the divinity of the market, but national sovereignty and the national interest are also sacrificed in the name of the (neo)colonial power of the West, condemning Argentina to the status of a (neo)colony.

7.2. The Chainsaw and the Logic of Sacrifice

At an event organized by the Meta corporation in Buenos Aires on November 12, 2024, Milei declared that Argentina was exporting the “chainsaw model” and deregulation worldwide. He further claimed that Elon Musk, who was set to lead the “Department of Government Efficiency” in the upcoming Donald Trump administration, was in discussions with Federico Sturzenegger, Argentina’s Minister of Deregulation and State Transformation, to explore ways to deregulate the US economy (Oficina del Presidente, 2024h). The so-called economic miracle of the chainsaw model was what Milei described as “the greatest fiscal adjustment in the history of humanity” when addressing business leaders at the Country Strategy Meeting organized by the World Economic Forum and the Argentine government in October 2024 (Oficina del Presidente, 2024f).

The “greatest adjustment in history” has resulted in an unprecedented rise in poverty across Argentina. According to data from the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (Indec, for its Spanish acronym), poverty reached 52.9% in the first half of 2024, marking an 11-point increase from the second half of 2023, when Javier Milei took office. This figure represents the highest poverty rate in the last 20 years.

Meanwhile, extreme poverty reached 18.1%, a 6.2-point increase compared to the second half of 2023. Poverty and extreme poverty levels increased across all regions of the country. In terms of age groups, 66.1% of children aged 0 to 14 were living in poverty. For those aged 15 to 29 and 30 to 64, the poverty rates were 60.7% and 48.6%, respectively. Among those aged 65 and over, 29.7% fell below the poverty line (Indec, 2024). In short, the so-called economic miracle of the “chainsaw” impoverished more than 5.3 million Argentines and pushed over 3 million into extreme poverty (BBC, 2024).

Despite nearly 25 million people now living in poverty, Milei repeatedly blames “socialism”—that is, policies promoting social justice and human rights—as an “impoverishing and murderous” system. Described by Atilio Borón as a display of “sadistic delight” (2024), Milei announced the ongoing destruction of the State, referring to the “3,200 pending reforms” aimed at making Argentina “the freest country in the world” (Oficina del Presidente, 2024a).

The esteemed British publication *The Economist* interviewed Milei and featured him on the cover of its November 30, 2024, edition with the title “My Contempt for the State is Infinite” (2024a). Milei and his inner circle despise the State so profoundly that they rejoice in its destruction, along with the pain and suffering inflicted upon the population. Milei has even stated that he loves being “the one destroying the state from within. It’s like being infiltrated behind enemy lines” (The Free Press, 2024). However, Milei is not merely dismantling the State. He is dismantling public education, public healthcare, state-owned enterprises, industry, pensions, jobs, incomes, and rights. The

brutality of the chainsaw doctrine is what the governor of Buenos Aires Province has termed “the economy of cruelty” (Kicillof, 2024).

For writer Martín Kohan, “cruelty is in fashion in Argentina” (Página 12, 2024b). Verónica Gago insightfully points out that state cruelty did not begin with Milei. However, under his administration, the politics of cruelty have become an entrenched political regime (2024). According to Ezequiel Ipar, Milei’s ideology of cruelty is rooted in the assertion of a “right to despise and cause suffering to others,” particularly the poor, in which “sacrifice and exclusion...become deliberately inflicted punishments” (2024). In other words, “the dismantling of state capacities is structured to gain political legitimacy through the suffering that the state’s withdrawal inflicts upon specific individuals or social groups” (Ipar, 2024).

This ideology of cruelty is sustained by a political economy of sacrifice inherent to neoliberalism, in which the logic of maximizing profit necessitates the sacrifice of those who were previously “taken into account” by the State—even to the point of condemning the poor to death. In both cases, the inflicted suffering assumes the dimension of divine punishment, a kind of exorcism. Milei’s religious mission to inflict a collective exorcism of social justice by destroying the State and imposing the Promised Land, the utopia of the total market, is what I refer to as *messianic neoliberalism*. I propose this idea by building on Enrique Dussel’s theological metaphor, developed in his analysis of Marx, which offers a valuable framework for understanding Milei’s political economy of sacrifice, as I shall explore next.

7.3. Dussel: The Logic of Sacrifice and the Theological Metaphor

In 2024, the first English edition of Dussel's *The Theological Metaphors of Marx*, originally published in 1993, was released. I consider Dussel's book, as well as his entire body of work, more relevant than ever for unraveling the political economy of sacrifice that characterizes the new manifestations of fascism in the Americas.

In Chapter 3, I referred to Dussel's analysis of Marx's theological critique of capital, that is, Marx's critique of fetishistic religiosity. As Dussel points out, Marx uncovers the theological background of the constitution of bourgeois economy, which necessitated a fundamental theological argument—which was elaborated by Adam Smith. This required “to explain how God, with his ‘Invisible Hand,’ could turn selfishness, usury, and the ‘every man for himself’ competition (already explained by Hobbes anthropologically with his *homo homini lupus*), into a virtuous, good, and just work” (Dussel, 2024, pp. 85-86). In this way, by identifying this theological-economic orchestration, Marx critiques bourgeois political economy through theological metaphors.

The religious structure of capital, as fetish, has a sacrificial logic.¹⁷³ “Capital is an emphatically living ‘god’ that demands human victims” (Dussel, 2024, p. xxx). As Dussel explains, “accumulation is the moment when the sacrifice is consummated, when life objectively becomes transformed, irreversibly, into the life of capital (the deadened life of the worker)” (2024, p. 129). Thus, the fetishistic cult lives off the

¹⁷³ The sacrificial character of capitalism and neoliberalism has been extensively theorized by Latin American liberation theologians. For example, see Hinkelammert (1977, 2017, 2018) and Jung Mo Sung (1992). See also Assmann and Hinkelammert (1989).

sacrificed life of the worker. The demon is the father of Death, as it lives off the death of the worker. The cult to the fetish, to Satan, is consummated by the accumulation of the ‘blood’ of the poor (1993c, p. 282). “The fetish lives from the blood of the poor: the life of the idol is the death of the poor. To take away the life of the fetish through justice is to kill it. But before dying, the idol kills” (2024, p. 117). For Dussel, religious capitalism denies the God of the poor, the God of life, the God who calls for justice, as well as the Christian tradition of liberation. Thus, the ‘god’ denied by Marx, according to Dussel, is not the Christian God, but the ‘god’ affirmed by Hegel—which is nothing other than the sacralized European totality—and European industrial and colonial capitalism—the European ‘I,’ imperial and recently capitalist (1993c, p. 237, 245, 247). This ‘god’ divinizes, fetishizes, and sacralizes the unjust political-economic order in place, and therefore allows for oppression in the name of divine right. The system of domination becomes a ‘state of nature’ established by Divine Providence, that is, a system established by God and nature. I argue that Milei’s *messianic neoliberalism* is supported by the idea of returning to the ‘natural’ state, the Promised Land, which, as Marx astutely said, constituted

a veritable Eden of innate human rights. What reigned there was freedom, equality, and property...because each one is concerned about itself and about no other...given the virtuous preexisting harmony of things under the auspices of an all-seeing astute Providence. (Marx, Capital, I. Cited by Dussel, 2024, p. 57)

7.4. The Forces of Heaven: Libertarian Mystique and *Messianic Neoliberalism*

Juan Luis González, biographer of Javier Milei, has stated in several interviews that Milei is convinced he speaks with God and that “God gave him the mission to enter

politics and not stop until he becomes president” (Radio Nacional, 2023). According to the biographer, it was in 2020 when Milei embarked on a mystical and esoteric path through a medium and the art of “interspecies communication” to communicate from the beyond with Conan—his dog, who died in 2017 and whom he considered his son.¹⁷⁴ It was then that “Conan began to communicate with God,” and it was God who “told him he had to enter politics because he had a mission: to save Argentina from evil and that he was also destined to become president in 2023” (Telefe Noticias, 2023).

Javier Milei was elected president of Argentina in November 2023. His political career began in 2021 when he became a congressman for the political party coalition *La Libertad Avanza* (La Libertad Avanza). One of the most notable features of his political career is his use of theological metaphors and biblical references to advance his anarcho-capitalist project. Within this ultra-neoliberal, aggressive, and violent imaginary, Milei is conceived as a savior, a liberator of Argentines, a prophet who will free the world from evil (represented by the State). The anarcho-capitalist messiah promises to achieve, or return to, the Kingdom of God, the utopia of the total market, heaven on earth. However, this first requires enduring hell on earth: “the greatest fiscal adjustment in human history,” aimed at destroying evil (the State) and the enemies of freedom, who deserve to be exterminated by the forces of heaven as part of divine punishment.

¹⁷⁴ Milei has five dogs, Conan (the Barbarian), Murray (Rothbard), Milton (Friedman), Robert, and Lucas. Except for Conan, they are also named after renowned libertarian economists.

In December 2021, there was a debate on the legislative bill known as *Bienes Personales*, which sought to establish a progressive tax primarily for taxpayers with significant assets or wealth abroad. During the debate, Milei denounced the tax increase as “immoral” and urged an end to “persecuting people” (referring to the “productive private sector”) and a reduction in public spending. To justify his defense of private sector interests, Milei employed a biblical analogy of the Jewish people who were forced to pay taxes to the Egyptians (Marelli, 2021). According to Milei, taxes led to the enslavement of the Jews, who then had to wander for “40 years to achieve freedom, to escape the oppressive yoke of the State.” For Milei, taxes drive away businesses and young people: “all those who produce leave; only those who parasitize the productive private sector remain” (Marelli, 2021). Milei assumed the presidency on December 10, 2023. The newly elected president closed his inaugural speech with a biblical reference to Maccabees 3:19, invoking “the forces of heaven,” which was also his presidential campaign slogan. Similar to the MAGA (Make America Great Again) caps, “heaven caps” became popular to the point of being translated into Hebrew (Milei, 2024e).

The image of a lion was also one of Milei's campaign logos and constitutes one of his primary theological references. The lion has biblical connotations, as it can symbolize the strength of God. Milei refers to himself as “the Lion,” whose mission is not to lead lambs but to awaken lions. Four days after being nominated as a candidate by La Libertad Avanza, Milei posted an image of a roaring lion accompanied by a

biblical verse in Hebrew that read, “The lion has roared! Who will not fear?”¹⁷⁵ (Milei, 2023a). In February 2024, during his trip to Israel, Milei posted a reference to Exodus from the Old Testament in Hebrew (32:19-21, 26), which describes what happened when Moses wrote the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai (Milei, 2024b). The use of the figure of Moses and the Ten Commandments is perhaps the most significant theological reference of Milei's anarcho-capitalist project. The verse explains that when Moses returned from Mount Sinai, he became enraged by the Israelites' idolatry of the golden calf that one of his brothers had built, thus Moses shattered the tablets at the foot of the mountain. The biblical reference was not merely an analogy to Argentina's political situation at the time, particularly the controversy surrounding the suspension and protests against the destruction of the State¹⁷⁶ pursued by the *Omnibus* Law,¹⁷⁷ but also an allusion to Moses' punishment of those who defied him.

On March 1, 2024, Milei once again posted an image of Exodus 34:1-25 from the Old Testament in Hebrew, which is also a reference to the Ten Commandments: “God

¹⁷⁵ The lion is also a significant element within Zionist symbolism. For instance, the central figure of the emblem and flag of Jerusalem is the Lion of Judah. The use of Zionist symbols by Milei and his followers—such as the Star of David or the Israeli flag—is consistent with his messianic delusion and his fervent devotion to Israel. See, for example, an image posted on Milei's Instagram account in October 2024, which features the Casa Rosada alongside the Star of David, accompanied by the phrase “*Shana Tova Umetuka*”, in celebration of the Jewish New Year (Milei, 2024k).

¹⁷⁶ From the outset of his administration, Milei announced an unprecedented austerity plan targeting public spending, which included the dismissal of public employees, the suspension of public works, and a reduction in transportation and energy subsidies. Additionally, the number of ministries was cut from 18 to 9, and the number of secretariats from 106 to 54 (Rey, 2023). In just the first quarter of 2024, cuts to pensions and social programs accounted for nearly half of the drastic austerity measures implemented by Milei (Tarricone, 2024). Milei proclaimed that “the era of the active state is over” (Ciales, 2024), effectively declaring war on retirees (Associated Press, 2024) and public education (Calloni, 2024). See also Elizondo (2024) and Stefanoni (2024).

¹⁷⁷ This refers to the *Ley de Bases y Puntos de Partida para la Libertad de los Argentinos* (Law of Bases and Starting Points for the Freedom of Argentines), which aimed to modernize the state through three main pillars: economic deregulation, labor law flexibilization, and the privatization of state-owned enterprises. An “omnibus bill” is a package of legislative initiatives designed to implement structural reforms. In Argentina, the first precedent for such a measure occurred during the presidency of Carlos Menem in 1989, followed by a second instance during Mauricio Macri's administration in 2015.

said to Moses: I will give you the second tablets, on which, as on the first, I wrote the commandments that were there and that you broke” (Milei, 2024d). That same day, Milei delivered a speech at the opening of the ordinary sessions of the Legislative Assembly, where he recalled his “sacred cause: the defense of life, liberty, and the private property of Argentines” (Oficina del Presidente, 2024a). As part of this mission, Milei announced the signing of a “new social contract” called the *Pacto de Mayo* (Pact of May). This “new foundational pact for Argentina”, signed “before the gaze of God the Eternal,” was modeled after the Ten Commandments and established “the ten principles of the new Argentine economic order” (Oficina del Presidente, 2024a). In Milei’s words, “These ten ideas, which form the basis of progress for any nation, will lay the foundation for Argentina’s growth over the next 100 years so that Argentina may once again become a beacon of light for the West” (see Table 5). Milei proposed that once the *Bases* Law was enacted, they could work on the ten principles of the “refounding of the Homeland,” which would mark “a new era of glory and prosperity” (see Figure 31). Resembling the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1816, Milei stated that this great historical moment was destined only for “beautiful souls” willing to make enormous sacrifices and risk everything for the Nation (Oficina del Presidente, 2024a).

On July 9, Argentina’s Independence Day, the *Pacto de Mayo* was signed, an event in which Milei recalled the “great generations of patriots” who “had, as the Holy Scriptures say and as King Solomon asked the Creator, the wisdom to distinguish between good and evil.” Milei stated that it was a “moral and civic obligation” to follow

the example of those “illustrious Argentines” who embraced the ideas of freedom— “the ideas that made Western civilization the most impressive civilizational achievement in human history” (Oficina del Presidente, 2024d). Milei also announced the creation of the Council of May to translate these principles into legislative reforms, which included a representative from the business sector. The *Pacto de Mayo* was signed by the governors of the provinces and concluded with the phrase, “may the forces of heaven be with us.” The Pact lists the ten “non-negotiable” principles, beginning with the sacred right to private property, understood as an inalienable right, prior to the law, and granted by God (Presidencia Javier Milei, 2024) (see Table 5).



FIGURE 30. La Estatua de la Libertad Argentina, Carajo!!

This illustration was published by the well-known Argentine cartoonist Nik (Gaturro, 2024d). Nik is the creator of the children’s comic Gaturro, whose Instagram account has over 700,000 followers. A slightly different version of this image was shared on Javier Milei’s official account (Milei, 2024p). While the Statue of Liberty carries a tablet symbolizing law or justice and a torch representing the Age of Enlightenment, Nik’s depiction of Milei as a hero of liberty features a torch that symbolizes Argentina as a “beacon of light” for the world—or as the beginning of the next hundred years and a “new era of glory” (Oficina del Presidente, 2024a).

Instead of a tablet, Milei holds a book by economist Murray Rothbard, founder of anarcho-capitalism, which is portrayed as a kind of sacred text. The jersey he wears is that of the Argentine national soccer team, bearing the number 10, famously worn by Messi and, before him, Maradona.

Nik has also represented Donald Trump as the Statue of Liberty holding a tablet that reads “*Aranceles*” (tariffs) (gaturro, 2025).

TABLE 5. Ten Clauses of the May Pact

1. *The inviolability of private property.*
2. *Non-negotiable fiscal balance.*
3. *Reduction of public spending to historical levels, around 25% of the Gross Domestic Product.*
4. *A useful and modern early childhood, primary, and secondary education system, with full literacy and no school dropout.*
5. *A tax reform that lowers the tax burden, simplifies life for Argentines, and promotes commerce.*
6. *A renegotiation of federal tax revenue sharing to end the current coercive model affecting the provinces.*
7. *A commitment by Argentine provinces to advance the exploitation of the country's natural resources.*
8. *A modern labor reform that promotes formal employment.*
9. *A pension reform that ensures the system's sustainability and honors contributors.*
10. *Openness to international trade so that Argentina may once again become a key player in the global market.*

Javier Milei perceives himself as a libertarian messiah who communicates directly with God, akin to Moses, and sees his role as liberating Argentines—and the world—from “communism” (see Figures 2 and 3). In an interview with The Wall Street Journal, Milei reiterated his admiration for Moses, the “greatest liberator in all of human history”¹⁷⁸ (2024; see also Shapiro, 2024). Milei sees himself as an anti-communist Moses. For instance, in August 2024, responding to Nicholas Maduro’s remarks in which he referred to Milei and Elon Musk as satanic figures, Milei invoked a reference to Maccabees:

Communists attack us with arrogance and impiety, seeking to exterminate us, our women, and our children, and to seize our remains. We, on the other hand, fight for our lives and our traditions. Heaven will crush them before us—do not fear them! For victory in battle does not depend on the number of soldiers but on the forces from heaven. Communism is atheistic; we have faith in God. (Milei, 2024j)

¹⁷⁸ In the interview, he also reaffirmed his admiration for Ronald Reagan, Pope John Paul II, and Margaret Thatcher (The Wall Street Journal, 2024).



FIGURE 31. Milei as Moises holding the tablet (*Ley Bases*)

On the occasion of the *Ley Bases*'s approval, illustrator Damían Domínguez created an image—shared by Javier Milei—that shows Milei alongside his Vice President, accompanied by the phrase “¡*Habemus Ley!*,” referencing the Latin proclamation used to announce the election of a new pope (Milei, 2024h). Domínguez describes himself as a “young illustrator from Chaco” contributing to the “cultural battle through drawings.”

Another example of a messianic representation is from the cartoonist Nik, who published an image of a planet depicted as a head with Milei's characteristic hairstyle, accompanied by the text “The world is becoming Mileinized...” This image was also shared by Milei's account (Milei, 2024g).

Images of Milei alongside the planet, including the phrase “*fenómeno barrial*” (neighborhood phenomenon), allude to the idea that Milei is first transforming his neighborhood and then the world—or the universe. In other words, Milei is portrayed as a prophet who will make Argentina the “moral beacon of the continent” (Carlson, 2023) and the “beacon of light of the West” (Oficina del Presidente, 2024a).

The belief that Milei will transform Argentina into “the freest country in the world” (Oficina del Presidente, 2024a, 2024h) and the “moral beacon that will illuminate the world” implies that Milei is, therefore, a kind of universal savior. This notion helps explain why representations of Milei as a savior of both Argentines and the world are infused with deeply messianic symbolism. For instance, the illustrator Nik published an image in which Milei is portrayed as Moses parting the waters—symbolizing inflation and the political caste—to open a path for the chosen people (Argentines) (Gaturro, 2024c).

In another illustration, Milei appears alongside Noah in an ark titled “Milei's Ark,” featuring an anchor labeled “fiscal anchor” (Gaturro, 2024a). The GAP account, which has nearly 30,000 followers on X, posted an image of Milei upon his nomination as the presidential candidate for La Libertad Avanza. The image depicts Milei beside a glowing cross as the savior of the world, accompanied by the caption, “First Argentina, then the world!” GAP (short for “Gordo Anti Progre”) describes himself as an “honorary militant of the forces of heaven” (2023). Another pro-Milei account, Milei Shelby, with 74 followers on X, has also published images portraying Milei as the messiah and savior of the world. See, for example, the images shared in November 2024 (2024d, 2024e, 2024f, 2024g).



FIGURE 32. Milei fighting the socialist hydra

This meme was posted by the account @nnairobi, a profile dedicated to translating and disseminating Milei’s message in Turkish. Its description reads “*Türkçe Milei Haberleri*” (Turkish Milei News). The account is managed by a supporter of Milei who identifies as a “libertarian” and “anti-communist.”

Nnairobi’s meme is based on a 1931 illustration by German cartoonist Oskar Garvens titled “The Lie of War Guilt” (*Kriegsschuldlüge*) (propagandopolis, 2024). As a form of recycled anti-communist propaganda, Nnairobi uses the image to depict Milei slaying a socialist hydra—represented by Karl Marx, Nicolás Maduro, Gustavo Petro, and the United Nations—with a sword bearing the slogan *Don’t Tread on Me*, a phrase associated with the far right and white supremacy in the United States.

The image was posted following Milei’s speech at the United Nations in September 2024 and has garnered nearly 35,000 views on X (nnairobi, 2024).

The employment of theological references and messianic symbology is also one of the main characteristics of the *forces of heaven*. The website of *La Libertad Avanza* says, “if you are ready to save the country, you are welcome to join the forces of heaven” (La Libertad Avanza). On November 16, 2024, Milei’s supporters launched *Las Fuerzas del Cielo* (the forces of heaven), as the *brazo armado* of “armed wing” of *La Libertad Avanza*, constituted of the “more loyal soldiers” of the President. It was presented as the “Praetorian Guard” of the President, evoking the elite imperial guard of the Roman Empire. The scenography consisted of a podium, and behind it, imperial

red vertical banners hung with golden letters, resembling medieval banners, spelling out slogans and symbols. The banner at the center read: “*Argentina será el faro que ilumine el mundo*” (Argentina will be the beacon that illuminates the world) with the *orlada* cross associated with global, spiritual, and cosmic changes (see Figure 33). Resembling Mussolini’s aesthetic and fascist liturgy, the central banner was flanked by others with the slogans: “God,” “property,” “freedom,” “life,” “homeland,” “family” (Lorca, 2024; La Política Online, 2024e). The lighting was also a staged performance that replicated European fascist rallies: a stark contrast between light and darkness, with spotlights aimed from below in an attempt to magnify figures (Cángaro, 2024).

Daniel Parisini, one of the most important online influencers of Milei’s movement, was one of the event’s key organizers and speakers. Parisini, known as “Gordo Dan,” clarified that the aesthetic of the event “was not fascist. It was Roman, the Roman Empire, the cradle of Western civilization, which is what we defend”¹⁷⁹ (Leclercq, 2024). Aligned with Milei’s mission of restoring “the great occidental legacy” (Oficina del Presidente, 2024k), the ultimate goal of *Las Fuerzas del Cielo* is to transform Argentina into “the beacon of the West, the beacon of the world, the beacon of beacons” (Las Fuerzas del Cielo, 2024b). The launch of The Forces of Heaven was accompanied by the launch of both the *Fundación Faro*¹⁸⁰ (see Figure 34) and *La Carlos Menem* (see

¹⁷⁹ Gordo Dan has a YouTube program called *La Misa* (the Mass). After launching *Las Fuerzas del Cielo*, his program showed the *orlada* cross at the center accompanied by the central banner shown at the event, flanked by two other banners that read “Communism is a disease of the soul,” and the biblical reference to the Maccabees 3:19 “For victory in battle does not depend on the number of soldiers but on the forces from heaven.” After mocking all the critics for calling them “nazis,” one of the participants pointed out Milei’s unconditional support of Israel, which shows that he and his supporters cannot be fascists (Carajo, 2024).

¹⁸⁰ The symbology of the lighthouse is central to Milei’s neoliberal messianism. In October 2024, the *Fundación Faro* (Lighthouse Foundation) was launched under the direction of Agustín Laje, one of the most prominent figures of the far-right in Argentina. As a new think tank, it offers courses and seminars to promote free-market capitalism.

Table 6).¹⁸¹ A key figure behind the launch of the *Las Fuerzas del Cielo* was Santiago Caputo, Milei’s advisor and one of the most influential figures of the forces of heaven militancy. In November 2024, Caputo announced the coming launch of *Las Epístolas del Cielo* (The Epistles from Heaven).

FIGURE 33. *Las Fuerzas del Cielo* are anti-communists



This image was shared by *Las Fuerzas del Cielo* (2024a). Inspired by an illustration of the Argentine prophet, Benjamín Solari Parravicini, the *orlada* cross has become the logo of the *Forces of Heaven*, representing the divine protection of a Christic force. The *orlada* cross resembles the templar cross. As it has been highlighted, the *orlada* cross also resembles the Nazi Iron Cross (Maceira, 2024) which was inspired by the Teutonic Cross. In the construction of the libertarian imaginary, the *orlada* cross has become a symbol of an ancient and mythical anti-communist struggle, as the image shared by *Las Fuerzas del Cielo* represents (2024a).

Along with the *orlada* cross, *Las Fuerzas del Cielo* uses phrases, typography, and imagery inspired by the Roman Empire. For example, instead of SPQR (acronym for *Senatus Populusque Romanus*), they use SPQA (*Senatus Populusque Argentum*) to refer to the Senate and People of Argentina. Milei is also represented as a Roman emperor accompanied by the Latin phrase *Ave Miller* (*Las Fuerzas del Cielo*, 2024b). Through Artificial Intelligence, Milei is usually portrayed as an Augustus figure, dressed in a red toga with golden trim (*Las Fuerzas del Cielo*, 2024c). In the libertarian imaginary, Milei is seen as carrying the fire that, according to Greek mythology, Prometheus gave to mankind as a tool for the development of civilization (Bossi, 2024).

The lighthouse is considered a reference to the Duce’s Lighthouse, the “Rocca delle Caminate,” which Mussolini turned into his summer residence in the Emilia-Romagna region. The illuminated light of the lighthouse signaled the presence of the fascist leader in that restored medieval fortress (La Política Online, 2024e). One of the goals of the *Fundación Faro* is to cultivate relationships with other far-right factions around the world to consolidate “*una patria grande anti-zurda*” (a great anti-leftist homeland) (Scorciapino, 2024a).

¹⁸¹ Carlos Saúl Menem served as President of Argentina from 1989 to 1999. His administration brutally implemented the infamous “structural adjustment” programs following the “recommendation” (that is to say, the forcible imposition) of the IMF, the World Bank, and the US Treasury Department (Almiron, 2022). Despite the devastation caused by the radical neoliberal structural adjustments, Menem has been praised as a “hero” by Milei. On May 14, 2024, 35 years after the electoral victory of Menem, Milei held a ceremony paying homage to the former President by placing the bust of Menem in the ‘Gallery of Presidential Busts’ at the Casa Rosada, which for Milei, was an “act of justice.” Through tears, Milei stated that Menem was “the greatest President in the country’s history” and a source of inspiration for “those of us who believe in freedom to follow his example” (Oficina del Presidente, 2024c). Milei has also stated that Domingo Cavallo—who directed Argentina’s central bank during the last military dictatorship and served as economic minister during the Menem administration—was the greatest Minister of Economy in all history (Perfil, 2021).



FIGURE 34. ¡Faro de Faros!

The logo of the Faro Foundation is inspired by a 1972 illustration of the Argentine artist Benjamín Solari Parravicini. A slightly different version of Figure 30, “*La estatua de la Libertad*,” was shared on Javier Milei’s official account (Milei, 2024p). In this version, the torch of enlightenment (*faro*) is also inspired by the same Parravicini’s drawing. The illustration reads “Traveler, you who observe, go toward the beach of silvery sands—there, peace awaits. Beacon of beacons!” (see Fundación Faro Argentina, 2024).

TABLE 6. La Carlos Menem

In October 2024, a group of young Milei supporters launched *La Carlos Menem*, an organization that, according to its members, aims to “break with the dark legend that has been cast over the 1990s, the most glorious decade in Argentina’s history.” The organization defends radical libertarianism combined with ideas of “homeland, family, and property” (Molina, 2024). The organization announced that they are recruiting those committed to Mile’s ideas and who want to make Argentina great again (Diario Registrado, 2025). When describing the values of the organization, Enzo di Fabio, President of the Organization, stated “We are a generation that is not ashamed to believe in God, in the word ‘order,’ in the sanctity of unborn life, and that sees the Armed Forces as defenders of peace. We also proclaim the failure of the Agenda 2030 and oppose the imposition of gender ideology. We believe in private property and the market. That is *La Carlos Menem*” (Molina, 2024).

Di Fabio is the Coordinator of the *Foro Panamericano de Jóvenes Políticos* (the Pan-American Forum of Young Politicians), a far-right think tank that brings together conservatives from across the country. The Foro has organized two international congresses in Buenos Aires in 2023 and 2024. In 2024, the participants of the Forum signed a charter expressing their commitment to the values of private property, free market principles, security, and the defense of life. The event included a tribute to the victims of “21st-century communism and socialism” (Del Solar, 2024). For Di Fabio, “the Forum is—and aims to remain—an international network of leaders, mostly young, who are committed to being the counterweight to the São Paulo Forum and the Progressive International. Without Donald Trump (U.S.), Jair Bolsonaro (Brazil), Vox in Spain, Viktor Orbán in Hungary, and Giorgia Meloni (Italy), we would not be able to understand the significance of Javier Milei’s victory” (Del Solar, 2024).

With an *evangelizing* mission, the three-volume canonical text of the libertarian doctrine, *Las Epístolas del Cielo*, will feature a burgundy cover design with golden lettering, emulating the aesthetic of an antiquated and mystical publication. The classic image of the artwork “Archangel Michael Defeating the Devil”—a sculpture by Baroque artist Luisa Roldán—will be printed on the back cover of the first volume. This image symbolizes the struggle between good and evil, a struggle that the libertarians aim to replicate with their methods in the national political arena (Scorciapino, 2024b, 2025). The book will include the ideas of Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek, among others, and will be presented as a first testament containing ten premises, resembling the Ten Commandments (see Table 7). *Las Epístolas del Cielo* will also include the “rules” of militancy, which center on the absolute alignment with Milei and his libertarian doctrine. Most interestingly, the preface of *Las Epístolas del Cielo*, will be titled “Nothing is true, everything is permitted,” a maxim inspired by the video game Assassin’s Creed. According to the website description, the game depicts a millennia-old struggle between two ancient sects, the Order of Assassins, who fight for peace and free will, and the Knights Templar, who desire peace through order and control (Assassin Creed, n.d.).¹⁸² Thus, Milei’s creed is presented as the Assassin’s

¹⁸² According to its website, the Assassin’s Creed is located in “Jerusalem, the twelfth century. Amidst the chaos of the Third Crusade, a Brotherhood of warriors rose to power. Shrouded in secrecy, feared for their ruthlessness, they alone would save the Holy Land, or destroy it. They were the Assassins” (Assassin Creed, n.d.).

Creed, that is, a code and guiding philosophy of the Assassins upheld from the Middle Ages as an ancient battle between good and evil.



FIGURE 35. The Archangel Saint Michael defeating the devil
Back cover of *Las Epístolas del Cielo* (Scorciapino, 2025).

Las Epístolas del Cielo will include illustrations that respond to the Roman printed style. Among these illustrations are those of Benjamín Solari Parravicini, an Argentine artist, who, for Milei's supporters, is said to have prophesized Milei's rise. Born in 1989, Parravicini is considered the Argentine "Nostradamus." In 1941, he predicted the rise of the "gray man," an unexpected leader who, according to Parravicini, would emerge in times of crisis to unite a divided Argentina. For certain libertarian sectors, Milei embodies the saint figure of "the gray man who will save Argentina" (Scorciapino, 2025).¹⁸³

¹⁸³ Santiago Caputo has decorated his office with Parravicinis' illustrations predicting the rise of Milei as the savior of Argentina, including the "gray man" which is accompanied by the text "Argentina will have its French Revolution, in triumph. Blood may be seen in the streets if it does not recognize the moment of the grey man" (Urgente 24,

TABLE 7. *Las Epístolas del Cielo*'s Ten Commandments

- 1. The State must not be managed but dismantled.*
- 2. If the rule of law does not protect life, liberty, and property of Argentines, then the rule of law does not exist.*
- 3. The Republic is a means to protect these rights from the whims of the monarch. If it is not that, it is nothing.*
- 4. Crime must be punished always and everywhere.*
- 5. Dialogue is only a value if it leads to a freer country. It is a means, not an end in itself.*
- 6. Politics should be about ideas, not persecuting the adversary. He who lives by the sword dies by the sword.*
- 7. Freedom of expression does not mean journalists are privileged beings who cannot be criticized.*
- 8. We will destroy inflation at any cost.*
- 9. We don't give a damn about the opinions of those who ruined the country. Our commitment is to society.*
- 10. Everyone is welcome to the Forces of Heaven.*

Javier Milei identifies himself as a disciple of the Austrian School of Economics, and adheres to the doctrine of anarcho-capitalism, which he views as a means of liberating the Argentines from the State. He has frequently employed theological references to argue that the State's purpose is to enslave the people and that it constitutes an "invention of the devil" (Milei Presidente, 2020). His absolute rejection of any notion of social justice and the common good is reflected in his disdain and demonization of progressive figures and ideals. For instance, in 2020, Milei referred to Pope Francis as an "imbecile" and "the representative of the evil one on Earth, occupying the throne of God's house" for advocating social justice and "promoting communism" (Milei Presidente, 2020). According to Milei, communism is a "deadly sin... an aberration" because it is rooted in envy, resentment, and theft, making it

2025). It has been reported that Caputo got a tattoo of the "gray man" illustration on his back (Río Negro, 2024). Resembling Pete Hegseth's crusader and anti-Muslim tattoos (Norton, 2025b), Caputo has numerous tattoos with imagery and ciphered meanings that evoke anti-communist and financial mystique (Caras, 2023; Río Negro, 2025). Hegseth's is US Secretary of Defense in the new Trump administration and author of *American Crusade* (2020).

fundamentally opposed to the Ten Commandments and the Holy Scriptures (Milei Presidente, 2020. See also Carlson, 2023).

Another example of Milei's use of theological references to justify his disdain for those advocating causes associated with social justice occurred in April 2024. Following historic demonstrations in defense of public universities, Milei posted an image of a lion drinking from a cup labeled "leftist tears," accompanied by the caption "A glorious day for the principle of revelation" (Milei, 2024i). Milei's messianic delusions intertwine with his fervent worship of the invisible hand of the market is what I refer to as *messianic neoliberalism*. This form of neoliberalism is imbued with a mystical salvific dimension (Delgado, 2024), portraying the market as the ultimate path to redemption. In this framework, Milei emerges as the *libertarian messiah*, leading his followers toward a utopia of total market rule—depicted as both a future ideal and a restoration of a past marked by freedom, glory, and prosperity. This vision is coupled with a crusade for the "fundamental values of Western civilization" (Segura-Ballar, 2021). As Solano, Romá, and Pavez observe, guided by Moses and accompanied by the Forces of Heaven, Argentines cross the desert toward the Promised Land. The myth extends beyond the national sphere, acquiring a global dimension, as Argentina assumes an international salvific mission (2024, p. 5).¹⁸⁴ Milei, therefore, becomes the beacon of hope for the West, as the following discussion will illustrate.

¹⁸⁴ As an illustration, see Gaturro (2024c).

7.5. Make ‘the West’ Great Again: Milei and *Libertarian Hyper-Occidentalism*

For Milei, the West represents “*el lado civilizado de la vida*” (the civilized side of life) (Infocielo, 2021). This perspective has been reflected in a foreign policy centered on loyalty to the United States and Israel.¹⁸⁵ As a presidential candidate, Milei stated that if elected president, his first wish was to “travel to Jerusalem to delve deeper into his studies of the Torah, Talmud and other Jewish scriptures” (Abusidu, 2023). As president, Milei reaffirmed his unconditional support for Israel.¹⁸⁶ In March 2024, Milei traveled to Israel on his second official trip, where he met with Israeli President Isaac Herzog and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who referred to Milei as “a great friend of Israel” (Netanyahu, 2024). During his visit, Milei cried at the Wailing Wall, danced and sang with Israeli settlers, and, in alignment with US foreign policy, unveiled plans to move his country’s embassy to Jerusalem (Corbishley, 2024a). In an interview with far-right pundit Ben Shapiro, Milei stated that “embracing Western values” means “embracing the ideas of the Founding Fathers of the United States,” but

¹⁸⁵ The Milei’s administration has aligned with the US and Israel at the United Nations. In May 2024, Argentina voted against a resolution to upgrade Palestine as a full member (United Nations, 2024a). In September 2024, Argentina also voted against the UN resolution that demanded that Israel “brings to an end without delay its unlawful presence” in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (United Nations, 2024b). On October 30, 2024, the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly adopted a resolution to end the six-decade economic, commercial, and financial embargo imposed by the US against Cuba. The only two votes against were Israel and the US. Appointed by Milei, former Foreign Minister Diana Mondino voted in favor of the resolution. On the same day, the Milei administration released a statement stating that “our country categorically opposes the Cuban dictatorship” (Oficina del Presidente, 2024g). It was reported that Milei abruptly dismissed Mondino for backing the UN vote (Taglioni, 2024). Anti-communist US Rep. María Elvira Salazar called Milei personally to thank him and congratulate him for supporting “the Cuban people at the United Nations” and “their fight for freedom” (Rep. María Elvira Salazar, 2024d, 2024e). Mondino was replaced by Gerardo Werthein, former ambassador to the United States. Werthein swore on “God, the Fatherland and the Torah” during his inauguration, making him the first official to swear on the Torah in an oath of office. Milei read from the weekly Torah portion, tying the occasion to the religious text describing Abraham’s travels, preaching “the Torah, life, and liberty.” Milei said to Werthein, “The forces of heaven are sending you signs” (Buenos Aires Herald, 2024; Buenos Aires Times, 2024b).

¹⁸⁶ See, for example, Milei’s interview with the editor-in-chief of The Wall Street Journal, Emma Tucker, on January 28, 2024 (The Wall Street Journal, 2024).

above all, it means embracing Israel as the ultimate expression of “Western values and liberty” because its people “have achieved the spiritual and material harmony that creates progress”¹⁸⁷ (Shapiro, 2024).

As part of the strengthening of the bilateral alliance between Argentina and Israel, Milei received the Israel Leadership Award from the Argentine-Israeli Chamber of Commerce (CCAI) on November 21, 2024.¹⁸⁸ During the event, Milei announced, “the signing of a historic memorandum in defense of freedom, democracy, and in the fight against terrorism and dictatorships” (Presidencia de la Nación, 2024b). In his speech, Milei stated that his government’s “natural affinity” with Israel demonstrates its “unwavering commitment” to the country, which, along with the United States, he described as “our most important political partners.” He went on to contrast his administration’s policies with those of past governments, declaring, “While the *Kirchneristas* signed a memorandum with Iran—the enemies of the free world—we are signing one with Israel... with our equals in defense of justice and freedom,” expressing hope that this agreement would serve as a model for “other nations of the free world to also choose life and liberty.” Milei concluded his speech by affirming that Israel could count on him as an ally in “the defense of the Western cause, life, liberty,

¹⁸⁷ The interview was titled “On the front lines of freedom.” Shapiro introduced Milei as a captivating figure who “has stirred conversations around the globe about the direction of Western civilization, economic freedom, and the power of individualism” (Shapiro, 2024).

¹⁸⁸ In April 2024, Milei was also honored by the Chabad Lubavitch synagogue in Miami. For his support for Israel, Milei was awarded the “Ambassador of Light” distinction. The award recognized Milei for “his tireless efforts on behalf of Israel and the global community, honoring his unbreakable dedication to spreading liberty, hope, and positive feelings in the face of darkness” (Centenera, 2024). In January 2025, Milei was also awarded the Genesis Prize, known as “The Jewish Nobel Prize” for his unequivocal support to Israel. As the Chairman of The Genesis Prize Foundation stated, “President Milei is a true hero of the Jewish people” (The Genesis Prize, 2025).

and private property,” adding, “May God bless Argentines and Israelis. May the forces of heaven be with us” (Oficina del Presidente, 2024l).

As a historical irony, on the same day that Milei announced this “historic memorandum,” the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant on charges that include war crimes and crimes against humanity committed against the Palestinian population in Gaza (United Nations, 2024b). Immediately, the Milei’s administration released an official statement strongly rejecting the ICC’s decision, reaffirming that “President Javier Milei stands in solidarity with Israel.” The statement further argued that the ICC should instead be pursuing Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, stating: “This ruling, issued by Prosecutor Karim Khan—who has yet to deliver a resolution against the communist dictator Nicolás Maduro for his crimes against humanity—subverts the victim and attempts to position them as the aggressor” (Oficina del Presidente, 2024m). For Milei, the attacks against Israel represent “the hate towards Western civilization” (Casa Rosada, 2025a).

Milei has also reaffirmed his unwavering support for and admiration of the United States. Between December 2023 and April 2025, Milei undertook ten trips to the United States, where he delivered speeches at CPAC as well as think tanks that promote free-market principles. In May 2024, Milei made two trips to the US. In the first one, Milei met with investors from Citi, IBM, Chevron, Exxon, Blackstone, Carlyle, Fortress, and Eldrige. Milei also participated in the Milken Institute’s Global

Conference,¹⁸⁹ where he opened his speech thanking the Milken Institute for being one of the few remaining think tanks that defend “the true principles of capitalism and the ideas of liberty.” He also referred to the United States as “the Mecca of capitalism” and to American capitalists as “the true heroes of Western progress” (Milken Institute, 2024). In his second trip, Milei met with former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, now director of the Hoover Institute, a think tank that promotes personal and economic liberty, free enterprise, and limited government. Milei also met with the Director of Stanford University, where he gave a speech. He also met with CEOs of OpenAI, Apple, Google, and Meta Platforms, and gave a speech at the Pacific Summit conference organized by the Bay Area Council. Presented as “champion of free enterprise,” Milei was invited to close the summit “to share his insights on the important connections between Argentina and the Bay Area’s technology and innovation industries” (Bay Area Council, 2024). Milei’s unconditional devotion to the United States extends to the point of relinquishing national sovereignty in favor of the economic and geopolitical interests of the Northern power, an approach that reflects Latin America’s long history of colonial subjugation (Borón, 2013; Grosfoguel, 2024).

In March 2024, General Laura Richardson, Commander of US Southern Command, gave an interview to the Atlantic Council. Richardson noted that the United States has a strong relationship with Argentina, which has “doubled” under the Milei’s administration. She also expressed expectations to strengthen collaborative efforts

¹⁸⁹ Among the speakers of the conference were Elon Musk, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Theresa May, and former US President Bill Clinton.

between Team USA and Team Argentina¹⁹⁰ (Atlantic Council, 2024). The following month, Richardson visited the Argentine city of Ushuaia.¹⁹¹ President Milei traveled to Ushuaia to meet with General Richardson, who was accompanied by US Ambassador Mark Stanley, and received her with full honors. It is important to highlight the symbolism of this visit. Milei received Richardson with all the honors of a foreign leader. As Alejandro Frenkel (2024) pointed out, “While the head of Southern Command is an important position within the US government apparatus for Latin America, it is by no means equivalent to that of a head of state.” In addition, in a shameful display of subordination, it was Milei who traveled 3000 km from Buenos Aires to Ushuaia and not the other way around.

During Richardson’s visit, Milei announced the construction of an integrated naval base and an Antarctic logistics center. For Milei, this joint effort is part of Argentina’s “new foreign policy doctrine” based on a strategic alliance with the United States, with whom Argentines have a “natural affinity” for belonging to the “Western tradition.” Dressed in military gear, Milei proclaimed that this tradition is rooted in “the ideas of

¹⁹⁰ When the interviewer asks Richardson whether they are “advising” the Argentine government to shut down the Chinese deep space station in Argentina, she emphasizes that Argentina is a “sovereign country” but that they “share our concerns.” The interviewer responds that he understands it is a sovereign nation but that the United States has a position on the matter and asks, “Is it the position of the US that the Chinese installation should be allowed to continue?” To which both the interviewer and Richardson laugh in complicity, revealing that the idea of “sovereignty” is a joke when it comes to the geopolitical interests of the US in the region (see Atlantic Council, 2024). For example, after Richardson’s visit to Argentina in April 2024, Milei committed to the United States to cancel the Atucha III project, which had Chinese financing, and halted the construction of the Carem reactor, a milestone in Argentina’s nuclear development history, as well as the rest of the projects committed to both the cooperation agreement and the Belt and Road Initiative (Glezer, 2024). Furthermore, it seems that the new US interest in the Antarctic Logistics Pole is to prevent the construction of a port in Tierra del Fuego with Chinese funding, which would serve as a key access point to Antarctica (La Política Online, 2024b).

¹⁹¹ It is worth mentioning that just two days before Milei’s unexpected trip to Ushuaia to meet with the head of the Southern Command, the president refused to visit the island to participate in the ceremony for those who died in the Malvinas War. For the first time in decades, no national authority attended the tribute ceremony (La Política Online, 2024c).

liberty, the defense of life, and private property, which were the banner of the founding fathers of both nations.” Milei added that “both peoples” also share the fact that when they adopted these ideas, “they were able to undertake the most significant territorial expansions in their history.” Unfortunately, Milei stated, Argentina embraced “values contrary to those of our founding fathers.” Worse still, “the West is at risk, it is in danger, partly because it has turned its back on these ideas. That is why, now more than ever, it is crucial to strengthen the bonds of friendship between those of us who uphold these values and the way of life they make possible” (Oficina del Presidente, 2024b). The crusade for “Western” values demonstrates, as Pablo Semán points out, that “the libertarian Occidentalism resorts to exclusionary, bellicose, and illiberal stance in order to save liberty” (2024).

For Milei, defending “the West” is framed as a civilizational crusade to uphold the moral superiority of capitalism and the sanctity of the free market. Milei made his first international trip as president to attend the 54th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum, held in Davos in January 2024. Milei gave a speech on January 17, 2024, and was introduced by the Founder and Chairman of the World Economic Forum, Klaus Schwab. He addressed the audience as “heroes” and “social benefactors” for his role in the creation of prosperity and general well-being, and who should not let anyone tell them that their ambition is “immoral.” Milei’s speech focused on liberty as the key to prosperity. He reminded the fundamental principles of libertarianism: the defense of the right to life, freedom, and property, and the importance of free enterprise, economic freedom, and capitalism, the only economic system capable of creating wealth and

prosperity, in other words, “the model of freedom that had made us rich” (World Economic Forum, 2024).

The main message of Milei’s speech at Davos was that “the West is in danger” because “those who are supposed to defend the values of the West are co-opted by a worldview that inevitably leads to socialism, and consequently, to poverty.” According to Milei, “collectivism” and those who advocate for social justice are destroying the “values of the West,” which include “the values of the free market, private property, and other institutions of libertarianism.” This is because “neo-Marxists have managed to co-opt the common sense of the Western world,” “which are just as harmful to life and to economic growth.” Milei emphasized repeatedly that “market failures do not exist,” so any regulation or intervention to correct so-called market failures “open up the doors to socialism” (World Economic Forum, 2024).¹⁹² After his speech, Milei posted an image of a lion draped in the Argentine flag, destroying the communist flag with a sledgehammer (2024a).¹⁹³ Milei’s speech created fervor among the fanatic pro-market ecosystem. For example, David R. Henderson, a fellow at the Hoover Institution, praised Milei’s “pro-freedom” message and “moral support” to businesspeople (2024). Fellow of the Mises Institute, Philipp Bagus, also expressed admiration for Milei’s defense of “the liberal-libertarian principles that have made the West great” (2024). Bagus also warned of “the destruction of Western values” by the

¹⁹² For example, the radical feminist agenda pushes for the “unnatural fight between man and woman.” Milei stated that “the cornerstone of our creed is that all humans are created equal and that we all have the same inalienable rights granted by the Creator, including life, freedom, and ownership” (World Economic Forum, 2024).

¹⁹³ Tools like the sledgehammer or the chainsaw, are one of the most common symbols of Milei’s hyper-masculine neoliberal crusade to destroy the State, “socialism,” and leftists. See, for example, Milei (2024f).

demands of the left, which “collide with the value of liberty; but also, with the institutions that make a capitalist society flourish in the long term, such as private property, natural hierarchies, traditions, the family, and Christianity” (2024). Elon Musk also praised Milei’s speech and shared it on his X account, stating that it provided a “good explanation of what makes countries more or less prosperous” (2024a). He also said that Milei “is doing an incredible job restoring Argentina to greatness” (2024c).

Milei’s foreign policy can be defined by what Juan Gabriel Tokatlian (2024) calls *libertarian hyper-occidentalism*, that is, an unconditional support for the West, represented by the United States and Israel, at the expense of national interests. I identify two dimensions within the idea of *libertarian hyper-occidentalism*. On the one hand, there is a “natural affinity” in Milei’s project of positioning Argentina on the “civilized side of life” because his salvational mission is framed as a civilizational crusade to save the West. This involves asserting the superiority of the West and the inferiority of the “barbarian communist” world, exemplified by countries like China, Cuba, or Venezuela.

On the other hand, the idea of *libertarian hyper-occidentalism* implies applying the principles of anarcho-capitalism to foreign policy. In the interview with Ben Shapiro, Milei stated that Argentines “have matured” and understood that “we can’t be blaming others for what happens to us, nor the United States, nor Europe, nor the IMF, no one is to blame” (Shapiro, 2024). Thus, the same principles that govern individuals, who “are the owners of their own lives and their own destinies,” are transferred to the nation.

In this way, defending the national interest becomes counterproductive from a cultural, ideological, and mystical perspective. In other words, if Argentina belongs to Team USA (as Laura Richardson put it), this implies renouncing national sovereignty in favor of US geopolitical and economic interests. In addition, the logic of anarcho-capitalism's foreign policy entails that "Argentina is the master of its own destiny," which implies not recognizing the forces that suffocate the country under neocolonial domination. The opposite would entail adopting an "anti-West" position. The renunciation of national sovereignty also extends to the regional level, with Milei's administration showing little interest in cooperation initiatives such as MERCOSUR, CELAC, and UNASUR, which were established as counterweights to the influence of the United States in the region. Indeed, Milei has become a key ally of the United States to block Global South integration projects, such as the BRICS. Marco Rubio, Secretary of State in the second Donald Trump administration, published an article in the Argentine newspaper *Clarín*, in which Rubio praised Milei for keeping Argentina out of the BRICS, stating that, had Argentina joined, it "would have fallen into the clutches of a foreign communist dictatorship" (Rubio, 2024a).

In an article titled "Building a Pro-US Future in Our Hemisphere," Rubio argued that it is necessary to embrace the "new generation of potentially pro-American leaders" who support the "U.S.-led international order," including figures such as Noboa, Bukele, Milei, and Peña (2024b). For Rubio, the United States also benefits from the "expansion of security with 'friendly countries'" rich in critical natural resources, citing Argentina as an example, one of the world's leading reserves of

lithium (Rubio, 2024b). Rubio has even stated that “the US will benefit from a closer trade relationship with the third-largest source of lithium in the world”¹⁹⁴ (2023). At the start of Milei’s presidency, Rubio expressed admiration for Milei and his “commitment to align with the US and our unconditional ally, Israel.” Rubio also mentioned that the US and Argentina could work together to address the issues posed by Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua, and China (Rubio, 2023). By invoking the Monroe Doctrine to counter Russia and China, Rubio further urged “President Biden to work closely with Milei to limit the influence of countries like Russia, China, and Iran, as well as counter the regional dictatorships of Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua in our hemisphere” (Rubio, 2024a).

Milei has joined the escalation of aggression led by the United States against progressive governments, particularly Venezuela. Aligned with the interventionist stance of the Northern power, on September 6, 2024, the Milei administration urged the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to issue arrest warrants against Nicolás Maduro, Diosdado Cabello, and other leaders for “crimes against humanity” (Ministerio de Relaciones, 2024b). Additionally, in August 2024, the Milei

¹⁹⁴ The plundering of Latin American natural resources has been a long US geopolitical interest. For example, in January 2024, General Laura Richardson, Commander of US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), was interviewed by the Atlantic Council, a DC-based think tank, to explore “what new strategies can US Southern Command deploy to promote security and prosperity within the Latin American and Caribbean theater?” In the interview, Richardson explicitly states that this region “matters” because of its enormous reserves of rare earth elements, lithium, oil, light sweet crude, copper, gold, fresh water, and the Amazon, so there is a lot “at stake.” She even referred to Latin American countries as “our” countries (Atlantic Council, 2023). With the goal of “box[ing] out” US adversaries, Richardson “detailed how Washington, together with US Southern Command, is actively negotiating the sale of lithium in the lithium triangle to US companies through its web of embassies” (Corbishley, 2023a). As Corbishley explains, the country where the US appears to have enjoyed the most success in this endeavor is Argentina. Even during the Alberto Fernández administration, the country participated in the US-created Mineral Security Partnership, which Reuters dubbed a “metallic NATO” (Corbishley’s, 2023b). For an analysis, of Richardson’s interview, see Corbishley’s “Monroe Doctrine Redux” (2023a).

administration signed the “Joint Statement on the Judgment of the Venezuelan Supreme Court” together with the United States and nine other countries (Costa Rica, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Dominican Republic, and Uruguay), rejecting the validation of the results of the July 28 electoral process issued by the Venezuelan National Electoral Council and verified by the Supreme Court of Justice (Ministerio de Relaciones, 2024a). Furthermore, at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2024, former Milei’s Foreign Minister Diana Mondino, together with US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, led a strong international offensive against President Maduro. Both leaders organized a parallel meeting that included about 40 countries, the European Union, the OAS, and the Carter Center to condemn Nicolás Maduro’s democratic government¹⁹⁵ (Chaves, 2024b).

Milei’s renunciation of sovereignty reaches the point of favoring the military and geopolitical interests of the Global North at the expense of national interests.¹⁹⁶ For instance, signaling how important Argentina is to US strategic interests in South America, especially to counter China’s influence, former Secretary of State Antony Blinken, visited Argentina in February 2024 (U.S. Department of State, 2024a). Milei’s administration has also established close ties with the CIA and the FBI to address the

¹⁹⁵ See the joint statement in US Department of State (2024b).

¹⁹⁶ For example, in April 2024, the Milei administration signed a contract to purchase 24 U.S.-made, second-hand F-16 fighter jets. The 40-year-old combat aircraft were sold by Denmark, which was going to replace them with the more modern F-35s. As reported by Centenera, “The decision by Argentina President Javier Milei to choose the American-made but used aircraft over China’s offer of new JF-17s with better weapons equipment was ultimately a geostrategic one: the United States is interested in stopping China’s advance in Latin America and Milei is interested in being appreciated as an unconditional partner of Washington and Israel” (Centenera, 2024). In February 2025, Almiral Alvin Holsey, Commander of SOUTHCOM stated before the US Congress that “Security Assistance played a vital role in Argentina’s acquisition of 24 F-16s from Denmark, with the approval of a \$941 million sustainment package from the United States. This investment not only ensures the procurement is properly maintained and equipped, but also proved essential in preventing China from further embedding itself in the military apparatus of a key Partner” (US Senate Committee on Armed Services, 2025).

“national security threats” faced by both countries, allegedly represented by Iran, Russia, and China (Kollman, 2024a; Página 12, 2024c). In terms of secret intelligence, the Milei administration directed that the Federal Agency of Intelligence (AFI, for its Spanish acronym) give “all power to the US CIA and in terrorism to Israel’s Mossad” (Kollmann, 2024b). Just one month after Milei came into office, Chief of Staff Nicolás Posse traveled to the United States, where he met with former CIA Director William Burns and former Chief of Staff of SOUTHCOM Scott A. Jackson (Jefatura de Gabinete de Ministros, 2024b; Geopolitical Economy Report, 2024a). William Burns also traveled to Argentina and was received at the Casa Rosada “to advance a common work agenda on intelligence and counterterrorism” (Jefatura de Gabinete de Ministros, 2024a). On March 21, Burns made a second visit to Argentina. On March 24, the country commemorated the 48th anniversary of the 1976 military coup that ushered in seven years of brutal military dictatorship. As Corbishley reminds us, “Both the coup and the brutal regime it spawned were endorsed and supported by three US governments, largely through the CIA” (2024b).¹⁹⁷

In April 2024, the Milei government formally requested to become a “global partner” of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (NATO, 2024; Ministerio de Defensa, 2024a), as well as to join the Ukraine Defense Contact Group (UDCG) “to promote international peace and stability.”¹⁹⁸ In response to this initiative, Luis Petri,

¹⁹⁷ On the US involvement in Argentina’s Dirty War, see Parry (2013).

¹⁹⁸ Volodymyr Zelenskyy was a prominent guest at Milei’s presidential inauguration, constituting Zelenskyy’s first-ever trip to Latin America. For Milei’s interest in Judaism and his “clear support for Ukraine,” Zelenskyy gifted him a nine-headed candelabra known as a *menorah* (Ritter, 2023). The Wall Street Journal featured an image of Milei and Zelenskyy’s effusive encounter on the front page of its print edition on December 11, 2023. Milei was later honored with an Order of Freedom for his reiterated support for Ukraine in global forums (Tyshchenko, 2024). After offering “full support” to Ukraine, Milei’s position shifted to align with Trump’s new foreign policy. After 14

the Minister of Defense, asserted, “We cannot allow tyranny to prevail...Let us fight for a free world; it is a struggle we will never regret” (Ministerio de Defensa, 2024b).¹⁹⁹ These examples show, as Corbishley points out, that “no other government in Latin America is tying its mast quite so tightly to Washington’s as Milei’s” (2024b). In line with the dollarization implemented in the 1990s under Menem that resulted in the surrendering of Argentina’s monetary sovereignty, Milei pledged during his presidential campaign to adopt the US dollar as Argentina’s national currency. For renowned economist Ha-Joon Chang, the abandonment of monetary sovereignty would turn Argentina into a “US colony” (Fundar, 2023). This initiative also goes against Global South campaigns for de-dollarization, led by BRICS countries (Norton, 2023a). In addition, even though China and Brazil are Argentina’s two largest trading partners,²⁰⁰ the Milei administration rejected joining the BRICS, even considering that

months and three bilateral meetings, Argentina abstained from the UN vote to condemn Russia (Buenos Aires Herald, 2025).

¹⁹⁹ Along these lines, the Milei administration also granted the United States control over the state-owned military manufacturing company to produce projectiles, ammunition, and weaponry for NATO and Ukraine (Salinas, 2024). Milei’s Omnibus Bill also included a proposal to empower the executive branch to “authorize the entry into the country of troops and equipment of foreign armed forces for the purpose of exercises, training or protocol activities,” as well as the deployment of Argentine forces abroad (Zona Militar, 2023). For Corbishley, Milei’s government, “like its counterparts in Peru and Ecuador, is intent on flinging its doors open to US troops (and, in the case of Argentina, other foreign militaries)” (2024a). For example, Milei’s government authorized the US military presence in the Paraná River, the longest navigable river in South America and one of the world’s largest navigable waterways (Cazón, 2024). For Corbishley, “This is an agreement involving a foreign army belonging to a country that clearly seeks to increase its hemispheric influence over Latin America” (2024a).

²⁰⁰ Milei has spoken with disdain about the BRICS countries, especially China, going so far as to refer to Xi Jinping as a murderer (Brandimarte & Tobias, 2023; Lema, 2023). This is despite the fact that China is Argentina’s second-largest trading partner after Brazil (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2023). In October 2021, Milei stated in an interview, “I don’t do business with communists” (Infocielo, 2021). He reaffirmed this stance in 2023 in an interview with Bloomberg (Brandimarte & Tobias, 2023), and again in an interview with Tucker Carlson, where he said, “Not only will I not do business with China, I won’t do business with any communist.” As a “defender of liberty, peace, and democracy,” he claimed, “communists (the Chinese, Putin, Lula) are not included” (Carlson, 2023). Ironically, during the G20 summit in November 2024, Milei met with Xi Jinping and invited him to visit Argentina (Presidencia de la Nación, 2024a). In an interview with Argentine TV host Susana Giménez, Milei spoke favorably of China, describing it as “a very interesting trade partner,” and announced that he would travel to China for the CELAG summit in January 2025 (Susana, 2024). In short, Milei shifted from saying “I don’t do business with China” to calling China “an interesting partner” (Canal Red Latinoamérica, 2024).

the BRICS members have historically supported Argentina's position on the Malvinas Islands (Tokatlian, 2024).²⁰¹

The Milei administration has effectively surrendered the Malvinas, legitimizing British colonial occupation.²⁰² Milei himself has not only failed to denounce the 200 years of usurped sovereignty but has stated that this is not a priority for his government. He even has recognized that the sovereignty of the Malvinas Islands belongs to the United Kingdom, as he did in a BBC interview. In the same interview, Milei expressed his admiration for Margaret Thatcher, who was the UK's prime minister during the war over the Malvinas. Once again, in the interview, he reaffirmed his unconditional alignment with "the West": "we are on the side of freedom, on the side of the U.S., on the side of Israel, and on the side of Western Europe" (Wells, 2024). While the Kirchner (2003–2015) and Fernández (2019–2023) administrations based their global outlook on principles of national interest, multipolarity, and regional integration, Milei's government has systematically sought to align Argentina's foreign policy with the

²⁰¹ For example, Vladimir Putin stated during his 2014 visit to Argentina that "Russia continues to support the need to find a solution to the dispute over the Falkland Islands through direct negotiations between Great Britain and Argentina" (cited in Tokatlian, 2024).

²⁰² The Milei administration has been marked by a passive stance regarding the United Kingdom's continued advancement over the Malvinas Islands and Antarctica (La Política Online, 2024a). On September 24, 2024, Argentina's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced an agreement with the United Kingdom on the Malvinas, negotiated by former Foreign Minister Diana Mondino and her British counterpart David Lammy (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2024d), which legitimized British control over Argentine resources. The agreement reinstates the 2016 diplomatic treaty signed under the government of Mauricio Macri (itself based on the 1989 Joint Declaration from Carlos Menem's administration), which, without congressional approval, reversed the restrictions established during the Kirchner administrations. The media outlet *Agenda Malvinas* denounced the agreement for threatening Argentine sovereignty by enabling British control to "expand fishing exploitation, extract gas and oil, reestablish flights from Brazil, and strengthen England's role as an occupying state" (Agenda Malvinas, 2024). According to Guillermo Carmona, former Secretary of Malvinas, Antarctica, and the South Atlantic, the agreement ignores Argentina's historical sovereignty claim and consolidates British dominance by reinforcing control over the region's fishing and economic resources. For Carmona, the core issue with the agreement "is that it is negotiated within the framework of an existing colonial structure, which excludes discussion of the central issue: sovereignty" (En Orsai, 2024). The UK government has also announced plans to develop a mega-port in the islands that could be used for oil activity, fishing, tourism, science, and even defense (Chaves, 2024a).

interests and perspectives of the United States, constituting an openly subservient administration in the full sense of the term (García, 2025). The unrestricted alignment with “the West” (Israel and the US) not only reflects a loss of sovereignty but, as Tokatlian and Malacalza (2024) point out, it also entails “the dismantling of an ‘institutional memory’ and a policy framework that contributed to the continuity, consistency, and coherence of the country’s foreign strategy.”²⁰³

For Milei, the defense of Argentina’s sovereignty is reframed as a battle against “collectivism” and socialist agendas that endanger *freedom*. As Tokatlian (2024) points out, paradoxically, Milei’s administration has shown no interest in securing national sovereignty on key issues, whether strategic, geopolitical, or economic-financial. Instead, it rejects global issues and human rights advancements from a sovereignist standpoint, reframing it as part of a “socialist agenda.”²⁰⁴ In September 2024, Milei traveled to New York to participate in the United Nations General Assembly. In his speech, Milei accused the UN of becoming a “multi-tentacled Leviathan” for imposing a supposed socialist ideological agenda. He denounced the Agenda 2030 for violating “the right to life, liberty, and private property” of individuals, who possess “inalienable rights granted by the Creator.” Milei condemned the UN for its “collectivist policies”

²⁰³ For an analysis of Argentina’s new geopolitical stance and foreign policy, which critics argue relegates the nation to a neocolonial status, see Delgado (2024).

²⁰⁴ This reflects a State policy rooted in the denial of human rights (Elizondo, 2024). For example, on November 11, 2024, Argentina was the only country to vote against a United Nations resolution on the rights of Indigenous peoples, which aimed to promote access to justice, environmental protection, and the preservation of Indigenous cultures and languages (Nodal, 2024). Three days later, Argentina was again the sole country to vote against a resolution calling to “intensify efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls” (Página 12, 2024d). On November 14, three thematic hearings were held before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, during which the Milei administration was called to respond regarding the status of policies related to memory, truth, and justice; the state of social and food security programs; and efforts to eradicate gender-based violence and promote reproductive health. According to the Center for Legal and Social Studies, the representative of *La Libertad Avanza* government “attacked human rights organizations and accused them of seeking revenge” (CELS, 2024).

and its “systematic violation of freedom.” For Milei, the “doctrine of the new Argentina” is the “defense of freedom.” He also expressed his dissent with the Pact for the Future²⁰⁵ agreed upon by the UN General Assembly on September 22, 2024 (Naciones Unidas, 2024a), and instead proposed a new agenda, “the agenda of freedom.” Milei also announced that Argentina would be “at the forefront of the fight to defend freedom” (Oficina del Presidente, 2024e). After the speech, images of Milei as a superhero²⁰⁶ (see Figure 36), or as a giant lion (with the UN audience represented as rats), were posted on social media (see Escuela Austriaca de Economía, 2024).²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Former Argentine Minister of Foreign Affairs Diana Mondino gave a speech at the UN Summit for the Future and rejected the UN Pact for the Future, which is a declaration pledging action towards an improved world for tomorrow’s generations through sustainable development. Mondino distanced from the Pact not because of its content or its goals, but because global agendas threaten freedom. Mondino stated that Argentina defended freedom for individuals so that they could make decisions and be responsible for their actions. Any global agenda must be focused on economic liberty and respect for private property (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2024c). According to Amnesty International, Argentina was the only country to disassociate itself from the Pact of the Future (Amnistía Internacional Argentina, 2024). For influential far-right Argentine figure Agustín Laje, this was a lesson on democracy and liberty from the Milei administration for rejecting the globalist Agenda 2030 and for distancing from the new Pact for the Future. Laje praised Mondino for defending freedom, democracy, and national sovereignty against this new UN liberticide attempt (2024).

²⁰⁶ Milei is also frequently depicted as Superman (Milei, 2024l) or as a superhero who destroys the State (Domínguez, 2024c). See also the illustration by Patrick Ojota, in which Milei is portrayed as an armored soldier bearing the Argentine flag on his back and wielding a chainsaw as he confronts a giant monster composed of progressive political leaders and representatives of labor and trade union organizations, in his quest to achieve “fiscal balance” (2024a).

²⁰⁷ While Milei is consistently depicted as a lion, his adversaries and critics—as well as those who advocate for social justice—are portrayed in a degrading manner as rats that must be exterminated. See, for instance, Milei (2024o). Milei has even referred to the National Congress as a “nest of rats” (Página 12, 2024a).



FIGURE 36. AnCap addressing the UN audience

Illustrator Patrick Ojota published this image following Milei's speech at the United Nations, in which the audience is depicted as pigs (Ojota, 2024e). In his illustrations, Milei is typically portrayed as a superhero, a founding father, or a military figure. For example, Milei is represented as a He-Man-like character, the "Recession Annihilator," who, instead of wearing the red Templar cross on his chest, bears the yellow snake associated with the *Don't Tread On Me* slogan (Ojota, 2024f). He is also depicted as Terminator—or "Termileitor" (Ojota, 2024b).

On February 7, 2024, the cartoonist Nik published a meme portraying Milei as a Terminator targeting social leader Eduardo Belliboni, along with unionists and lawmakers. The meme includes the phrase "*Casta la vista, baby*," and was shared by Milei's official account (Milei, 2024c). The media outlet of the Clarín Group also released a video titled "Mileinator," which features Milei as the Terminator eliminating legislators who opposed the Omnibus Law. At the end of the video, the same phrase appears: "*Casta la vista, baby*" (Diario Registrado, 2024).

While Milei is represented in hypermasculine or superpowered forms, national and international progressive leaders such as Cristina Kirchner and Nicolás Maduro are depicted in demonic and degrading ways. For instance, Ojota published an image of Maduro as a zombie next to a figure representing the UN, accusing the United Nations of supporting the "current socialist and terrorist genocide" (Ojota, 2024d).

It is worth noting that the superhero image used by illustrators supporting Milei was originally created by Milei himself, when he attended a manga event in early 2019 dressed in a yellow and black costume with a mask and trident. The superhero character, invented by Milei, was named the Anarcho-Capitalist General, "AnCap," who came from Liberland with the mission of "confronting the Keynesians" (El Clarín, 2019).

Milei's political economy is also oriented toward favoring the goals of US corporations and the IMF through the imposition of austerity policies, massive privatization of state-owned companies, and the dismantling of the State. In an interview with The Wall Street Journal (2024), Milei stated, "Everything I can sell from state-owned companies, I will do so as soon as possible...everything that can be privatized, we will privatize." As sociologist Mónica Peralta Ramos points out, it is no

coincidence that the American Chamber of Commerce in Argentina (AmCham), an entity representing US corporate interests, was one of the most fervent supporters of the *Ley de Bases y Puntos de Partida para la Libertad de los Argentinos* (commonly known as the Omnibus Bill), which was tailored to the interests of transnational capital seeking control over assets and natural resources through the privatization of public companies (Ramos, 2024). The interest of Larry Fink, CEO of BlackRock, and Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla and social media platform X, in acquiring public companies is also a reflection of an economic policy of surrender (Renou, 2024). Among the principles and goals of the Omnibus Bill were the promotion of individual freedom, the protection of private property, limiting state intervention, and deepening market freedom. Article 1 of the Omnibus Law established that the objective of the law was “to promote private initiative, as well as the development of industry and commerce, through a legal regime that ensures the benefits of liberty for all the inhabitants of the nation and limits all state intervention that is not necessary to safeguard constitutional rights.”

The Omnibus Bill was originally presented to Congress on December 27, 2023, and subsequently rejected on February 6, 2024. However, a reduced version, known as the *Ley Bases* (Base Law), was approved on June 12 amid protests and later definitively passed on June 28²⁰⁸ (see Figure 31). The *Ley Bases* establishes tax reform, flexibilization of labor legislation, and the privatization of a dozen state-owned

²⁰⁸ Among the most serious and undemocratic aspects of the “Ley Bases” is the granting of extraordinary powers to Milei for one year (renewable for up to two years). Article 1 declares a “public emergency in administrative, economic, financial, and energy matters,” thereby delegating to the president powers that constitutionally belong to the Legislative Branch, allowing him to govern through executive decrees.

companies. Additionally, the law introduces the *Régimen de Incentivo a las Grandes Inversiones* (RIGI – Large Investment Incentive Regime), which benefits transnational corporations by granting tax exemptions or reductions and administrative facilitation.²⁰⁹ Former president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner described the RIGI as the “legal statute of colonialism in the 21st century.” For Kirchner, RIGI represents a “neocolonial model” based on an “extractivist economy with no added value, no generation of technology, no research or development” (Diario El Sureño, 2024). In the face of transnational capital’s onslaught, economist Horacio Rovelli stated in an interview that the power of Minister of Economy Luis Caputo is nothing more than what has been granted by BlackRock, meaning that his subordination reduces him to being a “manager of the colony”²¹⁰ (Canal Abierto, 2024). Milei’s enclave approach to the economy was on full display in a speech given by Damían Reidel, the head of Milei’s Council of Advisors, at the International Economic Forum of the Americas (IEFA) Latam Forum on March 18, 2025. As it was reported by Corbishley (2025), Reidel spoke to captains of the US oil industry, tech company CEOs, billionaire investors, and public officials, explaining how the natural resources of southern Argentina would soon be theirs for the taking under the RIGI “legal reassurances”:

We have large extensions of land with access to energy, with access to water, in cold climates, which is sort of a cherry on the cake for the cooling of AI systems.

²⁰⁹ Specifically, the RIGI “provides tax, customs, and exchange benefits for 30 years, in addition to regulatory stability and protection against state abuses, for projects exceeding US\$200 million, with the aim of promoting large-scale investments, both domestic and foreign, in the long term,” including mining (such as lithium extraction) (Smink, 2024).

²¹⁰ Luis Caputo, former JP Morgan banker, was also the Minister of Finance in the right-wing administration of Mauricio Macri (2015-2019). In 2024, Caputo received the “Finance Minister of the Year” award from the Latin Finance magazine for “slashing spending, “cut taxes,” and “deregulating sectors to spur investment” (Newbery, 2024). On the murky background of Luis Caputo, see Corbishley (2023d). See also the video embedded in Norton (2025c).

And in an area without armed conflicts, without tsunamis, no earthquakes. There are not that many places on Earth with those things. *Obviously, the problem with this area is that it is populated by the Argentines. So, this is the one thing that we have fixed.* If you have any misgivings, as I said, we are stabilizing the macro, and we are giving you the legal framework that tells you we mean business this time. (IEFA TV, 2025)

Milei's *enclave* political economy is also reinforcing US dependency and financial colonialism.²¹¹ Argentina has a long history of neocolonial debt (Garcia, 2024; Almiron, 2022). As of April 2025, Argentina owes more debt to the IMF than any other country worldwide (IMF, 2025d). Argentina owes nearly \$41B to the IMF, which means that over a quarter of all IMF credit has been issued to Argentina²¹² (Latinometrics, 2025). It is precisely the inflation and economic crisis caused by this IMF *odious* debt that led Milei to power (Geopolitical Economy Report, 2023a, 2023b). Yet, despite the devastating effects of IMF-led neoliberal structural adjustments in recent history,²¹³ and after promising not to expand government debt, Milei began talks

²¹¹ According to the UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD), by 2023, the external debt of developing countries had quadrupled to USD 11.4 trillion in the past two decades, representing the equivalent of 99% of the export earnings of the developing countries (2025). As in the case of Argentina, "ruthless policies by multilateral organizations (such as the International Monetary Fund – IMF) forced these countries to cut domestic public spending for both consumption and investment and instead repay foreign debt. This set in motion a cycle of low growth rates, impoverishment, and indebtedness" (Prashad, 2025).

²¹² In 2016, the right-wing Macri government reestablished relations with the IMF. As analyst Ben Norton explains, it was during this administration that the Trump administration ordered the IMF to violate its own restrictions and give Macri the IMF's largest loan in the IMF's 81-year history, at \$57 billion, despite the IMF knew that Argentina was not going to be able to pay the *odious* debt (Norton, 2025c). Just like the 2022 agreement, the IMF agreement signed under the Milei administration will condemn Argentina into a new cycle of crisis, austerity, and social devastation (Tigani, 2025). As Trabucco (2025) points out, this is an illegal and odious debt, used—as during the Mauricio Macri administration—not to finance investment but to enable capital flight. The figure of \$42 billion represents the total value of an international operation activated to rescue Milei from political collapse. This includes contributions from the IMF, the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank, and adds to the already exorbitant debt burden accumulated by the Argentine state.

²¹³ During the 1990s under the Menem administration, the IMF neoliberal structural adjustments demanded financial deregulation, no tariffs on imports, cuts to public services, and one of the biggest operations of privatizations in history that represented "an unprecedented pillage of public resources" (Almiron, 2022). As Almiron, explains "US and European corporations bought the country practically overnight." This led to a brutal recession that culminated in the 2001 economic crisis, a "decades-long, fabricated crisis that was really a neocolonial takeover" (Almiron, 2022). For Almiron, "Argentina was not just broke; it had been socially, economically, and politically demolished

with the IMF even before his presidential inauguration. On November 24, 2023, Milei had a conversation with Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director of the IMF. After the meeting, Georgieva posted on X that “The IMF is committed to support efforts to durably reduce inflation, improve public finances, & raise private-sector-led growth” (2023). Milei also qualified the meeting as “excellent,” stating that “the Fund showed its cooperation to find the structural solutions that Argentina needs” (Milei, 2023b). Two days after Milei’s inauguration, the IMF issued a press release “welcom[ing] the measures announced...by Argentina’s new Economy Minister, Luis Caputo...IMF staff and the new Argentine authorities will work expeditiously in the period ahead” (IMF, 2023).

One of the first actions of the Milei government was signing a Staff Level Agreement with the IMF, deepening the debt trap with the US-controlled IMF. Not surprisingly, the IMF has praised Milei’s austerity measures²¹⁴ (Lejtmann, 2024). After several bilateral meetings, Milei held a meeting with the head of IMF in Washington, DC, in February 2025²¹⁵ (Oficina del Presidente, 2025b). On March 10, Milei issued a

as a sovereign country.” For this reason, “The 2001 default was a watershed moment for all Argentines, and became a symbol of the effects of neoliberalism and imperialism across the planet” (2022).

²¹⁴ As Ben Norton points out, “the IMF has a notorious history in Argentina, and in Latin America in general, as an instrument of Western geopolitical power, which has imposed brutal neoliberal austerity measures on formerly colonized nations. Its aggressive ‘structural adjustment’ policies contributed to the ‘lost decade’ of economic crisis and stagnation in the 1980s.” For this reason, “the IMF is widely seen as a symbol of neocolonialism” in Latin America (Norton, 2025c). As Almiron points out, debt has always been a deliberate effort to undermine Argentina’s economy and sovereignty (2022). Regarding the new agreement between the Milei administration and the IMF, analyst Agustín Lecchi pointed out that the IMF’s interest is not that Argentina pays its debts but that it maintains an *unpayable* debt so the US can control the Argentine economy (2025). What is evident is the growing interference of the US government and financial groups in Argentina’s domestic politics, endorsing an anti-popular model that subordinates national interests in exchange for access to debt (Trabucco, 2025).

²¹⁵ Milei also visited the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), where he met with the heads of both institutions—Ajay Banga and Ilan Goldfajn, respectively (Oficina del Presidente, 2025d, 2025c). President Ilan Goldfajn praised Milei for “producing tangible results by pursuing bold economic reforms.” Goldfajn stated that “we’ll continue backing Argentina’s reforms” by focusing “on private-sector-led growth, which is key to Argentina’s future” (IDB, 2025a).

Deregulatory Emergency Decree (DNU, by its Spanish acronym) to request a loan from the IMF. Despite the requirement of parliamentary support for any IMF deal, the decree authorized the executive branch to negotiate an Extended Fund Facility program with the IMF for the next 10 years (Falduto, 2025). In the middle of a large protest outside Congress and massive rejection, and despite the lack of details of the IMF deal, the Lower Chamber shielded the DNU, allowing for a new IMF program. On April 8, the administration reached a Staff-Level Agreement with the IMF. According to the IMF press release, “The agreement builds on the authorities’ impressive early progress in stabilizing the economy, underpinned by a strong fiscal anchor, that is delivering rapid disinflation and a recovery in activity and social indicators” (IMF, 2025a). Milei shared the IMF press release on X with the acronym TMAP, which stands for *Todo Marcha Acorde al Plan* (everything is going according to the plan)²¹⁶ (Milei, 2025c).

On April 11, the IMF released another press release announcing more details of the new arrangement, in which the IMF celebrates the government’s “impressive gains” and “deregulation efforts.” According to the IMF, one of the pillars of the program was to advance “a broad range of structural reforms to foster a more dynamic, market-oriented economy” (IMF, 2025b), including energy and mining.²¹⁷ To complement the

²¹⁶ Milei also used the same acronym on April 2 as a response to Trump’s tariffs announcement. On this day, Trump launched an economic war to the whole world by imposing tariffs on all US imports “to make America wealthy again!” (The White House, 2025i). Trump called this day “Liberation Day.” Milei used the TMAP along with VLLP!—acronym for *Viva la Libertad, Carajo!* (Long Live Freedom, Damn It!). Milei wrote “Friends will be friends” and shared a YouTube link to the rock band Queen’s song “Friends will be friends” (Milei, 2025b).

²¹⁷ Kristalina Georgieva, Chair of the IMF, made a statement in which she said that “Building on the impressive, ongoing efforts to deregulate the economy, the program seeks to deepen structural reforms to boost Argentina’s growth, including via its vast potential in *energy and mining*. Efforts will focus on further (i) strengthening product and labor market flexibility, and gradually opening the economy; (ii) improving state efficiency and its regulatory predictability; and (iii) enhancing governance and transparency, including by further aligning anti-corruption and AML/CFT frameworks with international standards” (IMF, 2025b. *Emphasis added*). The IMF’s statement offers a clear indication by directly expressing its interest in the development of the energy and mining sectors,

IMF agreement and as “part of a broader international effort” (IDB, 2025b), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the World Bank also announced billions “in support” for Argentina on April 11.²¹⁸ On the same day, on a national television broadcast, Milei thanked the IMF and Georgieva for supporting an economic plan that would make Argentina “the freest country in the world.”²¹⁹ For Milei, the IMF agreement marked “a new golden age” that “will make “Argentina great again.” Milei, once again, invoked the “Holy Scriptures” by citing the proverb “The last shall be first,” and stated that “Argentina, after walking for decades among the last, is destined to reclaim its place among the first” (Casa Rosada, 2025c).

The acceptance of IMF agreement regressive and anti-democratic conditions²²⁰ (see Table 8) suggests that Milei’s political economy is based on the total surrender of

foreshadowing an intention to implement a policy of plundering natural resources and pushing extractivism to the extreme (Stagnaro, 2025). President of the IDB, Ilian Goldfajn, also reaffirmed this intention during Milei’s visit to the IDB. Goldfajn emphasized that “Argentina is home to the world’s third-largest lithium reserves.” “Just as the United States and the world look for secure supplies of lithium and other critical minerals, we’re supporting three major lithium and copper projects in Argentina” (IDB, 2025a). US Secretary of the Treasury, Scott K.H. Bessent, also emphasized the US interest in pressuring the Argentine government to grant all rare earth mining concessions in the country to American corporations while displacing Chinese investments (Cieza, 2025).

²¹⁸ The IDB announced \$10 billion “to boost private-sector activity.” The press release states that “the IDB will support reforms that build on the country’s efforts to continue improving the efficiency of public spending and create more favorable conditions for private-sector-led development” (IDB, 2025b). The World Bank also announced a US\$12 billion support comprehensive package to “support Argentina’s economic reform agenda” in order to “foster private sector-led growth” (WBG, 2025a, 2025b). The announcement statement states that “the package is designed to support reforms that continue to attract private investment” (WBG, 2025a). Just the week before, head of the World Bank, Ajay Banga, had visited Milei in *La Casa Rosada*, where he promised “a significant support package that brings together the full strength of the World Bank Group to support reforms, attract private investment and lay the foundation for job creation” (Oficina del Presidente, 2025f). Banga also congratulated Milei for the “bold transformation” he is leading in Argentina (Buenos Aires Times, 2025b).

²¹⁹ Georgieva announced the IMF agreement on X, a program that was approved in recognition of the country’s “impressive progress” under Milei (2025). Luis Caputo replied to her post: “Thank you so much Kristalina! This wouldn’t have been possible without your support!” (totocaputo, 2025b). Corporate media and all the corporate and financial sectors of Argentina celebrated the IMF program (Trabucco, 2025; Alonso, 2025). The American Chamber of Commerce in Argentina released a statement celebrating the program for putting the private sector at the center of the country’s economic recovery (AmCham Argentina, 2025a).

²²⁰ The government received the IMF bailout with jubilant celebrations and announced the lifting of currency controls that had been in place for 14 years. As Corbishley pointed out, “just as happened in 2018, it looks like an IMF loan is about to be used to finance capital flight out of the country” (2025). Despite the IMF itself has admitted that neoliberalism does not work (Geier, 2016), it attached to the bailout the traditional neoliberal recipe: privatizations, structural reforms, deregulations, and privileged access to strategic resources. The objective is clear:

national sovereignty, condemning Argentina to neocolonial status, which is likely to deepen under the second Trump administration. Milei congratulated Trump on his election, stating that he “could count on Argentina to make the United States great again” (El Peluca Milei, 2024b). Milei was the first foreign leader to be received by Trump after his victory in the November 5, 2024, elections, in a meeting that also included Elon Musk.²²¹ Milei also delivered a speech at the America First Policy Institute gala dinner in Mar-a-Lago, where he congratulated Trump, saying, “Today, the world is much better because the winds of freedom are blowing much stronger,” which is “solid evidence that the forces of heaven are on our side” (Oficina del Presidente, 2024j). On this occasion, Milei also highlighted that just “as the ancients once did, we must unite to confront this barbarism and form an alliance of free nations, custodians of the Western legacy.”²²² Milei also paid tribute to Musk, asserting that X

to shrink the state, dismantle labor rights, erode pensions, privatize the pension system—as was done in the 1990s under Menem—and create favorable conditions for capital accumulation by the most concentrated economic sectors: banks, the agro-export complex, tech companies, investment funds, and the energy and mining sectors (Trabucco, 2025). The Milei administration agreed to implement the usual adjustment reforms and the brutal application of austerity; however, it agreed to go beyond. According to the Staff Report, the signatories of the agreement, Luis Caputo and Santiago Bausili, President of the Central Bank, agreed to “stand ready to take any additional measures that may become appropriate for this purpose and will consult with IMF staff on the adoption of these measures in accordance with the Fund’s policies while refraining from policies inconsistent with the program’s objectives and commitments herein” (IMF, 2025c, p. 82).

²²¹ The image of the meeting was shared by the Argentine Office of the President (Oficina del Presidente, 2024j) and Elon Musk (2024j). Milei’s accounts also shared an image of Milei, depicted as a lion, embracing Donald Trump (2024n). On the occasion of Donald Trump’s victory, illustrator Damián Domínguez published an illustration of Trump and Milei. Domínguez places Milei next to Trump in the iconic image captured during the first attack on Trump, where he is bleeding with his fist raised. Including Milei in the scene alludes to the union of resistance. The image features the flags of the United States and Argentina united, as well as the slogans Make America Great Again (MAGA) and ¡Viva la Libertad, Carajo! (VLLC) (Milei, 2024m). See also the MAGA slogan “Make Argentina & America Great Again,” with the flags of Argentina and the United States intertwined in the letter A of Shelby (2024c), as well as Nik’s illustration showing the United States and Argentina as two friendly countries with fist bumps and the slogan “Make Argentina Great Again” (Gaturro, 2024b).

²²² Milei explained this international alliance as follows: “The United States leading in the North. Argentina in the South. Italy in old Europe, and Israel, the sentinel at the Middle Eastern frontier. For only through the strength of free nations can there be a global hope for peace and prosperity” (Oficina del Presidente, 2024k).

is contributing to “saving humanity” (Oficina del Presidente, 2024j). Trump also congratulated Milei for “making Argentina great again” (Liy, 2024).

TABLE 8. The IMF’s Contempt for Democracy

In the IMF Staff Report, the Milei administration agreed to bypass the democratic functioning of power when it agreed to “continue to oppose any new spending initiative proposed by Congress that risks our fiscal anchor and stand ready to consider alternatives, as needed” (2025c, p. 88). The Staff Report included a statement at the end by Leonardo Madcur, Executive Director for Argentina, and Adrian Nador, Senior Advisor to Executive Director at IMF. In their Statement, both executives also suggested that, despite the small representation of *La Libertad Avanza* in Congress, Milei’s reforms have “widespread societal support;” thus, the Milei administration’s anti-democratic maneuvers have to be applauded. They stated, “Beyond Congress representation, the majority of Argentines voted on a new approach to resolving the longstanding problems of the Argentine economy and remains hopeful that it will bear fruit” (IMF, 2025c, p. 2).

IMF executives recognized that the exorbitant debt of Argentina is *unpayable* (Glezer, 2025; Tobias & Martin, 2025). Even the IMF report recognizes that the credit to Argentina “is projected to reach SDR 43.1 billion in 2026...This would be the Fund’s largest-ever exposure in absolute terms, about SDR 8.9 billion higher than the peaks during the 2022 EFF” (IMF, 2025c, p. 10). Madcur and Nador disdain for democracy is revealed in the following paragraph:

In all democracies, reforms can be undone or reversed; this risk to any program is inherent and reflects the beauty of the democratic system, *despite its flaws. It is ultimately up to the people to decide their own destiny.* Notably, the current President, with less than 15 percent of seats in both Chambers of Congress and no formal alliance with other political parties, managed to secure Congressional support for the landmark Ley Bases. Additionally, a comfortable majority vote (129:108) in the Lower Chamber recently shielded the DNU, allowing for a new IMF program. (IMF, 2025c, p. 2).

The contempt for democracy has also been revealed in the statements of the IMF Director, Kristalina Georgieva. At a press briefing in the World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings on April 24-25, 2025, Georgieva addressed the challenges that Argentina faces. She referred to the next legislative elections in the country as “a risk.” By making clear the IMF political endorsement of *La Libertad Avanza*, Georgieva stated, “domestically the country is going to go to elections as you know in October and it is very important that they don’t derail the will for change...I would urge Argentina to stay the course” (IMF, 2025e).

On April 14, just a few days after the announcement of the IMF agreement, the US Secretary of the Treasury, Scott K.H. Bessent, traveled to Buenos Aires.²²³ Despite Argentina’s hyper-indebtedness, Bessent went to Argentina to endorse the IMF program bailout for geopolitical reasons.²²⁴ The visit aimed to “engage with both

²²³ Bessent had a first meeting with Luis Caputo on February 23, 2025. According to the readout, “The Secretary commended Finance Minister Caputo for macroeconomic and structural reform measures that reduce the burden of regulation on the private sector, and that reduce the size and influence of government” (US Department of Treasury, 2025a).

²²⁴ On April 3, 2025, Mauricio Claver-Carone, former Presidente of the Inter-American Development Bank and current US State Department envoy for Latin America, cited “the ending of Argentina’s swap line with China as a

government and private sector leaders to affirm the United States' full support for Argentina's bold economic reforms"²²⁵ (US Department of Treasury, 2025b; Bessent, 2025b). Bessent and Milei met at the Casa Rosada along with their delegations. After the meeting, they presented a joint declaration. Milei emulated Trump by stating that "we are also calling this historic day *liberation day*..." for capital (Casa Rosada, 2025d. See Table 9). In a shameful display of servility, Milei reaffirmed his intention to make Argentina "a strong ally of the United States in the region, being the first one to uphold consistently to this commitment in all diplomatic forums." Milei also thanked Bessent and the government of Donald Trump "in the name of future generations" for "making Argentina great again"²²⁶ (Casa Rosada, 2025d).

key condition for an explicit endorsement of the Trump administration for the IMF bailout" (Corbishley, 2025). Claver-Carone also referred to the credit line between Argentina and China as "extortionary" and wanted it to end (Fidanza, 2025). As Corbishley (2025) pointed out, the fact that Washington sees the swap line as an "extortion mechanism" is ironic given how Washington uses the IMF in exactly that way. "In 2020, Claver-Carone, in the same role for the first Trump Administration as he has today, openly admitted that the US's decision to grant the \$57 billion loan requested by Mauricio Macri's government in 2018 was largely based on geopolitical considerations" (Corbishley, 2025). During his visit to Argentina, Bessent was interviewed by Bloomberg. In the interview, Bessent said that he went to Argentina "to show support for President Milei and his commitment to what I think is historic in terms of bringing Argentina back from the precipice." Applying the Monroe Doctrine, he also clarified that this is part of Trump's foreign policy of keeping China out of the region. Bessent also accused China of signing "rapacious deals" in Africa and Latin America (Bloomberg Television, 2025). Clearly, Bessent's endorsement of the IMF bailout is part of the "great encirclement plan" for China (Anstey, 2025). China's embassy in Argentina responded to Bessent's statements by denouncing "the new attempt to impose a new version of the Monroe Doctrine." The embassy's response also stated that "the United States should refrain from deliberately obstructing or sabotaging the assistance provided by other countries to developing nations and the Global South" (Embajada de China en la Argentina, 2025).

²²⁵ In the press release announcing the visit, Bessent stated that, "Thanks to the bold leadership of President Javier Milei, the relationship between the United States and Argentina is stronger than ever. I look forward to our positive discussions about Argentina's economy, and to exploring the ways our nations can further deepen our vital economic relationship" (US Department of Treasury, 2025b). The press release was shared in Spanish by Minister of Economy Luis Caputo (totocaputo, 2025a).

²²⁶ Milei also pleaded forgiveness for the rejection of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in 2005. By reversing decades of social gains in terms of advancing redistributive policies and economic independence from the United States, Milei's government condemned future generations to more foreign debt by sealing Argentina's dependence on the US (Alonso, 2025).

TABLE 9. Argentina's *Liberation Day*

We trust that the strong understanding we are building between our administrations will be mutually beneficial for both nations. Argentina and the United States share a deep affinity—both are daughters of *Western civilization*, champions of the fundamental rights to *life, liberty, and private property*. We also both belong to the *New World*, the young American continent with its own unique qualities. We are *heirs* to the contributions of diverse cultures and traditions, and we carry within us the *pioneering spirit of our ancestors who crossed the ocean*. In the nineteenth century, for a time, Argentina and the United States shared a *common mission*—each in its respective hemisphere. We became great continental powers and advanced at the forefront of the region, bearing the *torch of civilization*...

The roots of the seeds planted in this new relationship between the United States and the Republic of Argentina must be strong enough to extend throughout the entire region. Just as the United States was a *beacon* for the whole continent—and indeed for the world—during the twentieth century, Argentina is determined to become once again the *beacon of light* that South America needs after having endured so much *darkness*...

God bless Argentina, God bless the United States, and all the *peoples of heaven*—and may the forces of heaven be with us.

Excerpt of the speech of Javier Milei's on the occasion of the visit of US Secretary of State, Scott Bessent, to the Casa Rosada (Casa Rosada, 2025d).

Bessent, for his part, made parallelisms between Milei's and Trump's MAGA and their "shared values" and commended Milei for their efforts in "making Argentina great again" and "cultivating a pro-market ecosystem." Bessent stated that the US supports Argentina's IMF-led economic reform plan agreement and mentioned that "many US firms...are excited to put their long-term capital to be part of this exciting economic miracle" (Oficina del Presidente, 2025i).²²⁷ Bessent concluded his speech as follows:

Javier Milei's presidency marks a decisive break from the past. I am here today to express the support for President Milei's and his administration's vision for this beautiful country. More importantly, I am here to express the Trump

²²⁷ As pointed out by Trabucco (2025), Bessent is a multimillionaire who represents not only the interests of the Trump administration but also occupies a prominent position within the architecture of global financial capital. During his visit, Bessent met with CEOs of US companies. Afterwards, the American Chamber of Commerce in Argentina published a statement thanking Bessent for his "efforts in fostering constructive dialogue with the International Monetary Fund" (AmCham Argentina, 2025b). AmCham also expressed its gratitude to Bessent for visiting Argentina which reflects "a strong commitment to deepening the bilateral relationship" between the United States and Argentina" (2025b). Bessent's visit coincided with the visit of US billionaire Rod Citrone, founder of Discovery Capital, and Matt Dellorfano, Senior member at Discovery Capital, and Barry Bennet, a close US advisor to Donald Trump, and Matt Schlapp, President of CPAC. This delegation held a different meeting with Milei in Casa Rosada in which Soledad Cedro, CEO of CPAC Argentina, also participated (Oficina del Presidente, 2025h). Milei had met with Citroen, Dellorfano, and Schlapp at CPAC Investor Summit at Trump's Mar-a-Lago Club in November 2024 (Oficina del Presidente, 2024i). Barry Bennett, close Trump's advisor, also participated. In March 2025, Bennet traveled to Argentina and met with Milei's main advisor Santiago Caputo at Casa Rosada. At the end of the meeting, Bennet said that "it's important to deepen the bond" (La Derecha Diario, 2025).

administration's admiration and partnership with the Argentine people. You were willing to make the tough choices over the short run to make Argentina great again. We are your partners in this historic transformation. (Oficina del Presidente, 2025i)²²⁸

Bessent also shared the official picture of the meeting in Casa Rosada with the US and Argentine delegations reaffirming his pride “to affirm the United States’ full support for the President’s bold economic reforms”²²⁹ (Bessent, 2025c). The picture shows the US and the Argentine delegation sitting at a long table and smiling at the camera. At the edge of the table sits Milei’s famous golden chainsaw, inscribed with the slogan *Las Fuerzas del Cielo*, holding a central and prominent position in the photo (Oficina del Presidente, 2025g).²³⁰

²²⁸ After the meeting, the US Department of Treasury released a redout that states: “Secretary Bessent affirmed the United States’ full support for President Milei’s bold economic reforms, and commended him for his government’s early move to reduce barriers towards reciprocal trade with the United States. The Secretary also congratulated the President on Argentina’s recent, successful negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and emphasized the United States’ trust in President Milei to continue advancing Argentina’s positive economic momentum” (US Department of Treasury, 2025c).

²²⁹ On April 23, just a week later, Bessent participated at the Institute of Global Finance (IIF) Global Outlook Forum, held in Washington, D.C. alongside the World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings on April 24-25, 2025. In the event, Bessent stated that he went to Argentina “to demonstrate the United States’ support for the IMF’s efforts to help the country reset financially. Argentina deserves the IMF’s support because the country is making real progress toward meeting financial benchmarks” (US Department of Treasury, 2025d). Bloomberg also reported that Bessent participated in a private event organized by JP Morgan, where he stated that the US administration would be willing to use the Exchange Stabilization Fund to support President Javier Milei’s government in the event of a global shock, as long as the Libertarian administration sticks to its economic policies (Doll & Flatley, 2025).

²³⁰ Following this meeting, Luis Caputo and Scott Bessent participated in Spring Meetings of the World Bank and the IMF. Caputo also took part in an investors seminar organized by JP Morgan where he reaffirmed the country’s commitment to meet all the targets and implementing the structural reforms agreed upon with the IMF (Página 12, 2025a). Caputo also met with Kristalina Georgieva on April 23 when Georgieva expressed once again her support for Argentina’s economic reforms (Ministerio de Economía, 2025). In the press briefing of the Spring meetings, Georgieva praised Argentina’s results again. “Argentina has demonstrated that this time it is different. This time there is decisiveness to put the economy on a soundtrack... The state is stepping out from where it does not belong to allow more dynamism in the private sector” (IMF, 2025e). When responding to a question regarding the challenges that the country faces, she said reaffirmed the political support of international financial capital. Georgieva also stated, “the country is not alone. We are there. The World Bank is there. The Interamerican Development Bank is stepping up” (IMF, 2025e). Therefore, “what are the risks?” instead of risks, Georgieva referred to the opportunities: this is “a very important opportunity for Argentina in a world hungry for what Argentina produces, both in agriculture and in minerals, mining, gas, lithium” (IMF, 2025e). She also recommended listening to one of the meeting’s speakers, Federico Sturzenegger, Minister of Deregulation and State Transformation in Argentina, who was going to talk on “smart regulation,” “how you make the economy more vibrant by not being an obstacle to private initiative” (IMF, 2025e). On the panel Sturzenegger shared with

Two weeks later, after Bessent's visit, Milei received Admiral Alvin Holsey in Casa Rosada, the new Commander of SOUTHCOM (Oficina del Presidente, 2025j). Holsey's agenda included a visit to the naval base in Ushuaia along with US Ambassador to Argentina Abigail L. Dressel to assess the progress in the construction of the "integrated naval base" (US Southern Command, 2025). In April 2024, during the visit of former Commander Laura Richardson, Milei announced the construction of a joint naval base and an Antarctic logistics center in Ushuaia. According to the US Embassy in Argentina, Holsey's visit aimed to reinforce "the longstanding military collaboration between our nations, aimed at bolstering regional security, and advancing shared interests"²³¹ (US Embassy in Argentina, 2025). As analyst Ingrid Urgelles highlighted, Holsey's visit underscores the United States' strategic interest in establishing a military base in Tierra del Fuego, with the objective of securing preferential access to the South Atlantic and Antarctica—an arrangement that would effectively align US logistical routes with those of the United Kingdom (Urgelles, 2025).

Georgieva, the Minister gave her a pin featuring the image of a chainsaw that she put on her blazer (Página 12, 2025b).

²³¹ Holsey met with Minister of Defense Luis Petri, and General Xavier Isaac, Chief of the Argentine Armed Forces' Joint Staff. Luis Petri posted on X that Holsey's "presence, at a key moment for bilateral relations, reaffirms the strategic importance the United States places on Argentina... We are going through a period of great harmony and understanding with the United States, with a common agenda that includes security, the economy, defense, and the fight against terrorism. This visit is momentous and confirms the path we have been taking together... In President @JMilei's administration, we are committed to strengthening ties with the powers of the free world. Argentina is, today, one of the United States' best partners in the region, and we will continue working together to consolidate that leadership position" (Petri, 2025b). On November 7, 2024, Petri attended the ceremony in which Vice Admiral Alvin Holsey assumed command as the new head of SOUTHCOM (Ministerio de Defensa, 2024c).



FIGURE 37. The West is safe

On the occasion of Donald Trump’s victory, the account *El Peluca Milei* posted this image on X with the caption “The West is safe” (2024d). The same account also shared an image featuring Trump, Milei, and Bukele, accompanied by the text: “South America, Central America, and North America are now led by the right. It is the end of the left that destroyed the world” (2024a).

El Peluca Milei, which lists its location as Liberland on X, has 342,000 followers on the platform, 3.9 million on TikTok, 1.9 million on YouTube, and 1.4 million on Instagram. According to its Instagram account, *El Peluca Milei* was the second most-viewed media outlet in Argentina in October 2024 (2024c).

Milei Shelby also shared an image of Milei depicted as a lion shaking hands with Donald Trump, with the caption: “The West is in the hands of Milei and Donald Trump. The leaders of the free world, the ones responsible for saving the West” (2024a). Shelby additionally published an image portraying Milei and Trump as messianic figures under the title “The Forces of Heaven” (2024b).

7.6. Milei: The Free-Market Beacon of the Christofascist International

Milei’s political economy of submission has transformed him into a libertarian guru and neoliberal hero within the transnational far right, where he is seen as a “revolutionary of the free market” (The Economist, 2024b), a “free-market beacon” (Tobias, Gillespie & Hordern, 2025), and “the radical.”²³² As of April 2025, Milei has

²³² Milei was interviewed by Time magazine, which dedicated its cover to him with the title “The Radical. How Javier Milei is shocking the world” (Bergengruen, 2024). Milei has been also interviewed by the editor-in-chief of Bloomberg (Bloomberg Television, 2024) and by the Financial Times (Stott & Nugent, 2024).

made 20 international trips in which he has forged and strengthened ties with the transnational far-right, gaining celebrity status within the Christofascist International. According to Pablo Semán, Milei has become an icon of the far-right in Europe²³³ (Cué, 2024). In May 2024, Milei traveled to Spain and met with far-right congressman Santiago Abascal, leader of the political party Vox. He also gave a speech at the Vox's three-day rally, "Europa Viva 24," one of the largest events of far-right forces in Europe, where Milei was massively acclaimed.²³⁴ Milei has also hosted international events, such as CPAC (Presidencia de la Nación, 2024c) and the Madrid Forum (see Table 11), that promote far-right transnational far-right networks. Milei has joined efforts with other far-right international actors in their crusade to defend 'the West.' For example, he signed the "Western Civilization Declaration" along with Václav Klaus, Former President of the Czech Republic, and far-right guru Jordan Peterson. The declaration states that "there are currently powerful ideological-political forces at work that are about to destroy this civilization from within" (Liberal Institute, 2024).

²³³ In June 2024, Milei traveled to Germany where he received a medal from the neoliberal Friedrich von Hayek Foundation (DW, 2024). During this trip, Milei also visited Czechia and gave a speech at the libertarian think tank the Liberal Institute, where he said he would "probably" be awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics for his administration's achievements (La Capital, 2024). In April 2025, Milei participated in the "American Patriots Gala" at Trump's Mar-a-Lago residence and resort in Florida, where he received the "Lion of Liberty Award" for his defense of liberty, free markets, and conservative values (Infobae, 2025). The event was organized by John Rourke, CEO of Florida-based conservative moving company Blue Line Moving, and creator of the MACA (Make America Clean Again), an initiative to clean "left" cities from "homelessness" and other social malaises. See MACA (n.d.).

²³⁴ European leaders Marianne Le Pen, Victor Orban, and Giorgia Meloni also gave speeches at the rally, as well as US representatives from CPAC and the Heritage Foundation. The rally was centered around the support for Israel and the "defense of freedom," as well as the opposition to communism, the Agenda 2030, gender ideology, and "Islamic" immigration. At the event, Vox's president, Santiago Abascal, said that "in the face of globalism we must respond with a global alliance of patriots in defense of common sense, economic prosperity, security, and freedom because we share the threat, and that leads us to solidarity" (Medrano, 2024).

TABLE 10. Rep. María Elvira Salazar: Milei’s *Friend* in Washington

Rep. María Elvira Salazar (R-Fla.) has stated that it is her duty to help Milei in his “pro-freedom” crusade. Salazar has actively supported Milei for “upholding the principles our society values: individual liberty, economic freedom, and the rule of law” (Congresswoman María Elvira Salazar, 2024c). After attending Milei’s inauguration, Salazar commended Milei for bringing “a major economic shock” to Argentina. Milei “is going to reduce government in a very *painful* way, but the Argentines are expecting it” (Rep. María Elvira Salazar, 2023d). Two days after Milei’s inauguration, Salazar sent letters to Janet Yellen, former US Treasury Secretary, and IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva requesting “fair treatment and leniency” for Argentina’s Milei from the IMF (Congresswoman María Elvira Salazar, 2023g). Salazar praised Milei’s commitment to “fiscal responsibility, liberty, and capitalism” (Rep. María Elvira Salazar, 2023e).

Praising Milei’s “unabashedly pro-American” stand, in May 2024, Salazar sent a letter to President Biden “urging him to include Argentina in the list of countries that make up the Administration’s initiative to increase engagement in the region: the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity (APEC).” For Salazar, as “a great friend of the United States” and “one of our strongest allies in the region,” Milei’s Argentina deserves a place in APEC for “fighting the socialist curse.” According to Salazar, “*Today, in Latin America, there is no president with a more pro-freedom agenda than President Javier Milei. President Milei is working to turn around years of economic failure in a country with tremendous but wasted potential...Your signature Latin America initiative needs pro-American voices in the region like Argentina and Paraguay in order to prosper*” (Congresswoman María Elvira Salazar, 2024c). In his announcement on X of Biden’s letter, Salazar stated that “Argentina more than deserves to be in APEC. It’s time to include the *Fuerzas del Cielo*!” (Rep. María Elvira Salazar, 2024c. Emphasis added). The APEC is part of the *Americas Act*, a bill introduced by Salazar and other representatives to promote “democracy and free markets and to “counter China’s growing control over global manufacturing and geopolitics.” According to the legislators, the “bill unites the democracies in our hemisphere through trade, investment, and a shared commitment to free enterprise” (Congresswoman María Elvira Salazar, 2024a). Described as “the only major economic strategy for the region proposed in Congress,” the *Americas Act* seeks “to expand benefits of the USMCA [United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement] trade agreement to nations who share our values in the region” (Congresswoman María Elvira Salazar, 2024c).

In October 2024, Salazar sent a letter to the IMF along with other Republican members of Congress. The goal of the letter was “to urge the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to open new negotiations with the Republic of Argentina to create a robust financial package in order to support Argentina on their economic path to recovery.” In their letter to Kristalina Georgieva, Director of the IMF, “the Representatives commended President Milei’s efforts to restore reliability as an economic borrower and end Argentina’s historical financial mismanagement under previous socialist administrations.” The legislators stated: “The United States is the largest shareholder of the International Monetary Fund and therefore takes a keen interest in its activities. In Argentina, President Milei has vowed to restore his country’s reputation as a country that pays its debts and belongs in the club of countries that are reliable borrowers. According to reports, the economic adjustment plans he has implemented through the executive branch and the legislature are already curtailing inflation, hopefully setting Argentina on a path that ensures it will not miss any international financial obligations. As such, we ask that you consider these positive measures as you assist Argentina in charting the course ahead” (Congresswoman María Elvira Salazar, 2024e).

On April 1, 2025, Salazar wrote a letter to Scott Bessent, Secretary of the US Department of Treasury on behalf of Milei “to please come to the aid of our ally.” Salazar states in her letter that “if Argentina can pull itself out of its economic crisis...the whole free world will benefit as people around the globe will understand that freedom and capitalism are the way to prosperity—not socialism. That I why it is crucial we help out Presidente Milei now,” and “the IMF needs to step in and help right the ship.” This will save the country from socialism “the economy killer” (Rep. María Elvira Salazar, 2025a). This was followed by a post on X in which she equates Milei to Reagan:

@JMilei is to Argentina what Reagan was to the US: both leaders in the fight against socialism. President Milei needs all the support he can get from the IMF so Argentina can transition away from socialism (Rep. María Elvira Salazar, 2025b).

After the IMF Staff-level Agreement, Salazar, once again, “urge[d] the IMF to approve this deal and help keep Argentina on the right track” (Rep. María Elvira Salazar, 2025c). After the approval of the IMF program, Salazar celebrated the news by taking credit. She posted,

This month, I asked the IMF to help @JMilei in its mission to save the Argentine economy. They heard! Things are changing and countries like Argentina are showing the world that capitalism WORKS (Rep. María Elvira Salazar, 2025d).

Between December 2023 and April 2025, Milei undertook ten trips to the United States, where he strengthened his relationship with Donald Trump. Trump congratulated Milei for winning the election, saying that Milei would “truly Make Argentina Great Again” (Team Trump, 2023). On September 23, 2024, Milei met with investors at the New York Stock Exchange, or Wall Street, where he was hailed and celebrated. Milei also delivered a speech in which he reaffirmed his “unwavering commitment to fiscal balance” (Buenos Aires Times, 2024a). The following day, The Wall Street Journal featured an image of Milei on the front page of its print edition, ringing the bell to mark the opening of the stock market session.²³⁵ US Billionaire Robert Citrone, founder of hedge fund Discovery Capital Management, stated in an interview for Bloomberg that Milei “is very important for Latin America as an example. But more than that, he’s important for the world and for the US, so we need to do what we can to help Argentina” (Aldaya, 2024). President of the Heritage Foundation, Kevin Roberts, also traveled to Argentina and met with Milei in Casa Rosada (Oficina del Presidente, 2025e). Roberts traveled with other leaders of the organization, who celebrated the “rebirth of freedom” in Argentina and described Milei’s government as a “great success story” for “cutting socialist regulatory burdens and restrictions”²³⁶ (Heritage Foundation, 2025a, 2025b).

²³⁵ Milei also appeared on the front page of the printed edition of The Wall Street Journal on several occasions. For example, on December 11, 2023, Milei appeared alongside Volodymyr Zelensky, on the day of his inauguration. He was also featured on July 10, 2024, with his vice president, Victoria Villaruel, on a military tank during the Independence Day celebrations in Argentina.

²³⁶ Roberts was accompanied by the head of Latin American affairs, Andrés Martínez Fernández; the coordinator of the Index of Economic Freedom, Anthony B. Kim; and the Foundation’s chief of staff, Ryan Neuhaus.

Milei is also admired by far-right US politicians, such as Republican Congresswoman María Elvira Salazar, an anti-communist crusader representative of Florida (see Table 10).²³⁷ Salazar refers to Latin America as “our backyard” (Rep. María Elvira Salazar, 2023a) and reaffirms staunchly the Monroe Doctrine.²³⁸ Being the sole member of Congress who attended Milei’s inauguration (Bazail-Eimil, 2023),²³⁹ Salazar sees Milei as “a moral reference to the region” (Congresswoman Maria Elvira Salazar, 2024b), “a gift to the cause of liberty in Latin America” (Rep. María Elvira Salazar, 2024b), and “the most pro-America President in the history of Argentina” (Rep. María Elvira Salazar, 2024a).²⁴⁰ Milei has also been praised and

²³⁷ Salazar is the House Foreign Affairs Western Hemisphere Subcommittee chair and co-founder of GOP “freedom force” to fight the “socialist curse” in Latin America. When referring to protecting “liberty and democracy in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Honduras,” Salazar stated that “It’s time to support genuine liberty in these countries as the shining city on the hill that the United States is” (Congresswoman Maria Elvira Salazar, 2024d).

Salazar is characterized for its aggressive posture towards progressive and socialist Latin American governments, especially Cuba. In January 2021, Salazar introduced the FORCE Act against Cuba to prohibit the removal of Cuba from the list of state sponsors of terrorism. Salazar reintroduced the FORCE Act both in January 2023 and January 2025 (Congresswoman Maria Elvira Salazar, 2023a, 2025a). Salazar’s anti-communist crusade is also domestic. In January 2023, she introduced a resolution denouncing “the horrors and failures of socialism,” which was passed by the House in February (Congresswoman Maria Elvira Salazar, 2023b, 2023c). In September 2023, Salazar reintroduced the *Crucial Communism Teaching Act*, a law that would develop a high school curriculum with the purpose of teaching students about the history and dangers of communism. The House of Representatives passed the bill in December 2024. Salazar and Senator John Kennedy reintroduced the bill in March 2025 (Congresswoman Maria Elvira Salazar, 2023d, 2024f, 2025b).

²³⁸ In December 2023, Salazar introduced a resolution to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Monroe Doctrine. According to the resolution, as “an enduring foundational cornerstone of the foreign policy of the United States,” the House “reasserts the rights and interests of the United States, in accordance with the Monroe Doctrine, to oppose a foreign power extending malign influence that could endanger or undermine the democracies of the Western Hemisphere” (Congresswoman Maria Elvira Salazar, 2023f). For Salazar, “*The Monroe Doctrine’s promise of American independence in the Western Hemisphere has kept us safe for 200 years...Today, threats to our security and liberty no longer come from England, France, or Spain, but from China, Russia, and Iran. By passing my resolution, Congress will send a clear message to the world that America is still in charge*” (Congresswoman Maria Elvira Salazar, 2023f).

²³⁹ Right after the election of Milei in November 2023, Salazar sent a letter along with other US congressional representatives congratulating Milei and praising him as a “beacon of liberty in the Western Hemisphere.” The signatories stated, “we look forward to working with you to promote economic growth and security in the Western Hemisphere through trade and other mechanisms while combatting the growing influence of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Russia, Venezuela, and repressive socialist ideologies in South America” as well as “terrorist groups and other security threats” (Congresswoman Maria Elvira Salazar, 2023e).

²⁴⁰ For Salazar, this was a “historical moment in which Argentina chose the path of liberty and fiscal responsibility.” According to Salazar, “after meeting with several of his cabinet officials, it was clear that Milei’s free market agenda would be the course of action necessary to rectify a nation that has been hollowed out by socialist economics” (Congresswoman Maria Elvira Salazar, 2023g). Salazar posted a photo of herself at the Inauguration, stating,

interviewed by figures from the US far right, such as Tucker Carlson (2023), Ben Shapiro (2024), Bari Weiss (The Free Press, 2024), and Lex Fridman (2024). Shapiro, who, along with Weiss, is a militant Zionist, interviewed Milei in April 2024 in a conversation titled “On the Front Lines of Freedom.” Shapiro introduced Milei as a “captivating figure” who “has stirred conversations around the globe about the direction of Western civilization, economic freedom, and the power of individualism.”

TABLE 11. The Madrid Forum

Founded in 2020, the Madrid Forum is an anticommunist network of right-wing political parties and organizations created by the Disenso Foundation, a Vox’s think tank created in 2020 that advocates for democracy, freedom, and Western civilization heritage (Prensa Fundación Disenso, 2024).

The Madrid Forum describes itself as an international alliance in defense of freedom and democracy in the Ibero-sphere. Ironically, the organization has undermined democratic processes and has supported *coup d’états* in Latin America (Peñarredonda et al., 2023) as well as coup plotters and far-right leaders such as Jeanine Añez in Bolivia and María Corina Machado in Venezuela (Rojas, 2021). The Madrid Forum’s founding document, the *Madrid Charter*, denounces communism as a threat to democracy and has been signed by figures such as Eduardo Bolsonaro (Brazil), Keiko Fujimori (Peru), and José Antonio Kast (Chile).

In September 2024, Milei hosted the third summit of the Madrid Forum in Buenos Aires, organized by Vox. Santiago Abascal closed the summit by reading the Río de la Plata Declaration, in which they reaffirmed the relentless cultural battle to defend the West against destructive cultural Marxism as well as its support for Israel and its right to self-defense. The Declaration also rejects the role of Iran, Russia, and China in the region, which are deemed as “totalitarian world powers that are enemies of the West.” It also condemns the “totalitarian regimes” of Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. Far-right Venezuelan leader, María Corina Machado, thanked the Madrid Forum and the administration of Javier Milei, “the friends of Venezuela, the friends of freedom.” Machado reaffirmed that “Latin America and the West are united” in the defense of values such as freedom, justice, prosperity, as well as democracy, private property, and family (Foro Madrid, 2024b).

The concluding remarks of the Declaration reads: “From Buenos Aires, we proclaim that Ibero-America, a colossal moral and cultural reserve of the West, is gradually recovering democracy and the rule of law, pushing back 21st Century Socialism, and is emerging as a region where freedom, development, and prosperity will ultimately prevail, as demonstrated by the case of Argentina under the government of Javier Milei” (Foro Madrid, 2024a).

Billionaire Elon Musk—who has been embraced by the Brazilian and Argentine extreme right as an icon of freedom and a free-speech champion—openly praises and prompts far-right forces in Latin America (Brasil de Fato, 2024). Musk has also praised

“Congratulations, President @JMilei! Your steadfast dedication to the principles of liberty and free markets will guide your people well” (Rep. María Elvira Salazar, 2023c). During her time in Buenos Aires, she made rounds on Argentine television (Bazail-Eimil, 2023). On December 9, 2024, Salazar posted a short clip of one of these interviews with the text “@JMilei will be a great partner and defender of freedom at the international level in Latin America. We must work together to stop the Chinese Communist Party from entering our Hemisphere!” (Rep. María Elvira Salazar, 2023b).

Milei on numerous occasions for “bringing prosperity” and “restoring Argentina to greatness” (2024e, 2024d), and setting an example for the rest of the world (Musk, 2024e) (see Figure 38). In April 2024, Milei met with Musk and visited Tesla’s headquarters in Texas. The two promised to collaborate in promoting the free market, as well as on potential lithium extraction projects with the goal of defending “liberty” (Raszewski, 2024). Despite Musk’s role as a *neo-Conquistador* seeking to plunder lithium in Argentina (and Bolivia)²⁴¹ (Prashad & Bejarano, 2020a, 2020b), he has become a hero of the far-right in Latin America and is portrayed as a superhero who has joined forces with Milei to save the Western world from socialism (see Figure 39). Milei and Musk met again in May 2024, when Musk recommended investing in Argentina, and in September 2024, when Musk promised to invest in Argentina (Musk, 2024c, 2024h). In January 2025, after the general outrage created by Elon Musk’s Nazi salute during a speech celebrating the presidential inauguration of Donald Trump, Milei defended Musk from the “left accusations.” In a speech at the Holocaust Museum in Buenos Aires, Milei supported Musk as an “unquestionable defender of the State of Israel” (Oficina del Presidente, 2025a). Milei also posted on X,

Elon Musk must be one of the most important men in history, who is pushing human progress at a dizzying pace, and has always defended freedom in its purest form, for everyone...That is why today the entire international progressive movement is riding on the innocent gesture of @elonmusk to brand him a Nazi, because his fight for freedom threatens the hegemonic control of international socialism. But the world has changed. Elon is not alone. Those of us who fight for freedom are no longer alone. We are millions. And now we also regain the “land of

²⁴¹ Musk has supported US-backed corporate coup attempts in Latin America, Venezuela being the most recent example (Geopolitical Economy Report, 2024b). In July 2020, when a Twitter user confronted Musk, claiming that the US organized a coup in Bolivia just so that Musk could have access to the country’s lithium, Musk replied, “We will coup whoever we want!” (Prashad & Bejarano, 2020b). After the coup in Bolivia, Tesla’s stock rose astronomically (Prashad, 2019).

freedom”...thanks to our beloved @realDonaldTrump. *Not only are we not afraid of them, but we are going to seek them out in every corner of the planet in defense of FREEDOM.* (Milei, 2025a. Emphasis added)

In February 2025, Milei gifted Elon Musk a customized gleaming chainsaw during CPAC. The chainsaw, a symbol of the destruction of the State, was engraved with the phrase “¡Viva la Libertad Carajo!” which is Milei’s catchphrase that translates as “Long Live Freedom, Damn It!” Musk took the chainsaw onstage for his appearance at CPAC (Buenos Aires Times, 2025a. See Figure 2).



FIGURE 38. Musk: Prosperity is ahead of Argentina
Post shared on X by Elon Musk after Milei became President (Musk, 2023).



FIGURE 39. Milei and Musk joining forces to save the world

On the occasion of former Foreign Minister Diana Mondino’s speech at the United Nations, Domínguez published this cartoon depicting Milei and Elon Musk joining forces to “save the free world” (2024a), which was subsequently shared by Musk (2024g). In April 2024, Ojota created an illustration of Milei and Musk represented as superheroes, which was shared by Milei’s official account (2024f).

Admiration of foreign leaders is not limited to Musk. Following the visit of El Salvador’s President Nayib Bukele to Argentina on September 30, 2024, Domínguez published an image portraying Milei and Bukele as superheroes who will “liberate” Latin America from the “infamous socialism” (2024b).

7.7. Colonial Nostalgia and Milei’s Neoliberal Conquest of the Desert

Like Brazil’s Bolsonarismo, the far right under Milei has vindicated the military as heroes for extirpating Marxism and saving the nation from communism. The difference, however, is that in Brazil there was never real accountability for the military atrocities nor a construction of a memory of violence and human rights violations that occurred during the dictatorship era. In contrast, in Argentina, the Memory, Truth, and Justice process has marked the democratic consensus over the last decades, the *Nunca Más* (Never Again) pact, becoming a global milestone in terms of addressing the crimes against humanity committed during the 1976–1983 dictatorship. As summarized by

Daniela Dominguez (2025), the core principles of the democratic consensus in Argentina are “the recognition of the dictatorship’s atrocities as crimes against humanity, the principle that the military should not intervene in political affairs, and the acknowledgment that over 30,000 people were forcibly disappeared by the regime.”

Under Javier Milei, the *chainsaw of memory* is reversing the gains in terms of human rights, truth, and justice for the 30.000 victims (*desaparecidos*), a number that Milei has dismissed (Secretaría de Derechos Humanos, 2023). However, the anti-politics of memory is not only about minimizing past atrocities. There is an active government policy to impose denialism by adopting the “theory of two demons.” The far right under Milei has equated systematic state terrorism with the violence committed by the revolutionary left. Under the idea of “defending the freedom to know our history,” the Milei administration has called for “complete memory,” “complete truth,” and “complete justice” which has led to demands for truth, justice, and reparations for the “victims of terrorism,” that is, those responsible for genocide and crimes against humanity (Casa Rosada, 2024a, 2025a).

In Milei’s Argentina, the politics of anti-memory are combined with colonial nostalgia. The Milei administration has commemorated the *Campaña del Desierto* (Desert Campaign), through which it conquered large territories that belonged to the indigenous peoples in the Pampean and Patagonian regions (Casa Rosada, 2024b, 2025e). Also referred to as the *Conquista del Desierto* (Desert Conquest), this campaign took place between 1878 and 1885 and was directed by former President of Argentina, General Julio Argentino Roca. In a nutshell, the *conquista del desierto* was

a military campaign of extermination of thousands of indigenous peoples to establish dominion over Patagonia (Bayer, 2010). From the dessert campaign to the national security doctrine that gave justification for the fascist military coup of 1976, the genocides of the *barbarous* indigenous peoples and the *satanic Marxist enemy* were perpetrated in the name of Western/Christian civilization (Redondo, 2017; Rojas-Mix, 2007). As Argentine scholar Emilio Cafassi argues, State terrorism in the Southern Cone was not a departure from civilization but rather one of its most brutal and candid forms (2025).

Colonial nostalgia is accompanied by the neoliberal civilizing mission, which is also imposed in the name of *Occidente*. The neoliberal conquest seeks to impose a *campaña de tierra arrasada* or “scorched-earth campaign.” This is a combination of “*arrasar con lo público*” (to ravage the public good) and social demolition with the purging of the land coveted by capital. As I mentioned previously, just one month before the commemoration of the *Campaña del Desierto*, Damián Reidel, the head of Milei’s Council of Advisors, gave a speech at the Latam Forum where he offered “legal reassurances” to those interested in appropriating the natural resources of southern Argentina, that is, the Patagonian region. In his speech, Reidel remarked with a grin that “*the problem with this area is that it is populated by the Argentines. So, this is the one thing that we have fixed*” (IEFA TV, 2025). In contrast to Milei, Reidel speaks English fluently and has a solid formation and experience at the altars of capital, which makes him a sinister and powerful ideologue of the free-market doctrine that seeks to

transform entire territories into sacrificial zones, including their inhabitants.²⁴² For Cafassi (2025), Reidel's remarks reveal a vision of the territory that dispenses with its inhabitants, seeing them as obstacles to the development of an extractive, logistical, and technocratic model that is global in design but local in its victims. As Cafassi (2025) astutely points out, there is no investment without redemption, no progress without corpses, in this sacrificial liturgy of capital, capital falls in love with the land only once it has been emptied of its people and its history.

Reidel's statement, "*this is the one thing that we have fixed*," is not a casual one. With the spirit of the *conquista del Desierto* and the war against the *Marxist subversion*, peasants, migrants, students, precarious workers, and indigenous peoples are transformed into internal enemies that need to be extirpated. Coinciding with the remembrance of the *Conquista del Desierto*, it is not a coincidence that the Milei administration has launched the *Julio Argentino Roca President Operation*, which allows for the military deployment throughout the national territory (Presidencia de la Nación, 2025). The intervention of the military is legitimized under the executive order "National Defense System" that allows the establishment of "interior zones" into "military zones" to protect *Objetivos de Valor Estratégico* (assets of strategic value) (Presidencia de la Nación, 2024e).²⁴³ Enacting a twenty-first version of the national

²⁴² According to the World Economic Forum, Reidel has a "PhD in economics from Harvard University, MS in Financial Mathematics from University of Chicago and MS in Physics from Instituto Balseiro. Deputy vice governor of the Central Bank of Argentina. Member of the board of the Central Bank and the monetary policy committee. Co founder of QFR Capital Management, a global macro hedge fund. Previously at Goldman Sachs and JP Morgan (World Economic Forum, n.d.).

²⁴³ The "National Defense System" decree is complemented with the executive decree 1107/2024 that establishes that the Executive branch has the exclusive competence to designate a "*Objetivo de Valor Estratégico*." The decree establishes that "*competete al Presidente de la Nación determinar los 'Objetivos de Valor Estratégico' que han de ser objeto de protección por parte de las FUERZAS ARMADAS y de las FUERZAS POLICIALES Y DE*

security doctrine, this policy is aligned with the revisionist campaign of vindicating the military force and dismantling the democratic consensus regarding their role. For example, Luis Petri, Minister of Defense, said that those who criticize the *Roca Operation* are defenders of “narcos, terrorists, and violent criminals.” For Petri, the criticism is part of “*el sesgo ideológico [que] canceló y maniató a nuestras fuerzas*” (the ideological bias that canceled and restrained our military forces) (Petri, 2025a). On the one hand, the twenty-first-century *Conquista del Desierto* reveals the colonial character of Milei’s anarcho-capitalist project, which looks to create sacrificial zones to fuel capital accumulation. For Verónica Gago, the *Conquista del Desierto* vindicates plunder as a guiding political principle that resurfaces as a myth of origin (2024). On the other hand, the twenty-first-century national security doctrine is aligned with US geopolitical interests and transnational capital. Thus, Reidel’s remarks reveal not only the Milei administration’s submissive geopolitical role but also the integration of Argentina into the US-led *global police state* through *militarized accumulation*, that is, accumulating capital and seizing resources through war and conquest (Robinson, 2020).

SEGURIDAD FEDERALES, de conformidad con lo establecido en la aludida Ley de Defensa Nacional.” This translates as “it is the competence of the President of the Nation to determine the ‘Assets of Strategic Value’ that are to be protected by the ARMED FORCES and the FEDERAL POLICE AND SECURITY FORCES, in accordance with the provisions established in the aforementioned National Defense Law” (Presidencia de la Nación, 2024c). The decree also defines “Objetivo de Valor Estratégico” as “*cualquier bien, instalación o conjunto de instalaciones fijas y las entidades materiales de vital importancia para el ESTADO NACIONAL que, en caso de ser dañados parcialmente o destruidos, ocasionarían graves perjuicios a la vida y bienestar de los habitantes del país, a su economía, al ambiente o a la propia Seguridad de la Nación, limitando, posponiendo o impidiendo su desarrollo.*” This translates as “any asset, facility, or group of fixed facilities, as well as material entities of vital importance to the NATIONAL STATE, which, if partially damaged or destroyed, would cause serious harm to the lives and well-being of the country’s inhabitants, its economy, the environment, or the Nation’s own Security, thereby limiting, delaying, or preventing its development” (Presidencia de la Nación, 2024c). The decree also establishes that in a situation where Martial Law is declared to protect a “*Objetivo de Valor Estratégico*” within the territory, the operational command will fall under the ARMED FORCES.

Chapter Eight

8. Conclusion. Humanity or Fascism: ‘Make Antifascism Great Again’

We have liberated Europe from fascism, but they will never forgive us for it.
Georgy Zhukov, Marshal of the Soviet Union

La próxima guerra en Europa será entre Rusia y el fascismo, solo que el fascismo se llamará
democracia.

*The next war in Europe will be between Russia and fascism, only fascism will be called
democracy.*
Fidel Castro, 1992

The current situation corroborates the idea expressed by many historians. Over the past 500 years—when the West more or less took shape as we know it today, with certain modifications, naturally—all tragedies in the world originated in Europe or occurred owing to European policies. The colonisation, wars, the Crusaders, the Crimean War, Napoleon, World War I, Hitler. If you look at history in retrospect, the Americans played no seditious, let alone “inflammatory,” role.
Sergey Lavrov, 2025

A central US goal...is to perpetuate US global supremacy. The objective is not just power for its own sake but power to ensure (sic) plutocratic control of the planet, power to privatize and deregulate the economies of every nation in the world, to hoist upon the backs of peoples everywhere—including the people of North America—the blessings of an untrammelled “free market” corporate capitalism. The struggle is between those who believe that the land, labor, capital, technology, and markets of the world should be dedicated to maximizing capital accumulation for the few, and those who believe that these things should be used for the communal benefit and socio-economic development of the many.
Michael Parenti, 2003

How do we resist fascism when it returns disguised as democracy? What remains of utopias when horror becomes routine? These questions were raised by Argentine thinker Atilio Borón on the occasion of the premiere of *El invierno del oso* - *Crónicas antifascistas en Stalingrado* (The Bear’s Winter – Antifascist Chronicles in Stalingrad), a play written and performed by Manuel Santos Iñurrieta, featuring the participation of Borón. The play is set during the Battle of Stalingrad in World War II

(1942-1943), claiming two million lives, and marking the turning point in the defeat of Nazism with the arrival of the Red Army of the former USSR in Berlin in May 1945.

According to the *Centro Cultural de la Cooperación*, *El invierno del oso* introduces us to a gravely wounded Soviet soldier who turns to comedy and poetry as a lifeline amid the absurdity of war. Through his reflections, the protagonist contemplates social utopias, the enduring horror of fascism, and its haunting resurgence eight decades after the fall of Nazism (Gorini, 2025). In a short video clip of Borón's performance, he states "*Aquí están todas las cosas buenas que el fascismo quiere tragar. Están tus padres, están tus hijos, están los míos, y todo lo bueno que construimos...Aquí están sueños, utopías y amores, todas las cosas que el fascismo se traga y se come*" (Here lie all the good things fascism longs to devour—your parents, your children, mine as well, and everything noble we have built together...Here lie dreams, utopias, and loves—all the things that fascism swallows whole and devours) (Borón, 2025). In an interview with Santos Iñurrieta, he says that the play is also a self-critique or a critique of those who resist. He says that while the soldier is in the middle of the war, there is a delay in the actions of the allies, which stems from the inability to characterize the phenomenon—whether it is fascism or neo-fascism (Somos Radio AM 530, 2025). To this, I pose the question: **How can we resist fascism if we don't name it?**

Through my dissertation, I have developed the analytical category of *Christofascism* to account for the different manifestations of neofascism in the Americas. First coined by theologian Dorothee Sölle, I consider the category of Christofascism rich and relevant to account for the emergence of actors who compound

the far right and who have adopted the mission of imposing free-market totalitarianism as a civilizational crusade. Sölle coined the term to account for the phenomenon of fascist religion, that is, the subordination of Christianity to hate and the will to destroy. In the context of the rise of the fascist Christian right in the United States, Sölle highlighted the conflation of God and nation, a phenomenon that I analyzed in the case of the Christian nationalist movement of Bolsonarismo.

In Chapter 2, I expanded on Sölle's category of *Christofascism* by including some important elements of the definition of fascism, specifically, its colonial, capitalist, and international dimensions. Since fascism is intrinsic to capitalism, in Chapter 3 I also elaborated on the definition of the concept by analyzing the religious dimensions of capitalism. For this task, I built on Latin American critical thought, especially liberation theology, for understanding the new manifestations of fascism in the Americas. For example, Enrique Dussel's *Las metáforas teológicas de Marx* (1993c) was published in English in 2024 under the title *The Theological Metaphors of Marx*. The publication of this work 30 years later underscores the continued relevance of Dussel's thought, and of liberation theology more broadly, for understanding the resurgence of the very fascist forces that liberation theologians once opposed.

I argue that another crucial dimension of *Christofascism* is its crusade for Western supremacy. In chapter 4, I delved into the meanings of 'the West,' Western civilization, and Western modernity. Far-right actors in the Americas do not openly profess white supremacy, constituting a "multiracial far-right." However, they openly profess a sense of civilizational or Western superiority (colonial prejudice) that conceals the sense of

White superiority (racist prejudice). It is worth clarifying that the idea of colonial prejudice—or the sense of Western supremacy—is not limited by any means to the far right. Instead, what I argue is that the far right not only embraces but openly celebrates Western (colonial) superiority, thereby legitimizing white supremacy. The sense of Western supremacy enables the far right to coalesce around a common civilizational crusade to save so-called superior Western civilization, along with the principles that have legitimized genocide, land dispossession, and enslavement for centuries. In Chapter 5, I traced the religious colonial origins at the foundation of *Christofascism*. Christian fundamentalism is usually analyzed as having originated in connection with the colonial and messianic doctrine of Manifest Destiny in the United States. However, I argue that for tracing the colonial origins that underpin *Christofascism*, we must go back to the creation of the colonial doctrine of *discovery-as-conquest* and the Church’s sanctifying of the divine *right of domination* over peoples and territories.

By analyzing the cases of Brazil and Argentina, my study has underpinned the theological and messianic dimensions of *Christofascism* in the Americas. As Dussel argue, we must (re)discover “the importance of a criticism of theology as a moment within the broader critique of liberal politics and capitalist economics, which Marx exemplified” (2024, xli). In my study, I have argued that these theological dimensions go beyond the consolidation of a Christian nationalist project. The theological and messianic discourse, metaphors, symbolism, and mysticism of the free-market religious doctrine require alternative theoretical tools, such as those developed by liberation theologians. Indeed, to combat free-market fundamentalism, it is necessary to expose

its idolatrous nature and reclaim the liberatory and revolutionary meanings of the theological metaphors that have been distorted and co-opted by *Christofascism*. If God and the Bible have been hijacked, as Juan José Tamayo (2021) argues, then they must be recovered in this struggle over imaginaries. As Dussel (2017) would put it, we must invert the inversion—set upright what has been turned upside down.

I examine the concrete expressions of Christofascism in the Americas by making a profound—critique from the perspective of the theology of liberation towards the geopolitical economy of neofascism. I have developed two ideas to understand Christofascism in the Americas. ***Christian libertarianism*** and ***messianic neoliberalism***. *Christian libertarianism* refers to the integration of Christian theology with the core principles of free-market capitalism, presenting economic liberalism as divinely sanctioned. In Chapter 6, I analyze Brazil’s Bolsonarismo as an example of *Christian libertarianism*. As a Christian nationalist movement, I argue that the main premise of this manifestation of Christofascism is that the dominant form (inverted version) of Christianity it embraces does not conflict with or oppose capitalism. To the contrary, the instrumentalization of a fundamentalist interpretation of Christianity serves to justify an embrace of fanatic neoliberalism, which benefits big capital.

While *messianic neoliberalism* also makes an instrumental use of religion, I argue that this manifestation of neoliberalism turns the free-market doctrine into a religion in its own right. If Bolsonarismo’s Christian nationalist vision is organized around the mantra, “*God above everything*,” Milei’s anarcho-capitalist project is organized around the central maxim: “*the market above everything*,” where the market represents the

“almighty invisible hand” of God. This form of anarcho-capitalist fundamentalism has its own mythology, prophets, canonical gospels, evangelical fervor, and theological symbols. In Chapter 7, I examine the case of Milei’s Argentina to argue that Milei’s anarcho-capitalist divine plan can be understood as a manifestation of *messianic neoliberalism*. Milei invokes the promise of reaching the Kingdom of God on Earth, led by the anarcho-capitalist messiah, which will lead Argentines to the utopia of the total market. Milei embodies the libertarian Messiah with the salvific mission of freeing the Argentine people from the clutches of the State, which is a creation of the devil itself, the Anti-Christ. The messianic dimension of the anarcho-capitalist project explains the creation of a complete religious imaginary and mysticism to justify the sacrifice of Argentina’s sovereignty and the crucifixion of the poor. Under this framework, the austerity measures become a divine punishment, the *inferno* that Argentines must endure in order to reach the Promised Land, guided by Milei, the savior.

The sacrificial logic of *Christofascism* is not restricted to Argentina. In both Brazil and Argentina, the people are called to accept austerity measures and reject the Christian principles of equality, solidarity, and compassion behind the idea of social justice. Under Brazil’s Christian libertarian movement, or under Milei’s anarcho-capitalist fundamentalism, there is a call for a collective exorcism of social justice. This exorcism demands the sacrifice of life itself, especially the lives of the poorest, along with the sacrifice of human rights, dignity, hope, the future, and even the past and collective memory.

For understanding Christofascism's civilizational crusade in the Americas, I built on the idea of *libertarian hyper-occidentalism* proposed by sociologist Juan Gabriel Tokatlian to refer to the unconditional support for the West of the Milei government, represented by the United States and Israel, at the expense of national interests (2024). I expand on the idea of *libertarian hyper-occidentalism* and apply it also to Brazil to refer to the messianic sense of superiority that comes from a sense of belonging to a superior cultural and religious civilization: 'The West.' I argue that the idea of *hyper-occidentalism* allows us to unveil the sacrificial logic of Christofascist projects, in terms of foreign policy and political economy. I argue that for the Christofascist right in the Americas, embracing the ideas of liberty entails the sacrifice of sovereignty. Thus, the notion of *libertarian hyper-occidentalism* can be unpacked into two dimensions. First, based on Brazil and Argentina's supposed "natural affinity" with the "Western tradition," the imposition of free-market totalitarianism is framed as a civilizational crusade to save Western civilization, a discourse that rests on the assertion of the moral superiority of the West. Second, the principles of the free-market doctrine are extended to the realm of foreign policy. In other words, just as citizens are deemed to be responsible individually and "owners of their own lives," nations, too, are not allowed to recognize the structures of domination that shape their "destiny." However, as former President of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, wrote in 1965, "a State in the grip of neo-colonialism is not master of its own destiny" (1965, p. x). Within the imaginary of *libertarian hyper-occidentalism*, acknowledging the forces of oppression is equated

with adopting a *victimhood* narrative on the international stage—something that would inevitably be perceived as *anti-Western*.

Both dimensions of *libertarian hyper-occidentalism* help explain why, under the religious free-market doctrine, defending sovereignty and affirming national interest are seen as counterproductive. As a result, national sovereignty and independence are subject to sacrifice in the name of the Western tradition, supposedly embodied in the United States and Israel. For example, Milei promised Trump that he could “count on Argentina to help make the United States great again.” It remains to be seen how far Argentina will continue to sacrifice its sovereignty in the name of the (neo)colonial power of Western civilization, and what role it will play in facilitating the sacrifice of the sovereignty of countries like Cuba and Venezuela at the altar of “the West.”

8.1. For a Twenty-First Century Anti-Fascist Resistance

Man, fear nothing but fascism. Stay alert!
Julius Fučík, Czech journalist²⁴⁴

Eighty years after the Soviet Union’s defeat of fascism, what does it mean to resist fascism today? The struggle against fascism is inherently a struggle against capitalism. From the perspective of the theology of liberation, combating capitalism

²⁴⁴ Fučík was member of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and part of the anti-Nazi resistance. In 1942, he was captured and subjected to torture by the Gestapo in Prague. During his imprisonment, he documented his interrogation experiences on scraps of paper, which were secretly smuggled out and later published posthumously as *Notes from the Gallows* (Fuchik, 1948). His final message, “I love you all, friends. Be on guard!” is a lasting call in the face of the advance of reactionary forces that seek to eternalize barbarism and genocide in the world. Julius Fučík was executed on September 8, 1943. September 8 is celebrated in many countries as the International Day of the Journalist in honor of Julius Fučík. This date was officially established in 1958 by the International Organization of Journalists (IOJ) during its congress in Bucharest, Romania. Fučík also posthumously received the Honorary International Peace Prize in 1950 for his fight against fascism (Duliet, 2024).

requires exposing its fetishistic, idolatrous, sacrificial, and anti-Christian nature. It also requires repudiating the necropolitical nature of the free-market doctrine in order to imagine economic forms of organization based on equality, solidarity, compassion, and respect for life. Inspired by these principles, in his last Via Crucis meditations for Good Friday, Pope Francis denounced “an economy in which the ninety-nine are more important than the one is inhumane.” It is an economy of “algorithms, of cold logic and implacable interests” (2025). Pope Francis called “to challenge an economy that kills,” and to embrace God’s economy, which “does not kill, discard or crush.” Instead, divine economy “cultivates, repairs and protects” (2025). Pope Francis originally proposed these ideas in his apostolic letter “The Joy of the Gospel” where he denounced capitalism for “threat[ening] the life and dignity of God’s people” (2013, section 51).²⁴⁵ Following the teachings of Pope Francis, an anti-fascist movement has to embrace ethics that respect life and social justice in order to utterly reject *an economy of exclusion, the new idolatry of money, and a financial system which rules rather than serves*.

No to an economy of exclusion: In section 53 of Pope Francis’s apostolic exhortation, he rejects the “economy of exclusion” because “such an economy kills.” For Pope Francis, “Just as the commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill’ sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say ‘thou shalt not’ to an economy of exclusion and inequality.” Pope Francis denounces the unjust

²⁴⁵ See also Pope Francis’s *Encyclical on Capitalism & Inequality* (2015). On the Pope’s teachings, see Tornielli and Galeazzi (2015).

economic system that creates violence. As long as exclusion and inequality continue, “it will be impossible to eliminate violence” (2013, section 59). Pope Francis states that “Today everything comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed upon the powerless. As a consequence, masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalized: without work, without possibilities, without any means of escape” (2013, section 53). In section 54, Pope Francis argues that under the “globalization of indifference,” “we end up being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor.” He says that “in this context, some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world.”

No to the new idolatry of money: Pope Francis calls attention to our relationship with money, and its dominion over ourselves and our societies. Pope Francis denounces that “The worship of the ancient golden calf (cf. *Ex* 32:1-35) has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose” (2013, section 55). Pope Francis denounces the tyranny of the “deified market,” which tends to “devour everything which stands in the way of increased profits” (2013, section 56). For Pope Francis, in this unjust system, “While the earnings of a minority are growing exponentially, so too is the gap separating the majority from the prosperity enjoyed by those happy few. This imbalance is the result of ideologies which defend the absolute autonomy of the marketplace and financial

speculation. Consequently, they reject the right of states, charged with vigilance for the common good, to exercise any form of control” (2013, section 56).

No to a financial system which rules rather than serves: For Pope Francis, the financial system is built on the denial of the primacy of the human person. “Behind this attitude lurks a rejection of ethics and a rejection of God” (2013, section 57). Pope Francis argues that “ethics—a non-ideological ethics—would make it possible to bring about balance and a more humane social order.” Effectively, “ethics leads to a God who calls for a committed response which is outside the categories of the marketplace. When these latter are absolutized, God can only be seen as uncontrollable, unmanageable, even dangerous, since he calls human beings to their full realization and to freedom from all forms of enslavement” (2013, section 57). Thus, in his apostolic exhortation, Pope urged “financial experts and political leaders to ponder the words of one of the sages of antiquity: *‘Not to share one’s wealth with the poor is to steal from them and to take away their livelihood. It is not our own goods which we hold, but theirs’*” (2013, section 57. Emphasis added).

Embracing ethics built on the principles of justice, solidarity, and compassion also requires anti-fascist pedagogies. On the one hand, this entails overcoming the neoliberal *ethos* in the realm of education and its focus on human capital, meritocracy, and entrepreneurship, which revolved around a set of values that promote social apathy, selfishness, and individual salvation. A common feature of the Christofascist right in the Americas is its crusade against “ideological indoctrination,” which means the demonization of any efforts to confront or even acknowledge historical and present

injustices. For that reason, one of the main priorities of the far right is to exorcise the education system of the so-called left's nefarious influence. This reactionary vision of education is focused on unquestioned obedience to the status quo and the rejection of critical thinking, which allows the reproduction of systems of domination. For this reason, it goes hand in hand with the neoliberal doctrine of education. On the other hand, anti-fascist and anti-neoliberal pedagogies have to go beyond the superficial criticism of discrimination and oppression, performative identity politics, and "inoffensive antifascism," that is, antifascism devoid of class content and historical memory (Rendón, 2025). Anti-fascist pedagogies educate for the common good, social justice, equality, dignity, and liberty in order to imagine utopian projects of hope and resistance (Giroux, Filippakou & Ocampo-Torrejón, 2021). For scholar Díez-Gutiérrez, to educate for democracy, we must educate in antifascism (2022). In the face of the fascist neoliberal doctrine, an anti-fascist pedagogy has to educate in the right to disobedience (Díez-Gutiérrez, 2022). A pedagogy of disobedience is necessary to create forms of organization that keep the antifascist cause alive and vigilant.

In the face of neoliberal despair and the assault on the possibilities of survival of the majority, an antifascist pedagogy teaches that *nadie se salva solo* (no one is saved alone). This is the main message of the Argentine *El Eternauta*, the story of an organized political rebellion against an omnipotent monstrous power destroyer of the

conditions necessary for life and of life itself.²⁴⁶ In the *batalla por los sentidos* or war over meanings and imaginaries, *El Eternauta* vindicates the idea of uniting to resist. In other words, solidarity and social ties, that is, the collective hero, prevail over self-salvation. Today, instead of a toxic snow, the collective hero confronts the destroyer, embodied in the chainsaw, the impulse of death and destruction of the commons and the rights of workers, students, and pensioners. As an anti-fascist allegory, *El Eternauta* shows the importance of insubordination, collective resistance, and anti-individualism to fight against indignity, injustice, and cruelty. Antifascist pedagogies also oppose what Rita Segato refers to as pedagogies of cruelty (2018). For Segato, in the face of the apocalyptic phase of capital, the repetition of violence produces a normalization effect of a landscape of cruelty and, in doing so, fosters in people the low thresholds of empathy that are indispensable for the predatory annihilation of peoples and territories. Thus, Segato suggests anti-pedagogies of cruelty to dismantle the elemental structure of capitalist, colonial, and patriarchal violence (2018).

8.2. For an Anti-fascist International

We deny your internationalism, because it is a luxury which only the upper classes can afford,
while the working people are hopelessly bound to their native land.
Benito Mussolini, 1921

²⁴⁶ Héctor Germán Oesterheld, creator of the science fiction comic *El Eternauta*, and his family, were victims of the fascist horror, an omnipotent monstrous force, that is, the fascist military dictatorship that ruled the country between 1976 and 1983. Héctor, his four daughters, and three sons-in-law were either killed or disappeared. In the clandestine detention, torture, and extermination centers of the military junta. Two of Héctor's daughters were pregnant when taken to death camps. It is believed they gave birth to children who the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo are still searching for to this day. Thus, at least ten members of Oesterheld's family members, including himself are *desaparecidos* (Valko, 2025).

Considering the colonial, capitalist, and international character of fascism, an anti-fascist movement has to be organized internationally to combat capitalism and neocolonialism. For Samir Amin, “because of the uneven expansion of capitalism and its differentiation into centers and peripheries, the construction of a system beyond capitalism will have to begin in the peripheral areas” (1988, p. 73). On this basis, I argue that the international organization of the anti-fascist struggle will also come from the Global South.

As a model that can be supported and emulated in other latitudes, I will focus on Venezuela’s battle against fascism as a matter of governmental policy with international ramifications. In April 2024, Venezuela’s National Assembly approved the bill “Law against Fascism, Neofascism, and Similar Expressions.” The first article states that

The purpose of this Law is to establish the means and mechanisms to preserve peaceful coexistence, public tranquility, the democratic exercise of the popular will, the recognition of diversity, tolerance, and mutual respect in the face of fascist, neo-fascist, or similar expressions that may arise within the territory of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. (Eljuri, 2025)

The law also prohibits the diffusion and divulgence of propaganda, publicity, and messages that favor the culture of hate, intolerance, discrimination, and death. This includes the principles, acts, symbols, and methods that *hagan apología* (exalt or glorify) of fascism. The law also provides for the creation of a High Commission against Fascism, Neo-Fascism, and Similar Expressions, as a collegial body responsible for advising and generating recommendations regarding public policies and

specific measures (Eljuri, 2025). The anti-fascist law was referred to the Committee of Internal Policy for the purpose of preparing a report for its second debate.

While the bill confronts the promotion of fascism and extreme violence by the far right in Venezuela—which includes burning people alive for supporting *Chavismo*—the law also tackles foreign attacks that have sought to erode Venezuela’s self-determination, including cyber-attacks aimed at disrupting the country’s electoral processes (Eljuri, 2025). In August 2024, the National Assembly condemned *cyberfascism* for sowing hatred and fascist ideologies, and the creation of a National Commission against Fascism, Hatred, and Violence. In the debate, President of the National Assembly, denounced *cyberfascism* and techofeudalism for crushing critical dissent. He states that the owners of social media platforms—referred to as digital ideological media—such as Mark Zuckerberg and Elon Musk “*vienen a acabar con la humanidad, con la libertad de ser, elegir, pensar, amar y escoger; porque ni siquiera te permiten escoger si una persona que piensa distinto, tenga argumentos suficientes para convencer y ellos acaban con eso*” (They come to destroy humanity, the freedom to be, to choose, to think, to love, and to decide. They won’t even allow you to choose whether someone who thinks differently has sufficient arguments to persuade. They just put an end to that) (Revoluciona, 2024). Deputy Gustavo Villapol also stated that “*Es necesario legislar sobre esto, porque con el fascismo no se negocia, con el fascismo no hay pacto, al fascismo se derrota, y en Venezuela derrotamos al fascismo con las leyes, la Constitución, y lo haremos, para que más nunca asesinen a nuestros ciudadanos con ganas de soñar y vivir en paz*” (It is necessary to legislate on this

matter, because fascism is not negotiated with, there is no pact with fascism—fascism must be defeated. And in Venezuela, we defeat fascism through laws and the Constitution, and we will do it so that our citizens who dream and long to live in peace are never killed again) (Revoluciona, 2024).

One of the most significant aspects of the anti-fascist law is the creation of the International Network against Fascism. Article 8 states that

The National Executive shall promote and support the establishment and operation of an international network of individuals, groups, social movements, and institutions committed to the fight against fascism, neo-fascism, and similar expressions, with the aim of joining and coordinating efforts and initiatives at the global, regional, and subregional levels. (Eljuri, 2025).

As part of this framework, in September 2024, the government of Venezuela hosted the *Primer Congreso Mundial contra el Fascismo, Neofascismo y Expresiones Similares* (first international congress against fascism, neofascism, and similar expressions), in which the Anti-Fascist International was formally established. The Congress brought together social, feminist, youth, and cultural movements, intellectuals and academics, unions and political parties, personalities, indigenous organizations, human rights groups, and organizations of *los pueblos* (the peoples) of the world. All these actors created the foundational document of the Anti-fascist International, the Caracas Declaration, a 25-page detailed manifesto that includes a declaration of purposes, organization and structure, and a strategy of articulation (Declaración de Caracas, 2024). The latter emphasizes the organization of congresses, networks, and campaigns, and coordinated antifascist and anti-imperialist actions at the international level. Since then, the Anti-fascist International has opened chapters in

Cuba, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Kenia, the Catalan countries, Madrid, and the Canary Islands, among others (Internacional Antifascista, 2024). The document also includes a list of principles and ideological foundations such as: anti-imperialism, anti-fascism, anti-colonialism, anti-patriarchalism, 21st-century socialism, care for life, environmental sustainability and climate justice, and peace and social justice (Declaración de Caracas, 2024). In addition, the declaration includes the twelve-point platform of the Anti-Fascist International:

1. Against fascism in all its forms.
2. For the sovereignty and self-determination of peoples.
3. Against multidimensional and cognitive warfare.
4. Against the new financial and technological aristocracy.
5. Against economic and financial violence.
6. Sovereignty over strategic resources and common goods.
7. Innovative education for epistemological decolonization and critical reflection.
8. For gender equality and diversity.
9. For the rights of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, and against all forms of racism and xenophobia.
10. Popular organization as the core of the antifascist struggle.
11. Toward international antifascist solidarity.
12. For a world of justice, equality, and peace.

FIGURE 40. First page of the Declaration of Caracas

This is the first page of the 25-page Declaration of Caracas, the “Foundational Document of the Anti-Fascist International” (Eljuri, 2025). This is a summarized translation: We commemorate the 51st anniversary of the military coup against **Salvador Allende**, which exposed the brutality with which reactionary forces are willing to crush any emancipatory project. **Allende’s memory calls on us today to organize in order to defeat a common enemy: cyberfascism.** The new capitalist phase of the 21st century has led imperialism to attack through new, multidimensional forms of domination, such as **cognitive warfare** and technological colonization, with the aim of fragmenting consciousness, dismantling popular struggles, and perpetuating exploitation in order to achieve **social control and the appropriation of wealth.**

Venezuela has become the epicenter of the **international neofascist offensive**, and for this reason, we mobilize **in solidarity.** This siege is far from a mere offensive; it is part of a **global strategy that seeks to stifle revolutionary forces** challenging the new configurations of digital capitalism. The courage and audacity of the Venezuelan people in sustaining their revolution is not merely a temporary act of resistance, but a **reaffirmation of a historical process that confronts structures of domination**, charting a path toward the emancipation of peoples in a context that is redefining the terms of struggle.

Documento fundacional de la Internacional Antifascista (IA)

Declaración de Caracas, 11 de septiembre de 2024

Movimientos sociales, feministas, juveniles y culturales, intelectuales y académicos, sindicatos y partidos políticos, personalidades, organizaciones indígenas, colectivos de derechos humanos, organizaciones de los pueblos del mundo, nos encontramos en Caracas, Venezuela, para celebrar el **“Primer Congreso Mundial contra el Fascismo, Neofascismo y Expresiones Similares”**.

Conmemoramos en esta fecha al presidente **Salvador Allende**, a 51 años del golpe militar que truncó su gobierno revolucionario en Chile, un acontecimiento que no solo pretendió frenar el avance inminente de la revolución latinoamericana y caribeña, sino que evidenció la brutalidad con la que las fuerzas reaccionarias están dispuestas a sofocar cualquier proyecto emancipador.

La memoria de Allende nos llama hoy a **organizarnos para derrotar a un enemigo común: el ciberfascismo**. La nueva fase capitalista del siglo XXI ha hecho que el imperialismo ataque con nuevas formas de dominación, de forma multidimensional, como la **guerra cognitiva** y la colonización tecnológica, con el objetivo de fragmentar la conciencia, desarticular las luchas populares y perpetuar la explotación para conseguir el **control social y apropiación de riquezas**.

Venezuela se ha convertido en el epicentro del **ataque neofascista internacional**, y por ello nos movilizamos **en solidaridad** frente a la arremetida feroz de la ultraderecha contra su pueblo y el gobierno legítimo del Presidente Nicolás Maduro Moros. Este asedio, lejos de ser una simple ofensiva, forma parte de una **estrategia global que busca sofocar las fuerzas revolucionarias** que desafían las nuevas configuraciones del capitalismo digital. El coraje y la audacia del pueblo venezolano al sostener su revolución, no es solo una resistencia temporal, sino la **reafirmación de un proceso histórico que confronta las estructuras de dominación**, trazando un camino hacia la emancipación de los pueblos en un contexto que redefine los términos de la lucha.

Under the slogan “Humanity or Fascism,” in November 2024, 1,200 delegates from 76 countries gather in Caracas to celebrate the International Meeting of the Promoting Team of the Antifascist International, with the purpose of laying the solid foundations necessary to create a powerful global organizational structure capable of defeating and ultimately eradicating Fascism, Neofascism, Zionism, and similar expressions. Among its 20 points, the *Anti-Fascist Declaration of Caracas for a New World* (Internacional Antifascista, 2024), calls to combat fascism and genocidal neoliberal policies, by proclaiming:

- We demand the immediate cessation of all forms of violence and crimes of aggression against the peoples who are victims of Zionism, including the illegal occupation of their territories, neo-colonial practices, and the violation of their right to self-determination. We urge all peoples of the world to act against this genocide and to support the legitimate aspirations of the peoples for sovereignty, freedom, and justice.
- Support a peaceful resolution to the war instigated by the expansionist and warlike machinery of NATO in Ukraine, directed against the Russian Federation.
- The rescue of the historical experiences of struggle of all peoples of the world against fascism and bourgeois liberal democracies. In particular, we vindicate the epic of all peoples of the former Soviet Union in the victory over Nazi-fascism, which defended the freedom and culture of humanity against Nazi barbarism.
- We condemn all forms of war and interventions imposed by imperialist powers, which seek to destabilize and subjugate the peoples of the world.
- Our rejection of imperialism as a structural promoter of fascism through the constant sowing of fear and terror in the economic, political, military, technological, cultural and social spheres. Imperialism seeks to ensure its hegemony, the exploitation of peoples and the plundering of the natural and strategic resources of the planet.
- The defense of education and the construction of a NEW WORLD, more sensitive and humane, multipolar and multicentric, is sown and harvested with education as a praxis of social transformation, thus connecting the university with our people.

The Anti-Fascist Declaration of Caracas also emphasized the importance of research, study, and training to decode the multiple mutations of fascism and succeed in neutralizing its various strategies and tactics. In the second part of this chapter, I explore several avenues for future research on fascism in line with the anti-fascist principles set forth in the Declaration of Caracas.

8.3. Toward a Research Agenda to Combat Fascism

8.3.1. Combatting (Financial) Colonialism Disguised as 'Democracy'

The danger to world peace springs not from the action of those who seek to end neo-colonialism
but from the inaction of those who allow it to continue.

Kwame Nkrumah, 1965

Colonialism takes many forms. One of its forms is financial colonialism. The domestication of countries through debt also has a sacrificial logic. For Verónica Gago,

debt is another dimension of cruelty (2024). In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis stated that the “new tyranny” of financial capital imposes debt and the accumulation of interest, which makes “it difficult for countries to realize the potential of their own economies and keep citizens from enjoying their real purchasing power” (2013, section 52). The UNCTAD reported that half the world’s population (3.3 billion) lives in countries that allocate more of their budget to pay off the interest on debt than to pay for either education or health services (UNCTAD, 2025).²⁴⁷ This is explained by the history of colonialism. Instead of paying reparations to former colonies, Western powers have perpetuated colonial subjugation through debt and financial control. In the case of Africa, the Brattle’s report has made a calculation of \$100–131 trillion for reparations owed for the violations of international law arising from and caused by transatlantic chattel slavery. As a point of reference, the US GDP for 2024 was \$30 billion. “According to Brattle’s estimates, the harms during the period of enslavement were inflicted on 19 million people over four centuries, including Africans kidnapped and transported to the Americas and Caribbean and those born into slavery, for a total of 802 million years of life to be compensated” (Brattle, 2023).

Britain did pay reparations... to slave owners. In February 2018, the British Treasury posted a “surprising fact” post on Twitter addressing its followers that said: “Millions of you helped end the slave trade through your taxes.” The post read,

²⁴⁷ This is combined with the silent genocide and the indiscriminate human cost that results from unilateral coercive sanctions which are oriented to suffocate a country’s economy and inflict economic pain. According to scholar Francisco Rodríguez, by 2023, more than one fourth of countries and nearly a third of the world economy was subject to sanctions by the UN or Western powers. Sanctions result in cut spending on public health, education, and food assistance, and decline in living standards, which severely harm the most vulnerable populations and can cause death of many thousands (Rodríguez, 2023).

Did you know? In 1833, Britain used £20 million, 40% of its national budget, to buy freedom for all slaves in the Empire. The amount of money borrowed for the Slavery Abolition Act was so large that it wasn't paid off until 2015. Which means that living British citizens helped pay to end the slave trade.

(Olusoga, 2018). As historian David Olusoga argues, “What the Treasury didn’t mention, though, was that the £20m was paid out to the 46,000 slave owners, to compensate them for the loss of their human property. By one calculation that is the modern equivalent of about £17bn”²⁴⁸ (2018). In sum, the British Treasury, which later deleted the tweet, completed paying reparations to slave owners in Africa in 2015, in the amount of approximately \$23 billion.

Another example is the case of Haiti, whose people conducted the first successful revolution against imperialism. As explained by the Tricontinental, Haiti’s freedom was a challenge to US slavery, so it had to be crushed. Two hundred years ago, in 1825, France’s King Charles X demanded the young nation to pay 150 million francs as “compensation” for the loss of its colony and enslaved labor force, a sum that was ten times Haiti’s annual budget and equivalent to the amount the US had paid for the Louisiana territory. Thus, Haiti borrowed from French banks to pay the money and then fell into a debt trap that it has never been able to exit (Tricontinental, 2025a). As the Tricontinental put it,

from 1825 to 1947, when Haiti finally paid off the debt, eighty percent of its wealth—around \$21 billion—had been used as payment, leaving it in a state of total chaos (it is estimated that the Haitians ended up paying more than twice the value

²⁴⁸ As Olusoga explains, “the slave owners not only received compensation from the British taxpayer, they won another concession, the euphemistically titled ‘apprenticeship’ system. What this meant was that the slaves themselves were forced to work the fields for a further six years after the supposed abolition of slavery—45 hours a week for no pay” (2025). On the legacies of British slave-ownership, see Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery (n.d).

of the indemnity). This is an odious payment. Neither France nor Citibank, which bought the debt, have ever apologised for this plunder. (2025a)



FIGURE 41. Mafalda and the World Bank

This is a cartoon by Argentine cartoonist Joaquín Salvador Lavado Tejón (1932-2020), known as Quino, creator of the comic strip Mafalda, which is recognized all over Latin America. In this cartoon, Mafalda and her mother have a discussion that summarizes the loss of sovereignty by the imposition of odious debt by international organizations: *Mafalda, pick up the sweater you left lying around! / I don't have to obey anyone, Mom! I'm a president! / And I'm the Paris Club and the International Monetary Fund! / Gotta admit, that was clever* (Ediciones de la Flor, 2024).

Inhuman debt is also imposed by the neocolonial international organizations such as the IMF and the World Bank. These organizations force countries to implement genocidal neoliberal policies that result in brutal austerity measures, all in the name of repaying odious debt, perpetrating a circle of impoverishment, indebtedness, and loss of national sovereignty. The imposition of odious debts is an example of neo-colonialism, which, for Kwame Nkrumah, is the worst form of imperialism because it keeps countries artificially poor through imperialist finance, all under the guise of “freedom,” “multilateral aid,” and “foreign investment” (1965). Nkrumah argued that “The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory,

independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside” (1965, p. ix). As in the case of Argentina, “The result of neo-colonialism is that foreign capital is used for the exploitation rather than for the development of the less developed parts of the world” (1965, p. x).

In the international struggle for liberation and human dignity against neocolonialism, we need to recuperate the spirit of the Bandung Conference. Seventy years ago, in 1955, leaders from twenty-nine African and Asian nations—along with delegates from colonies still fighting for independence—gathered in Bandung, Indonesia, for the historic Asian-African Conference. The secretary-general of the Bandung Conference, Roeslan Abdulgani, spoke about the “Bandung Spirit,” which he described as “the spirit of love for peace, anti-violence, antidiscrimination, and development for all without trying to intervene for one another wrongly, but to pay a great respect to one another”²⁴⁹ (Tricontinental, 2025b). As the Tricontinental explains, “the Bandung era also carried within it the seed for a new international economic order. South-South cooperation was the clarion call at Bandung” (2025b, p. 14). I will return

²⁴⁹ These are the ten principles of the conference’s final communiqué of 24 April 1955: **1.** Respect for fundamental human rights and for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. **2.** Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations. **3.** Recognition of the equality of all races and of the equality of all nations large and small. **4.** Abstention from intervention or interference in the internal affairs of another country. **5.** Respect for the right of each nation to defend itself singly or collectively, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations. **6. (a)** Abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defence to serve the particular interests of any of the big powers. **(b)** Abstention by any country from exerting pressures on other countries. **7.** Refraining from acts or threats of aggression or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country. **8.** Settlement of all international disputes by peaceful means, such as negotiation, conciliation, arbitration, or judicial settlement as well as other peaceful means of the parties’ own choice, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations. **9.** Promotion of mutual interests and cooperation. **10.** Respect for justice and international obligations (Tricontinental, 2025b).

to the South-South cooperation and the Bandung spirit at the end of this chapter. For now, I turn to “the West.”

As the Tricontinental shows, the Bandung Conference was perceived by Western powers, especially the United States, as “by its very nature and concept, anti-Western” (2025b, p. 16). This unleashed an imperialist reaction all over the world to suffocate the struggles for real independence. The imperialist backlash took the form of “a series of coups in Africa (against the people of the Congo in 1961 and of Ghana in 1966), Latin America (against the people of Brazil in 1964), and Asia (against the people of Indonesia in 1965)” (Tricontinental, 2025b, p. 16). Almost as a revenge for Bandung, the coup of Indonesia resulted in the murder of a million communists. And all of this was carried out in the name of Western civilization. As the Tricontinental argues, the coups in Iran (1953) and Guatemala (1954) had already announced the West’s refusal to allow a new world order to be built (2025b, p. 16).

The current forms of neofascism and neocolonialism reveal that the Western legacy of racism, colonialism, and white supremacy never departed from the West; they simply donned the mask of democracy, human rights, and so-called Western values. For example, in October 2022, Josep Borrell, former European Union foreign policy chief, gave a speech at the European Diplomatic Academy in which he referred to Europe as a “garden” and the rest of the world as the “jungle.” These were the words of Borrell:

Europe is a garden. We have built a garden. Everything works. It is the best combination of political freedom, economic prosperity and social cohesion that the humankind has been able to build—the three things together...The rest of the world...is not exactly a garden. Most of the rest of the world is a jungle, and the

jungle could invade the garden. The gardeners should take care of it, but they will not protect the garden by building walls. A nice small garden surrounded by high walls in order to prevent the jungle from coming in is not going to be a solution. Because the jungle has a strong growth capacity, and the wall will never be high enough in order to protect the garden. *The gardeners have to go to the jungle.* Europeans have to be much more engaged with the rest of the world. *Otherwise, the rest of the world will invade us, by different ways and means.* (European Union External Action, 2022)

The metaphor of the “garden vs the jungle” is just another representation of the same colonial trope, *civilization vs barbarism*, where Europe or “the West” is represented as civilized and superior. This colonial representation of the rest of the world or the Global South also serves to justify conquest and genocide. As scholar Joseph Massad pointed out, Borrell’s European garden is built on the plunder of the “jungle.” “It is colonialism and slavery that built the European ‘garden’” (Massad, 2022). After referring to Europe as a “beautiful garden,” Borrell stated that “the world needs Europe.” As a “beacon” of civilization, “the beauty of the European experience is ‘you and me,’ overcoming the heritage of the past and offering to the world the recipe for peaceful coexistence, cooperation, integration, and development” (European Union External Action, 2022). Borrell’s final advice to the students was to be “good colonialists:” “Keep the garden, be good gardeners. But your duty will not be to take care of the garden itself but [of] the jungle outside” (European Union External Action, 2022).

Borrell’s main argument for praising Europe’s superiority was its “strong institutions.” According to Borrell, “the big difference between developed and not developed is not the economy, it is institutions” (European Union External Action,

2022). This is also the argument of economists Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson in their study “The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation” (2001),²⁵⁰ for which they won the ‘Nobel’ Prize in Economics in 2024, which constitutes an award for the “magical thinking” of free-market fundamentalism (Offer & Söderberg, 2016; Mirowski, 2020).²⁵¹ In their study, the laureate economists argue that the good type of “colonization policies” was those established where Europeans settled, such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States, which the authors refer to as “the New-Europes.” In these places, “the settlers tried to replicate European institutions, with strong emphasis on private property and checks against government power” (2001, p. 1370). In contrast, “In places where the disease environment was not favorable to European settlement,” such as the Congo, “the cards were stacked against the creation of Neo-Europes” (2001, p. 1370). One of the premises of the laureates is that “The colonial state and institutions persisted

²⁵⁰ The paper that formed the basis of the authors’ analysis is the basis for Acemoglu and Robinson’s book *Why Nations Fail* (2013), which was shortlisted for the Financial Times Business Book of the Year Award. While dismissing the longlisting effects of colonialism and imperialism, the authors’ solution for global poverty and inequality is the establishment of new set of institutions capable of bringing prosperity.

²⁵¹ The Nobel Prize in Economics is not really a Nobel Prize. It was established by the Central Bank of Sweden (Sveriges Riksbank) in 1969, and not by the Nobel Prize Committee. The Nobel prize was created in 1901 by Alfred Nobel to award individuals whose contributions were greatly beneficial for humanity—Ironically, Alfred Nobel was the inventor of dynamite. For Alfred’s great-grandnephew Peter Nobel, Alfred Nobel, “despised people who cared more about profits than society’s well-being, Peter says, reiterating his vehement criticism of the Nobel Economics Prize which he says Alfred Nobel would never have created” (The Local Sweden, 2005). For scholar Dawa Sherpa (2024), “The prize initiated and awarded by the Central Bank of Sweden and falsely dubbed as the Nobel in Economics has acted as an institutional vehicle to endorse and establish Neoliberal ideas (mostly Free market fundamentalism) within Economics.” In fact, as Philip Mirowski shows, the Bank of Sweden Prize was associated with the Mont Pèlerin society. In fact, eight Mont Perlin Society members have won the Nobel: Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, George Stigler, Maurice Allais, James M. Buchanan, Ronald Coase, Gary Becker, and Vernon Smith. As Mirowski argues, “the selection committee has guaranteed that neoliberalism enjoys a stable proportional representation in the supposed ‘best of the orthodoxy’ (2020, p. 237). For Sherpa, “The selective recognition of economists mostly from the schools favouring capitalism marginalizes all other schools critical of capitalism within the discipline of Economics” (2024). In *The Nobel Factor*, Avner Offer and Gabriel Söderberg, argue that “For a discipline that celebrates rationality, the Nobel Prize is an anomaly, a form of magic, a one-sided transfer handed down as a gift. Ironically, this magic is transformed into authority for what counts as science. Natural scientists think that theory has to be confronted with evidence. In economics, however, in response to empirical failure, methodologists have waived this requirement” (2016, p. 13).

even after independence,” so the question is not whether the institutions are colonial in origin, but which of these colonial institutions are the “good institutions,” that is, the correct institutions that bring “economic prosperity.” According to the Swedish selection committee, the awarded economists’ work “helped us understand differences in prosperity between nations” (The Nobel Prize, 2024).

On the one hand, the authors’ colonial mindset does not consider the displacement and extermination of millions of Indigenous people as a result of European civilizational crusades all over the world. They also do not consider the enormous transfer of wealth from the Global South to the Global North (Hickel et.al., 2022), nor the fact that the development of the North depends on the underdevelopment of the South (Amin, 1998). They also overlooked the colonial origins of economics (Kvangraven, Kesar & Dutt, 2024). On the other hand, the authors focus on European institutions as superior, that is, “the institutions of law and order and private property,” which favored a “market economy.” This argument is also reinforced in Acemoglu and Robinson’s book *Why Nations Fails* (2013). In the overview of the book, it says that the authors show “that to invest and prosper, people need to know that if they work hard, they can make money and actually keep it—and this means sound institutions that allow virtuous circles of innovation, expansion and peace” (Profile Books, 2013).

Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson clarify in their study that since their “focus is on property rights and checks against government power,” they focus on the “protection against ‘risk of expropriation’” (2001, p. 1370). Thus, systems based on “central planning and collective ownership” are based on “extractive institutions” that “create

poverty,” which is deemed inferior. Acemoglu and Robinson also advance this argument when they say that “nations fail economically because of extractive institutions” (2023, p. 446), and they use the example of China. Although they recognize the economic growth of China, since this is a case of “authoritarian growth” based on “extractive institutions,” China’s model “is neither desirable nor viable in the long run” (2013, p. 493).²⁵² Therefore, Borrell’s “strong institutions” and the laurate economists’ “good colonial institutions” that allow the protection of private property, and a market economy are what have become synonymous with superior “democratic institutions,” that is, pro-market/neocolonial institutions.

In terms of international antifascist struggles, defending democracy or “democratic institutions” has two implications. On the one hand, it is very common in liberal and progressive circles to denounce the danger of the emergence of the far right for threatening democracy. In 2022, the national election in Brazil was portrayed by progressive sectors as an election between democracy and authoritarianism. However, as I examined in Chapter 2, framing this struggle as a defense for democracy derives from the bourgeois notion of fascism, which, as Rockhill argues (2020b), is built upon the ideological construction of a false antagonism between fascism and liberalism. Framing the struggle as a battle to save liberal democracy usually focuses on the fitting epiphenomenal and irrational traits behind the emergence of the neofascist right while

²⁵² The subtitle of chapter 5 summarizes the ideological free-market bias of the authors in one sentence: “What Stalin, King Shyaam, the Neolithic Revolution, and the Maya city states all had in common and how this explains why China’s current economic growth cannot last” (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013).

overlooking the structural causes and dimensions of the geopolitical economy of fascism.

On the other hand, throughout this dissertation, I have illustrated how the transnational far right in the Americas is aligned for the defense of “democracy.” For example, the attack on the Brazilian Capitol in January 2023 by Bolsonarismo forces was framed as a struggle to save Brazil’s democracy from “communism.” However, like in the liberal camp, democracy is reduced to the protection of property rights and capitalist institutions. Whatever political or economic system that questions the pro-big business model of free-market capitalism is subject to the implementation of “democratic institutions,” that is, a neocolonial/neoliberal civilizing mission. The *civilization vs barbarism* colonial dichotomy also takes the form of “democracy vs autocracy,” which is the organizing principle of US-led Western hegemony. General Laura Richardson referred to countries aligned with US foreign policy in Latin America as “team USA” or “team democracy” to counteract “authoritarian” governments (Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela) and the “malign activities” of Russia in the region and most particularly China’s influence (Atlantic Council, 2023), which Richardson refers to as one of “extraction” (CSIS, 2023). In other words, unconditional alignment to “Team democracy,” that is, the US-led ‘West,’ means in practice renunciation of sovereignty and the undermining of Global South integration initiatives that look to overcome dependence on the US and US hegemony over the region. In other words, it means the sabotage of national and regional efforts for self-determination.

8.3.2. *Combatting Historical Revisionism, Colonial Nostalgia, and Neoliberal*

Forgetting

The writer's role is not free from difficult duties. By definition he cannot put himself today in the service of those who make history; he is at the service of those who suffer it.

Albert Camus, 1957

There is only one form of government that cannot produce good writers, and that system is fascism. For fascism is a lie told by bullies. A writer who will not lie cannot live or work under fascism.

Ernest Hemingway, 1937

Antifascism is also a battle against historical revisionism. I analyzed how, in the case of Brazil, the yearning for an authoritarian past has led to the demand for military intervention. While Bolsonarismo vindicates perverse figures such as Brilhante Ustra, the far right in Chile vindicates the legacy of fascist military dictator Augusto Pinochet and his regime of state terror and neoliberal “shock therapy” (Grim & Hibbett, 2021). Pinochet is also a reference for the US far right (image). In Milei's Argentina, there is also a clear policy of rewriting history by defending the US-backed military junta that ruled the country from 1976 to 1983. Thus, in the name of democracy and freedom, the neofascist far right in countries once aligned under Operation Condor is rewriting the history of the military dictatorships in order to dismantle the democratic consensus established after the end of fascist military rule.



FIGURE 42. The “Hoppean Snake”

The “Hoppean Snake” is a meme that consists of a yellow coiled serpent wearing the military hat of Pinochet, which is probably inspired by the snake on the Gadsden flag that warns “Don’t Tread on Me” (Ketcham, 2021). As reported by journalist Christopher Ketcham, the image is present at Trump rallies and online far-right ecosystems. Sometimes the background includes depictions of helicopters from which stick figures are jettisoned to their death. This evokes Pinochet’s strategy of kidnapping, torturing, and killing by throwing his political opponents out of helicopters and into the ocean. This strategy was also utilized by the Argentine military junta. According to Ketcham, “in one of its many variants, the snake-as-Pinochet proclaims with a sardonic smirk, “I’m evil for throwing people out of helicopters? False. Commies aren’t people” (2021). Memes and T-shirts that offer “free helicopter rides” are also significant in Trumpian ecosystems, especially among white supremacists and US paramilitaries. Ketcham connects the name of the meme with Hans-Hermann Hoppe, a German academic who migrated to the United States associated with Austrian School economics and anarcho-capitalism, author of *Democracy. The God That Failed* (2001). In the book Hoppe, argues that “there can be no tolerance toward democrats and communists in a libertarian social order. They will have to be physically separated and expelled from society” (2001, p. 218). In February 2024, scholar Moustafa Bayoumi followed up on Ketcham’s report by bringing to attention the fact that an admiration for Pinochet’s program of extermination of communists was not restricted to the fringes of the US far right. Bayoumi referred to the post on X of republican congressman Mike Collins of Georgia (2024). Collins commented on the arrest of Jhoan Boada, a supposed immigrant who allegedly assaulted two police officers in New York City. According to Bayoumi, after leaving court, Boada was photographed raising his two middle fingers, to which Anthony D’Esposito of New York posted: “We feel the same way about you. Holla at the cartels and have them escort you back.” Revealing a genocidal fantasy, Collins replied, “Or we could buy him a ticket on Pinochet Air for a free helicopter ride back” (2024).

In Brazil, Argentina, and elsewhere, the justification of dictatorship and fascist military rule is combined with colonial nostalgia. Christofascism is characterized by the glorification of the colonial past, which relativizes colonial crimes and obscures the intrinsic brutality and barbarism of colonialism. In Brazil, under the umbrella of Bolsonarismo, there is a movement that advocates for the restoration of a monarchical regime. Claiming to preserve the “*civilização cristã*” (Christian civilization), this movement promotes a return to a time before 1889, when colonialism and slavery were central to imperial Brazil (Filho, 2019). The display of imperial symbols is usually

present at Bolsonaro's rallies (see Figure 43). In Argentina, on Columbus Day, the far-right government of Javier Milei shared a video on X to commemorate Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Americas as "a milestone that marked the beginning of civilization on the American continent" (Casa Rosada, 2024d).



FIGURE 43. The flag of Brazil's monarchy
São Paulo, Av. Paulista, 7 September 2022, personal archive.

Colonial revisionism and "imperialist nostalgia" (Rosaldo, 1989) have become a global discourse integrated into far-right international networks that praise the colonial West's 'civilizing mission' of the past to legitimize its sophisticated continuation. As I have analyzed, a revisionist approach to colonial history not only serves to embellish the colonialist West but also to foster a sense of belonging to 'the West' and its civilizational superiority. A line of research on the relation between colonial nostalgia and Western supremacy is to explore how they serve to justify the implementation of

neocolonial/neoliberal projects. For example, in Peru, on the occasion of the 490th anniversary of the founding of Lima, the far-right mayor Rafael López Aliaga ordered the reinstatement of the equestrian statue of the *conquistador* Francisco Pizarro as a way to reclaim the pre-Hispanic and Spanish past of the Peruvian capital. Aliaga invited Isabel Díaz Ayuso to the ceremony. Ayuso is the president of the Community of Madrid and one of the most prominent apologists of the extermination of Native Americans by Spanish forces (Vega, 2025). Aligned with the tenets of Christian libertarianism, Aliaga is a fanatic of the free-market doctrine and deems the left as “diabolic” (Noriega, 2021).

In the United States, the second administration of Donald Trump signed the executive order “Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History,” which denounces the “ideological indoctrination” and distortion of “our shared history.” In the effort of “restoring truth,” the order counters the “corrosive ideology” that seeks to “portray American and Western values as inherently harmful and oppressive” (The White House, 2025h). In relation to the long history of European imperialism, Elon Musk has tweeted on several occasions that the British Empire was, in reality, a “force of good” for ending “global slavery” (Musk, 2024i). Using the United States as an example, Musk also tweeted that “Modern Western civilization has extraordinary empathy compared to its power” (2024b). Disregarding the annihilation of the civilian population of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and omitting the long history of US aggressive interventions in every corner of the world, Musk tweeted that there is no “historical precedent for a nation with so much power helping, rather than destroying, its defeated enemies” (Musk, 2024b). As the public figure of the Department of Government

Efficiency (DOGE), Musk adopted the “chainsaw doctrine.” Vivek Ramaswamy was originally considered to run DOGE along with Musk. Ramaswamy also admires Milei’s chainsaw strategy. In November 2024, Ramaswamy posted on X: “A reasonable formula to fix the U.S. government: Milei-style cuts, on steroids” (2024).

As in the case of Brazil’s neoliberal forgetting, Christofascism’s historical revisionism opens a line of research in which we should engage with two realms that are usually separated: neoliberalism and memory. For Domenico Losurdo, “the convergence between historical revisionism and neo-liberalism is patent” (2015, p. 22). As Enzo Traverso reminds us, neoliberal reason has shaped how we think of history and relate to the past. Neoliberalism does not offer any utopias, so it tends to depoliticize and reify the past. When the sole organizing principle is radical individualism, *presentism* becomes the temporality of neoliberal historicity. For Traverso, this perpetual neoliberal present “corresponds with a neoliberal ethos that eternizes the current economic order and condemns any form of collective action” (2017). Neoliberal *amnesia* is what defines historical revisionism and the politics of memory under Christofascism.

In *Nostalgia de la luz* (Nostalgia for the Light), Chilean documentary film director, Patricio Guzmán, addresses the lasting impacts of Augusto Pinochet’s dictatorship (2019). By reflecting on previous documentaries of Patricio Guzmán, Thomas Miller Klubock (2003) analyzes how, during the transition to democracy in Chile, the military and the democratic opposition seem to have colluded in producing amnesia as a condition for (neoliberal) democratization. In the aftermath of Pinochet’s regime, Chile

underwent a deepening of free-market reforms and privatization, underpinned by the belief that economic growth should take precedence over historical reckoning and accountability for past human rights violations. This framework has enabled segments of Chilean society to elude a critical confrontation with the authoritarian legacy, fostering a form of collective amnesia that legitimizes the persistence of structural inequalities and injustices rooted in the dictatorial era. For Klubock (2003), this entails a form of selective forgetting, in which certain dimensions of the past are emphasized—namely, economic stability and institutional continuity—while others, particularly those concerning state violence and repression, are marginalized or silenced. Klubock points out the intimate links between the repressive past and the neoliberal present by emphasizing “the success of Pinochet’s efforts to stamp out the Chilean left and depoliticize social life” (2003, p. 277). Thus, the idea of *free-market amnesia* accounts for the process in which historical memory and demands for justice are systematically subordinated to the imperatives of the market and neoliberal governance. In *Unearthing Memory*, the NACLA editors point out that

The neoliberalization of Latin America has aided and abetted the oblivion which ruling elites have sought to impose. Neoliberalism is predicated upon forgetting the ideals of social solidarity, equality, and justice that were at the root of progressive projects in the Latin America of the 1970s and 1980s, and replacing them with extreme individualism, amnesia, and the atomization of the marketplace. Indeed, this atomization, imposed by military violence and propped up by local administrators of global capitalism, is emblematic of postdictatorship/postwar Latin America. (2021, p. 203)

Guzmán’s final reflection in *Nostalgia de la luz* is: “*Los que tienen memoria son capaces de vivir en el frágil tiempo presente. Los que no tienen, no viven en ninguna*

parte” (Those who have memory are able to live in the fragile present. Those who have none live nowhere). The idea of living nowhere due to *free-market amnesia* and *neoliberal forgetting* is what defines historical revisionism and the politics of memory under Christofascism. Christofascism imposes the market as the natural principle of social organization since biblical times and weaponizes an imagined mythical past to vindicate a supposedly natural and millenary social order based on authority, hierarchy, and tradition. This form of historical revisionism also liquidates the historical revolutionary tradition, as Losurdo has analyzed extensively (Losurdo, 2024).

8.3.3. *Combatting the ‘American Crusade’ and the ‘Chainsaw Doctrine’*

Lest we forget, the United States is the grandest—and greatest—freedom experiment in human history. The most free, most fair, most tolerant, most equal, and most powerful. We should never, ever apologize for her. If you don’t agree with that statement, at best you are utterly ignorant of human history; at worst, you are a willing enemy of freedom—and America.
Peter Hegseth, 2020

Peter Hegseth, US Secretary of Defense in the second Trump administration, wrote a book titled *American Crusade* (2020) advocating to “make the crusade great again.” The book is a call to the sons and daughters of freedom, guided by faith, to populate the crusading ranks that will fight for the soul of America and sacred freedom. For Hegseth, “this time in our history calls for an AMERICAN CRUSADE. Yes, a holy war for the righteous cause of human freedom” (2020, p. 2). Hegseth draws a direct historical connection between the Christian crusades and the freedom-loving patriots of the movement “Make America Great Again.” “One thousand years ago, after years of ceding land to conquering Muslim hordes, the pope orders military action to save

Europe. ‘Deus vult’ (‘God wills it’) was the rallying cry of Christian knights as they marched to Jerusalem” (2020, p. 2). Hegseth credits the crusades for safeguarding “Western” values (faith, family, freedom, and free enterprise), when he writes, “enjoy Western civilization? Freedom? Equal justice under the law? *Thank a crusader*” (2020, p. 289). Hegseth also depicts Islam as the historic enemy of the West and refers to people from the left as “infidels” for professing the “false religion of leftism”²⁵³ (2020, p. 289). Foretelling of this current form of Christian crusader patriotism, the famous American writer Did Sinclair Lewis once said, “when Fascism comes to America, it will be wrapped in the flag and carrying a cross.”

In the United States, the messianic logic of Manifest Destiny that underpins the American crusading mentality is not exclusive to the far right or to Republican administrations. However, my interest focuses on the manifestations of the American Crusade under both Donald Trump administrations. For instance, it would be particularly valuable to compare how this crusading impulse has manifested during Donald Trump’s first administration versus his second. Given that the central theme of my dissertation is the civilizational crusade of the Christofascist right in the Americas, it would also be enlightening to draw parallels between Trump’s administrations and far-right governments in Latin America. Both of Trump’s terms have been marked by a messianic aura constructed around his political persona. I argue, however, that his first administration aligned more closely with what I describe as *Christian*

²⁵³ The medieval and crusader discourse and aesthetics also characterize the far right in Brazil, as I analyzed in Chapter 6. Hegseth has a ‘*Deus vult*’ tattoo on his right arm along with other crusading and anti-Muslim tattoos.

libertarianism, that is, the instrumentalization of the Christian religion to legitimize an exclusionary economic system rooted in exclusion and inequality. The focus on conservative issues, the use of the Bible, and the election of evangelical republican Mike Pence were signals to Trump's evangelical base.

By contrast, in Trump's second administration, there is a clearer vision of dismantling the government's distributive and inclusionary functions. This includes the demonization of public education for promoting "radical indoctrination." This is extended to professors and universities who J.D. Vance has deemed as the "enemy" for teaching people "to hate their country;" therefore, "we have to honestly and aggressively attack the universities" (National Conservatism, 2025). This has resulted in concrete proposals to eliminate the Department of Education (The White House, 2025g), an initiative that is inspired by the Heritage Foundation's policy manual Project 2025. At the same time, using the US dollar symbol as its logo (\$), Trump's second administration created the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), an initiative led by billionaire Elon Musk, which has also launched a direct assault on the public sector and the working class. DOGE resembles the Ministry of Deregulation and State Transformation created in the administration of Javier Milei. Thus, despite the contradictory rhetoric of economic protectionism and messianic "liberation day" tariffs, Trump's second term has embraced the "chainsaw doctrine," or what Vivek Ramaswamy referred to as "Milei-style cuts, on steroids" (2024). For these reasons, I contend that Trump's second administration aligns more closely with what I refer to as

messianic neoliberalism and is therefore more comparable to Javier Milei's government in Argentina.

In any case, there is no doubt that the 'American Crusade' under Donald Trump's second administration has taken on dystopian proportions. The crusade against universities, academic freedom, and critical thinking, waged in the name of eradicating so-called discriminatory DEI initiatives and alleged 'antisemitism,' serves to advance the "identity politics" of whiteness while repressing defiant knowledge and punishing voices of critical dissent. This reminds us of philosopher Bertrand Russell's warning:

The first step in a fascist movement is the combination under an energetic leader of a number of men who possess more than the average share of leisure, brutality, and stupidity. The next step is to fascinate fools and muzzle the intelligent, by emotional excitement on the one hand and terrorism on the other. (1940, p. 253)

The neofascist and crusading dimensions of the Trump administration are combined with imperial hubris expressed as "white settler solidarity" (Horne, 2014). The government of South Africa has advanced in its promise of land reform by replacing an apartheid era-law for land expropriation, to which the white settlers (so-called Afrikaners) have portrayed themselves as "white victims of exclusion" and "the rightful owners of the land" (Lepuru, 2025). In a disturbing echo of Ronald Reagan's defense of apartheid in South Africa, the Trump administration has denounced an alleged "white genocide" in the country and has imposed sanctions on the government of South Africa for the "disproportionate violence against racially disfavored landowners" (The White House, 2025d). The policy of sanctions is accompanied by "the resettlement of Afrikaner refugees escaping government-sponsored race-based discrimination, including racially discriminatory property confiscation" (The White House, 2025d).

While opening the doors to the alleged persecuted South African “white minority,” the Trump administration has launched a massive deportation campaign with the ethnic cleansing spirit of removing poor Latin American immigrants, especially Venezuelans, and deporting them to the Salvadoran concentration camp, so-called Terrorism Confinement Center (CECOT). This has been done with vicious sadism, as shown by a video of immigrants in shackles posted by the White House. The video of a “removal flight” includes images of immigrants walking toward the plane and the sounds of the airplane engine and the clinking of handcuffs and chains. The X post is titled: “ASMR: Illegal Alien Deportation Flight” (The White House, 2025e). ASMR stands for Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response, which refers to a pleasant, tingling feeling some people experience when watching videos featuring unusual sounds. Six minutes after the White House posted its “relaxation” video, Elon Musk shared it with the text “Haha wow” (Musk, 2025).

The demonization of foreigners goes beyond the “illegal aliens.” The Trump administration is persecuting and deporting students, academics, and activists for opposing the genocide in Gaza, even when they have legal status to reside in the country. The policy of banishing dissent in the face of genocide normalization also reveals the banality of evil, or the evil of banality, as Argentine scholar Jorge Alemán put it (2025). Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was the first foreign leader to be received by the White House in February 2025. During this visit, Trump expressed his desire to “take over” and “own” the Gaza Strip and turn it into a “Riviera of the Middle East” (The White House, 2025b). Days later, Trump shared an AI-created video

representing his dystopian vision to “clean out” Gaza. “Trump Gaza” shows a giant golden statue of Trump (which could be analyzed as idolatrous), as well as him sipping cocktails with a topless Benjamin Netanyahu in Gaza. Elon Musk also appears several times, eating and dancing as dollar bills fall from the sky (Homes & Owen, 2025).

As if we need yet another concrete manifestation of “Western” values, in April 2025, during Netanyahu’s second visit to the White House, Trump stated his desire to turn Gaza into a “freedom zone” by enforcing the forcible displacement of Palestinians²⁵⁴ (NBC News, 2025). On May 21, 2025, Netanyahu gave a press conference announcing Trump’s plan to conquer Gaza and implement the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians as “correct and revolutionary” (Middle East Eye, 2025). The imposition of sanctions on South Africa was also justified by the country’s alleged “aggressive positions towards the United States and its allies, including accusing Israel, not Hamas, of genocide in the International Court of Justice” (The White House, 2025d). The Trump administration has also imposed sanctions against the International Criminal Court (ICC) for issuing arrest warrants against Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant. According to the executive order, the ICC actions constitute “an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States”²⁵⁵ (The White House, 2025c). In this new version of the “American

²⁵⁴ During the press conference, Trump stated: “you know how I feel about the Gaza Strip. I think it's an incredible piece of important real estate and I think it's something that we would be involved in. But you know having a peace force like the United States there controlling and owning the Gaza Strip would be a good thing...*you take the people the Palestinians and move them around to different countries* and you have plenty of countries that will do that and you really have a freedom a freedom zone. You call it *the freedom zone, a free zone.*” Trump also said that “Israel owned” Gaza. “They took oceanfront property and they gave it to people for peace. How did that work out? (NBC News, 2025).

²⁵⁵ The orders says that “The United States will impose tangible and significant consequences on those responsible for the ICC’s transgressions, some of which may include the blocking of property and assets, as well as the

Crusade,” migrants, activists, students, and critics also fall into this “unusual and extraordinary threat.”

Trump’s government agenda is guided by the crusader mission of extirpating the left. In *American Crusade*, Hegseth warns the reader of the Left’s plan, “utter annihilation,” and of the “hordes of people within our borders...who don’t share our allegiance—and their ignorance and ideologies threaten America’s very survival” (2020, p. 3). Hegseth denounces “leftist depravity” as an “existential threat to freedom” (2020, p. 33). The Left’s “philosophy of hate” and desire for “destruction” are seditious and anti-American (2020, p. 13). Thus, for Hegseth, “following the lead of President Trump and beyond, American Crusaders must lead the cultural fight from here” (2020, p. 13). In this crusade, “there is room for only *100 percent Americanism*...only the categorical defeat of the Left will secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our prosperity” (2020, p. 14). According to Hegseth, “the American crusade is a war against destructive *ideas* (2020, p. 294). Along these lines, while allegedly defending free speech, this administration has targeted “corrosive ideologies” and “illegal ideas.” For example, in an X post that was later deleted (see Figure 44), the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) posted a graphic saying that ICE job was also to stop “illegal ideas” from crossing the border (Bianco, 2025).

suspension of entry into the United States of ICC officials, employees, and agents, as well as their immediate family members, as their entry into our Nation would be detrimental to the interests of the United States” (The White House, 2025c).



FIGURE 44. If it crosses the U.S. border illegally, it's our job to STOP IT
Graphic posted on X by the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) that was later deleted (Bianco, 2025).

The crusader mission against anti-American threats also defines US foreign policy. Pete Hegseth, who refers to soldiers as “warfighters,” has made clear on several occasions that this administration will “revive the warrior ethos” and “remain the strongest and most lethal force in the world” (U.S. Department of Defense, 2025a). The foreign policy priority of Trump’s second administration is China. This is a continuation from the Biden administration; however, while under Biden, this was framed as a “democracy vs autocracy” struggle, under Trump, China is presented as an existential threat to the United States, an aggressive, destabilizing force with hegemonic ambitions to dominate and control the world. In his “American Crusade,” Hegseth states,

If the twenty-first century is not an American-dominated century, it will not be a free century. The forces of despotism, collectivism, Islamism, and globalism are on the march. China is expanding. Europe is demographically and culturally overrun. America is a flickering light of freedom on a surrounded hill. (2022, p. 14)

The Washington Post reported that Hegseth personally authorized a Pentagon document in which it is revealed that the top priority of the US military is to prepare for a potential war with China over Taiwan. The memo, which is based on an anti-China report published by the Heritage Foundation, states that “China is the Department’s sole pacing threat, and denial of a Chinese *fait accompli* seizure of Taiwan—while simultaneously defending the U.S. homeland is the Department’s sole pacing scenario” (Horton & Natanson, 2025). When describing the “winning” scenario of this “holy war” against China, Hegseth wrote that “Communist China will fall—and lick its wounds for another two hundred years” (2020).

Under Donald Trump’s second administration, the “American Crusade” against China is also manifested as an aggressive foreign policy towards Latin America. On the one hand, the Trump administration has invoked the 200-year-old colonial Monroe Doctrine to impose its hegemony in the region by force. This is especially directed toward countries that dare to defy US hegemony in the region: Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua, which Marco Rubio, US Secretary of State, deems as the “enemies of humanity” (U.S. Department of State, 2025b). For example, US Secretary of Energy, Chris Wright, stated in an interview with Fox News that “President Trump wants to use United States force or energy independence to force a change in Venezuela.” For Wright, through the “peace through strength” strategy, “the Trump administration will bring change in Venezuela” (U.S. Department of Energy, 2025). On the other hand, the twenty-first-century Monroe Doctrine is part of the new Cold War against China. Just as countries like Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua had been demonized for rejecting

US hegemony and interventionism, China is also depicted as an aggressive evil power for daring to develop and overcome the subservient position imposed by Western powers. This vision was revealed by Vice President J.D. Vance during the American Dynamis Summit, where he honestly stated the true goal of neoliberal globalization: “The idea of globalization was that rich countries would move further up the value chain, while the poor countries made the simpler things”²⁵⁶ (The White House, 2025f). J.D. Vance has also referred to China as “the biggest threat” to the United States (Yang, 2024), a position that is shared among US political and Big Tech elites to prepare for war against China.²⁵⁷

The intensification of the Monroe Doctrine and the imperialist offensive against China also has the goal of obstructing China-Latin America cooperation. For example, in his inauguration speech, Donald Trump stated that the Panama Canal was a “gift” from the US to Panama. However, he warned that “China is operating the Panama Canal. And we didn’t give it to China. We gave it to Panama, and we’re taking it back” (The White House, 2025a). A few days later, Secretary of State Marco Rubio traveled

²⁵⁶ When explaining why globalization did not work out in terms of keeping the international division of labor that maintains the cycle of dependency that benefits the Global North, Vance stated, “It turns out that the geographies that do the manufacturing get awfully good at the designing of things. There are network effects, as you all well understand. The firms that design products work with firms that manufacture. They share intellectual property. They share best practices. And they even sometimes share critical employees. Now, we assumed that other nations would always trail us in the value chain, but it turns out that as they got better at the low end of the value chain, they also started catching up on the higher end. We were squeezed from both ends. Now, that was the first conceit of globalization” (The White House, 2025f).

²⁵⁷ Vance delivered the remarks on globalization at a summit organized by the Silicon Valley venture capital firm Andreessen Horowitz. The annual summit brings together corporate executives and US government officials to facilitate contracts (Norton, 2025d). One of the main priorities of Andreessen Horowitz is to prepare for war with China in 2027. According to its website, China “is an expansionist power preparing for war.” To prepare for “the fight of the future,” Andreessen Horowitz is working on “peace through strength, built on technology. Washington has spent years preparing for this moment, and Silicon Valley is building for it too. This project highlights 50 tech companies uniquely positioned to prevent this conflict and fortify the U.S. against the threats an Indo-Pacific crisis would unleash, from securing self-sustaining supply chains to building AI-powered defense systems and resilient energy infrastructure” (Andreessen Horowitz, n.d.). See also note 60.

to Panama, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic to advance President Trump's "America First foreign policy," which includes "countering China" (U.S. Department of State, 2025a). After this visit, Panama withdrew from China's Belt and Road Initiative, an initiative that promotes South-South cooperation and common development through connectivity. Two months later of Trump's inauguration, Pete Hegseth traveled to Panama. After praising President Mulino's "decision" to withdraw from the Belt and Road Initiative, Hegseth stated,

Together with Panama in the lead, we will keep the canal secure and available for all nations through the deterrent power of *the strongest, most effective and most lethal fighting force in the world*. We will do this in partnership with Panama. Together we will take back the Panama Canal from China's influence, and we will do this along with other capable like-minded allies and partners. This is what *Peace through Strength* looks like. (U.S. Department of Defense, 2025b. Emphasis added)

After his remarks in Panama, Hegseth was interviewed by Fox News, in which he stated that "Chinese influence cannot control our own backyard." He referred to President Mulino as "pro-Trump" and "pro-American," and that with his collaboration, they are "working to keep the communists out" (Fox News, 2025b). In sum, the Trump administration's strategy towards Latin America can be summarized as countering "Chinese malign influence" and its desire to "export a very different view of the world" by "taking our backyard back" (Fox News, 2025a). A month later, at a defense summit in Singapore, Hegseth said,

We're also increasing security in the Western Hemisphere and taking back the Panama Canal from malign Chinese influence. It is key terrain, after all. China did not build that canal. We did. And we will not allow China to weaponize it or control it. Deterrence starts in our own backyard. (U.S. Department of Defense, 2025c)

The US backyard seems to extend into the Indo-Pacific. At the Asia's defense summit, the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue, Hegseth stated that China "wants to fundamentally alter the region's status quo," thus to deter "Chinese aggression," it is necessary to maintain the status quo, and that "requires strength." For Hegseth, what is clear is that the United States "will not be pushed out of this critical region" (U.S. Department of Defense, 2025c). To this, the Foreign Ministry Spokesperson of China denounced Hegseth's vilification of China and the US "Cold War mentality for bloc confrontation." In addition, the Spokesperson said, "no country in the world deserves to be called a hegemonic power other than the U.S. itself, who is also the primary factor undermining the peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2025c).

8.3.4. Trump's 'American Crusade' vs South-South Cooperation

China is not a superpower, nor will she ever seek to be one. If one day China should change her color and turn into a superpower, if she too should play the tyrant in the world, and everywhere subject others to her bullying, aggression and exploitation, the people of the world should identify her as social-imperialism, expose it, oppose it and work together with the Chinese people to overthrow it.

Deng Xiaoping, Vice Premier of China, 1974

For Asia, the US in the last 60 years since President John F. Kennedy's inaugural speech—that one form of tyranny (colonial control) will not be replaced by an iron tyranny, that was the moral legitimacy in which US presence was in our region. US has now willy-nilly—the image has changed from liberator to great disruptor to a landlord seeking rent.

Ng Eng Hen, Singaporean Minister of Defense, 2025

China is characterized by its commitment to "never seeking hegemony." In 1974, Deng Xiaoping, then Vice Premier of China, led a Chinese delegation to the Sixth Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly and delivered a speech at the

Session, becoming the first Chinese leader to take the rostrum at the UN since the founding of New China. Deng's speech underscored "the need to convey to the international community China's unequivocal commitment to supporting other developing countries in their efforts to defend national sovereignty, develop national economy and fight imperialism, colonialism and hegemonism (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2022). Most recently, President Xi Jinping has reiterated China's commitment to never seeking hegemony or expansion, no matter what stage of development it reaches. China will neither "import" models from other countries, nor "export" the Chinese model, nor ask other countries to copy the Chinese practice (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2022). In October 2022, at the opening session of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Xi Jinping said that

China remains firm in pursuing an independent foreign policy of peace. It has always decided its position and policy on issues based on their own merits, and it has strived to uphold the basic norms governing international relations and safeguard international fairness and justice.

China stands firmly against all forms of hegemonism and power politics, the Cold War mentality, interference in other countries' internal affairs, and double standards...

Guided by the principles of sincerity, real results, affinity, and good faith and with a commitment to the greater good and shared interests, China endeavors to strengthen solidarity and cooperation with other developing countries and safeguard the common interests of the developing world.

The world has once again reached a crossroads in history, and its future course will be decided by all the world's peoples. (The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, 2022)

We are at a crossroads between US hegemony, expansionism, and the West's winner-takes-all mentality, vs multipolarity and Global South cooperation, in which the latter is clearly under attack under the second Trump administration. Foreign Minister of China, Wang Yi, has responded to the aggressive posture coming from the Trump administration by making some important remarks in relation to China and Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) cooperation. At a press conference, Yi said

Wang Yi said, China-LAC cooperation is South-South cooperation. There is only mutual support in this cooperation, no geopolitical calculations. In its engagement with LAC countries, China follows the principles of equality and mutual benefit, and never seeks sphere of influence or targets any party.

Wang Yi said, what people in LAC countries want is to build their own home, not to become someone's backyard; what they aspire to is independence and self-decision, not the Monroe Doctrine. Cooperation between China and LAC countries has won popular support because it respects the will of the people, meets the needs of regional countries, and provides reliable options and broad prospects for the revitalization of the region. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2025a)

Yi also praised the 10th anniversary of the formal launch of the China-CELAC Forum, which is an opportunity to take China-LAC cooperation to a higher level. The China-CELAC Forum "aims at promoting the development of the comprehensive cooperative partnership based on equality, mutual benefit and common development between China and LAC states" (China-CELAC Forum, 2016, p. 3). The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), which includes all the 33 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean region, was founded in 2011, offering an important basis for the establishment of China-CELAC Forum, which was established in 2015. The Fourth Ministerial Meeting of the China-CELAC Forum took place in Beijing in

May 2025, which included the presence of three Latin American leaders: Gustavo Petro, President of Colombia, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of Brazil, and Gabriel Boric, President of Chile. The signatories of the 28-point Declaration of the Fourth Ministerial Meeting²⁵⁸ emphasized the “supportive role of the countries of the Global South and reaffirm our intention to coordinate efforts to advance modernization and sustainable development” (China-CELAC Forum, 2025b). The Declaration also mentions the urgency of reform of the United Nations Security Council to make it more democratic and effective, as well as of the international financial system to make it more equitable. Points 11 and 14 are particularly important regarding the principles of sovereignty and self-determination threatened by Western powers:

Point 11. We agree on the importance of upholding international law and promoting the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We are committed to the *principles of equality among nations, mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity*. We support the peaceful settlement of differences, disputes, and conflicts, respect *non-interference in the internal affairs of other States*, oppose the threat or use of force in international relations and the *imposition of unilateral coercive measures*, and are committed to promoting a more democratic international order.

Point 14. We advocate for a peaceful world and an *inclusive and mutually beneficial economic globalization*. In this regard, we underline the need for global economic governance to address the shared priorities of all nations, particularly those of developing countries. We reaffirm our support for a *fair, transparent, and rules-based multilateral trading system*.²⁵⁹

President of China Xi Jinping delivered a keynote address at the opening ceremony where he emphasized the Forum’s approach to pursue “win-win cooperation.” Xi Jinping stated, “This community of ours is founded upon equality, powered by mutual

²⁵⁸ As stated in the Declaration, “The Argentine Republic was absent from the Ministerial Plenary at the Fourth Meeting of the CELAC-China Forum and did not participate in the adoption of these documents.”

²⁵⁹ Shamefully, the Government of Costa Rica dissociated itself from this paragraph.

benefit and win-win, invigorated by openness and inclusiveness, and dedicated to the people's well-being" (China-CELAC Forum, 2025a). By upholding the principles of solidarity, cooperation, independence, and autonomy, the President of China stated that "Together, China and LAC countries champion true multilateralism, uphold international fairness and justice, advance global governance reform, and promote multipolarization of the world and greater democracy in international relations." Xi Jinping concluded by saying, "No matter how the world changes, China will always stand by LAC countries as a good friend and a good partner" (China-CELAC Forum, 2025a). In its Fourth Ministerial Meeting, the China-CELAC Forum adopted the "CELAC-China Joint Action Plan for Cooperation in Key Areas (2025-2027)," which launched five programs to advance shared development:

- *Solidarity Program.* China will work with LAC countries to support each other on issues bearing on our respective core interests and major concerns.
- *Development Program.* China will work with LAC countries to implement the Global Development Initiative. We will resolutely uphold the multilateral trading system, ensure stable, unimpeded global industrial and supply chains, and promote an international environment of openness and cooperation.
- *Civilization Program.* We should uphold the vision of equality, mutual learning, dialogue, and inclusiveness between civilizations, and champion humanity's common values of peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy, and freedom.
- *Peace Program.* The two sides should cooperate more closely in disaster governance, cybersecurity, counterterrorism, anti-corruption, narcotics control and combating transnational organized crime so as to safeguard security and stability in the region.
- *People-to-People Connectivity Program.* In the next three years, China will provide CELAC member states with 3,500 government scholarships, 10,000 training opportunities in China, 500 International Chinese Language Teachers Scholarships, 300 training opportunities for poverty reduction professionals, and 1,000 funded placements through the Chinese Bridge program. This includes the facilitation of friendly exchanges and the implementation of visa exemptions for five LAC countries.

A few days before the fourth edition of the China-CELAC Forum, Xi Jinping attended the Victory Day celebrations in Moscow on May 9, 2025, along with other

Global South leaders such as the Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel, the Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, as well as the African leaders Ibrahim Traoré, the President of Burkina Faso, and Denis Sassou Nguesso, Presidente of Congo.²⁶⁰ It is worth mentioning that the European Union rejected the celebration and declined to participate in this historical celebration.²⁶¹ Victory Day marked the 80th anniversary of the Soviet Union's defeat of Nazi Germany in World War Two, which in China is known as the World Anti-Fascist War, and in Russia as the Great Patriotic War. The Soviet Union contributed by far more than any other country to defeating the Nazis. Approximately 26 million Soviets died in World War II. Similarly, between 14 and 20 million Chinese lost their lives resisting the pro-fascist Japanese empire during World War II, a sacrifice that is usually ignored in Western narratives. Two days before Victory Day, the Russian Gazette published an article by Xi Jinping where he draws a line between the World Anti-Fascist War of 80 years ago and the situation of today. Xi says that while China and the Soviet Union united their forces eighty years ago to defeat the overbearing

²⁶⁰ At the highest level, the following countries were represented: China, Brazil, Venezuela, Cuba, Serbia, Slovakia, Laos, Mongolia, Azerbaijan, Vietnam, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Abkhazia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Egypt, Zimbabwe, Congo, Myanmar, Palestine, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, and South Ossetia. At a fairly high level, India, Nicaragua, and South Africa were also represented. Units from 13 countries also marched through Red Square in the Russian capital, in particular from China, Azerbaijan, Vietnam, Belarus, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan (Actualidad RT, 2025b).

²⁶¹ In April 2025, European Union foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas, successor of Josep Borrell, warned that if member states of the EU were to participate on the celebrations in Moscow, it would not be "taken lightly on the European side." According to Kallas "we made it very clear that we do not want any candidate country to participate in these events on the 9th of May in Moscow" (European Union External Action, 2025). Previously, the German Parliament (Bundestag) excluded the ambassadors of Russia and Belarus from the main commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War (Actualidad RT, 2025a). President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, and Prime Minister of Slovakia, Robert Fico, traveled to Moscow for the celebrations, despite the fact that Lithuania and Latvia prohibited the Serbian president's plane from flying over their territory on route to Russia to attend the commemoration. At the same time, Poland and Lithuania denied entry into their airspace to the Prime Minister of Slovakia, Robert Fico (Resumen Latinoamericano, 2025).

fascist powers, today, “unilateralism, hegemonism, bullying, and coercive practices are severely undermining our world. Again humankind has come to a crossroads of unity or division, dialogue or confrontation, win-win cooperation or zero-sum games.” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 2025b). With a clear reference to the current United States’ aggression, he later says,

We must learn from history, especially the hard lessons of the Second World War. We must draw wisdom and strength from the great victory of the World Anti-Fascist War, and resolutely resist all forms of hegemonism and power politics. We must work together to build a brighter future for humanity. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 2025b)

Xi Jinping calls for *upholding the postwar international order and defending international fairness and justice*, principles that would “steadily promote an equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 2025b).

On Victory Day, China and Russia published a joint statement in Chinese and Russian. Journalist Fred Gao provided a transcript in English. In line with Xi Jinping’s article, Gao highlights that the statement no longer uses vague terms like “certain countries,” but directly refers to “resolutely responding to the U.S. ‘dual containment’ policy against China and Russia,” and clear opposes “attempts by the United States and its allies to advance NATO’s eastward expansion into the Asia-Pacific” (Gao, 2025).

According to Gao’s translation, Russia and China also

welcome the willingness of Latin American and Caribbean countries to engage in mutually beneficial cooperation on the basis of equality, mutual respect, and consideration of each other’s interests, and are willing to strengthen cooperation with relevant countries and mechanisms the region. (Gao, 2025)

The Fourth China-CELAC Forum's declaration, the CELAC-China Joint Action Plan for Cooperation in Key Areas (2025-2027), and the China and Russia joint statement on Victory Day, show the realignment of the international system and global economic power, in which Latin America and the Caribbean start abandoning their peripheral role imposed by colonial structures of power and US imperialism. In the face of dependency and economic punishment in the form of debt, sanctions, and unilateral tariffs—which is nothing but a new form of neocolonialism—the construction of a new global architecture based not on domination but on respect and cooperation offers new possibilities of development without colonial subjugation. The Fourth China-CELAC Forum and the significance of the 80th commemoration of the defeat of Nazi Germany, indicates a change in times in which the Global South is no longer integrated through obedience and dependency, but where it can start assuming a protagonist role by representing the interest and dignity of its peoples. In the face of the neocolonial offensive at the core of the civilizational project of the neofascist right in the Americas, it is important to embrace the new opportunities of South-South cooperation that can break with the legacy of colonialism, in the spirit of the Bandung conference, that is, financial sovereignty, self-determination, and international solidarity.

Walter Benjamin said that, as a religion, capitalism represents “the expansion of despair, until despair becomes a religious state of the world in the hope that this will lead to salvation” (2004, p. 289). Still, we cannot lose sight, as Camus wrote in *The Plague*, that “the habit of despair is worse than despair itself.” In the face of the dystopian features of the new manifestations of Christofascism, it is a political and

cultural urgency to recuperate the anti-fascist struggle as a living practice of popular and internationalist resistance, which can allow us to imagine utopian futures where despair is not the state of the world. An example of international dialogue and solidarity oriented to confront the crises of humanity and build an alternative future is the Dilemmas of Humanity Conference, which represents people's organizations, social movements, political parties, leaders, and intellectuals from all over the globe. This international initiative is based on the conviction that any alternative project to overcome capitalism and neocolonialism will be led by the peoples of the world in struggle. The Conference highlights four central themes in the construction of any revolutionary project: anti-imperialism and national sovereignty, organizing the working class, popular democracy, and the construction of socialism and utopia (Dilemmas of Humanity, n.d.). The Conference's fourth edition took place in April 2025 in São Paulo, Brazil. The Venezuelan Anti-Fascist International, the Dilemmas of Humanity Conference, and the Global South multilateral initiatives of economic cooperation show that, in the face of the neofascist plague, popular and international solidarity and a utopian vision will keep us from succumbing to despair. As Camus also reminded us, "What's true of all the evils in the world is true of plague as well. It helps men to rise above themselves" (1948). On this hopeful note, I will close with the passage "*Ventana sobre la utopía*" (Window on Utopia) by Eduardo Galeano, recalling what renowned Argentine filmmaker Fernando Birri once said,

Ella está en el horizonte—dice Fernando Birri—. Me acerco dos pasos, ella se aleja dos pasos. Camino diez pasos y el horizonte se corre diez pasos más allá. Por mucho que yo camine, nunca la alcanzaré. ¿Para qué sirve la utopía? Para eso sirve: para caminar. (1993, p. 310)

She's on the horizon, says Fernando Birri. I go two steps closer, she moves two steps away. I walk ten steps and the horizon runs ten steps ahead. No matter how much I walk, I'll never reach her. What good is Utopia? That's what: it's good for walking. (1995, p. 326)

Chapter Nine

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