

Globalisation, theocracy and the new fascism: the US Right's rise to power

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Abstract: The Christian Right is an increasingly powerful phenomenon in US politics. Extremely influential in the current administration, it has been building a mass base across the nation. This analysis of a movement that has been growing over the past four decades reveals the complex interrelationships between its different strands, their reach into the mass media, their war of attrition against socially liberal legislation and the opportunistic links with elements of the pro-Israel lobby. Also examined are the contradictions and potential contradictions within its different facets. Most alarming are those elements which revile, as anti-Christian, the very concept of a democratic society in their aim at overall 'dominion'.

Keywords: Christian Right, GOP, Gramsci, Huntington, neo-cons, palaeo-cons, Reconstructionism

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Race & Class

Copyright © 2006 Institute of Race Relations 0306-3968 Vol. 47(3): 47-67; 061086
10.1177/0306396806061086 <http://rac.sagepub.com>

Since George W. Bush's re-election in 2004, the Christian Right in the US has come under new scrutiny, domestically and around the world. Some, of course, are celebrating the religious Right's rise to power; but many others are worried about the political direction the country has taken – on matters of war and peace, on the future of respect for liberty and diversity and on prospects for equitable and sustainable development. The worry is justified. With two Muslim countries occupied by US troops, with Iran and North Korea poised on the nuclear threshold facing counter-threats of occupation; with the ongoing violence and counter-violence of Israel's occupation of the Palestinians; with the continuing plots against Venezuela for its oil; who would not be worried about a White House potentially under the thumb of zealots longing for theocracy, the Apocalypse and the Second Coming?

America's cantankerous relationship with its right-wing preachers over the years is no longer simply a part of our country's local colour. Bush's victory, even if narrow, against his multilateralist and corporate liberal rivals in the ruling class, as well as against the popular 'Anybody but Bush' forces that mobilised against him, has enabled the Christian coalition forces to become even bolder. America's theocrats are now of global concern and a growing danger to all.

Today's Christian and conservative rightists, to be sure, didn't suddenly spring out of nowhere. Their current incarnation spans nearly four decades. They got their big start in 1968, when George Wallace, then governor of Alabama, led a mass movement of anti-civil-rights white Southerners out of the Democratic Party and into an alliance with Richard Nixon's 'Grand Old Party' (GOP), as the Republicans were known, through its 'Southern strategy' of 1968 and 1972.¹ But, following Nixon's Watergate downfall in the 1970s, the key organisers of what was then dubbed 'the New Right', chiefly Paul Weyrich and Richard Viguerie, retrenched and re-strategised. They began to raise, and spend, millions of dollars from major capitalists to build the think-tanks, policy coalitions, grassroots churches and media infrastructure that, by 1980, helped put Ronald Reagan in the White House. Nonetheless, as the Reagan years began, the religious Right was still only a junior partner in the GOP. It was often used, sometimes cynically and opportunistically, but the 'Rockefeller Republicans', socially more liberal and then represented by Reagan's vice-president, the elder George Bush, still mainly ran the show.

The proponents of the New Right, however, did not intend to play second fiddle for long. Some critics saw early on what was happening. Futurist and sociologist Alvin Toffler said, for instance, in his classic work of 1980, *The Third Wave*:

In the United States, it is not hard to imagine some new political party running Billy Graham (or some facsimile) on a crude 'law-and-order' or 'anti-porn' program with a strong authoritarian streak. Or some as yet unknown Anita Bryant demanding imprisonment for gays or 'gay-symp's'. Such examples provide only a faint, glimmering intimation of the religio-politics that may well lie ahead, even in the most secular of societies. One can imagine all sorts of cult-based political movements headed by Ayatollahs named Smith, Schultz or Santini.²

Along with others, Toffler saw the beginnings of the new religious Right in the US in a much broader context. The rise of fundamentalism was a worldwide phenomenon, taking root in Muslim, Christian, Jewish and Hindu peoples around the world. Jeffrey Hadden and Anson Shupe, authors of *Televangelism* (1988), a critical study of the merger of religion and modern telecommunications, tied it directly to the rapid social change and disruption of social structures brought about by the onset of globalisation. They argued that globalisation is, in part, a 'common process of secularizing social change' and that it contains 'the very seeds of a reaction that brings religion back into the heart of concerns about public policy. The secular . . . is also the cause of resacralization . . . [which] often takes fundamentalistic forms.'³ They also explain that, ironically, the fundamentalist voice of protest against global secularism is itself amplified by the same advanced technology of globalisation, a powerful tool that gives it global reach and an accelerated rate of growth. Or, as The World Council of Churches, itself a liberal-to-moderate target of the fundamentalist Right, puts it:

Globalization gives rise to a web of contradictions, tensions and anxieties . . . It led to the concentration of power, knowledge, and wealth in institutions controlled or at least influenced by transnational corporations. But it also generated a decentralizing dynamic as people and communities struggle to regain control over the forces that threaten their very existence. In the midst of changes and severe pressure on their livelihoods and cultures, people want to affirm their cultural and religious identities . . . While globalization universalized certain aspects of modern social life, it also causes and fuels fragmentation of the social fabric of societies . . . In some cases this reality gives rise to fundamentalism and ethnic cleansing.⁴

Alvin and Heidi Toffler go further in describing the impact of the loss of hope in their 1993 book, *War and Antiwar: survival at the dawn of the 21st century*.

On a world scale, the lurch back to religion reflects a desperate search for something to replace fallen . . . faiths – whether Marxism

or nationalism . . . it is the aftertaste of colonialism that makes . . . Islamic populations so bitter against the West. It is the failure of socialism that propels Yugoslavs and Russians toward chauvinistic-cum-religious delirium. It is alienation and fear of immigrants that drives many Western Europeans into a fury of racism that camouflages itself as a defense of Christianity.⁵

Building the politics of resentment

The New Right in the US has made use of globalisation's economic stress and erosion of traditional identities to build a new politics of resentment. To fund it, Weyrich, Viguerie, and dozens of others who learned from them, have raised millions from the super-rich of the Right: Mellon Scaife's foundations, Coors' Castle Rock Foundation, the Bradley Foundation, the Smith Richardson Foundation and the Olin Foundation are just the top five, with combined assets of nearly \$2 billion. The money has been deployed to build dozens of think-tanks and hundreds of policy groups and coalitions, such as the Heritage Foundation, the Free Congress Foundation and the Rockford Institute. And the New Right has given resentment a political focus, particularly around the themes of race, gender and class. Thus, in terms of race, it has used post-segregation affirmative action and immigration growth to fuel a chauvinism and a racism rooted in the fear of the erosion of white privilege. On gender, it has used the independence won by women over reproductive rights and their entry into the workforce, along with the gains of the gay rights movement, to foster female insecurity over family break-ups as well as to nurture the 'angry white male' syndrome as a response to weakened traditional notions of masculinity and male identity. And it has turned class anger over job loss and wage decline, stemming from capital flight and outsourcing, to account by targeting the 'power elites' of corporate liberalism and its mass media.

The New Right has also promoted neo-liberal economics, free markets and individual responsibility. This has a particular appeal to fundamentalist Christians because of its consonance with traditional evangelical Protestant beliefs, rooted in the Victorian era, that held that the market was an instrument designed by God to reward righteous Christian behaviour and preached that poverty was the result of a sinful life. Such a view easily fits with today's neo-liberal attacks on government social programmes, seeking to destroy everything from welfare payments to social security. New Life Church leader Ted Haggard puts a particular evangelistic spin on free-market globalisation, preaching that spirituality can be seen as a commodity, with unregulated global trade providing an open channel for the spread of Christianity.⁶

But the religious Right's key launching pad was the right-to-life movement. This grassroots campaign emerged after the Supreme Court's *Roe v Wade* decision in the 1970s, which struck down state anti-abortion statutes and protected a woman's right to abortion in the first trimester of pregnancy. Pushed by the Catholic Church and the more conservative Christian Protestants in the South and Southwest, the anti-choice movement gave the New Right elites the opening they needed for a broader mass base. They quickly deployed their direct mail, think-tank and electronic media networks to build and coordinate a vast single-issue, direct-action movement around the issue of abortion.

They were very successful. By the late 1980s, the right-to-life movement had mobilised millions and was becoming an important factor in elections. Some elements had become quite militant, such as Operation Rescue, which organised regional mobilisations to shut down abortion clinics in such cities as Atlanta, Los Angeles and Wichita. Reversing *Roe v Wade* had become a moral crusade, demagogically borrowing rhetoric from the last century's attempt at its abolition and engaging in mass civil disobedience. In some cases, extremists took their actions to the level of armed assault and the murder of health professionals.

But the New Right was interested in much more than changing abortion laws. Its acolytes wanted political power themselves, not just an alliance with the politically powerful. They decided to transform single-issue mass action and lobbying campaigns into a multi-issue, grassroots electoral operation. The only question was whether to do it inside or outside the GOP. They decided to do both, but the main emphasis was on taking over the Republican Party from the bottom up.

Thomas Frank, in his current best-seller, *What's the Matter with Kansas?*, whose starting point is to examine how one of the most radically-inclined states became one of the most conservative, described the process clearly in his account of the 1992 'voters' revolt' there:

This was no moderate affair. The ones who were actually poised to take back control of the system [from GOP moderates and a few Democrats] were the anti-abortion protesters. Theirs was a grassroots movement of the most genuine kind, born in protest, convinced of its righteousness, telling and retelling its stories of persecution at the hands of the cops, the judges, the state, and the comfortable classes . . . Now they were putting their bodies on the line for the right wing of the Republican Party. Most important of all, the conservative cadre were dedicated enough to show up in force for primary elections . . . And in 1992, this populist conservative movement conquered the Kansas Republican Party from the ground up.⁷

What happened in Kansas was part of a bigger picture, a longer-term, nationwide and carefully thought-out strategy and set of tactics. One of the more interesting explanations of this was put forward by talk radio ace, Rush Limbaugh. In his 1994 book, *See, I Told You So*, Limbaugh unveiled his fascination with Antonio Gramsci, the Italian communist theoretician and leader of the 1920s and early 1930s:

In the early 1900s, an obscure Italian communist by the name of Antonio Gramsci theorized that it would take a 'long march through the institutions' before socialism and relativism would be victorious . . . Gramsci is certainly not a household name . . . his name and theories are well known and understood throughout leftist intellectual circles. Gramsci theorized that by capturing these key institutions and using their power, cultural values would be changed, traditional morals would be broken down, and the stage would be set for the political and economic power of the West to fall . . . Gramsci succeeded in defining a strategy for waging cultural warfare . . . Why don't we simply get in the game and start competing for control of these key cultural institutions? In other words, why not fight back?⁸

Pat Buchanan, author of *Reclaiming the American Right* among other books, has also studied Gramsci, whom he calls the 'greatest Marxist strategist of the twentieth century'. As he notes, 'Lenin's regime died . . . But the Gramscian revolution rolls on, and, to this day, it continues to make converts.' Like Limbaugh, Buchanan believes that the Left has captured American culture by taking over 'the arts, cinema, theater, schools, colleges, seminaries, newspapers, magazines, and the new electronic mediums'. Buchanan sums up Gramsci's message as 'It's the culture, stupid!'⁹ But Buchanan has studied not only Gramsci but also Marxist philosopher Georg Lukacs, as well as the Frankfurt School, paying particular attention to Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse. '[T]heir ideas have triumphed', he argues, 'America's elites, who may not even know today who the Frankfurt thinkers were, have taken to their ideas like catnip.'¹⁰

Gramsci himself often noted that his views on strategy and tactics were not the intellectual property of the Left alone. In fact he developed them, in part, through an analysis of how Mussolini and his fascists rose to power in a lurch-by-lurch 'passive revolution' against both the liberal bourgeoisie and the working-class left of Italy.¹¹ By combining Limbaugh's views and efforts with those of his New Right god-fathers, think-tank builder Weyrich and direct-mail computer whiz Viguerie, one gets a clear outline of a Gramscian strategy deployed by the Right. Here's what it looks like:

- *Identify the main enemy.* Here the New Right's target is both corporate liberalism, whose political hegemony in 1960 was cracked by the decade of revolt that followed, and the 1960s New Left, which had won a new kind of cultural hegemony in the following decades, even if it failed to consolidate those gains politically. To the legions of the Right, it didn't matter if corporate liberalism and the New Left were fundamentally opposed; it suited their purposes to morph them into one, not even wincing when, say, Limbaugh described the *New York Times* as an organ of the far Left. To wage populist class warfare against both the Left and corporate liberalism, the Left had to be joined at the hip with elites that provoked resentment
- *Build counter-theory.* Since liberalism had near hegemony in the universities, at least in the schools of liberal arts, the New Right established its own think-tanks and publishers as counter-institutions to train the next generation of cadres who could challenge those elites in their ivory towers. With foresight, it funded several diverse schools of thought: traditionalist, libertarian, secular neo-conservative, theocratic and paleo-conservative nationalist and racist.
- *Build mass communications.* The New Right is best known through such flamboyant representatives as Limbaugh, Sean Hannity and Michael Savage and their daily polemics on talk radio. But the Christian Right's religious media and direct mail infrastructure are far-flung, especially in the form of Pat Robertson's global Christian Broadcasting Network. Christian theocrat James Dobson's popular radio programme *Focus on the Family* (FOTF) alone claims to reach 4 million people every day, with up to 25 million more occasional listeners. FOTF is carried by 4,000 radio and TV stations in forty countries. Its name also refers to its sister organisation, the Family Research Council, a powerful lobbying organisation. It has thousands of employees, with even its own zip code in Colorado Springs. It has a mailing list of 2 million supporters, and gets 12,000 letters, calls and e-mails every day.¹²
- *Build base communities.* These are situated in churches – mainly Assemblies of God, Pentecostal and some Southern Baptist and Right Presbyterians. These have evolved into grassroots political caucuses, mainly in the GOP, but also in the Reform Party and the Taxpayers Party. Ted Haggard's New Life Church community in Colorado Springs is built as a cadre organisation with a Bolshevik-like structure. Based on 1,300 cell groups, local leaders report to section heads who answer to zone leaders who report to district officials, all responsible to Haggard as head of New Life.¹³
- *Build the counter-hegemonic bloc.* This involves broader alliances such as the Christian Coalition, which pulls in Mormons and

Catholic rightists. Some forms draw in conservative Jews as well. The National Association of Evangelicals alone has 45,000 churches encompassing 30 million members; its presiding head is Haggard.

- *Take power in government.* The main approach so far is that of taking over the GOP and purging it of moderates, then winning elections and appointments by combining voting with direct action and any other means necessary.
- *Radical reconstruction of society.* There is a range of approaches here, from secular neo-con global projects to theocratic reconstruction of government, law and the Constitution to purge them of Enlightenment values and subordinate them to biblical law. The steady drift is towards the far Right.

The GOP and the religious Right

What are the results of this strategy? The February 2002 issue of *Campaigns & Elections*, a trade journal for campaign workers and pundits on all sides, published a study, 'Spreading out and digging in', by Kimberly Conger and John Green, which demonstrated the considerable growth of the religious Right in the GOP over the past decade.¹⁴ The study's results were summed up by *The Christian Statesman*, a theocratic publication of the Right as follows:

Christian conservatives now hold a majority of seats in 36% of all Republican Party state committees (or 18 of 50 states), plus large minorities in 81% of the rest, double their strength from a decade before. They are weak in just 6 states (plus D.C.), all northeastern.

As the study put it, Christians are 'gaining influence by spreading out to more states and digging in when faced with opposition'. Formerly dismissed as a small regional movement, 'Christian conservatives have become a staple of politics nearly everywhere'.¹⁵

Once ensconced in the GOP, the Christian Right then uses the threat that it will ally with a third party or boycott key campaigns to move Republicans ever further in its direction. Focus on the Family's Dobson has been one of the most outspoken on this tactic. In an interview broadcast on 17 January 2005 on National Public Radio (NPR), he spoke about elected Republicans. 'If they get disinterested in the values of the people who put them in office as they have done in the past, if that happens again, I believe the Republican Party will pay an enormous price in four years and maybe two.' Dobson had already spelled out just what he meant in an earlier (1998) article in *US News & World Reports*: 'It doesn't take that many votes to do it. You just look how many people are there by just a hair, [who won their last election by] 51 percent to 49 percent, and they have a 10- or 11-vote majority.'

I told [House Majority Whip] Tom DeLay, ‘I really hope you guys don’t make me try to prove it, because I will.’

But, as Dobson indirectly indicates in hinting at problems, it would be a mistake to see the GOP today as simply a tool of the Christian Right. The reality is more complex and the topography of right-of-centre politics in the US in 2005 reveals an often bewildering cluster of colluding and contending schools of thought, as well as varying degrees of power and influence. In the broadest strokes, these can be separated into three main groupings – secular conservatives, religious conservatives and anti-conservative racialists.

- *Secular conservatives.* Here fall mainly the multinational businessmen, neo-conservatives and right libertarians. Privately these people may be religious, but their faith is usually separate from pragmatic politics. Some are pro-choice and want to maintain a separation of church and state. In their view, growing their businesses trumps promoting religion in the political arena. Former Secretary of State George Schultz and Vice-President Dick Cheney are typical examples.
- *Religious conservatives.* These fall into two main groups, Christian nationalists and Christian theocrats. What’s the difference? When Bush says, as he did at a recent press conference, that his faith in God drives his politics, but that Jews, Muslims and even non-believers can be equally patriotic and welcome in an America that wants to spread its message around the world, he is expressing a Christian nationalism tinged with US hegemonism.¹⁶ The Christian theocrats, on the other hand, view other world faiths as Satanic and needing to be fought, subdued and eventually eliminated. House Republican leader Tom Delay and Pat Robertson, founder of the Christian Coalition and a GOP presidential candidate in 1988, are typical examples. The Catholic Right and Jewish Right are best put in their own subgroups under this heading, since they are often not comfortable in a permanent alliance with the Christian Right, especially with its theocratic trend, which is often anti-Catholic and anti-Jewish.

Finally, there are the paleo-conservatives. They are rooted in traditional, often aristocratic, Christian denominations such as Anglicanism or pre-Vatican II Catholicism, but they defend a much older conservatism that is wary of theocracy. They define themselves as nationalists, isolationists and even patriots of various US states or regions, such as the South, and are strongly opposed to the neo-cons, whom they view as closet Jewish leftists. Most paleo-cons even opposed invading Iraq as a ‘Jacobin’ adventure of the neo-cons. Pat Buchanan is a prime spokesman.

- *Anti-conservative racialists.* This is the extreme Right, revolutionary rather than reformist and often expressing a populist contempt for both secular and religious conservatives. It includes the Ku Klux Klan network, but the executed Oklahoma City terrorist bomber, Timothy McVeigh, is the most recent well-known example. He was a student of William Pierce, author of the anti-Semitic and anti-Black manifesto *The Turner Diaries* and founder of the neo-Nazi National Alliance. In the last years of his life, Pierce worked to build a global network of neo-Nazi groups and also met in the Middle East with Islamist fundamentalists to extend his reach. The racialists' religious views, to the extent that they have any, are either neo-pagan or 'Christian Identity', which combines pagan beliefs with the notion that 'Aryans' are the true descendants of Israel, with Jews and Blacks descended from pre-Adamic, Satanic and subhuman 'Mud People'. Their mass base lies in the armed militia movements, the Aryan Brotherhood white gangs in prisons and the skinheads among alienated youth. While relatively small (they still number in the tens of thousands), these groups are armed and dangerous, and could surge under crisis conditions.

The conservative Right in a global economic context

For a more comprehensive understanding of US politics today, it needs to be stressed that the conservative Right is only one sector of the ruling class. Like most countries in the world, the US has not been immune to the way in which globalisation, especially the emergence of a transnational capitalist class (TCC), has changed its class structures and political priorities. Because of these transnational financial and manufacturing interests, the TCC is strongly inclined towards multilateral economic and political agendas as well as multicultural social values. These often clash with those nation-centric values established during the industrial era.

Most industrialised and even many developing countries have witnessed the emergence of complex conflicts related to the TCC. In every country, the TCC spurs conflict among each nation's various classes and strata, as between nation-based capitalists with multinational reach; capitalists limited to the domestic market; nation-based partners of the TCC; and, last but not least, the broad masses of the population. In the political realm, the debates are often expressed in the conflicts of neo-liberal free marketeers vs. national protectionists, globalists vs. nationalists or multilateralists vs. unilateralists.

This worldwide conflict takes on a special character in the US which, as a superpower and since the end of the cold war and the collapse of the Soviet Union, has found itself caught between two visions, one rooted in the past and the other in the future. The first vision is that

of a unipolar world in which the US has emerged victorious as the sole superpower, ready and willing to challenge any other nation or bloc of nations seeking to change the present relations of power. This is the politics of US hegemonism, in which US sovereignty is unrestricted while all other sovereignties are limited. It is the variant of US nationalism that is at the core of the ruling GOP coalition under George W. Bush.

The second vision is that of the emergence of a new multipolar world. In this, the TCC emerges in a global arena in a way that is not tied to any one national state; it is an arena where new forms of global governance are emerging, where new regional power blocs are developing and where the national interests of every state are advanced, paradoxically, by accepting some restriction on their sovereignty. This is the politics of multilateralist globalism. US nationalism and national interests are here mediated in the form of corporate liberal internationalism expressed by the Democratic Leadership Council and the John Kerry campaign, now the minority opposition in Congress.

These two visions determined the core conflict of the 2004 presidential election. That conflict explains why a globalist billionaire like George Soros went all out to defeat Bush. It also explains why the contest wasn't fought between anti-war and pro-war candidates, for the corporate liberal line remains: 'Now that we're in Iraq, we can't just leave. We have to stabilize the country and the region.' It also explains why internationally so many forces expressed their anti-hegemonism by opposing the Iraq invasion – whether from a pro-globalist, nationalist or popular democratic perspective.

The theocratic Right's view of the United States as a Christian nation coincides with the views of one of America's most influential social theorists, Harvard University's Samuel P. Huntington. Although Huntington is not a Christian fundamentalist, his work opens a door that connects significant sectors of the political and economic elite to the theocratic Right. Huntington's well-known thesis concerning the 'clash of civilizations' sets the framework for the Christian Right's view of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as wars against Islam. But for non-fundamentalist elites, Huntington's thesis provides a cultural and racial explanation of conflict that neatly avoids an examination of imperialism, the political demands of self-determination or the rigours of an economic analysis.

Huntington's 'clash of civilisations' thesis dovetails with Ted Haggard's fear 'that my children will grow up in an Islamic state'. This common ideological identity is further strengthened by Haggard's preaching a 'strong ideology of the use of power, of military might as a public service'. Here the aggressive unilateralism of the Bush White House finds religious sanction. As Jeff Sharlet explains, Haggard 'is for preemptive war, because he believes the Bible's exhortations against

sin set for us a preemptive paradigm'; in Haggard's own phrase, 'the Bible's bloody'.¹⁷

Another important link between the nationalist ideology of Huntington and the theocratic Right is the defence of the US against immigration and multiculturalism, for these twin evils threaten to undermine what Huntington calls 'our core Anglo-Protestant culture'.¹⁸ As Huntington argues,

Anglo-Protestant culture and the creed it produced came under assault by the popularity in intellectual and political circles of the doctrines of multiculturalism and diversity; the rise of group identities based on race, ethnicity and gender over national identity; the impact of transnational cultural diasporas; the expanding number of immigrants with dual nationalities and dual loyalties; and the growing salience for US intellectual, business and political elites of cosmopolitan and transnational identities. The United States' national identity, like that of other nation-states, is challenged by the forces of globalization.¹⁹

We hear similar cries of alarm from Frank Wright, president of the National Religious Broadcasters Association, who claims that 'Today, the calls for diversity and multiculturalism are nothing more than thinly veiled attacks on anyone willing, desirous, or compelled to proclaim Christian truths.'²⁰

One key target of these attacks on multiculturalism is Latin American, especially Mexican, immigration, which, 'immense and continuing' is, in Huntington's view, 'the single most serious challenge to America's traditional identity'.²¹ For theocrats like Haggard that threat takes on a particular Catholic aspect. Catholics, he says, 'constantly look back . . . Protestantism, though, always looks to the future with the influx of people from Mexico, they don't tend to be the ones that go to universities . . . and so in that way I see a little clash of civilizations.'²² But immigration is also a major issue for the paleo-cons. Here is Patrick Buchanan writing in *The Death of the West*:

There are thus deep differences in attitudes toward America between old immigrants from Ireland, Italy, and Eastern Europe and today's immigrants from Mexico . . . Mexicans not only come from another culture, but millions are of another race . . . Unlike immigrants of old, who bade farewell forever to their native lands . . . Mexicans have no desire to learn English . . . rather than assimilate, they create Little Tijuanas in US cities . . . they are creating an Hispanic culture separate and apart from America's larger culture. They are becoming a nation within a nation.²³

This interlinked sense of moral, cultural, racial and religious superiority is a common thread that ties together unilateralists and the religious

Right and their common assertion of US hegemonism and opposition to 'one world' globalism. These cultural wars are an essential element in their formation of a hegemonic political bloc. For Buchanan and Huntington, it is okay to be Latino in the US, but only if you accept the dominant Anglo-Protestant culture as your own. Christian nationalists such as Bush may allow more room for other religious minorities to exist, but only so long as they don't challenge Anglo-Protestant rule. The Eurocentric Christian narrative of US history, emphasising its western cultural purity, is a key factor in defining and defending the nation state. The rejection of multilateralism abroad is tied to the opposition to multiculturalism at home. These are essential ideological tools in the battle for political power between nationalist and globalist sectors in the US capitalist class.

John Fonte, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, a conservative think-tank, puts the strategic conflict for power between the globalists and nationalists in clear terms. The US is facing a 'post-assimilationist society' that will make 'American nationhood obsolete'. For nationalists, 'transnationalism is the next stage of multiculturalist ideology – it's multiculturalism with a global face [and challenges] traditional American concepts of citizenship, patriotism, assimilation, and at the most basic level . . . the meaning of democracy itself'.²⁴ Along with Huntington's thesis on the clash of civilisations, Fonte's observations provide the theoretical basis that ties cultural wars at home to wars with Islam abroad. Western civilisation must be defended within and without, something both the theocrats and nationalists believe globalists not only fail to do but actively undermine.

Reasserting the nation state's right to the unilateral use of force and violence, ignoring international law, attacking immigrant rights and promoting a renewed Christian patriotic cultural narrative are all key elements in a broad counter-offensive against the TCC. For nationalists and the religious Right, this is an 'intra-civilization conflict' for the soul of the nation. Buchanan creates his own spin on this: 'Like colon cancer, the long-term threat to the West lies deep within.' For the Religious right, de-Christianisation and de-westernisation are one and the same thing.²⁵

It would be reductionist, however, simply to stop here. There are complex nests of contradictions and conflicts in American political life. But the most important to look at for understanding and combating the rise of the Right are the conflicts within the GOP and Bush's ruling coalition.

Conflicts within the GOP

Multinational 'free trader' vs. populist protectionist. This is a conflict between the wealthiest sector of the GOP, on one side, and smaller

business and labour GOP voters, on the other. Unfortunately, the latter grouping pulls the GOP even further to the right. Its anti-immigration stance led some, like Ross Perot and Pat Buchanan, to run against the GOP on the Reform Party ticket. The latest expression of this right-wing populism is the Minuteman Project, in which groups of paramilitary vigilantes set up their own patrols along the Mexican border.

Pro-war vs. anti-war. Opposition to the Iraq war in the GOP comes from several quarters. Many libertarians, along with right populists like Buchanan, oppose 'empire' from a nationalist and isolationist perspective. There is also resentment among high-ranking military officers in the Pentagon against neo-con policies that are viewed as adventurist and ill-planned. This particular group looks to former Secretary of State Colin Powell and General Wesley Clark (contender for the Democratic nomination) rather than George Bush and Donald Rumsfeld.²⁶

Christian nationalists vs. Christian theocrats. The Christian nationalists such as Bush tend to give primacy to patriotism – even Muslims can be patriots – while continuing to promote the agenda of the religious Right. The theocrats, on the other hand, are openly hostile to Islam as Satanic. Bush has had to criticise at least one of his top theocratic right-wing generals for anti-Islamic remarks; he has also had to distance himself from the Revd Franklin Graham, son of the Revd Billy Graham, who launched similar attacks on Islam. For their part, the theocrats criticise Bush for 'capitulating to polytheism' and warn their followers that there is still some way to go before the GOP is reconstructed along biblical lines.

Zionist vs. Anti-semite. While the most virulent anti-Semites are in the neo-Nazi groups, which often give rhetorical support to Arabs fighting Israel, overt anti-Semitism also reaches into the populist and paleo-conservative trends. This puts their proponents at odds, at least superficially, with the so-called Christian Zionists among the theocrats. It needs to be stressed, however, that this 'Zionism', despite being welcomed by Israel, is at its core anti-Semitic. The Christian Zionists embrace Israel because it is a sign of the 'End Times', meaning the Rapture (in which true believers will be caught up into the heavens to meet the Lord), the Apocalypse and the Second Coming of Christ. It is worth noting that the Book of Revelations claims that only 144,000 Jews will be saved and converted, while the rest will be destroyed as unbelievers. These views have had mass exposure and impact in the ongoing best-selling *Left Behind* series of books by Tim LaHaye, which have sold over 40 million copies.

'Colourblind' vs. White supremacist. Open avowals by the Right of white supremacy are mostly confined to the neo-Nazi and KKK groups. However, more recently a new version of this belief has emerged

among the paleo-conservatives, expressed in the celebration of the supposed virtues of 'Euro-Americanism' and neo-confederate 'Southern traditionalism', which downgrade other cultures. But when Senator Trent Lott of Mississippi expressed such views in a tribute to Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, he was compelled to back down by proponents of the 'colourblind' racism found in the GOP and elsewhere. Here the text is taken from Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' speech. The quote 'not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character' is used to oppose affirmative action and many other programmes challenging the structures of white privilege.

Pro-life vs. Pro-choice. There is a relatively small sector of pro-choice Republicans, based mainly among the old-school Rockefeller moderates in the north-east and among libertarians. Christine Todd Whitman, former New Jersey governor and head of the Environmental Protection Agency speaks for the group in her new book, *It's My Party, Too: the battle for the heart of the GOP and the future of America*. Others in this group include Colin Powell, Rudolph Giuliani (former mayor of New York), John McCain (contender for the presidential nomination), Arnold Schwarzenegger (governor of California) and George Pataki (governor of New York state). While their influence in the party is under a cloud, they are often placed at the front or centre in GOP conventions to appeal to a broader range of voters.

Authoritarian vs. Libertarian. The right libertarians in the US are centred in the Cato Institute. They have their own party, but some also run as Republicans. Representative Ron Paul of Texas is the prime example. He attacks the current GOP Christian Right for departing from the conservative libertarianism of the late Barry Goldwater in favour of 'a program of bigger government at home, more militarism abroad, and less respect for constitutional freedoms'. Paul is outspoken against the war in Iraq *and* against restrictions on civil liberties, but offers 'critical support' for anti-abortion legislation. Libertarians and some of their occasional allies, George Schultz and William Buckley among them, also swim against the tide concerning the so-called war on drugs. They argue for decriminalisation on the grounds that the drug laws merely increase the profits of the drug trade and thus expand it.

Thus not every Republican is a conservative, although the conservative Right clearly has the upper hand. Nor is every conservative American part of the Christian Right, although the Christian Right is in the White House, dominates the GOP in the Congress, and is working for all-around hegemony at all levels of the party in all fifty states.

Finally, though not all members of the Christian Right are considered Christian theocrats, theocrats are a growing militant minority that is strong in grassroots social movements and is aligned with powerful allies in Congress, especially senators Frist and Delay.

Theocracy and the new fascism

But is Christian theocracy really expressing a new form of fascism arising in US politics in the twenty-first century?

The short answer is 'Yes'. But the longer answer starts off by noting that fascism in the past has come in many flavours. More than one political theoretician, liberal or leftist, has come up with more than one set of characteristics defining fascism. Fascism, moreover, does not require swastikas or black shirts or even a close match with the political and economic conditions of pre-Hitler Germany. In fact, back in the 1930s, Louisiana Governor Huey Long ironically noted that, 'When fascism comes to America it will come disguised as anti-fascism.'

Mussolini coined the term from the Latin *fasces*, the word for the wooden rods used by ancient Romans for beating their subordinates. A number of these rods were bound together in a bundle to symbolise unbreakable strength and were carried in front of the emperor's processions. (If you have an American Mercury-head dime from 1915–1945, look on the back to see the *fasces* symbol of authority.) Mussolini himself was quite slippery when it came to defining fascism, but in 1925 he memorably summed it up as 'Everything in the State, nothing outside the State, nothing against the State'. Compare this with the key tenets of the Calvinist theology of the elect of the Pentecostal and Presbyterian Right in the US, from which the new 'dominionist' theocratic trend of 'Christian reconstructionism' has arisen. Its rubric is 'Everything in Christ, nothing outside of Christ, nothing against Christ,' which is modelled on Romans 11:36 'Of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things.'

Today's Christian reconstructionism was launched in the late 1960s, chiefly by Revd R. John Rushdoony, founder of the Chalcedon Foundation. His most famous work, *Institutes of Biblical Law* (1965), takes its title from the sixteenth-century John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.²⁷ Rushdoony's basic idea is that all human social and political institutions must be 'reconstructed' to bring them in line with a literal absolutist reading of the Bible. Since this includes the barbaric penalties in the Book of Leviticus, Christian theocrats look forward to the following, and their writings are quite open about it.

- Imposition of the death penalty on abortionists, gays and disobedient women under theocracy.

- Slavery (the ‘biblical’ version) is justified for non-Christian prisoners, captives in war and, in some cases, disobedient women.
- The Enlightenment was anti-Christian; liberal democracy is the offspring of it and of the French Revolution.
- Public schools must be abandoned for home schools.
- The Bible is the ultimate test of scientific truth.²⁸

Many commentators have drawn the parallel with the radical Islamist imposition of the Qur’an and ‘Sharia law’ on Muslim societies. They make an excellent point, even though both Rushdoony and the Islamists would consider each other the tools of Satan.

Rushdoony, whose thinking has wide influence in fundamentalist circles, especially Right Presbyterian and Pentecostal, died in 2001, but his foundation and work are continued by his son Revd Mark Rushdoony and by other Reconstructionist theologians. Among them is the Revd George Grant, founder of the Franklin Classical School in Tennessee. One of his recent books, *The Blood of the Moon*, which takes its title from a line in the Qur’an, argues that the Islamic world must be conquered and subdued by military might in order to bring about its conversion, and that the current war in Iraq is only the beginning. Here’s the message from his *The Changing of the Guard: biblical principles for political action*, published in 1987:

Christians have an obligation, a mandate, a commission, a holy responsibility to reclaim the land for Jesus Christ – to have dominion in civil structures, just as in every other aspect of life and godliness. But it is dominion we are after. Not just a voice.
It is dominion we are after. Not just influence.
It is dominion we are after. Not just equal time.
It is dominion we are after.

World conquest. That’s what Christ has commissioned us to accomplish. We must win the world with the power of the Gospel. And we must never settle for anything less . . . Thus, Christian politics has as its primary intent the conquest of the land – of men, families, institutions, bureaucracies, courts, and governments for the Kingdom of Christ.²⁹

One further point regarding reconstructionism needs to be noted and clarified, which is its distinction from the pre-millennialist (as opposed to post-millennialist) school of Christian theocracy. The pre-millennialists believe that the End Times, when Jesus will return to govern over a 1,000-year Kingdom of God, will come relatively soon. This is the view expressed in LaHaye’s *Left Behind* series and the movies about the Rapture. What is particularly dangerous about the pre-millennialists is their Christian Zionism, which means they lobby

both Bush and the Israelis not to give back a single inch of land to the Palestinians.

Their take on Iraq (from a recent 700 Club News-Talk show on CBN) exemplifies their thinking:

It has nothing to do with oil. It has everything to do with that there's 1.2 million Muslims that have been deceived by the false God Allah, and that the God of heaven, Jehovah, is now in the process of doing war if you will against that spirit to . . . break the power of deception so those people can be exposed to the gospel. (Interviewee Glenn Miller.)³⁰

While the reconstructionists would agree with this, they are post-millennialists. This means that they don't think the Second Coming will occur until after 1,000 years of theocratic rule, which is required to prepare and purify the way for Jesus. Their special danger is their longer-term, but step-by-step, strategy to take over and purge secular governments and institutions worldwide – by elections if they can or by war, if necessary.

Reconstructionists, for example, are currently leading the Right's assault on the US judiciary. Their allies have introduced the Constitution Restoration Act (CRA) in Congress (HR 1070 in the House and SB 520 in the Senate). The CRA affirms the right of government officials to 'acknowledge God as the source of law, liberty and government'. It prohibits federal judges from using foreign laws and judgments as the basis for rulings.³¹ The CRA also argues that no laws or legal guides should be used other than English constitutional and common law up to the time of the adoption of the Constitution of the United States.

This is both interesting and alarming for what it includes, as well as for what it excludes. Why nail down the time, for instance, as 1788? The reason is that the French Revolution's 'Declaration of the Rights of Man' followed a year later, in 1789. And in the years to come were also the Civil War Amendments, the Geneva Conventions, the Nuremberg Principles and the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, among other milestones. Theocrats behind the CRA view most of these events as inspired by the Enlightenment and therefore as Satanic and anti-Biblical. This basically means that the CRA is an enabling Act for abolishing the separation of church and state and a launching pad for theocratic law-making.

'There's a, you know, majority on the Supreme Court', James Dobson of Focus on the Family proclaimed at the 24 April 2005 'Justice Sunday' TV broadcast. 'They're unelected and unaccountable and arrogant and imperious and determined to redesign the culture according to their own biases and values, and they're out of control. And I think they need to be reined in.' 'The court's majority does not

care', he added, 'about the sanctity of life . . . plus this matter of judicial tyranny to people of faith, and that has to stop.'³²

Despite the religious trappings, progressive activists familiar with the Left's traditional writings on fascism will have little trouble recognising this phenomenon for what it is. Georgi Dimitroff, a Bulgarian communist and leader of the Comintern in the late 1930s and 1940s, formulated the widely accepted view that 'Fascism is the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinist, most imperialist element of finance capital.'³³ Later, in 1947, when anti-communism was rising in the US, he added:

The fascist tendencies in the US are ideologically masked with the aspects of 'Americanism', 'defense of the free initiative', 'safeguard of democracy', 'support to the free peoples', 'defense of the free institutions', and 'safeguard against totalitarianism' . . . [fascists] in the US are not so naïve that they would mechanically repeat the ideology spread by Goebbels and Rosenberg, that failed catastrophically . . . This is why they mask their aspirations to hegemony and cleverly use the ideas of 'freedom', 'democracy' and 'peace'. The forms of fascist ideology appear to have changed but their content remains the same. It is the aspiration to world domination.³⁴

Today's fascist threat in the US may be more serious than previous threats in one important manner: its mass ideological base, despite its populism, is openly confrontational with constitutional democracy. The United States has gone through a number of periods in its history wherein the Right has been in the ascendant. The counter-revolution against Reconstruction in the nineteenth century following the Hayes-Tilden deal was arguably the worst, with the rise of Klan terror against the Black freedmen in the South. Even Hitler saw fit to model some of his repressive legislation on the KKK-inspired 'Black Codes' in the US. And the McCarthy era was a period pregnant with fascism. The political and economic elites broadly supported attacks on the Left, and repressive legislation was passed that not only blacklisted thousands from their jobs and put important communists in jail but also led to the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. Yet, through it all, the Communist Party was never completely illegalised, nor did the far-flung anti-communist hysteria ideologically challenge the secular state.

The Nixon White House later violated basic constitutional protections by using the CIA and the president's own 'plumber's squad' as his personal political police; this had aspects of fascism, but was motivated more from Nixon's opportunism and paranoia than from fascist ideology *per se*. And while attacks on the Left were widespread, bourgeois democracy, such as it is, was held intact and even expanded in terms of minority, women's and gay rights.

However, the theocratic Right today is far more ideological and organised in terms of forming a counter-hegemonic bloc to democracy. Its base is deeply situated within civil society and is creating a powerful and lasting challenge that goes beyond the political expediency of attacking the Left that characterised previous right-wing periods. Linking this movement to the White House war on terrorism and its governmental attacks on democratic rights presents a truly serious threat.

As Alvin Toffler once noted, if you don't have a strategy, then you end up being part of someone else's strategy. This point is critical, especially now, when our task is not only to understand the rise of the Right but also to forge the tools required to do something about it.

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