

# ***Generative Logic of the Anti-Globalization Trend: The Revitalization of Conservatism under the Excessive Development of Neoliberalism***

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**Abstract:** After extensive scholarly discussions and the ongoing evolution of these two contrasting ideologies, certain paradoxical occurrences have arisen in the context of neoliberalism's worldwide progression. Among them, the polarization at both the political and economic levels, brought about by the global spread of neoliberalism, has led to the emergence of a new form of 'authoritarianism' in the global neoliberal landscape. While there is still debate about whether the current resurgence of right-wing nationalist political movements in various countries is inherently intertwined with the aforementioned rising authoritarianism, it is undeniable that neoliberalism is facing challenges from these backlash phenomena that are, directly or indirectly, a result of its impacts. Exemplified by Trumpism, this article will probe into the generative logic of revitalization of anti-globalization conservatism in the context of the excessive development of neoliberalism.

**Keywords:** neoliberalism, anti-globalisation, trumpism, conservatism

## **1. Introduction**

The ideology of neoliberalism emerged in the 20th century and became associated with globalization due to its emphasis on international trade and social democracy. However, the implementation of neoliberal policies such as free-market capitalism has led to concerns about capital mobility and socioeconomic polarization. Traditionally, conservatism has been opposed to neoliberalism, but paradoxically, the negative consequences of neoliberal globalization have given rise to a new conservatism characterized by trade protectionism and interventionist approaches. Although there is controversy surrounding the relationship between this new conservatism and authoritarianism, it is clear that neoliberalism is being challenged by its negative effects, such as socio-economic polarization and a distorted recognition of social democracy.

Despite the historical opposition between conservatism and neoliberalism, the negative consequences of neoliberal globalization have given rise to a new form of conservatism that prioritizes trade protectionism and interventionist approaches. This new conservatism has emerged due to socio-economic polarization and a distorted recognition of social democracy, which are seen as backlashes to neoliberal globalization. Although there is controversy over whether the current

resurgence of neo-conservatism is inherently linked to authoritarianism, it is clear that neoliberalism is being challenged by these adverse consequences that are a direct or indirect result of its policies.

Specifically, according to Lebow, The global economic crisis from 2008 to 2009 profoundly embodied that the distributed consumption caused by continuously extended globalizing procedures could no longer be sustained under the U.S. temporal context of increasing debt, as it had been maintained since the rise of neoliberalism [1]. Additionally, the crisis has penetrated the U.S. through the socio-ideological aspect in which pseudo-liberal advocates select what the so-called ‘majority of marginalized’ favor and organize activities with a high level of political seditious through social media. These ‘bottom-up’ resentments generated from the unceasing social contradictions and economic crisis has reinforced on account of escalating common sense of ‘laissez-faire’ in the landscape of neoliberalism. As a result, these hyperrealities phenomena in American society generate incivility and vicious competition among the domestic political partisans and profoundly foster the nihilism (it will be discussed later) public opinion environment.

In general, the constant development of the socio-economic polarisation of the nation, the obsession with individual interests, and the citizen’s mentality of uncompromising and vengeance, finally, channeled neoliberal politicization in the U.S. into anti-globalization conservatism. Namely, the renewal of the right-wing conservatism ideology, which stands opposite to globalization and multilateralism, is more effective than the cause. Granted, it can be considered as an oxymoron, but it still was an authentic fact that excessive neoliberalism politicization is the two intertwined entities of the present step of the evolving trajectory of neoliberalism.

This article following will explore how neoliberalism ideology has, paradoxically, shaped the renewal of the conservative Anti-globalisation trend. Specifically, based on the process-tracing method in the context of case study analysis, this article firstly will provide a retrospective analysis of neoliberal globalization. Secondly, the rising and developing trajectory of Trumpism, as one of the most representative cases of neo-conservatism, is going to be reviewed in this article. In the final section, this article will discuss the pattern of manifestation of conservative Anti-globalization trends at the political, social, and economic levels, respectively.

## 2. A Critical Review of Neoliberal Globalization

Since the 1970s, to cope with the stagflation crisis in the context of the national monopoly capitalism stage, neoliberalism has replaced Keynesianism as the mainstream ideology in Western countries, serving as “a plan aimed at restoring class power.” [2]. According to Chomsky, Neoliberalism, as the name implies, is a new theoretical system built on the foundation of classical liberalism [3]. This theoretical ideology is also known as the Washington Consensus, and it includes some aspects related to the global order. He also claimed that the so-called “Washington Consensus” refers to “a series of market-oriented theories formulated by the US government and international organizations under its control, and implemented in various ways, often as harsh structural adjustment programs in economically vulnerable countries.” The consensus specifically includes the essential disciplines of fiscal deficit reduction, lowering marginal tax rates, marketization of interest rates, privatization of state-owned enterprises, deregulation of government, and so on. The disciplines abovementioned were not only inspiring to Latin American countries, which are the early followers of neoliberalism but also to many other developing countries that are pursuing economic reforms.

After the emergence of the “Washington Consensus,” neoliberalism gradually evolved from an academic framework within the context of Western-centric globalization to a dominant “political and economic paradigm” in the following era of so-called globalization. Namely, developed countries represented by the United States and the United Kingdom sought to promote the political and economic practices of neoliberalism worldwide, advocating for dismantling barriers to free the

capital to flow across sectors, regions, and countries, and opening up the global market for more diversified merchandise [2].

Specifically, regarding the reasons for the rise of neoliberalism, Kotz believed that the change in the world capitalist competition structure caused by the process of globalization was the most important reason for the rise of neoliberalism in the late 1970s and early 1980s [4]. He pointed out that, under the intensified competition pressure from foreign conglomerates due to globalization, although accepting governmental interference is expected to promote capital accumulation in the long run and to better preserve the long-term interests of big businesses, more and more countries' domestic interest groups still tended to support policies such as tax reduction and deregulation that would enable them to survive in the context of the global rivals. In addition, he regarded the weakening of socialist movements, the demise of state socialism, and the absence of large-scale economic crises in industrial capitalist countries as the other important factors promoting the rise of neoliberalism.

Besides, Bourdieu explained the reasons for the rise of neoliberalism from the perspective of theoretical propaganda [5]. He believed that the reason why neoliberal views have become so popular today is that there have been extensive and persistent efforts in the guidance of public opinion. This long-lasting and insidious imposition has created a genuine belief through infiltration. He also pointed out that more and more relevant research works have shown that in the UK and France, intellectuals, journalists, and businessmen have worked together for a long time to forcibly establish neoliberal views as self-evident. He, therefore, claimed that the essence of this artificially concocted neoliberalism is nothing more than putting the most classic conservative ideas of all times and all countries under the cloak of economic rationality. Petras also believes that the global rise of neoliberal globalization as an economic strategy within the capitalist system is the result of an ideological project supported by state power, not the natural development of the market [6].

The adoption of neoliberalism and its associated policies, particularly those related to globalization, have led to the rise of nationalism in many countries. In addition to promoting a free-market economy and global activities, neoliberalism has also had a significant impact on individuals of all social classes and organizations from around the world by disseminating its principles of self-interest and deregulation. This has resulted in the widespread adoption of neoliberalism's socio-ideological proposition among citizens and society, laying the foundations for nationalism. As a result, since the 2008 financial crisis, scholars have gradually realized that the free market is a "utopia". In the meantime, more voices have emerged to resist globalization and even oppose liberalism itself through democratic means. According to Hendrikse, the current "Great Regression" is the result of the combined effects of the global crisis and the neoliberal crisis, meanwhile, the ideology that advocates distinct population groups based on race, nationality, religion, and other factors, has gradually revitalized [7].

### **3. Trumpism: A Typical Representative of the Revitalized Conservatism**

The concept of Trumpism is defined here as a combination of conservative political beliefs, social and economic ideas of unilateralism, authoritarian governance strategies, and agitative movements and speeches used by Donald Trump and his supporters to acquire and maintain political power in the United States. The success of Trumpism in the 2016 presidential election reflects the dominance of neoliberal globalization advocates in American politics [8].

The United States is the birthplace of Trumpism and has been greatly influenced by the crisis of neoliberal globalization. This crisis has widened the gap between social classes, resulting in negative impacts on basic living conditions, such as high unemployment rates caused by foreign labor inflows. Neoliberal rationality has caused many democratic public services, such as education, to be viewed as resources for investment purposes, leading public opinion astray [9]. Deregulation

policies that stem from neoliberalism have contributed to the aggregation of individual dissatisfaction, leading to the negative aspects of freedom and creating a nihilistic environment in US society. These phenomena generate incivility and competition among domestic political partisans, which provides an opportunity for nationalist and authoritarian politicians like Trump to achieve their desire for power [1].

Fraser suggests that Trump's political support initially came from tapping into the dissatisfactions and prejudices of marginalized white Americans [8]. Trump's campaign utilized pseudo-socially democratic activities and created inflammatory populist and nationalist buzzwords through social media. As a skilled opportunist in commercial communication, Trump blurred the lines between neoliberal policies and conservative political propositions during his 2016 presidential campaign to appeal to specific groups and gain votes. This allowed him to articulate his desired policies in a way that resonated with neoliberal globalization rationality [10].

In the last section, it was mentioned that the global economic crisis revealed that the multilateral international trading system, which had been established through the expansion of globalizing processes, was no longer sustainable [11]. This was due to growing external competition and increasing foreign debts faced by the US, which dominated the global economy [12]. Local multinational enterprises (MNEs) in the US, which had benefited from outsourcing manufacturing to MNEs in developing countries for many years, began to fear for their interests as these newcomers became more successful. Trump recognized these issues and took a conservative stance on international business, criticizing and breaching the multilateral trade policy that had characterized national trade agreements for many years. These unresolved socio-economic contradictions will spread from the US to the rest of the world through globalization and policy mobility, ultimately leading to a new round of global economic depression.

All in all, the anti-globalization conservative movement in the US is associated with Trumpism and the fundamental principles of neoliberal globalization. Practically, this movement exploits citizens' nihilistic attitudes, undermines democratic and freedom norms, prioritizes self-interest in global trade, and fosters a conventional alliance between nationalist forces and neoliberal politicians. As a typical form of right-wing nationalism, Trumpism is expected to continue to spread in American society even after Trump's presidency. This movement may also distort the future of global development toward a nationalist direction. In the following section, we will explore the political, social, and economic factors driving the resurgence of anti-globalization conservatism.

## **4. Patterns of Manifestation of Anti-globalization Conservatism**

### **4.1. Political Perspective: A Paradoxical Alliance and Ideological Compromise**

At the political level, conservatism generally advocates elitism and the establishment, which are the classic tenets of conservatism. Although in the context of democratic systems, in reality, the system is still governed by elites, and elitism is a key characteristic of conservatism [8]. However, in the current popular anti-globalization conservatism, there is surprisingly a significant amount of anti-elitist content [12]. One of the most crucial features of conservatism is maintaining the current political authority and order, emphasizing that political development should not be radical, but should be progressive evolution and reform, rather than violent revolution. However, as mentioned in the last section, due to the crises faced by economic globalization in recent years, the ideological system of global governance based on neoliberalism has been increasingly questioned by more and more people. The advocates of the new anti-globalization conservatism seize this opportunity to gain support from the public by propagating anti-establishment ideas. Namely, under the system of anti-globalization conservatism represented by Trumpism, the paradoxical combination of elitism and anti-elitist populism emerges.

As a result, neoliberal political forces often compromise ideologically with populist conservative factions by forming political alliances to gain political power to implement their desired policies. As observed by Brown, many politicians, including Trump, either excel at combining neoliberal economic plans with conservative policies that can attract specific interest groups, or excel at reshaping neoliberal economic policies in a way that conforms to the common sense of the general public [13]. In earlier times, the authoritarian populism of Thatcher and Reagan is the successful application of right-wing politicians of neoliberalism twice. In addition, centrist-right politicians also attempt to strengthen their alliance through the use of nationalist rhetoric and policies (including military actions). Therefore, Harvey argues that advocates of neoliberalism need the support of some radical nationalists to gain a comparative advantage in the global ideological competition environment [14].

From the perspective of voters, according to Lebow [1], in a country where whites make up 62% of the population, 88% of Trump's supporters are white. He received support from over half of white women voters, two-thirds of white male voters, and nearly two-thirds of white voters aged 50 and older. Trump won the support of two-thirds of white voters without a college degree. In exit polls, one-fifth to one-fourth of Trump voters interviewed said they did not think Trump was qualified to be president, reflecting the fact that Trump's use of the frustration, anger, prejudice, or intense hatred of these poor or marginalized voters was decisive. In other words, many of Trump's voters made their decision because they believed that the outcome of the election would have no impact, regardless of what the candidates said they would do once they entered the White House, they would not be able to deliver on their promises.

The most notable result of the compromise between political alliances and ideologies mentioned above is that people intend to abandon the vision of the "grand global alliance of human citizens" as expected by the neoliberal globalist, accompanied by the continuous development and escalation of anti-globalization trends in areas such as finance, industry, trade, and information.

#### **4.2. Social Perspective: The Influence of Exclusion's Public Sense, Resentment, and Nihilism**

According to Brown's view, the distorted integration of views on state resource allocation and social ideological acceptance resulting from the expansion of global neoliberalism sowed the seeds for the conservative revival represented by Trumpism [9]. In the past two or three decades, some specific groups in the Western countries that once led the world system have shown a relative decline, and it is often within these groups that authoritarian messages such as "Make XY Great Again" frequently appear. This is closely related to the global development of capitalism, which is experiencing a particular form of backward modernization. It can be concluded that the first factor is the vigorous development of the global economy. Since the late 1980s, income inequality between countries has eased, primarily due to the economic prosperity in Asia. The BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) have caught up with and moved beyond the status of "developing countries." There are winners of globalization, the new global middle class, although they are still relatively poor compared to the Western middle class. Due to the stagnation or, at best slight growth of the incomes of the middle and lower classes, inequality has intensified within the Western world. The middle class and working class of the old industrialized world are losers in global modernization, and they must watch as they lose their land to others: to globalist elites, to highly skilled globalized winners, to the emerging middle class of capitalism.

These de-civilizing phenomena not only appear among people with low incomes but also concentrate among middle-class people, especially middle-aged men with moderate education and income. Neoliberalism profoundly influences people and organizations around the world (regardless of their social class or pursuit of goals) by spreading its governance rationality and common sense, such as self-interest and deregulation [9, 13]. Among them, the trend of decentralization and de-



sublimation of administrative power has led to the release of individuals' obsession with selfishness in the neoliberal landscape [15]. At the same time, the neoliberal globalization crisis not only exacerbates the income gap between various social strata (regardless of race) but also worsens the mental quality of life for many people.

According to a survey conducted by Brown, the American middle class, seen as the "mainstay" of society, often resorts to spending their leisure time online, following or spreading negative information, as a way to cope with their high-pressure work and family obligations [9]. They feel disregarded and taken advantage of by elites, globalization, feminism, and refugees. They feel like outsiders in their society and belong to a minority group in their own country, lacking a sense of belonging and respect. The loss of status leads them to seek balance by negatively categorizing other groups, and their lack of material and cultural status becomes a catalyst for resentment, negative emotions, identity crises, and conspiracy theories. Ultimately, in the distorted context of neoliberalism, the uncontrolled aggregation of dissatisfied individuals gradually frees the negative side of freedom from social constraints. At the same time, the contradictions of these social ideologies have intensified the anxiety of a considerable portion of citizens towards neoliberal globalization policies, thereby increasing their acceptance of authoritarianism and conservatism [16].

#### **4.3. Economic Perspective: The Multilateral International Trade Environment Is in Trouble**

Finally, the neoliberal globalization policies, such as free markets and international trade, have caused fierce competition between multinational corporations in developed and developing countries, leading to opportunities for the development of authoritarian and conservative regimes. There is no doubt that neoliberalism has brought many structural changes, including offshoring of manufacturing, restructuring of large corporations into small company "value chains," tax cuts to shrink government, privatization of public services, and financialization of daily life. Offshoring of production aims to reduce wage costs and the share of wages in GDP. However, Lebow believes that the frequent global economic crises in recent decades have demonstrated that the multilateral international trade environment formed by the extension of globalization cannot be sustained [1]. Even the United States, as a major operator and dominator of the global economy, is facing some economic difficulties brought on by economic globalization.

Specifically, hollowing out of the economic structure is the first issue. Since the Clinton administration, the US has experienced the "new economy" phenomenon, which was characterized by remarkable economic performance resulting from the positive interactions between technological advancement, innovative business practices, and government incentives. The US economy enjoyed a long period of low inflation and high growth, but it also gave birth to investment bubbles in the Internet and information technology. During the Bush administration, a real estate bubble formed. As for industrial structure, the proportion of the service economy in the US GDP continued to rise, with the value added of the finance and insurance services increasing from 6.40% in 1993 to 7.57% before the crisis in 2006 [17]. In contrast, the value added by the manufacturing industry as a proportion of GDP continued to decline from 16.39% in 1993 to 12.03% in 2015 [18]. Secondly, after the financial crisis broke out, the US government's bailout measures did not provide enough relief and subsidies to the unemployment safety net for the general population. Instead, the implementation of financial rescue plans offered subsidies to a small percentage of people with high income, led by financiers, thus exacerbating income inequality. At the same time, US-based multinational corporations that have long benefited from outsourcing manufacturing to developing countries have begun to worry about their interests being affected by the rise of these competitors.

Politicians like Trump quickly recognized these issues, demonstrating an apparent nationalist projection toward international business by criticizing and undermining multilateral trade policies

that the country has long participated in [10]. In addition, when describing his nationalist trade policies, Trump emphasized his strong “consensus” with local multinational corporations. However, Cozzolino argues that the unilateral trade policies advocated by Trump and continued by the current US government [12], such as trade sanctions against China and Mexico and tax cuts for US multinational corporations returning to the country, are expected to lead to financial downturns, such as stock market declines, inflation, and rising unemployment. This globally increasing economic panic, nurtured by developed countries like the US, is expected to make more people lose confidence in the development ideas advocated by neoliberalism, such as economic globalization [19].

## 5. Conclusions

In general, the current debate between those who are against and those who support globalization is a matter of differing perceptions and problem-solving methods. However, neither side can convince the other, and both sides have come to dislike each other. The anti-globalization movement and its views are a mixture of diverse behaviors and opinions, some of which are incorrect, immoderate, and irrational—for example, attacking the international economic system and its conferences, resorting to violence, and pursuing sensationalism with serious Global-phobia [16]. As mentioned earlier, the current global social predicament is due to the deviation between neoliberal development theory and reality. The solution lies in whether global governance policies create better public services, an environment for dialogues, and economic performance. The task of humanity is not to halt the pace of globalization but to make it serve more and more people.

From a theoretical perspective, to successfully revise neoliberal globalization, it is necessary to criticize neoliberalism from three aspects: values, ownership, and democracy. On the issue of values, it is necessary to emphasize that the principle of equality is the central criterion of a free society. In education, labor, housing, health, and other areas, the market cannot provide a minimum guarantee for everyone, and only through the state’s social redistribution policy can the legitimate rights and interests of the weak be protected. On the issue of democracy, one cannot regard the existing representative democracy in developed Western countries as the perfect idol of human freedom, as the previous advocates of neoliberalism did. Democracy should be improved and developed according to the development of the times and the characteristics of each country. Another crucial aspect is the regulation of international trade and finance. Under neoliberalism, the free market has been the guiding principle of international trade, with little consideration for the impact on labor rights, social welfare, and the environment. The rules governing international trade and finance need to be restructured to ensure that they promote economic development, social justice, and environmental sustainability. revising neoliberal globalization requires a comprehensive approach that addresses values, ownership, democracy, environmental sustainability, regulation of international trade and finance, power relations, and the needs and interests of developing countries.

Namely, globalization is an irreversible historical process, countries should make the most of this trend by promoting good governance and establishing a just and equitable global governance order. This is expected to be a better way to reduce the disparities between developed and developing countries, achieve balanced development among nations, and reverse the unequal impact of globalization. Meanwhile, emerging advanced economies like China should continue to drive development-oriented global rules, especially in the developing world, with a focus on removing obstacles to the full participation of developing economies in globalization, including infrastructure, interconnectivity, production capacity, and technology. By doing so, globalization can become more effective, fair, and sustainable.

Generally speaking, to face the global challenges caused by the progressively slowing international economic growth and weak recovery, it is essential to promote innovation-driven

economic growth. This can be achieved by establishing a global innovation system, promoting technological innovation and cooperation among countries, and providing technical assistance and transfer to narrow the development gap among countries affected by globalization. By creatively addressing development challenges, it is expected that the inherent driving force and vitality of global economic growth will penetrate various industries, promote economic growth, expand global employment, and guide globalization in a fair and inclusive direction.

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