

THE PROGRESSIVE RESPONSE TO THE NEW RIGHT

JOHN FEFFER • DECEMBER 2019



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The Battle for Another World:

The Progressive Response to the New Right

December 2019

By John Feffer

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	6
Part One: Origins of the New Right	8
Against Globalization	10
Cultural Struggle	15
Changing Playbook	17
Part Two: Transnational Organizing of the New Right	18
Trump and Bannon	20
The Focus on Europe	22
Cleavages on the Right	25
Civil Society on the Right	26
Digital Organizing	28
Going Mainstream	29
Part Three: Transnational Progressive Organizing	33
Locus of Activism	37
Regional Organizing	38
Translocal Organizing	41
Linking Issues	43
Part Four: Challenges for Progressive Transnationalism	45
The Centrality of Democracy	46
The Structure of Organizing	48
Agents of Change	49
Part Five: Moving Forward	55
Providing Services	57
Storytelling	58
Digital Upgrade	59
Naming and Shaming	60
Coordination	62
Conclusion	65
List of Interviewees	68
Organizational Descriptions	70



Executive Summary

The far right is increasingly active globally—at the level of governments, through civil society, and in the digital sphere. Their political parties are cooperating across borders, their anti-democratic actions are undermining the rule of law, their attacks on “globalists” are eroding the efficacy of international institutions, and their racist memes are spreading throughout culture.

According to the 80 academics, researchers, and activists interviewed in this report, this threat to democracy and internationalism is urgent.

Yet, the global response to this organizing on the far right has been muted. Those who oppose the far right have been focusing their efforts largely at a local and national level. Meanwhile, global threats such as climate change, a widening gap between rich and poor, and entrenched militarism require more, not less, international cooperation. A refocus on local and national struggles at the expense of organizing at the global level provides the far right with an opportunity to rewrite the rules of the international order along illiberal lines.

Key conclusions from this report include:

- An international reaction to economic globalization has been key to the right’s success. Unlike the internationalist left, the new right has been more effective at channeling discontent into political success at a national level.
- Key to the new right’s success has been a story that can be applied effectively across borders: the “great replacement.” The argument that minorities, with help from “globalists,” will usurp the privileges of the dominant group has proven appealing to both an extremist fringe and more mainstream conservatives.
- The new right has achieved political success with its attacks on globalization in a way the left failed to do. But the new right has a key failing: It has nothing to say about an ever-worsening climate crisis.
- The 80 international experts overwhelmingly identified the school climate strikes as the present moment’s most promising international action and the Green New Deal as a framework that could defeat the right’s global narrative.
- A Global Green New Deal wouldn’t just address the environmental crisis. By creating enormous numbers of well-paying jobs, it would also speak to those left behind by economic globalization. Such a narrative would undermine the new right’s anti-globalist appeals while offering up a positive vision to rally around within and across borders.

This report is a co-production of the Institute for Policy Studies (Washington, DC), with Focus on the Global South (Bangkok, Thailand) and the Transnational Institute (Amsterdam, Netherlands), with the assistance of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. Although this report is the product of interviews with 80 people around the world, the interviewees do not necessarily endorse all of its arguments and conclusions.

Introduction

A succession of social upheavals over the last decade has radically realigned political power throughout the world.

As a result of these tectonic shifts, what had once been on the furthest fringes of the right has now moved toward the center while the left has been pushed to the margins. “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold,” poet William Yeats wrote at a time of similar political churn in 1919. “The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity.”

“The right is full of righteous belief. The left is battered with doubts.”
Brid Brennan

Today, 100 years after the publication of Yeats’s poem, those who are full of passionate intensity now rule over considerably more than half the world’s population. Many of these leaders—Donald Trump (United States), Jair Bolsonaro (Brazil), Narendra Modi (India), Viktor Orbán (Hungary), Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Turkey), Rodrigo Duterte (Philippines)—have come to power democratically but are determined to undermine democratic institutions. Their political rise has often been supported by more conventional conservative parties. They have aligned themselves on an ad hoc basis with other authoritarian leaders who owe their positions to military coups, one-party deliberations, or dynastic succession. Further to their right, a set of avowedly racist organizations and networks provide ideas, messaging, and sometimes muscle for these leaders of the new right.

This is not a normal oscillation in electoral power. The new right has set about reordering the political landscape. Mainstream parties have lost credibility. Politics have become even more polarized. Not just liberalism but democracy itself is under attack.

Nor will the guardrails of democratic governance necessarily contain the ambitions of these new right-wing leaders. They have challenged constitutional, legislative, and judicial restraints. They have attacked the cornerstones of civil society, including the press and other watchdog institutions. They aspire to become leaders for life (like Vladimir Putin, in charge since 1999) or to establish parties that govern with little opposition for decades on end (like Japan’s Liberal Democratic Party, in power almost continuously since 1955).

Rhetorically, the new right is focused on securing borders, protecting sovereignty, and challenging global elites. These leaders use the language of nationalism and particularism. They speak in the name of imagined majorities that are racially or religiously homogenous.

Despite this obsession with strengthening the nation-state, this new right has increasingly been active across borders. States and parties have created alliances, with transnational activists like former Trump advisor Steve Bannon aspiring to build a kind of Nationalist International. Extremist civil society organizations have promoted a climate of intolerance that nurtures the political ambitions of right-wing populist leaders. White nationalists in particular have created alternative digital platforms to spread their messages and recruit new members across the globe.

Progressives have organized locally and nationally to respond to the new right. But ironically, given their historic internationalism, progressives have been slow to work across borders—in a sustained, coordinated manner—in response to the new transnational assault on democracy. This dilute internationalism coincides with both the new right's attacks on global institutions and an intensification of various global threats such as climate change, pandemics, widening economic inequality, and weapons proliferation.

"Internationalism is now a problem for the left," observes Gadi Algazi of Tel Aviv University, "and a reality for the right."

This report, based on interviews with more than 80 activists, analysts, and academics around the world, will analyze the rise of the new right, its connections to other far-right actors, and its new global aspirations. It will survey the current state of transnational progressive organizing. It will outline the challenges to that organizing and identify both lessons learned and best practices. And it will conclude with a discussion of what's missing from a robust, multi-issue, progressive transnationalism and how to fill those gaps.

As the twenty-first century began, progressives famously proclaimed that "another world is possible." They imagined a world beyond rote democracy and the rapacious market.

With the longstanding liberal-conservative status quo now crumbling, the new right has not only taken up this call, it is putting it into practice. This construction of "another world"—an intolerant, anti-democratic, unsustainable world—can be stopped before it is too late. But it requires that the best of us regain the conviction that Yeats described, not just to counter the new right but to save the planet from ruin.

PART ONE: The Origins of the New Right

He was a businessman who suddenly decided to run for president. Nobody in the political elite took him seriously. After all, as an outsider, he'd never been successful in politics. Plus, he trafficked in outlandish conspiracy theories, which led him to say the craziest things. There was no way he could beat the established parties and their candidates.

And yet, Stan Tymiński surprised everyone. In 1990, he beat Poland's then-current prime minister to face off against Nobel Prize winner Lech Wałęsa in the second round of the country's presidential elections. Tymiński would eventually lose to Wałęsa. But the newcomer's unexpected popularity, particularly in the areas hardest hit by the dislocations of economic reform, anticipated a wave of populists who would eventually control much of East-Central Europe.

Two decades before the rest of the world, this post-Communist region experienced all of [the necessary preconditions](#) for the rise of a new kind of politics. Fast-track free-market reforms and rapid privatization, which together represented a condensed version of economic globalization, had plunged countries into crises characterized by high unemployment and a sharp polarization of wealth. The major political parties—liberal, conservative, post-socialist—by and large supported these disruptive economic reforms. With the explosion of far-right extremism came an uptick in intolerance and an escalation of attacks on minorities, particularly Roma.

“We’ve never experienced a political moment like this in the United States. There were similar moments, but they didn’t arrive at a time when American identity was so hotly contested, when citizenship was so hotly contested, a time of demographic change and economic inequality. We need to listen to our colleagues who’d actually lived under these political and social moments to try to understand a little better what’s happening for those of us living under it currently.” Eric Ward

In this environment, right-wing populists like Tymiński in Poland and Vladimir Mečiar in Slovakia established a model of politics that would eventually become standard for the region. The prospect of joining the transnational European Union initially limited the spread of these political tendencies. But once most of the countries in the region became EU members and especially after the financial crisis of the late 2000s, these tendencies reemerged to become dominant in the region—and increasingly around the world.

Right-wing populism is nothing new. It can be found in the Anglo-American tradition—from the anti-Communist firebrand Joseph McCarthy in the U.S. in the 1950s to the fire-breathing nationalist Enoch Powell in the UK in the 1960s—as well as a number of European parties such as the French National Front and the Italian Lega Nord. Echoes can also be found in movements in the Global South, from the Baathist party in Syria to the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India.

But current right-wing populists like Donald Trump in the U.S. and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil—as well as the regional heirs of Tymiński and Mečiar like Viktor Orbán in Hungary and Andrej Babiš in the Czech Republic—are something different. For one thing, they have helped to create a “new right” by joining hands with a rising “[identitarian](#)” movement that focuses on racial and religious identity and by collaborating with more conventional right-wing parties that see opportunity in the shift rightward. This new right makes appeals to the majority—the “people”—even as it “dog-whistles” to a specific subset, such as whites or upper-caste Hindus. Unlike run-of-the-mill authoritarianism, the new right seeks power through the ballot box by promising to go after the political elite and its economics of austerity. Once in power, however, the new right looks for ways to stay there by short-circuiting the usual mechanisms of democratic governance.

“Right-wing populists and authoritarian governments relate to institutions quite differently,” observes Jan Nederveen Pieterse, a Dutch sociologist at UC Santa Barbara. “Right-wing populism is a governance crisis. Authoritarianism is a governance system.” The new right, to use [a motto of Steve Bannon](#), wants to “deconstruct the administrative state.” Authoritarian regimes, meanwhile, rely on such administrative apparatuses as part of their governance strategy: “they don’t just control institutions, they are the institutions,” Pieterse adds.

“According to the right wing, government is inefficient and corrupt. They seize government and make sure it is inefficient and corrupt. And then they say, ‘See, told you so!’”
Barbarina Heyerdahl

At the moment, such right-wing authoritarian leaders are also on the ascendant. Some, like Prayut Chan-o-cha in Thailand, owe their positions to military coups. Other authoritarians have come to power through one-party systems (Xi Jinping of China) or royal succession (Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia), or stay in power through rigged elections (Paul Biya of Cameroon).

There are also authoritarian figures on the left, like Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua and Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela. “There’s a tendency on the left to assume that authoritarianism is a feature of the right,” observes sociologist Edgardo Lander of

the Central University of Venezuela in Caracas. "But some leftist governments have become very authoritarian."

Rounding out these numbers are the religious fundamentalists that challenge internationalism, multiculturalism, and inclusive democracy, from the Islamic State and the Union of the Right-Wing Parties in Israel to the Christian fundamentalists who form a core of support for Donald Trump in the United States.

Together, these political actors form a larger anti-democratic and illiberal political ecosystem.

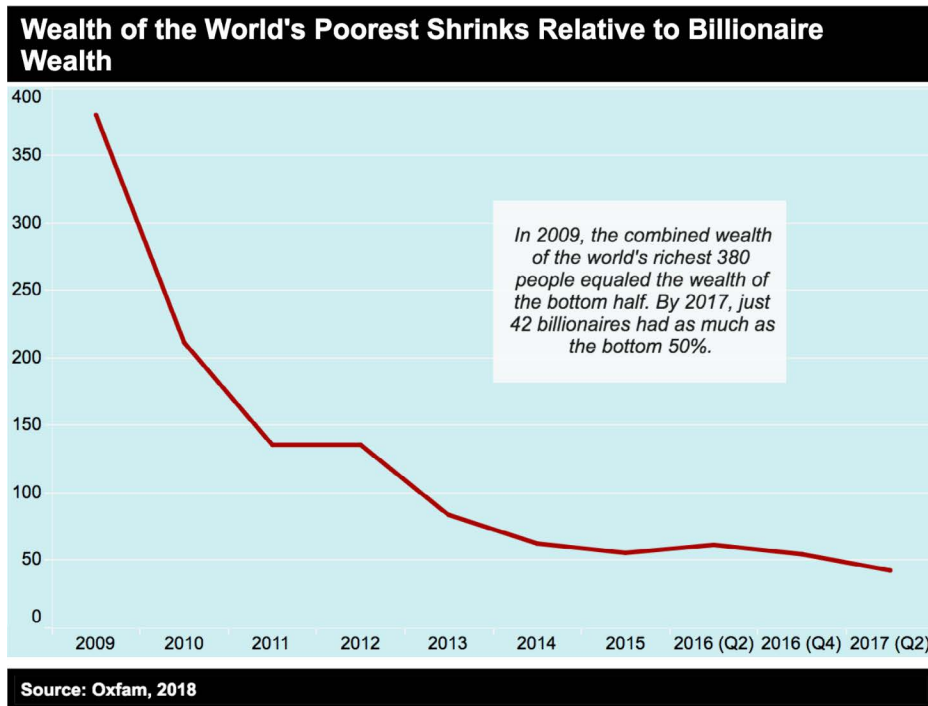
Against Globalization

The new right is, at least rhetorically, skeptical about economic globalization—and the elite that supports the neoliberal project of reducing barriers to trade, investment, and financial flows. In this way, the new right differs from both conventional authoritarian governments like Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in Egypt as well as market-oriented conservatives in democratic societies.

"Their appeal to the electorate and their huge support comes from at least a rhetorical anti-neoliberal agenda," notes Wolfram Schaffar of the International Institute for Asian Studies in Leiden. "You see that with Thaksin Shinagawa in Thailand. He introduced universal health care coverage in Thailand, which made him hugely popular. It's the same with Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, who came to power with anti-neoliberal and pro-welfare promises. That's why he has the stable support of more than 80 percent of population."

In Poland, the right-wing Law and Justice Party has adopted an ambitious [public spending program](#) by providing cash benefits for families having more than one child, raising the minimum wage, offering free medicine to those over the age of 75, and dropping the income tax requirement for those under the age of 26. It all amounts to a significant Keynesian stimulus to the economy.

Although the creation of a more interconnected global economy has helped both billionaires and [nearly a billion Chinese](#), many people in between have been left behind. "At the root has been the right wing's capacity to harness people's sense of alienation—the discontents of globalization," observes Fiona Dove, executive director of the [Transnational Institute](#) (TNI) in Amsterdam.



Source: inequality.org

This alienation has produced a new wave of anti-austerity protests across the Global South: in Lebanon, Tunisia, Chad, Sri Lanka, Haiti, Argentina, Ecuador, and Chile. It has also [caused a political shift](#) in working-class loyalties—for instance, from the Communist Party in France to Marine Le Pen’s far-right National Rally. But the alienation also extends beyond the have-nots, who have suffered the most from the greater polarization in wealth, to include the have-somes. Traditionally seen as the motor for democratization, the middle class has provided an “active consensus” behind right-wing movements in countries like the Philippines, Thailand, and Brazil, suggests sociologist and former member of the Philippines parliament Walden Bello. “The lower classes tend to get swept up with authoritarian politics, but they don’t have the same kind of approach or response,” he notes. “The middle class, especially the urban middle class, provides a more active consensus.”

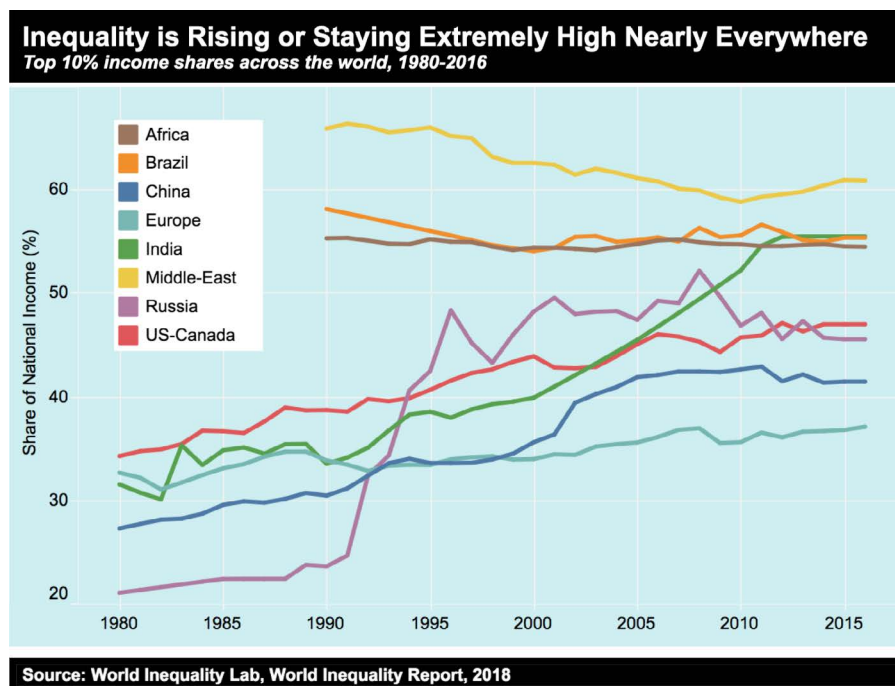
The middle class is worried about losing its economic and social privileges, which have eroded in many countries across the world. In the United States, for instance, wages for the average worker are [the same today](#) as they were back in 1973 (adjusted for inflation), and the situation has been [much worse](#) for those who have lower annual earnings. Anxiety about declining status, for instance, was a [greater predictor of support](#) for Donald Trump in the 2016 elections than economic status alone. Central to the shift of both working class and blue-collar middle-class voters has been the decline of labor unions, which were “the central piece supporting the welfare state in the U.S.,” points out political economist and historian Gar Alperovitz, co-founder of the [Democracy Collaborative](#) in Washington, DC. Union membership has “gone from 34.2 percent to 11 percent—only 6 percent in the private sector. The institutional powerbase that once sustained the so-called liberal program is gone.” It’s not just

the United States. In the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)—36 of the wealthiest countries in the world—trade union membership has [fallen by half since 1985](#), from 30 percent to 16 percent.

The new right has also attracted support from particular economic sectors, such as the fossil-fuel industry where policies addressing climate change threaten jobs from the executive boardroom all the way down to the coal mine. “It feels like we’re living through the last gasps of not just a dying industry but a whole economic order around extraction,” explains May Boeve of [350.org](#) in Oakland. “This intense rightwing surge is a reaction.”

In many countries, the new right has also [done well in rural areas](#) and small towns—the Polish countryside, the American farm belt, the Anatolian heartland—that have not benefitted from the economic growth that has flowed into more liberal urban centers. Economic globalization has adversely affected smaller farmers, and the countryside tends to be more culturally conservative and less cosmopolitan than the cities.

The new right has directed much of the anger of those who have not benefitted from globalization toward transnational institutions and elites. In this way, the platform of “deconstructing the administrative state” has translated into campaigns against “globalists” in Brussels (the EU) or Washington (the IMF) responsible for pushing neoliberal economic policies. In particular, new right leaders want to reduce the power of international institutions and accords that impinge on the sovereignty of the nation-state and restrict the power of national corporations. They are suspicious of any global institutions that are supposed to be acting in the common good (even those, like the WTO, which consistently fail to do so).



Source: [inequality.org](#)

This attack on the mechanisms of the global economy has come on the heels of the financial crisis of 2008-9 and has intersected with what's been called "[slowbalization](#)." Over the last decade, the portion of trade as part of global GDP has fallen. Multinationals have seen a drop in their share of global profits. Foreign direct investment tumbled from 3.5 percent of global GDP in 2007 to 1.3 percent in 2018.

Meanwhile, the political forces that hitched their wagons to economic globalization faced a crisis of their own after 2009. "The main establishment parties—Republicans and Democrats in the United States, Social Democrats and Christian conservatives in Europe—all of them were giving the same response, which was to bail out the finance sector and cut social spending to cover the costs of those bailouts," Sol Trumbo Vila of TNI points out. "Most people felt that they had only two choices: follow the neoliberal globalization model, which has now been exposed as dysfunctional, or go back to nationalist projects and frames, which are outmoded but familiar."

Some political actors were prepared to take advantage of the vacuum created by the financial crisis. "The right wing that was waiting in the wings basically stepped in and harvested the arguments and the resistance organized by movements and unions around the world against corporate globalization," explains Shalmali Guttal of [Focus on the Global South](#) in Bangkok. "But they changed the enemy. The enemy was not mainly global capitalism and neoliberalism and corporations. They created this 'other.' The enemy were the globalizers, the ones who put free trade before national interests. and those who talked about national interest in the language of justice, equality and peoples' rights. The right wing that took power has continued with free trade, neoliberalism and corporate globalization, but framed it in nationalist rhetoric."

Enter politicians like Viktor Orbán in Hungary and Donald Trump in the United States. "There's an enormous number of people who feel deeply let down by the existing political establishment who are very vulnerable to nationalist, populist, racist calls to power," notes Ethan Zuckerman of MIT's [Center for Civic Media](#). "These opportunistic political leaders are masterfully grabbing that sentiment. And once they grab it, they fully believe it. Politicians are salespeople. They have to persuade themselves of something so that they can sell it."

But these politicians are just as likely to be selling political messages as policy initiatives: the noise, rather than the signal. "Right-wing populists are monsters of noise through social media like Facebook," observes Jan Nederveen Pieterse. "Their timeline often reaches no further than the next electoral cycle. Their focus is more on politics than on policies or institutions. A lot of it is simply bickering and is thus a distraction."

Progressives might have taken advantage of the rejection of mainstream parties in the wake of the financial crisis. The upswell of support for Bernie Sanders in the United States, Jeremy Corbyn's rise to the leadership of the UK Labor Party, the victory of the

Left-Green Movement in Iceland, and the electoral surge of the Greens in the 2019 European Parliament elections all reflect this dissatisfaction.

But many on the left remained suspicious of electoral politics. A [2012 study](#) on “subterranean politics” in Europe reviewed the activism going on at the time—the Occupy movement, the anti-fascist organizing—and concluded, as the London School of Economics’ Mary Kaldor put it, that “it was very anti-political because people didn’t want anything to do with the political class.”

This disillusionment was reinforced by the center left’s flirtation with Third Way politics, which had pushed the Labor parties in the UK, Australia, and New Zealand, the Democratic Party in the United States, the Swedish Social Democratic Party, and others toward the neoliberal center. After 2008, as Sheri Berman writes in a study of [Why the Left Loses](#), “the centre-left lacked a convincing message for dealing with the crisis, or a more general vision of how to promote growth while protecting citizens from the harsher aspects of free markets. Instead, it kept on trying to defend outdated policies or proposed watered-down versions of neoliberalism that barely differentiated it from the centre-right.”

The new right not only offered an economic program often lifted from the left’s Keynesian agenda but something else more suited to the anti-establishment temper of the times: charismatic authority. In the Philippines and India, for instance, “we’re moving away from politics as usual or democracy as usual and moving into a period of charismatic politics,” explains Walden Bello. “The source of authority is charismatic rather than rational-legal or traditional. People might say, for instance, ‘We have too much deadlock and we need a strong leader to break those deadlocks.’” These charismatic leaders tend to be outsiders or, at least, those who present themselves as outsiders like Donald Trump. Even a number of well-known comedians, like Jimmy Morales in Guatemala and Volodymyr Zelensky in Ukraine, have taken advantage of this sentiment.

All politics, of course, is local. The new right takes different forms in different countries, for instance anti-clerical in the Philippines but staunchly Catholic in Poland. Even the word “populism” has different connotations from region to region and country to country. “In continental Europe, populism would have a clear negative connotation: someone who is promising a lot, unleashing the raw power of the people. This can come close to fascist mobilization,” notes Wolfram Schaffar. “Berlusconi in Italy was the one of the first clearly labelled a populist, with a very negative connotation. You don’t have this negative connotation in Latin America.”

What unites the new right is its exploitation of popular grievances with the political and economic status quo. But it has been even more successful in taking advantage of cultural grievances.

Cultural Struggle

Although the rejection of economic globalization and the embrace of charismatic, anti-establishment politicians explain much of the new right's appeal, many supporters are responding to factors that are not precisely political or economic. As Melissa Ryan, who writes the [Ctrl Alt-Right Delete newsletter](#) for Hope Not Hate in Boston, points out, the new right is "fighting a cultural war first, and a political war second. A lot of the time, policy doesn't even enter into it. I closely follow Trump's online army, which is both American and international. It's hard to get them excited about policy but easy to get them amped up around cultural cues: racist, misogynistic, anti-immigrant, and Islamophobic views."

These cultural issues all involve a policing of some type of border. White nationalists are focused on preserving white privilege and maintaining white "purity" in the face of challenges from minorities at home and migrants coming from non-white countries. Religious extremists want their religion—and only their religion—to be fused with the nation-state. Gender activists are concerned about the loss of heterosexual privileges and male supremacy. This larger effort by the new right to police cultural and physical borders can also be understood as a [rejection of Enlightenment values](#) of rationality, rule of law, progress, and equality. The goal is to rewrite an entire historical trajectory.

That historical trajectory extends to the gains made by social movements in the modern era. "The ways in which women's movements have challenged the fundamental assumptions of patriarchy have created a set of fears about what will replace it," Kavita N. Ramdas of Open Society's [Women's Rights Program](#) in New York points out. "The language of nationalism and hypermasculinity are tied to each other—there's a reason it's called patriotism." The Proud Boys and other masculinist groups fret that men are under siege from the feminist movement. According to Birgit Sauer of the University of Vienna, the new right's anti-gender organizing in Europe focuses on the removal of gender studies from academia. "Viktor Orbán prohibited gender studies in Hungarian universities in 2018," she notes, "so they want to use Hungary as an example to cut off the financing of gender studies."

Islamophobia permeates the new right's worldview. According to the myths of "[Eurabia](#)" and "[Europistan](#)"—which motivated Norwegian mass shooter Anders Breivik in 2011 and his would-be acolyte [Philip Manshaus](#) in summer 2019 and helped generate movements like Pegida in Germany—Muslims are waging both a demographic and an ideological campaign to take over the continent. The ground zero of this campaign is France. "The Christchurch attacks show that France has been the promised land for many white supremacists," says French human rights activist Yasser Louati. "The Christchurch terrorist said that he was inspired or motivated by what is happening in France. France has the largest Muslim minority in the West—and it is the country that has passed the greatest number of laws targeting the Muslim community."

The French debate over Islamophobia can be felt in Quebec as well, reports André Frappier of [Québec Solidaire](#), where the recently passed [Bill 21](#) prevents civil servants from wearing religious symbols, including the hijab. The legislation split the sovereigntist movement, with the Parti Québécois, having adopted a right-wing anti-immigrant platform several years ago, supporting the bill and the left-wing Québec Solidaire opposed. "The Parti Québécois opened the door for the far right," Frappier says. "Three years ago, Marine Le Pen made a tour in Montreal because she smelled something there. She came to support the far right that was beginning to grow."

Trump has tried to import something similar into the United States with his Muslim travel ban. The Indian and Israeli governments are also focused on keeping Muslims at arm's length. Some Buddhist governments, too, have jumped on the bandwagon. "Many people say that there's an anti-Muslim International that connects what's happening in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand," explains Wolfram Schaffar. Even Nobel Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi has played a role by visiting Hungary and discussing with Viktor Orbán [their shared concern](#) over "continuously growing Muslim populations." The EU made only a lukewarm statement on Myanmar's ethnic cleansing of the Muslim Rohingya minority "because Orbán did not want to have a clear statement on that," Schaffar adds. "Orbán said that he could understand Myanmar expelling what it considers illegal immigrants."

Islamophobia is a subset of a larger xenophobia that the new right has fueled. Much media focus has been on anti-immigrant sentiment in Europe. But attacks on foreigners have become so acute in South Africa that more than a thousand refugees [camped out](#) in front of UN offices in Cape Town demanding that they be relocated to a third country because they fear for their lives. Venezuelan refugees have [faced xenophobic backlash](#) throughout Latin America. Hatred of ethnic Chinese has [periodically surfaced](#) throughout southeast Asia.

A Changing Playbook

Three key elements facilitated the move of these political, economic, and cultural sentiments into the mainstream. The first was the end of the Cold War, which destroyed an anti-fascist consensus that joined together not only the United States and Soviet Union but also all mainstream political parties. The emergence in the 1990s of far-right politicians like Jörg Haider in Austria, Jean-Marie Le Pen in France, and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy in Russia paved the way for future parties and movements to break the anti-fascist taboo more vigorously.

The second element was the Internet, which linked up niche groups. "Social media amplifies everything – that goes for veganism as well as the radical right," relates Matthew Feldman of the [Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right](#) (CARR) in the UK. "It's the medium that most speaks to the radical right: potentially international, potentially permanent, potentially anonymous – all the things that the radical right

lacked going back many years. If you wanted to be involved in, let's say, Holocaust denial, you'd have to have known the groups beforehand, probably subscribe to some dodgy magazine of questionable quality. But now you or I could go on Twitter or Facebook, type in 'Holocaust denial' and get materials not available even in the 1990s."

A third element has been the patient organizing of the new right, some of it copied directly from the left's playbook. The identitarian movement has [borrowed](#) various counter-cultural strategies (from Antonio Gramsci) and community organizing tactics (from Saul Alinsky). It is active on campuses. It projects a "cool" and "hip" aesthetic to appeal to young people.

And the new right digs in for the long term. After the EU Parliament elections in 2009 when Hungary's far-right Jobbik party won three seats, Larry Olomofe of the [People of African Descent Resource Centre](#) (PADLINK) in Warsaw remembers seeing "a cluster of people in Hero Square around the Hungarian flag, and it turned out they were Jobbik members handing out leaflets and continuing their crusade. Even though they'd achieved unprecedented results in the election three days prior, they were still out there doing this. While we were intellectualizing them away by saying, 'look at these idiots,' they took our political participation strategies, created a critical mass, and now they're setting the agenda."

The new right brings together these political, economic, and cultural threads in its attack on global elites. This attack goes beyond economic institutions to those of civil society—like human rights organizations—that campaign for the rights of minorities or refugees or political prisoners against the presumed will of the majority. This antipathy toward globalism, however, has not stopped the new right from pursuing a global project of its own. The ultimate goal: to replace existing international institutions and agreements with what Larry Rosenthal, the chair of the [Berkeley Center for Right-Wing Studies](#), calls "an approximation of the liberal order in illiberal terms."

PART TWO: Transnational Organizing of the New Right

Long before Steve Bannon began to travel the world to unite the right, white nationalists and neo-Nazis developed their own version of internationalism.

The Nazis defined racial purity in transnational terms—not German, but Aryan—which George Lincoln Rockwell, the founder of the American Nazi Party, translated into the American context in the 1960s. Rockwell and other neo-Nazis, “always viewed their challenge as uniting white people in white countries around the cause of recovering, from their perspectives, their ethno-states,” notes Heidi Beirich of the [Southern Poverty Law Center](#) in Montgomery.

Rockwell was joined in this project by William Luther Pierce—the author of *The Turner Diaries*, a touchstone text for extremists—who established ties with the far right in Germany and Greece. There were others as well.

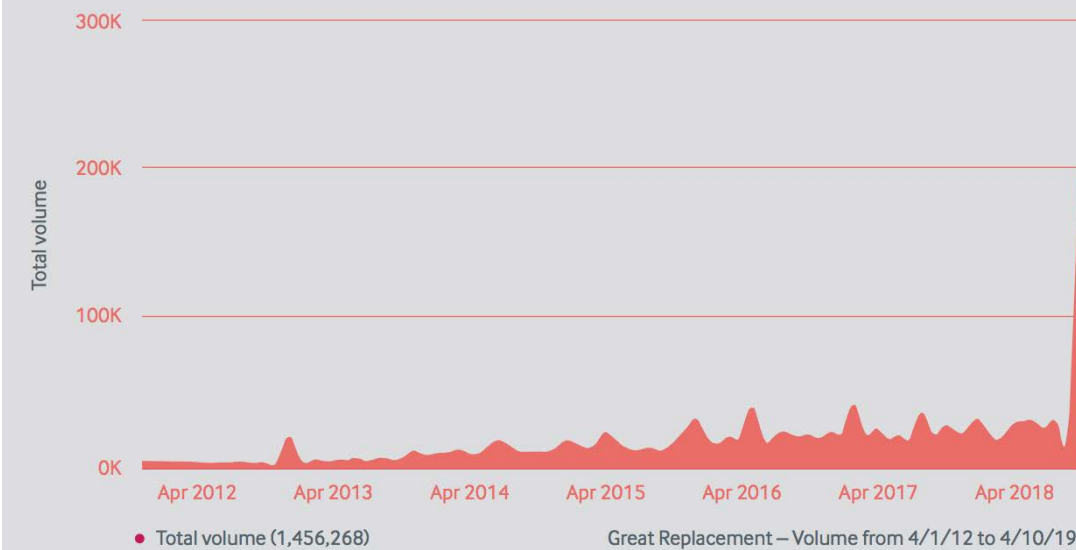
“It’s hard to understand the mythology of transnationalism within the white nationalist movement without going back to Francis Parker Yockey and Willis Carto—both now deceased but two highly influential white nationalists in the United States,” points out Eric Ward of the [Western States Center](#) in Portland. “Yockey developed the idea of a far-right alliance between Russia and United States that was then developed by folks like David Duke who toured Eastern Europe extensively. Willis Carto held international gatherings around Holocaust denial and promoted far-right internationalism in the pages of *Spotlight*, the weekly flagship of the white nationalist movement from the 1970s through the 1990s.”

This white transnationalism could even be found in the music industry. Before the Internet, Ward points out, Resistance Records helped spread white power messages among neo-Nazis in North America and Europe and generated as much as a million dollars a year in profits.

Today, neo-Nazis can be found in otherwise unlikely geographic locales. They show up at [Poland’s Independence Day](#), in Ukrainian [military forces](#), and at the [fringes of Russian politics](#) even though the Nazis considered Slavs to be subhuman. “When the Central America migrant crisis began,” reports Manuel Perez-Rocha of the [Institute for Policy Studies](#) (IPS), “there were some small rallies of self-described [neo-Nazis](#) in central Mexico.”

“One of the biggest misconceptions of the American left and left of center movements in Europe as well is the tendency to think of the far right as a nationalist movement,” says Melissa Ryan of Hope Not Hate. “It’s actually the opposite. They operate internationally. They share best practices, they share funding streams. They’re internationalists claiming to be nationalists.”

Figure 8 Discussion of the “Great Replacement” on Twitter between April 2012 and April 2019



“The Great Replacement”: The Violent Consequences of Mainstreamed Extremism, ISD

The far right has promoted its transnational network thanks to the Internet. But it also benefited from a powerful new transnational narrative: the “great replacement” of white people by non-white people. Introduced by the French writer Renaud Camus in 2010, the “great replacement” has been taken up by white nationalists across Europe and North America and has inspired mass shootings in several places such as Christchurch, New Zealand in March 2019 and El Paso, Texas in August 2019. The doctrine is not just about keeping out immigrants but, through a policy of “remigration,” expelling ones already there. The platform of the German far-right party, Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), for instance, [reads](#): “Germany and Europe must put in place remigration programs on the largest possible scale.”

Although white nationalists use the phrase “great replacement” in its explicitly racist meaning, more cautious conservatives transpose the phrase into the “cultural” context of a “civilization” under threat. “Africa wants to kick down our door and Brussels is not defending us,” Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán [said](#) in 2018. “Europe is under invasion already and they are watching with their hands in the air.” In this context, the new right [proposes](#) “ethnopluralism” and “diversity in isolation”— maintaining cultural walls between different ethnic groups—as an alternative to the “unity in diversity” of multiculturalism.

In the 1920s, the far right attracted adherents by blaming all the ills of the nation on “degenerate races,” an argument that united incipient fascists with [conservatives like Calvin Coolidge](#). “The demographic replacement is a similar master frame that can unite both clear extremists and conservatives who might be worried about demographic change,” warns Matthew Feldman of CARR. “Once you add those two

together you have potential majorities in many countries. They've found a winning formula. There's nothing that I've seen that comes remotely close to countering that formula."

Trump and Bannon

For decades, white nationalism, notwithstanding all of its transnational networking, resided on the margins of politics. But that changed with the political arrival of a number of prominent right-wing populists, chief among them Donald Trump and his election as U.S. president in November 2016.

"When Trump won, the joke was: welcome to Mississippi!"
Kali Akuno

Several countries, like Brazil, experienced a sudden Trumpification of politics in 2016. Jair Bolsonaro "copied a lot from Trump: his online politics, his speeches against political correctness, his anti-feminist and hate speech," explains Esther Solano of the Federal University of São Paulo. The Trump effect encouraged a number of far-right European leaders in Italy, France, and the UK. Populist leaders like [Volodymyr Zelensky](#) in Ukraine have pointed to Trump as an electoral inspiration. Israeli politics, under Benjamin Netanyahu, moved further right. Even Shinzo Abe in Japan, although he has not patterned his politics after the U.S. president, has tried to leverage his relationship with Trump to bolster his more hardline nationalist stance in the region, particularly toward China and South Korea.

By inviting autocrats to the White House and routinely flouting international norms, "Trump has created space for the international far right," Paris-based political consultant Ethan Earle argues. "He's given carte blanche to people further down the pecking order in geopolitics to continue to push their politics further and further to the right knowing that there's political coverage coming from the very top." As Barbarina Heyerdahl, the Vermont-based manager of the Acorn Fund notes, "There is a cabal of authoritarian, racist leaders—Trump, Modi in Kashmir, Xi in Hong Kong, Putin acting against protesters in Russia, Bolsonaro against indigenous communities in Brazil, and Erdoğan against the Kurds in Syria—who are just watching each other to see what the others are getting away with to calculate what they can get away with in their own countries."

However much other right-wing leaders look to Trump for inspiration, he has shown neither the interest nor the capacity to head up a new Nationalist International. But others are eager to rush in where Trump fears to tread.

Steve Bannon, for instance, is attempting to stitch together a new right global network that resembles the Trump coalition in the United States. With the encouragement of various right-wing oligarchs like financier John Thornton, he's met with neo-fascists associated with the Flemish Vlaams Belang, France's National Rally (formerly the National Front), and Sweden's Democratic Party, as well as more conventional right-wing populists in Italy and Hungary. He has tried to establish a political nerve center in Brussels that he calls "the Movement" as well as a training center for politicians in Italy.

Europe is only part of Bannon's plan. In Latin America, he's [appointed](#) Bolsonaro's youngest son as his regional representative to help build on the right's electoral successes in Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, and Paraguay. Bannon has [partnered](#) with a Chinese billionaire to create a Rule of Law Fund that's meant to be the point of a spear aimed at the regime in Beijing. He has also visited Japan at the invitation of the fanatical [Happiness Realization Party](#), a political cult that embraces Japanese militarism. Also figuring prominently in his thinking is Russia, a vast, mostly white country led by a critic of Western liberalism and "radical Islam."

**"Even as there's more critique around the abuses of some of the violent states in the Middle East—and around the world for that matter—there isn't enough of a sense of empire and imperialism as a global system, with the U.S. playing a particular role in that system."
Khury Petersen-Smith**

Bannon talks big and grabs headlines, but the Movement he hoped to create in Brussels hasn't become operational while his much-hyped training center for right-wing politicians in Italy has foundered. European nationalists have not united behind him. "For some people it was a complicated game to play: Anti-Americanism is an integral part of many nationalisms in Europe," Jordi Vaquer of the [Open Society Initiative for Europe](#) in Barcelona points out. "Bannon wanted to oversell what he was doing. It was more about the announcement than a carefully crafted strategy."

But Bannon's inability so far to create a big tent for the new right is beside the point. "Bannon might fail to build a coherent alliance across the Atlantic," Yasser Louati explains. "Nevertheless, the discourse he and his natural allies are pushing has become the ruling ideology in their countries—the U.S., the UK, Italy, Hungary. White nationalism is in power in those countries."

The Focus on Europe

Europe is a focal point for the transnational organizing of the new right at the elite political level. The far right has capitalized politically on the refugee crisis aggravated by the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and elsewhere in the Middle East. It has taken advantage of Euroskepticism. And it is operating in an explicitly transnational political space.

The victory in 2016 of the Brexit campaign to pull the United Kingdom out of the European Union established a bandwagon effect among Euroskeptics eager to escort their own countries out of the EU: Frexit, Czexit, and the like. But the new right's strategy has since changed. As Lorenzo Marsili of [European Alternatives](#) in Rome points out, "They gave up attacking the EU and calling for an exit from the Euro and leaving the EU. Now the rhetoric is to take it over, to build the EU as a space of exclusion with stronger borders and looser fiscal policy. They have Europeanized their own rhetoric. They have a vision for Europe that's possibly more worked out than the center left or center right."

The new right, in other words, now wants to work its way through European institutions. "There is quite a bit of potential for the better use of the new institutional power that the populists have been gaining in municipalities, in regions, in countries, and in EU institutions," Jordi Vaquer adds. "These parties have learned some of the games of international cooperation in the EU. They are increasingly sharing agendas, conspiracy theories, the media space."

Consider, for instance, the extraordinary reinvention of Nigel Farage, the architect of Brexit. His project of pulling the UK out of the EU has proven to be a political disaster for the country. Yet, in the space of two months in 2019, Farage rebuilt the fledgling Brexit Party, blitzed the country with a [social media campaign](#), and captured 31 percent of the UK vote in the European elections. Here was a right-wing party that explicitly rejects the European Union, led by a man who has served in the European Parliament for two decades, that now has become the largest single party operating in that assembly. And Farage, an avowed nationalist, accomplished this feat in part by forging a transnational alliance. "He seriously went to school with the Five-Star movement in Italy," reports Larry Rosenthal. "He just backed up his truck and asked, 'How do you do this on-line thing?' And then he reproduced it."

One coordinating center for the European new right is the parliamentary bloc previously known as the Europe of Nations and Freedom. In 2017, the group held a convention in Koblenz sponsored by Germany's far-right Alternative für Deutschland with participation by movement headliners Marine Le Pen from France, Geert Wilders from the Netherlands, and Matteo Salvini from Italy. It took place shortly after Donald Trump's inauguration, which prompted Wilders [to comment](#), "Yesterday a free America, today Koblenz, tomorrow a new Europe." In 2019, the bloc doubled in size

as a result of the European Parliament elections and renamed itself the Identity and Democracy Party. And the grouping does not even include the Brexit Party, Hungary's Fidesz and Jobbik, or Poland's Law and Justice Party (PiS).

Other forces are competing for influence among Europe's new right. Russia, for instance, has reached out to right-wing political parties, with Vladimir Putin's United Russia party signing formal agreements with Italy's [Lega](#) and Austria's [Freedom Party](#). The Kremlin has provided some financing, either directly or through wealthy intermediaries [like Konstantin Malofeev](#). Media outlets like RT and Sputnik amplify certain Russian messages. Still, Jordi Vaquer cautions, "It's not like the Fourth International, this time a right-wing one, with a secretariat in Moscow and every country has a national chapter. Each of these parties has deep national roots, and their overwhelming focus is on national politics."

"Even though the right infights all the time, like the European populist parties, they are attempting to come together in the EU parliament and they speak at a higher level than folks on the left do. There's a lot more coordination and understanding of the ideology. You just don't see that on the other side." Heidi Beirich

Putin, himself, has followed a similar trajectory as Orbán—from a liberal to a conservative nationalist. He has sounded [new right messages](#) about the obsolescence of liberalism, the dangers of immigration and minority rights, and the virtues of traditional values. "But in terms of rhetoric, Putin is not really a populist," explains Ilya Matveev, a founding editor of Openleft.ru living in St. Petersburg. "Populism means this rhetoric of 'common people' versus elite. Putin never attacks the elite in Russia. It is his own elite. He is a nationalist, not a populist. His rhetoric is about Russia as a nation versus other countries like the U.S. or the West in general."

Nor is Putin opposed to the global elite. "This type of rhetoric is quite instrumental," adds Ilya Budraitskis, a Moscow-based political theorist. "It doesn't mean that Putin has any clear long-term strategy to become a true leader of a new uprising against the liberal elites, that he really wants to become a leader of a right-wing populist international. He uses this kind of rhetoric as an element of a game for recognition that he's playing with the Western elite. He wants to become a full member of the international elite that he was expelled from after the annexation of Crimea in 2014."

Hungary, too, aspires to be a hub of coordination for the European new right. A number of extremists, like Swedish far-right businessman Daniel Friberg and his [identitarian publishing house Arktos](#), have made their home in Budapest. The

Hungarian government wants to be “a leading force within the EU of the sovereignist versus the federalist camp,” Márta Pardavi of the [Hungarian Helsinki Committee](#) in Budapest says. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, in office since 2010, has a very focused interest in southeast Europe. “His political and business associates are buying media in Macedonia and Slovenia,” Jordi Vaquer observes. “Orbán was the first European leader to welcome Milorad Dodik, the separatist leader from Republika Srpska who is now a member of the Bosnian presidency. He is close to the increasingly authoritarian Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić. He is hosting in Hungary the fugitive former Macedonian premier Nikola Gruevski, sentenced to two years in prison for corruption.”

At the paramilitary level, the conflict in eastern Ukraine has served as a training ground for white supremacists and neo-Nazis from around the world. These fighters have returned (or attempted to return) to their home countries to apply what they’ve learned. The Ukrainian government, for instance, [arrested](#) a member of the French far right fighting in the country who was plotting to attack several targets in France, including a synagogue and a mosque. Former fighters from Italy smuggled into their country an air-to-air missile, rocket launchers, and machine guns, which the Italian authorities [confiscated in a raid](#). In September 2019, the FBI arrested a U.S. soldier in Kansas who planned to attack CNN. He’d been [mentored by two American GIs](#) who’d fought with a far-right Ukrainian paramilitary group.

In addition to the links they are making with one another, the European far right is eager to connect with like-minded groups in more distant countries with large white populations. “The far right in Australia has been bringing in speakers from the far right globally,” reports Phil Ireland, the chair of GetUp in Australia. “Nigel Farage is a darling of theirs. I understand that there have been interactions with Steve Bannon. Geert Wilders from the Netherlands has also been brought out to Australia.” In South Africa, meanwhile, the new right has [raised concerns](#) of “white genocide” involving the so-called oppression of white farmers, a meme that attracted the attention of [Fox News and Donald Trump](#), though in fact the murder of farmers in the country recently hit a 20-year low and those figures include non-white farmers as well.

A more complicated relationship connects the far right with Israel. Neo-Nazi organizations for the most part want nothing to do with the country. But right-wing evangelicals have established close ties with the right-wing administration of Benjamin Netanyahu. New right parties in Europe, like Austria’s Freedom Party, have reached out to Israel, with party leader Heinz-Christian Strache [visiting Israel in 2016](#). Such connections “allow these parties in Europe to say that they’re not anti-Semites because people see that they are working with Jews and supporting Israel,” explains Ran Cohen of the Israeli [Democratic Bloc](#). “It also allows them to exchange their anti-Semitism for Islamophobia in a very smooth way.” Indeed, a number of countries, especially India, see Israel as a key ally in their struggle against Islam: “Both countries define themselves as being surrounded by Muslim enemies,” observes Phyllis Bennis of IPS in Washington, DC.

Israel has emerged as a hub of transnational right-wing activism in another way. "If you want to talk about refugees, you have to understand Israel and Palestine," explains Khury Petersen-Smith of IPS. "In the late 1990s, early 2000s, Israel said, 'We should just build a wall to keep out Palestinians.' At the time, it was out of bounds of what's acceptable in the international community. But Israel said, 'Well, we're doing it.' And now there are a lot of walls." Trump administration officials have [visited Israel](#) to examine how Israel builds its walls. In addition, Israeli firms have [won contracts](#) to supply technology at the U.S.-Mexico border, and the Israeli government has also [sent troops](#) to Honduras to train the border patrol there.

Cleavages on the Right

It's hard to imagine that nationalists all trying to make their countries "great again" could find much common ground. Populist rightwing governments might agree that their governments have exclusive and sovereign control within their borders, but in practice they have clashed over territory and trade. Differences in religion, ethnicity, and historical memory also divides the new right. Only a common threat—global institutions, immigrants, minority rights—provides coalitional cohesion across borders.

"At a time of deep nationalism, it's actually hard to get nationalists to agree on anything," observes Eric Ward. "That's why Yockey, Carto, and Pierce really pushed the idea of white identity. The European far right doesn't really coalesce until the identitaire movement takes off"

Despite an ideological agreement around the narrative of the "great replacement," the European far right is not on the same page on all issues, for instance around financial flows within the European Union. "Salvini is arguing for spending more money for Italy," points out Alex Demirovic, a senior scholar at the Rosa-Luxemburg Stiftung in Germany. "But the German right-wing populists were founded on a criticism of the Euro policies and the European central bank policies after the crisis, so they are totally against any support for other European countries."

Russia is another divisive issue. Although a couple far-right parties have signed association agreements with Putin's United Russia party, PiS in Poland would never consider such a move.

The head of PiS, Jarosław Kaczyński, "would never say that he's an ally of Vladimir Putin," points out Bartosz Rydliński, a professor of political science in Warsaw. "A lot of PiS supporters still think Russia is responsible for the crash in Smolensk in 2010 [which killed Kaczyński's brother, President Lech Kaczyński, and much of his cabinet]. Also, in 2008 when Russia invaded Georgia, Lech Kaczyński went to Tbilisi with the presidents of Lithuania, Estonia, Ukraine, and other Central European countries to show solidarity with Mikheil Saakashvili. Kaczyński said, 'Today, Georgia, tomorrow Ukraine, the next day the Baltics. And there might come a day when Poland faces a similar threat.'"

Although Bolsonaro and Orbán share a distaste for the LGBTQ movement, other far-right leaders like Geert Wilders [have embraced same-sex marriage](#) and decried Islamists for opposing gay rights. Similarly, some elements of the far right are old school sexist, while others have updated their ideology to permit women leaders like Alice Weidel of the Alternative für Deutschland and Pia Kjaersgaard and Kristian Thulesen Dahl, the former and current heads of the Danish People's Party. As Birgit Sauer points out, the more modern new right argues that "Western countries are gender equal while most of the migrants have traditional patriarchal gender relations." Some elements of the European far right have [begun to support stronger measures](#) to protect the environment—in part out of concerns that rising waters will produce more migrants—and craft a new kind of [Green fascism](#). Both Bolsonaro and Trump, however, remain firmly aligned with the fossil fuel industry.

Racism and intolerance are also stumbling blocks for building a global new right. The "great replacement" narrative pits Europeans against non-Europeans and Americans against non-Americans. White nationalism, after all, can promote only a narrow consensus.

Civil Society on the Right

Transnational activism is not limited to the commanding heights of the new right. Civil society organizations have also been creating connections across borders. The [World Congress of Families](#), founded in 1997, promotes its religious nationalist agenda through regular global gatherings. "Their convenings have increasingly been a site for cross-fertilization across political and religious movements, mostly within Christianity but also other faith traditions," reports Tarso Ramos of [Political Research Associates](#) in Boston. Alliance Defending Freedom International spends millions of dollars in court cases in [more than 50 countries](#) against same-sex marriage and abortion. The global right-wing petition organization CitizenGo, which made its name by gathering [over 200,000 signatures](#) for a Council of Europe petition against late-term abortion, has also promoted its anti-trans messages on [buses](#) around the world.

"The world of social conservatives in the United States is intensely involved internationally in every single place, pushing anti-LGBT and anti-abortion thinking," explains Heidi Beirich of the Southern Poverty Law Center. "They are very cognizant of the need to go beyond the nation state to push their issues. You'd think that the most parochial movement, Christian conservatives in the U.S., wouldn't think that way. But they think bigger than we do."

Much of the focus of new right civil society has been on minority populations: the LGBTQ community, people of color (in predominantly white countries), and religious minorities. Throughout Eastern Europe but also in some Western European countries, Roma have been a particular target. "The right wing and extremists always need to have an enemy: one day it can be Roma, another day it will be another group," explains

Zeljko Jovanovic of the Open Society [Roma Initiatives Office](#) in Berlin. “Usually the most under-represented groups with the least political power to strike back are those who are attacked, minority groups in particular.” Also responsible, he adds, are groups from the center left and center right that fail to see that the attacks on Roma represent a danger for democracy in general.

Given the dominant narrative of the “great replacement,” immigration has served as a major networking opportunity for far-right civil society organizations. Organizations like the Center for Immigration Studies and the Federation for American Immigration Reform have coordinated across the Atlantic. “The promotion of *The Camp of the Saints*—the French xenophobic and racist novel that first mainstreamed the replacement theory that everyone is talking about—was highly promoted and distributed by Social Contract Press” in the United States, explains Eric Ward. “Through that kind of work, the idea of a Fortress America is built off what the new right was doing in Europe based on Fortress Europe—the idea of stopping all undocumented migration into the U.S..”

A kind of “Fortress Brazil” has also emerged, with Bolsonaro [portraying](#) Venezuelan migrants as a threat. Similarly, far-right Hindu nationalists aim to create a [Fortress India](#) that expels all undocumented Muslims, including those who have lived in the country their whole lives. White nationalists have reached out to Hindu nationalists, and the extremist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) even had links to the Nazi movement in Germany. “We should not underestimate the possibility of the nationalist movement in India reaching out to the global North,” argues Walden Bello.

Although the “great replacement” remains a powerful narrative for the far right, a shift might be under way—toward climate change. With the Adelphi Institute, German journalist Susanne Götze conducted research that determined that “nearly all the right-wing parties in Europe are linked to climate deniers.” The shift could be seen in the 2019 European Parliament elections, when the right wing adopted a climate denial agenda.

“Climate change was always a bit of a niche topic that the far right focused on, but this time it overtook the topic of migration, which has been huge in Europe and featured as the top theme among far-right activists for last few years,” reports Julia Ebner of the [Institute for Strategic Dialogue](#) (ISD). “Now for the first time it has completely shifted toward a focus on climate change. There were also smear campaigns against Greta Thunberg as the face for pro-environmentalism. This strategy of putting a face on the topic was the same thing they did to George Soros on the migration topic.”

Civil society organizations are also active in the diaspora where they funnel money back to right-wing parties and politicians back home. “In the case of the Philippines for instance, many of the Filipinos who support Trump in the United States also support Duterte,” says Walden Bello. A global network of Diehard Duterte Supporters

(DDS) holds meetings in various countries and [aggressively criticize](#) Duterte opponents on the Internet. The often-violent rhetoric becomes even more ominous for those who recognize that DDS also stands for Davao Death Squad, the paramilitaries linked to Duterte when he was mayor of Davao City.

The 28-million strong Indian diaspora is a [key constituency](#) for Modi's BJP—and a source of fundraising as well. Donald Trump's [appearance at a Modi rally](#) in Houston in mid-September 2019 underscores the importance of diaspora politics in the electoral imagination of both leaders. Right-wing Jewish donors [provide financing](#) for the non-profits, political parties, and settlement activities of Israeli extremists. Meanwhile, the diaspora can also be a source of support for the far right's push for regime change abroad, as is the case with a group of Chinese living in America who [translate Trump's tweets](#) into Chinese in the hopes of undermining the Communist Party in Beijing.

Digital Organizing

The far right has proven not only to be early adopters when it comes to digital technology. It is adept at constructing alternative platforms when barred from access to mainstream outlets.

"Stormfront went up on the Web in 1995, and that was the first place where all of the sudden you had global thinking around white supremacy," says Heidi Beirich of SPLC. "More recently, they've been able to forge the bonds of white pride worldwide, and the Web just made it easier. So, now you can have American white supremacists funding identitarians in places like Italy and Austria to fund a boat to go out and round up immigrants. This coordination factor didn't used to exist."

Ethan Zuckerman adds, "There's absolutely evidence that the far right has found ways to create compelling content. A lot of that content is in plain sight. Their most powerful tool is exploiting YouTube's recommendation algorithm. If you spend enough time on a topic, you tend to go down these rabbit holes of extremism." Canada's Jordan Petersen, for instance, might seem like just another self-help guru. But if you start watching his videos on YouTube, his references to [race](#) or [masculinity](#) or incel culture (involuntary celibates) could very well lead you to more extreme content, thanks to YouTube's suggested links.

Even when the far right is "deplatformed"—a [successful strategy](#) that removes those promoting hate speech from mainstream social media like Twitter or Reddit—it continues to distribute its content through 8chan (now 8kun), the [chat app Discord](#), or newer platforms like Gab, which has attracted nearly a million registered users with its extremist content, alt-right celebrity posters, and sophisticated user interface. Live-streaming extreme content [through sites like Twitch](#), whether it's a Trump rally or a gunman killing two people outside a synagogue in Halle in October 2019, provides the far right nearly unfettered access to a global audience.

“These movements are not necessarily transnational in the sense of someone in a castle in Austria leading the movements of all the neo-Nazis,” Zuckerman continues. Rather, they are transnational in their storytelling. “These movements are always trying to get you to reject standard narratives and believe that there’s a suppressed narrative out there, and that once you unlock that suppressed narrative, you will understand the secret truth of the world.” That’s where Bannon and Breitbart come in: to upcycle alternative narratives, like the “great replacement,” into the mainstream.

Julia Ebner portrays these transnational connections as a three-way collaboration. “On the one hand you have extreme right groups trying to push their narrative, dictate the political agenda, and also dictate what’s reported in the news. These are often coordinated campaigns involving troll armies and social media fake accounts. The second part of the triangle is the alternative media outlets: a whole new empire of alternative blogs and hyper-biased information that the far right has built across Europe in different languages and often linked to American media outlets like Breitbart or Rebel Media in Canada. Once the disinformation spreads across one platform it spreads across the other platforms, so it’s hyper-networked in this sense. The third part of the triangle are the far-right populist parties.” These parties either benefit from these campaigns or share the biased articles or piggyback on the hashtags within an extremist echo chamber. At times, the far right launches unbranded social media campaigns in which they try to obscure their fingerprints to give an appearance of neutrality.

This sharing takes place most visibly across the Atlantic. But traces can even be found in China. For instance, the Chinese website Zhihu sponsored a Q and A after the New Zealand mosque attack. “A lot of people cheered for [the attack] and expressed support for the shooter,” researcher Chenchen Zhang says. “Those were top voted comments.” Although the website ultimately removed those comments, other racist and [Islamophobic content](#) remains uncensored in China because, from the point of view of the government, it highlights the failures of Western liberalism and shows the strength of the Chinese system.

Going Mainstream

The far right has moved into the mainstream through a variety of tactics and not just by creating successful political parties. “The real danger today is not that we have an unstoppable wave of far-right populism,” notes Princeton professor Jan-Werner Mueller. “The real danger is the opportunism of the mainstream: other parties that outright collaborate with these far-right populist parties or de facto copy at least some of their rhetoric and even some of their policies.”

In Austria, for instance, at the federal level the far-right Freedom Party came to power in coalition with the more traditionally conservative People’s Party. In addition to partnering with the Freedom Party, the People’s Party standard bearer, Sebastian

Kurz, has adopted much of the far right's rhetoric. "Back in 2017, Kurz had been talking all the time about immigration," Alexandra Strickner of the Austrian chapter of [Attac](#) points out. "He has a quite authoritarian agenda. It's important to look at how the center—the Christian Democrats and even the Social Democrats—is shifting much more to the right."

Indeed, the new right is constructing an entirely different political playing field. "An anti-immigration right-wing populist party like Alternative für Deutschland or a grassroots movement like Pegida functions as incubator or hub where people from the conservative right meet highly violent extremists that they would normally not meet," explains Daniel Koehler of the [German Institute in Radicalization and De-Radicalization Studies](#). "These populist right-wing parties systematically bring down the social barriers that would normally prevent extremist groups from interacting with the political mainstream."

In Japan, right-wing nationalist Shinzo Abe has injected what had once been fringe views about Japanese history into the mainstream. "Since Abe took office the second time at the end of 2012, he has really shifted the whole society to the right," Satoko Norimatsu of the [Peace Philosophy Centre](#) in Vancouver explains. "For example, something that would have been controversial 10 or 20 years ago is no longer controversial. If a Cabinet member had denied that the Nanjing Massacre ever happened 10 or 20 years ago, he'd have been dismissed immediately. Now, almost the whole cabinet accepts this." A similar transformation has taken place in Israel where Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "started supporting far-right activists and candidates and mainstreaming their ideas in order to keep himself in power," reports Ran Cohen.

In Russia, Vladimir Putin used a subtle shift in vocabulary to signify his appropriation of a more exclusionary nationalist project. In the Russian language, the term "Russian" is either *russky* (ethnic Russian) or *rossisky* (Russian by citizenship). "Since 2012, Putin started using *russky*," explains Ilya Matveev. "Previously Putin supported the civic nation. But since the annexation of Crimea, nationalism became more ethnicized. This is precisely what the nationalists wanted, and they became semi-allies of the regime."

In the United States, meanwhile, the victory of Trump in the 2016 elections, but more so his transformation of the Republican Party, has meant that "the line between the fringe and the right is starting to collapse," Heidi Beirich notes. "Over the last year, there has been a deepening of the alliance between the Republican Party and these groups that were never accepted in the GOP. The Republicans would dog-whistle a lot about Blacks and immigrants. But now they're openly working with extremists who were beyond the pale before."

Sometimes the right-wing populist party will even align with more extremist civil society. In Poland in 2018, for instance, government officials for the first time joined

the [Independence Day march](#) organized by the far-right National Radical Camp. The following year, local politicians from the Law and Justice Party (PiS) also showed up in support of an anti-LGBT demonstration in Białystok. “Everyone was quite shocked that this collaboration happened in Białystok,” reports Igor Stokfiszewski of [Krytyka Polityczna](#) in Warsaw. “Until now, we had the impression that PiS was trying to keep at least a little distance, but now they are directly collaborating with the far right.”

To move into the mainstream requires money. Right-wing civil society organizations and foundations have facilitated this flow of money. The far-right embrace of climate denial, for instance, gets a big global lift from the likes of ExxonMobil and the Koch brothers. The U.S. climate-denial thinktank Heartland Institute works closely with European partners. “During the last UN climate conference in Poland,” according to German journalist Susanne Götze, “the Heartland Institute connected with the Polish trade union, Solidarność. They signed a contract of collaboration. They did it officially. They don’t hide.” Solidarność represents Poland’s dwindling number of coal miners.

In Spain, where the stigma attached to former fascist dictator Francisco Franco hitherto restricted the emergence of far-right political parties, the [new Vox party](#) took advantage of considerable international support to get off the ground. Campaign finance laws in the EU makes it difficult for foreigners to contribute money to elections. But as in the United States, foreigners could [support](#) like-minded organizations that spread Vox-like messages. During the parliamentary elections in April 2019, the party went from zero to 10 percent (and 24 MPs) in record time and then, in a second election in November, doubled its seats to become the country’s [third largest party in parliament](#). “The internationals helped shape the image of Vox, the rallies, the discourse, and gave it lots of messages to test, like anti-immigration,” explains Jordi Vaquer.

Entering the mainstream also opens up new sources of funding. Vox first achieved electoral success at the regional level, in Andalusia in December 2018. Even though the party had previously criticized state funding for parties, it [gladly accepted](#) nearly 3 million Euros of such funding. In Germany, meanwhile, political parties that make it into the Bundestag in consecutive elections become eligible for state funds to support their activities worldwide. The far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) has created a foundation, the Erasmus Stiftung, that can tap into those funds. If the AfD is able to remain in the Bundestag in 2021, which is likely given its successes in the local and European Parliament elections in 2019, the foundation could receive [70 million Euros of taxpayer money per year](#).

Once in power, the populist right attempts to transform the mainstream by suppressing oppositional civil society. In Brazil, for instance, “The Bolsonaro government has criminalized popular movements and political organizations,” explains Tchenna Maso of [La Via Campesina](#) and [Movement of People Affected by Dams in Latin America](#) in São Paulo. “The government is focused on suppressing

organizing on the left, shutting down marches and protests.” Bolsonaro early on [issued a decree](#) to “supervise, coordinate, monitor and accompany the activities and actions of international organizations and non-governmental organizations in the national territory.” A major focus of this heightened government control has been on [environmental organizations](#), which the Brazilian president has [even blamed](#) for the recent intensification of fires in the Amazon.

Suppressing civil society also involves restricting the flow of funding. “When it comes to the European situation, if some of these parties take power, as happened in Austria, there’s a lot more to lose in Europe than in the United States because civil society groups are tied to the state,” adds Heidi Beirich.

This has already happened in Poland. “We are dealing with structural discrimination against civil society organizations including Krytyka Polityczna,” explains Igor Stokfiszewski. “We have been cut off from any public funds. We have been attacked in the public media, on public TV, and pointed out as an enemy of the people.” In Russia, the Putin government instituted [a “foreign agent” law](#) in 2012 that stigmatizes any NGO that accepts money from a foreign entity. In Hungary, the parliament passed two laws in summer 2018, one criminalizing assistance to migrants and another that imposes a tax on any funding that promotes migration in general. Many organizations feel that if they “owned up to the fact that they were working on this subject, it would damage their overall reputation and their ability to fundraise among Hungarian citizens and attract volunteers,” reports Márta Pardavi of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee.

The problem goes beyond the financing of civil society organizations. If the populist right manages to take control of government, it often engages in “state capture,” using the mechanisms of state power to strengthen the party and its affiliated organizations. In Hungary, for instance, the Fidesz government of Viktor Orbán has [helped concentrate](#) the media in the hands of its supporters and has even distributed something as relatively minor as [licenses for cigarette sales](#) to party loyalists. If the Hungarian government renationalizes utilities or banks, it’s not because of some fundamental belief that the state benefits from controlling the “commanding heights” of the economy. Rather, Fidesz simply wants more power in its hands and more spoils to distribute. Such policies, alongside voter suppression and constitutional changes, help explain the persistence in power of such parties and politicians: Vladimir Putin in Russia (since 1999), Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (since 2003), Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua (since 2007), Viktor Orbán (since 2010), Shinzo Abe in Japan (since 2012).

By systematically dismantling the guardrails of democracy, these political forces aspire to transform the electoral realm and end the more conventional oscillation of political passions. The new right does not just want to win at politics. It wants to end politics—as it is practiced in democratic societies. The challenge for the left, then, is not just to win elections, but to reinvigorate democracy overall.

PART THREE: Transnational Progressive Organizing

The [World Social Forum](#), which began when 12,000 people converged on Porto Alegre in Brazil in January 2001 under the banner of “another world is possible,” represents the most recent high point in progressive, multi-issue global organizing. Its successes and shortcomings provide an important reference point for current efforts to challenge the transnational right.



Globe at World Social Forum, Porto Alegre, Brazil, 2005 (Friends of the Earth International via Flickr)

An extraordinary combination of political debate, strategy session, and carnival, the World Social Forum united two distinct trajectories in transnational organizing.

At the UN level, states and civil society collaborated on a series of gatherings such as the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and the World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. “The first transnational mobilization was of the ecological movements to create the Earth Summit and to create legally binding treaties for biodiversity and climate change,” recalls activist author Vandana Shiva from India. “That legal infrastructure is what the one percent and the so-called populists are attacking right now.”

The second strand were the grassroots protests against the institutions and mechanisms of economic globalization. Environmentalists, trade unionists, and farmers converged on Seattle in 1999, temporarily shutting down the World Trade Organization meeting and blocking what former director-general Renato Ruggiero [called](#) the “constitution of a single global economy.”

“In the late 1990s, one of the terms that emerged to describe this transnational progressive activism was the ‘anti-globalization’ movement,” Kumi Naidoo of [Amnesty International](#) observes. “I found that very ironic because the so-called anti-globalization movement was a very global movement. It was using some of the tools of transnational connectivity and the Internet and online ways of connecting. We should call it instead a global justice movement or a gender justice movement or an economic justice movement.”

This global justice movement accelerated after 1999, through the protests against the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2001 and the G8 summit in Genoa in July 2001. But then it hit up against the events of September 11, 2001. “The next big mobilization was set for October 2001, two or three weeks after the 9/11 attacks,” recalls Phyllis Bennis of IPS. “First, every airport in the world was shut down. And people just realized that we just can’t keep going as if nothing had changed (because George W. Bush made sure of that). So, that meeting never happened, and even though the global justice movement continued to do really important work, organizationally it never really recovered from that blow.”

The union of these two trajectories, the World Social Forum provided a people’s alternative to the World Economic Forum meeting at Davos. Even as the September 11 attacks interrupted the momentum of the post-Seattle mobilization against the WTO and free trade, the WSF only grew larger, spawning regional forums and creating innumerable joint enterprises.

“All the demos against the war in Iraq were coordinated in those spaces,” Fiona Dove of TNI remembers. “Some of the big trade campaigns, the movement against corporate impunity, also began there.” Sarita Gupta, formerly of Jobs with Justice, says that the organization’s relationship to “the New Trade Union initiative in India—which seeded the [Asia Floor Wage Campaign](#) but is now taking on gender-based violence in the garment sector—happened 100 percent because of the WSF process.”

Kali Akuno of [Cooperation Jackson](#) in Mississippi connects the work of the organization to the meetings, delegations, and conversations around the WSF, particularly participatory budgeting, a more inclusive mechanism for determining spending priorities that began in Brazil. “In the early 2000s, me and several others took a couple of different popular education courses on participatory budgeting,” he remembers. “A number of political forces here in Mississippi committed ourselves to bringing participatory budgeting here and implementing it after that.”

The Forum was also noteworthy for being driven by groups from the Global South. The meetings took place in Brazil, India, Senegal, Tunisia, Kenya, Mali, Venezuela. The WSF did not take place in the Global North—in Montreal—until its fifteenth edition in 2016.

In the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, other global movements intersected with the WSF. The Occupy Movement in the United States, the indignados in Spain, and the Arab Spring embraced a parallel spirit of social justice. They achieved certain victories—the Occupy Movement “for the first time put inequality at the top of the global agenda,” argues Srećko Horvat, the Croatian philosopher and author of *Poetry from the Future*—and helped sustain the energy of the World Social Forum. But they didn’t produce a durable transnational movement.

Particularly after 2008, many participants chafed at the Forum’s refusal to take political positions and its suspicion of vertical organizing. “The Social Forum was the last truly global response to a failing globalization, a response on the scale of the problem,” argues Lorenzo Marsili. “It was an incredibly rich space for cross-fertilization, for the exchange of best practices. But it failed to make the transition from a pure Habermasian discursive space, a forum for debate, to something more political—not necessarily a political party but a global political movement that would act as a movement, taking a stand on specific questions and trying to influence the debate with a global critical mass.”

Kali Akuno agrees. “Instead of being a movement of movements, which is how it billed itself, there needed to be conversations about how to develop a coordinated international political strategy for maximum impact for our social movements,” he points out. “Unfortunately, a certain level of rehashing of the ideological debates of the twentieth century reemerged. Some forces didn’t want to repeat the centralized politics of the left of that period.”

For Oded Grajew, one of the founders of the World Social Forum, the institution was always political in the sense of trying to influence policy. But the Forum was also careful to be an open space that welcomed a wide variety of organizations. When some people wanted the WSF to make a declaration in support of Brazilian leader Dilma Rousseff, for instance, Grajew encouraged them to put one out in the name of the organizations that agreed, but not in the name of everyone. “Others wanted to make a declaration that the most important thing to do is to fight climate change,” he says. “But others say that most important thing is gender inequality or social inequality. You must respect everyone who has different positions and priorities.”

Although the 2018 Social Forum mobilized 80,000 people, the process no longer has quite the same momentum as it did in the 2000s. The Workers Party in Brazil, which supported the WSF in its early years, lost power, and its leader Lula was imprisoned. The pink tide of left-leaning governments in Latin America has ebbed. The sheer

expense and carbon footprint of such gatherings were also challenges. “I always said that in periods of declining resources, we should conserve every bit of our energy and meet once every decade,” Vandana Shiva notes. “We bathe every day—but in India we have a cycle of 12 years before we go to bathe in the Ganges for the Kumbh, the fair of creation.”

After 20 years, the World Social Forum has been developing many thematic issues such as the migration crisis (Mexico), the fight against the extraction economy (South Africa in 2018), and the upcoming focus on transformative economies in Barcelona in 2020. According to Jason Nardi of the [Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of Social Solidarity Economy](#) in Florence, one of the organizers of the 2020 meeting, the [Barcelona gathering](#) will bring together movements and organizations working on the commons, agro-ecology, alternative economic and financial practices, feminist economics, and nonviolent action. One possible outcome would be “a movement version of the Sustainable Development Goals, but based on our actions and practices,” he says. “The transformative actions would be the different goals that we want to look at over a 10-year period to change public policy, finance, education, and culture. We are developing systemic alternatives to the neoliberal market economy, towards a post-growth economic system that can address climate justice, inequality, and poverty eradication while profoundly democratizing our societies.”

Although the thematic Forums allow for more focused networking and organizing, activists still speak fondly of the larger, multi-issue gatherings. “If there’s a moment when we need a WSF-like space, it’s right now,” observes Sarita Gupta, currently the director of the [Ford Foundation’s Future of Work\(ers\)](#) program. May Boeve points out that “looking at issues with a cross-sectional analysis is all the rage now but we were doing that a long time ago—with the climate crisis, the wars, the debt crisis, bringing all those issues together. Those spaces are not happening now.” Ethan Earle adds, “Just because something has completed its life cycle doesn’t mean it can’t be reborn. So, another iteration of the World Social Forum or something similar could again be useful one day.”

The regional Forums are no longer taking place. But one of the organizers of the U.S. Social Forum, [Grassroots Global Justice](#), is preparing to launch a national convening of 10,000 people in the United States for 2021 that will attempt to take this kind of organizing to the next level, providing space for multi-issue discussions and building between different sectors with a more political focus. “We learned a lot of lessons from the U.S. Social Forum,” says GGJ’s Cindy Wiesner in Miami. “We’re thinking long-term about how to create a new independent political vehicle that’s so desperately needed and that brings us together beyond our nonprofit organizations or activist collectives so that we can contend for power.”

Locus of Activism

Much of the multi-issue transnational activism of the left has shadowed official international gatherings. The World Social Forum was a response to the World Economic Forum in Davos. The mobilizations against free trade agreements often took place alongside WTO meetings or G-7 gatherings or meetings around particular agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership or the North American Free Trade Agreement. During the 1990s and into the 2000s, the [Helsinki Citizens Assembly](#) created a civil society equivalent to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe while the [ASEAN People's Forum](#) attempted something similar with the Association of South-East Asian Nations. High-profile meetings of government officials provide a time and a date as well as a news hook for potential media coverage of the civil society shadow events.

"It does make it easier when you have clearly defined institutions and their gatherings to go up against," observes Kavita N. Ramdas. "When those institutions, however flawed, now seem the last resort of sanity, however, it makes you wonder whether we should be going up against the World Bank when Trump is ripping up any kind of interactions with anyone in the world."

"In the national context, it's clear who the people are to organize against. At the transnational level, there is a question of organizing against whom?"

Nikhil Aziz

One obvious locus of activism for progressives is the United Nations, an institution that has embodied internationalism since its founding in the wake of World War II. Its human rights conventions, institutions devoted to refugees and climate change, specialized agencies like the International Labor Organization (ILO), and commitment to peacekeeping all embody progressive transnational ideals. Workplace justice organizers scored a victory in June 2019 when the ILO established a new [global standard](#) to end violence and sexual harassment at work. "Across the world, campaigns are happening now to ratify the treaty and implement the framework at the national and local levels," reports Cathy Feingold of the AFL-CIO. The [Global Campaign to Reclaim People's Sovereignty, Dismantle Corporate Power, and Stop Corporate Impunity](#) is a multi-sectoral network of over 250 social movements, trade unions, and affected communities focused on reining in the power of transnational corporations. One of its principal campaigns is to push a [binding treaty](#) to regulate TNCs through the UN. "This global campaign brings together diverse movements that feel unified in the struggle against corporate power," says Kumi Naidoo of Amnesty International.

However, Kavita N. Ramdas of Open Society continues, “The UN has lost so much legitimacy. Through 9/11, the bombing of Afghanistan and Iraq, the interventions to destabilize the Middle East, the rest of the world has lost confidence that the UN is anything but a mouthpiece for the United States and for the Global North.” Moreover, as Phyllis Bennis, argues, “From the vantage point of the far right, the UN is already irrelevant. The far right is not focused primarily on challenging the UN because they don’t see it as a viable instrument of the globalists. They’re more focused on the international financial institutions.”

Other potential targets of protest and pressure include the headquarters of transnational corporations, international weapons shows, and global banks. Activists can rely on legal mechanisms at the International Criminal Court. The Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe, whose members also include the United States and Russia, has a structure in which NGOs can speak directly to governments as part of the reviews of country performances on democracy and human rights. Within Europe, activists can also take their concerns to the European Court of Human Rights, the European Commission, and several other bodies.

Regional Organizing

Multi-issue transnational organizing at the global level, via the World Social Forum, has subsided to a certain extent over the last few years. But transnational organizing at a regional level remains robust.

Europe, for instance, is a natural locus for such organizing because, as Lorenzo Marsili points out, it is an economically and politically integrated continent with “a transnational government in the form of the European Commission and the European Parliament and a very sophisticated system of interdependencies among member states. So, it provides fertile ground for building a genuine transnational counterpower within the space that EU provides.” One such effort, [Europe for the Many](#), is working transnationally to strengthen the “remain and reform” movement within the European Union in the face of Brexit and other manifestations of Euroskepticism.

An example of successful European transnational activism was the campaign against the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA), which [generated demonstrations](#) in cities across Europe and involved, in particular, young people. Widespread concern that ACTA would infringe on freedom of expression eventually prompted the European Parliament to kill the measure in 2012. “Because ACTA was transnational and about to affect transnational space, only transnational mobilization was able to stop it,” Igor Stokfiszewski of Krytyka Polityczna. points out. “It became a pattern for coordinated transnational action of social movements and political parties to resist those kinds of political solutions.” But, he cautioned, with the exception of climate change and a few other issues, most of the problems facing Europe do not lend themselves to transnational solutions.

Krytyka has also been involved in several other interesting trans-European initiatives. For five years, between 2012 and 2017, it sponsored a meeting in the Polish city of Cieszyn for representatives of progressive movements particularly from East-Central Europe. And it has participated with five other cultural organizations from France, Croatia, Spain, Moldova, and Sweden in [Connected Action for the Commons](#).

In Africa, too, a number of continental initiatives have taken root. [Africans Rising for Peace, Justice, and Dignity](#) involves over 370 organizations across the continent. On May 25 every year, Africans Rising sponsors events focusing on a different issue. In 2019, the focus was on slavery and human trafficking with more than 130 events across the continent and in the diaspora as well. Coumba Touré of Africans Rising explains, “The issues we’re struggling with here are the same that Africans are struggling with in Brazil or the United States or Europe. By being Africans, some of our issues are automatically transnational.”

In Latin America in 2015, 10 years after the defeat of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas, social movements came together to create [La Jornada Continental](#), the Continental Meeting for Democracy and against Neoliberalism. “We decided that the social movements of the continent needed to come together to strengthen the struggle against neoliberalism, corporate power, and free-trade agreements and stop the takeover of democracy by right-wing and authoritarian forces,” explains Karin Nansen of [Friends of the Earth International](#) in Uruguay. “But we are also integrating cross-cutting issues such as environmental justice and feminist perspectives, which are fundamental to expose and confront the root causes of the systemic crisis we face.” Around 3,000 people met in Montevideo in 2017 to strategize and organize joint campaigns. The most recent meeting was in Cuba in November 2019.

The Movement of People Affected by Dams in Latin America (MAB) is drawing social movements together in the region as well. In addition to meetings in Panama in September and Bilbao in October 2019, Tchenna Maso hopes that MAB will organize gatherings in Asia and Africa in 2020. Women, too, are organizing a continent-wide meeting of feminists next year. “The women’s movement is old but what we are seeing is a new wave of this movement, a new generation of young women, many of them really radical not just on access to abortion but against all the inequalities of the patriarchy,” reports Luciana Ghiotto, who teaches political economy at Universidad Nacional de San Martín in Buenos Aires. Meanwhile, in North America, the groups behind the trinational initiative to oppose NAFTA are hoping to revive the process in 2020, in part to [challenge NAFTA 2.0](#) but also “to make the case that environmental and social concerns should be concerns for labor unions,” says Manuel Perez-Rocha of IPS.



Christine Ahn and Gloria Steinem in Korea, Women Cross DMZ (Jean Chung)

In Asia, [Women Cross DMZ](#) has brought together women from the two Koreas, the United States, Europe, and elsewhere to advance peace and reunification on the Korean peninsula. “The Trump administration has been upending traditional approaches to U.S. foreign policy,” notes one of the driving forces behind the movement, Christine Ahn from Hawai’i. “For better or worse, it has created some strategic opportunities. As a peace movement and a feminist movement, we have to seize the moment to create peace on the Korean peninsula.” Toward that same end, Cheong Wooksik of the Peace Network in Seoul is part of a regional movement “pushing an agenda of creating a nuclear-weapons-free zone on the Korean Peninsula as a prior step to the creation of a NWFZ in Northeast Asia.”

One of the most successful regional organizing efforts in Asia is constantly on the move. Founded in 1983 as a “floating peace village,” [Peace Boat](#) brings together hundreds of passengers from countries all around the world for two long peace tours in Asia every year (and three global tours). “Having people go beyond national borders is the very foundation of building peace,” explains Peace Boat’s Akira Kawasaki in Tokyo. “When you look at the current intergovernmental disputes—for example, between Japan and South Korea or Japan and China— they’re a symptom of people very much trapped in narrowly defined nationalism. Cultivating a sense of global citizenship or an identity as Asians rather than Japanese, Chinese, or Korean through our Asia voyages—a change in mindset—is the basic methodology Peace Boat has employed since its founding in 1983.” In Northeast Asia, Peace Boat has recently been bringing together groups from the two Koreas, Japan, and China for a meeting in Ulan Bator, Mongolia to discuss concrete steps toward peace and denuclearization in the region.

Largely absent from regional organizing, at least on an activist level, is China. This poses a challenge to the progressive movement, which has praised the government in Beijing for its efforts on sustainable energy and criticized it for human rights abuses. Although Chinese environmental activists have collaborated with their regional counterparts, civil society on the mainland remains relatively weak and isolated. “We can’t have a movement that calls itself global or a discourse that calls itself planetary that shuts out not only 1 billion people but the 1 billion people who through their political organization will shape the next decades in quite a significant way,” observes Lorenzo Marsili. Peace Boat has been perhaps most successful in engaging ordinary Chinese citizens. According to Akira Kawasaki, so many participants in the voyages are now Chinese that the workshops onboard are conducted in Chinese and English, not only Japanese.

There have also been cross-regional initiatives. The [Asia-Europe People’s Forum](#), for instance, has provided a progressive alternative to the Asia-Europe Meeting since 1996. A number of transatlantic progressive efforts have flourished over the years, but the rise of the right has complicated matters. “We used to appeal to the Europeans to be the voice of reason that’s been more willing to challenge the U.S. government,” reports Medea Benjamin of [Code Pink](#). “Because of the growth of the far right in Europe, the groups we work with tend to be weaker.”

Translocal Organizing

Outside of a few countries—Uruguay, South Korea, Spain, Mexico—left parties are not in power. “I don’t see much light at the national level,” says the [AFL-CIO’s](#) Cathy Feingold, “except for the smaller countries like New Zealand and its wellbeing budget or Iceland and geothermal energy and feminism.”

Given this record, it is no surprise, that some on the left are refocusing away from national politics. “This right-wing hasn’t come from nowhere,” Fiona Dove of TNI points out. “They’ve been building this for quite a while. So, transnationally, we need to root politics locally, bring politics back closer to the people. In Europe at any rate, we’re quite excited by this new municipalism.”



A meeting in Spain of transnational municipalists from Fearless Cities (ahora madrid via Flickr)

Rooting politics locally and working transnationally is not a contradiction. In Spain in 2015, after winning power in several major Spanish cities, the left immediately realized “that the challenges of the current moment are transnational— climate change, unaccountable financial flows, the corporate capture of democratic institutions, the right to migrate and the protection of refugees, the arms trade —that had to be addressed through transnational cooperation,” Sol Trumbo Vila of TNI explains. “So, there was a strong effort to connect nationally and transnationally with similar projects in Italy, in Latin America, and also with Cooperation Jackson in Mississippi and Richmond Progressive Alliance in California.” Thus was born the [Fearless Cities](#) campaign.

In Spain, explains Laura Roth of [Barcelona En Comú](#), “When the refugee crisis started, cities basically pressured the state to accept many more refugees because they were willing to put the resources into receiving all those people.” Through the Fearless Cities campaign, Spanish cities have also worked with their counterparts across Europe to press for regulation of transnational corporations like Airbnb. It’s difficult to fight Airbnb locally, she continued, “but if cities join efforts they are much stronger than companies in some cases. Cities are more willing to do these things compared to states or national political parties.”

In the Spanish local elections in 2019, however, the municipalist movement suffered losses throughout the country, with the exception of Barcelona, even as the far right Vox surged. “The fact that many municipalist organizations are not governing gives them a chance to regroup and rethink what they want to do,” Roth concludes.

In Poland, the populist right is in control of national politics and most government structures. But the country is rather decentralized. “Because of this decentralization, it

is possible to resist many of the tendencies that the government is trying to introduce at the level of cities,” including its anti-LGBT actions, Igor Stokfiszewski of Krytyka Polityczna explains. “One of the first actions of the Warsaw mayor was to sign an ‘LGBT charter’ that secures the wellbeing of the LGBT community at a city level.” The progressive mayor of Seoul, Park Won-Soon, made similar efforts to [transform the city](#) even as politics at the national level drifted further to the right (under the eventually impeached President Park Geun-hye). California and other states have mounted challenges to the Trump administration’s climate and immigration policies.

Translocal organizing is not just municipal. In Europe, renewable energy cooperatives are linking up to enable consumers to create a new energy model. As Jason Nardi explains, these new linkages are facilitated by blockchain technology and cryptocurrencies that avoid the speculation and environmental problems of bitcoin. Local currencies—for instance, the *léman* in Geneva, Switzerland—can also help with relocalizing supply chains. “The whole supply chain for craft beer production is relocalized,” Nardi reports. “It is using the *léman* to substitute for the Swiss franc in exchanges with all the suppliers up to the bar or restaurant that sells the beer, from who produces the crop to who transforms it—even to mushroom producers using the residual ‘waste’ to nurture their cultivation.”

Nor is the translocalism restricted to cities. “The groups that we fund—peasant movements, indigenous people’s movements, women’s movements working in rural areas—there is transnational movement building,” observes Nikhil Aziz of the [American Jewish World Service](#). “A lot of it is still localized, still responding to immediate assaults in terms of land grabs or the impact of climate change.” The Inter-Island Solidarity for Peace group brings together activists from a number of Asian islands burdened by military bases and militarization—Jeju, Okinawa, Taiwan, Guam, Hawai’i. It [met in Kinmen](#) (between Taiwan and Mainland China) in September 2019.

Linking Issues

The World Social Forum was transnational and multi-issue. Although such big tent organizing is difficult and expensive, there are plenty of more modest transnational efforts that connect two or more issues.

The environmental movement, for instance, has brought together concerns over sustainability with economic justice, feminism, and issues of war and peace. “The #Fridaysfor Future strikes: that is international organizing through solidarity,” Vandana Shiva points out. “That is today’s World Social Forum.” At Standing Rock, indigenous activists and environmentalists joined hands to block a proposed energy pipeline slated to cross reservation territory. And in Okinawa, environmentalists and peace activists have worked together to stop the construction of a new U.S. military facility, arguing that the base would disrupt the fragile ecosystem along the coast.

Labor and environmental activists have found common cause in such organizations as the [Climate Justice Alliance](#), [Labor Network for Sustainability](#), and [Trade Unions for Energy Democracy](#). One opportunity for transnational linkage on these issues involves challenging corporations that use the investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) [mechanism](#) in free-trade agreements to file suits against countries that have tried to implement responsible environmental policies or regulations. Manuel Perez-Rocha has compiled a database of all the suits filed by extractive industries against countries, which he plans to share with climate change activists “so that they understand the perils of ISDS in their fights against the fossil fuel industries. Countries can make very nice declarations, but it doesn’t matter if they can’t meet those commitments because they might be sued by corporations.”

Arms trade activists have linked arms with human rights campaigners to stop the flow of weapons to places like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Israel. Sustainable farming advocates work with indigenous communities and environmentalists. Anti-corruption forces cooperate with economic justice advocates pushing for greater regulation of global financial institutions. #MeToo activists have taken on structural racism.

There is no shortage of cross-linkages in progressive transnational organizing. The challenge, as Cindy Wiesner points out, is to aim not for the lowest common denominator politics but to cohere at a higher level: “To be honest, this is the kind of work that doesn’t get acknowledged by funders or by other movement counterparts—the work of bringing people together despite differences around shared interests.”

The left, too, faces some tensions in its overall agenda. Activists square off over the relative importance of pocketbook issues versus identity politics. Environmental concerns do not always play well among traditional working-class constituencies, particularly those whose livelihoods depend on polluting industries. So, cross-linkages can also lead to cross-purposes.

But these are not the only challenges facing progressive transnational organizing.

PART FOUR: Challenges for Progressive Transnationalism

The rapid spread of the new right has thrown progressives onto the defensive in country after country. One immediate response has been to refocus attention on the national rather than transnational level. “Each and every organization or party is really busy with what’s happening at home—in Hungary, in Israel, in Greece—without giving much attention to how anti-democratic forces are rising around the world and whether or not we should be looking at it as a global emergency that’s requires global solutions,” observes Ran Cohen.

At a time of heightened threats, the other tendency has been to refocus on one issue to the exclusion of others. When Metta Spencer of Canada’s [Peace Magazine](#) approaches people to work on multi-issue efforts these days, “Almost everyone would say: I’m working my butt off on climate change or on chemical weapons and I can only do so much. You’re asking me to diffuse my efforts. You have too broad a scope. Just take one thing and work on that. But by doing just that one thing, we don’t see how we’re connected to other people working on other issues.”

“We will witness the popularity of the right wing as long as we have a weak left that has no bravery, has no vision, and is afraid of conflict—that is afraid of being alive!”

Bartosz Rydliński

Then there’s the problem of agenda creep. With the new right eager to undermine the status quo, the left often ends up fighting for what had previously been taken for granted by liberal mainstream society such as independent media or free and fair elections. For a left determined to promote transformational change, it can be a challenge to pivot to defending the building blocks of an embattled status quo.

The commonplace challenges of transnational movement-building—the urgency of defending gains at a national level, the compartmentalization of activism, the tension between transformational and incremental change—have only been accentuated by the rise of the new right.

The Centrality of Democracy

The new right is not just attacking liberalism, both domestically and internationally. “What’s in danger here is democracy itself not just liberalism,” argues Jan-Werner Mueller. “We can’t leave the term ‘democracy’ to the populists, unless you want to say that we have democracy as long as the governing party doesn’t stuff ballot boxes on election day. Orbán, Erdoğan, and other populist leaders damage democracy as such when they undermine fundamental political rights.”

If the new right is challenging democracy, a natural response should be to strengthen democracy. “In order to address the crisis, we need more and more democracy, deeper democracy,” argues Karin Nansen of FOEI Uruguay, “in which people have a say, where they can reclaim the political arena and take politics into their hands, and make fundamental decisions like how we should produce our food, how to distribute it, how to change the economic and energy systems.”

“The answer to attacks on democracy is more democracy,” agrees Eric Ward. “It is not the white nationalist movement that is threatening American democracy. What is threatening American democracy is our inability to put forward an alternative to white nationalism that is grounded and inclusive of American voices.”

An inclusive, pro-democracy approach, however, can be either partisan or non-partisan. Annabel Park, who started [the Coffee Party](#) in 2010 in response to the right-wing Tea Party in the U.S., thinks that the latter approach would have more traction, at least in the United States. “For a lot of Americans, democracy is a calling, almost a religion,” she says. “Give them the right opportunity, they’ll drop everything.” But, she added, “They don’t want to do something that’s partisan. They don’t want to spend their time just supporting a party or a candidate—because they are either conflict-averse or they reject the two-party system.”

Political parties are, for the most part, national. So, it is rather difficult to promote a transnational partisan approach. In Europe, however, where members have been directly elected to the European Parliament since 1979, transnational politicking is increasingly an option, not only through linked parties—such as the various Green Parties—but through new transnational efforts like DiEM 25 and Volt.

As the co-founder of [DiEM25](#), a relatively new trans-European movement with an electoral component, Srećko Horvat has no doubts that the left must organize transnational political parties to combat the far right. Although DiEM25 did not manage to enter the European parliament after the 2019 elections, it received 130,000 votes in Germany with a budget of only 35,000 euros. “130,000 votes in Germany is something we have to capitalize,” Horvat says. “Even if we get 10 percent of these people to become active, that’s already a step further.” The party subsequently won nine seats in the recent Greek legislative elections.

Energized by their organizing in Europe and the partial success of Bernie Sanders in the 2016 Democratic Party primaries, DiEM25 and the Sanders Institute have created the [Progressive International](#). After launching in November 2018, it has issued an open call, produced a few videos, and put up a webpage.

Even in Europe, however, where European integration makes cross-border electioneering possible, the challenges are enormous, beginning with the EU's 24 official languages. "It's very difficult to persuade national parties that it's in their interest to establish transnational coordination and relinquish some sovereignty," says Lorenzo Marsili, author of *Citizens of Nowhere*. "I've talked to dozens of party leaders across Europe. They think nationally, their strategic campaigning is done nationally, and they think they won't have much to gain in investing in transnational structures, with the Greens being something of an exception."

For Mary Kaldor, the future of partisan campaigning within the European Union is "less a question of creating trans-European parties and more about building up coalitions that already exist." She cites the same anti-political sentiment in Europe that Annabel Park has observed in the United States. After all, voters have witnessed what happens when progressive parties take power. Progressive leaders in Latin America transformed mainstream politics by, for instance, introducing family payments in Brazil to reduce poverty and helping to end political impunity in Chile. But progressive parties have succumbed to some of the same problems that have afflicted liberal and conservative parties, such as corruption. Also, the electoral success of progressive parties has created a certain dependency, particularly as these governments coopted social movements. "This weakened social movements and civil society, which lost their critical role, for instance on the corruption issue," points out Oded Grajew.

One way of splitting the difference between partisan and non-partisan organizing is to embrace a platform transnationally—such as the Green New Deal (GND). Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC), the outspoken democratic socialist elected to Congress in 2016 who has promoted the GND, "has been an enormous inspiration for people in Europe, even for the Democratic Left Alliance in Poland," reports Bartosz Rydliński. "We are copying the argument of the Green New Deal." Walden Bello concurs: "People in the Global South are in fact inspired by AOC and are looking very carefully at the strategizing and approaches that she and other new women representatives in the House are providing."

Another strategy is to break down the traditional separation between groups that work on electoral politics and those that work across borders. "These are both important parts of the movement," argues Tobita Chow of [Justice Is Global](#) out of Chicago. "A big part of what we are trying to accomplish is to bridge that gap." The new group has brought together U.S. workers with laborers from other countries to make the case for global economic justice at presidential forums in early primary states in fall 2019.

The Structure of Organizing

Right-wing movements are notoriously hierarchical, often organized around a single man (or, very rarely, woman). Outside of Communist parties and movements, which also tend to be hierarchical, the left has been suspicious of too much verticality. Consider the Occupy Movement, which avoided leaders and structures. The left, points out Ethan Earle, takes pains to make sure that its structures are “at least somewhat democratic and respectful of human rights. The far right doesn’t share these values. It wants to win and that’s all. It’ll figure everything else out afterwards.”

Laura Roth sees virtues in more horizontal organizing. “The left has traditionally tried to organize in ways that are not different from the right—and sometimes even worse in hierarchical, centralized ways—and that hasn’t been successful,” she points out. “I’d like to think that more horizontal and decentralized ways have the advantage of making the efforts less vulnerable to attack. A network is harder to attack compared to a visible structure.”

“There is a suspicion of hierarchy, I accept that,” observes Francine Mestrum of [Global Social Justice](#) in Belgium. “But a hierarchy can be made democratic. Trade unions are hierarchical, but they are democratic.” Elsewhere, she [writes](#), “the attachment to horizontality has now become a cover for hiding the really existing power relations. There is no structure, no one has any responsibility and hence there is no accountability. There is no transparency, let alone democracy.”

Srećko Horvat believes that “the problems from the future are actually so big that you need more verticality in the sense of efficient decision-making process and global cooperation. For instance, if you have hundreds of millions of climate refugees, you really need a strong plan and infrastructure to handle this.”

A related tension in transnational organizing has been between social movements and NGOs. At the World Social Forum, those who favor direct action against structures of power and those who favor engagement to reform structures of power have often been at odds. Although the Social Movements Assembly [met during the Forum](#) to formulate consensus positions, Shalmali Guttal believes that the WSF “was much more a space for middle-class organizations. The class character of the organizers and participants was not that of the majority who are living in very dire straits today and who might be capable of organizing on the ground. The WSF in Mumbai sought to change this class character and at least one WSF in Tunisia looked different.” Fiona Dove agrees. “The big World Social Forums at one point got very NGOized,” she notes. “Who got to go were other NGOs, not necessarily movements, and those with access to donors who could pay their way. At some point there was a sense that they were no longer representative.”

One way of squaring this particular circle is the “inside-outside” strategy. NGOs attempt to influence policymakers on the inside with more-or-less quiet diplomacy. Meanwhile, on the outside, social movements make noise in the streets and otherwise mobilize people power in support of more radical change. If the two work at cross-purposes, they can cancel each other out. But if they cooperate, they can become more than the sum of their parts.

Agents of Change

Activism requires activists. The challenge for transnational activism is the lack of international institutions that can employ or otherwise support such activists. “Transnational organizing in the traditional sense is very difficult at this point without an institutional base,” Gar Alperovitz points out.

One such institutional base remains the union movement. “Despite the challenges unions face, we’re still the largest global force,” Cathy Feingold says. The International Trade Union Confederation, where Feingold is the deputy president, [represents](#) over 200 million workers in over 300 affiliates. In terms of transnational activism, she points to new organizing in the informal economy, to a recently opened [Just Transition Center](#) to address the common interests of workers and a sustainable economy, and to the role that unions have played in democratization, like the Tunisian General Trade Union that shared the Nobel Prize in 2015 and continues to represent the “glue for the inclusive democracy” in that country.

Unions and workers organizations are taking on new transnational corporations like Amazon. In 2018, for instance, Amazon workers in Germany and Spain went on strike—and Polish workers conducted a work slowdown—in a coordinated push for better wages and working conditions. Although many Western European companies have set up in Eastern Europe to take advantage of cheaper labor—Poland [has special economic zones](#) just like China and Mexico—“Amazon is the first example where we have intensive connection with workers abroad,” reports labor activist Magda Malinowska of [Inicjatywa Pracownika](#) in Poznań. “They want to work with us because they now need us.”

Organizing among domestic workers around the world has increased dramatically through the efforts of the [National Domestic Workers Alliance](#), [Jobs with Justice](#), and, beginning in 2013, the International Domestic Workers Federation, which [represents 500,000 domestic workers](#) around the world. With continued job loss in manufacturing and agriculture, health care remains a growing field. “The lack of care infrastructure around the world is very real,” Sarita Gupta observes. “It calls into question a much larger set of questions around caregiving and specifically around what people can depend on from their governments in terms of social programs. There’s an opportunity to create 50-85 million more jobs in the health care sector in the global economy. How we shape that is a huge opportunity.”

A growing challenge for the economic justice movement has been a “precariat” of temporary workers, part-time workers, workers without contracts, student workers, and so on. “In the Netherlands, only one in five people has permanent contracts: 80 percent of people are in precarious labor,” notes Fiona Dove. “We need to rethink what we consider labor. Is it only those with permanent contracts in blue-collar jobs, or can we consider it working people in a much bigger sense?”

Economic precariousness is behind a good part of the new right’s electoral success. So, there’s an urgent political need to reach out to this constituency. “We need to counter the skillful use of identity politics by nationalists with the ability to reach out to not only the moveable middle but also to the groups that feel threatened by political and economic change,” argues Jordi Vaquer. “This has to do with blue-collar workers, of course, but also with small homeowners, the lower middle class. They and their children are getting employment that pays less well, that’s much more precarious. The inability to articulate narratives to reach these groups makes them vulnerable to the populist arguments.”

Another way of conceptualizing agency in this regard is to bring together all those fighting against economic inequality, which would unite workers with farmers, indigenous communities, the unemployed, and the otherwise marginalized.



Economic justice event at Dandora landfill, Nairobi, Kenya (Fight Inequality Alliance)

[Fight Inequality Alliance](#), a global network founded in 2017, unites trade unions, social movements, and NGOs. “We have good strong policy recommendations on all the biggest policy levers to reduce inequality, many of them from our members and within the movement,” explains Fight Inequality Alliance’s Jenny Ricks who is based in South Africa. “But we lack the countervailing grassroots people power to fight for a different future and a different type of system and society. We need to build power from below.

It's not about having polite advocacy conversations in corridors in capital cities." Every January, Fight Inequality Alliance sponsors a week of action that coincides with the World Economic Forum in Davos. The Kenya chapter, for instance, held its alternative summit in 2018 [at the Dandora landfill](#), a garbage mountain in Nairobi, which combined performances with discussions about inequality to create a microcosm of an alternative and equal society.

Similarly, in the United States, the [Poor People's Campaign](#) has revived Martin Luther King Jr.'s final effort to unite the economically marginalized of all backgrounds. "The Poor People's Campaign has managed to put together issues of war, environment, and economic justice," relates Edgardo Lander. "This offers a possibility of inclusion that's not seen as extremely radical or impossible but as common sense." The Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which King once led, has also launched an [international version](#) of the campaign.

"The rise of the right impacted our work in creating divisions in the U.S. working class, in particular in the U.S. context, along mainly racial lines. We've seen more support for white supremacy tenets than ever before. A lot of people point to the election results as an example of that where huge swathes of the Midwest, including many union members, voted for Trump and supported an anti-immigrant and anti-Black agenda, an agenda often in opposition to worker-friendly solutions like raising the minimum wage."

Sarita Gupta

Another tactic to fight economic inequality has been the campaign that [Attac](#) has organized globally to levy a tax on financial transactions in order to slow down the rapid flow of capital in and out of countries and to raise money for various purposes. The network is active in 40 countries where the tax is part of a larger effort to construct alternatives to neoliberalism, strengthen food sovereignty, or promote, as in Austria, a "good life for all."

Intellectuals, too, have played key roles in social movements around the world, including the changes in Eastern Europe in 1989 (Václav Havel), the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa (Desmond Tutu), the democratization of South Korea (Kim Dae-Jung), and the rollback of authoritarianism in Latin America (Michelle Bachelet). Today, Edgardo Lander points out, the right has been effective in taking its culture wars into the university where it seeks to suppress the left and promote philosophies like climate-change denial. "There's an anti-intellectual version of the left that considers it not critical because it's not working class," he observes.

“If you as an intellectual speak out against a new right-wing regime—even if you’re not able to do anything here, you don’t have connections to any social group, you just speak—your voice reverberates in the liberal and left echo chambers.”

Agnes Gagyi

Particularly when it comes to the environmental movement, young people are an important vector of change. “I’m inspired by voices of young people,” says Kumi Naidoo. “They’re the main stakeholders of the future. High school students in particular have stepped forward in creative, powerful ways. The voices of young people might move CEOs and heads of state who have children and grandchildren.”

May Boeve started out a decade ago as part of the group of young people who launched 350.org. “People have always understood climate change as an issue where young people are particularly vulnerable,” she explains. “To have very young people publicly shaming political leaders for doing nothing has struck a moral chord now that’s really quite powerful.” This new generation—through #FridaysforFuture and the Extinction Rebellion—has many allies providing assistance (for instance 350.org’s training director wrote a guide with them on how to organize climate strikes). In fall 2019, during [the week of September 20-27](#), people all over the world walked out of their jobs to join students on their climate strike.

“This movement inspires me because millennials are playing an important role in their own future,” says Tunisian activist Salma Belhassine. “The symbol is also inspiring because older generations judge millennials as nonchalant and Internet-obsessed. But they are showing that they, too, can take the future into their own hands.”

Women have also led the opposition to the far right. The women’s marches in Washington, DC were a very visible signal of popular resistance to the Trump administration. The [World March of Women](#) has done the same thing at a global scale. “These right-wing movements are so misogynistic and intent on rolling back the gains of the women’s movement that women’s rights and women’s issues have to be at the forefront of the response to the right,” says Walden Bello. “At the same time, in pushing this issue especially in the Global South, we have to address some of the concerns about security that have moved many women to embrace right-wing parties that have emphasized personal security.”



Women's March on Washington, January 21, 2017 (Mobilus In Mobili via Flickr)

Similarly, because the far right has targeted them, ethnic, racial, and religious minorities occupy an important place in any progressive response. “Black Lives Matter, which emerged in the U.S. of course, has been taken up by African migrants in France and among Afro-Brazilians,” notes Khury Petersen-Smith. “Black Lives Matter has also been a vehicle for talking about other issues. In the U.S., it has involved critiques of gender and heteronormativity, and there have been efforts to center an analysis around the leadership of black women and queer black folks.”

Migrants, too, have received the brunt of right-wing fury. The [Transnational Migrant Platform—Europe \(TMP-E\)](#) has served to amplify migrant and refugee voices. The Permanent Peoples’ Tribunal [devoted two sessions](#) (in Palermo in 2017 and in Barcelona in 2018) to the violation of the human rights of migrants, which also featured testimony from migrant representatives, and concluded that current EU immigration policy is guilty of [systemic abuses amounting to a kind of “necropolitics.”](#) “It would be really useful right now to have the leadership of immigrant and refugee leaders, particularly those who have come from totalitarian-leaning societies,” argues Eric Ward. “And because they are connected to another society, they would naturally be able to draw on support from those other places. That would give us a jumpstart on building transnational relationships.”

“There has to be a concerted effort on the part of progressives to grapple with immigration, to arrive at an immigration policy that welcomes immigrants but is not identified with an immigration policy that has no rules or processes or regulations.” Walden Bello

But migrants and refugees are also wary of the limelight. “They tend to be the ones who want to keep their heads down because society is already hostile to them,” explains Larry Olomoofe of PADLINK. “Even though we encourage them to fight for their rights, they’d rather deal with the situation as it is rather than escalate it.”

One community that is often left off the left’s list are the very people who voted for the new right. “True activism is going into spaces where people have very different views and winning them over,” maintains Kumi Naimoo. “Talking to ourselves about how bad the system: That’s not broadening the people’s camp.”

Sanho Tree of IPS agrees. “If given a choice of talking to a roomful of conservatives or to progressives, I choose conservatives every time. Because those are the people I have to win over,” he says. “You need to teach the choir which notes to sing—but you don’t need to spend full time with them.”

PART FIVE: Moving Forward

The left has engaged in a tremendous amount of transnational activism: within regions, translocally, on an issue-by-issue basis. But with a few exceptions, this effort is not making headlines. Nor is it precipitating a wave of new progressive governance at the level of nation-states. Moreover, it is on the defensive in the face of well-funded and vigorous efforts by the new right to roll back the gains made by social movements over the last century of patient organizing. As critically, a pall of despair has settled on people everywhere as they witness the effects of climate change, the corruption of public officials, and the ever-widening gap between rich and poor.

It is not easy to figure out how to make transnational organizing more popular or effective. But a common refrain among activists is that there are no quick fixes. “One of the things that the right has been fantastically successful at is having a long-term project,” observes Jenny Ricks. Indeed, Gar Alperovitz sees the reversal of the right’s ascendance as a 30-year fight, comparable to the social movements of the past. “The environmental movement was nothing in the 1960s,” he recalls. “There were conservationists, not many environmentalists. Yet, somehow a movement was built around a set of ideas and moral themes that has become potentially transformative on the climate change issue. The same thing can be said of feminism.” The fight for minority rights—racial, sexual—has been similarly successful over the last few decades.

“Governments work together, and white supremacists work together. But people from civil society are not working together—sometimes they’re even working against one another.”
Yasser Louati

The new right has created a sense of momentum through a few critical wins: the Brexit referendum in the UK in 2016, Trump’s election that year, Bolsonaro’s victory in Brazil in 2018. A few big wins at the national level could do the same for the global left. “If Orbán or Erdoğan loses an election, that will have a domino effect,” Ran Cohen points out. “Orbán and Erdoğan will claim that foreign forces are intervening in the elections, but they claim that anyway! So, let’s work together on a global scale to make sure that authoritarian leaders go home.”

The same can be said about the importance of a few wins at the international level. Ethan Earle gives the example of the [blanket ban](#) in El Salvador on metal mining instituted in 2017, which was the result of a transnational effort. “It was a concerted campaign going on for years built around the front-line communities who faced mining taking place in their backyards. The tipping point in campaign was when the

archbishop of El Salvador, who'd been wavering, read the Pope's encyclical on climate change, changed his position, and came out in favor of the campaign."

Patrick Bond of the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg points to other key transnational victories, such as the [Montreal Protocol](#) in 1987 to restrict CFCs affecting the ozone. "The single greatest victory was the movement to secure anti-retroviral medicines for free," he argues, "thanks to ActUp and African civil society led by the Treatment Action Campaign in South Africa working together to reverse [former president Thabo] Mbeki's opposition. This victory raised life expectancy in South Africa from 52 years at birth in 2005 to 64 in 2019." The UN Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria was vital to ensuring treatment access across the world, he adds.

What the populist right has at the moment, in addition to several key wins under its belt, is a vision of the future it wants. This vision is intolerant, exclusionary, and backward-looking, but it is a clear alternative to the current more-or-less liberal status quo. The left is still casting around for a similarly clear vision of an alternative to this same status quo (and to the right-wing's version of "another world is possible").

"Marxism so monopolized thinking on the left for 100 years in terms of social classes, bourgeoisie, proletariat and so forth," Larry Rosenthal points out. "It was effective in many ways but it ran dry and nothing has replaced it. What is necessary is some synthetic vision and its success somewhere." Fiona Dove also recalls when the left had a theoretical consensus around an understanding the world. "I find it difficult to think of how to move forward without a common framework within which you build a political identity," she concludes.

"We have a crisis of alternatives," laments Luciana Ghiotto, coordinator of the Continental Platform Latin America Better without Free Trade Agreement. "The World Social Forum showed its limits: the limits of only getting together to talk about how much we hate neoliberalism. But we need to be moving forward with alternatives. We also have a new wave of global social movements from what we had 20 years ago centered around two dynamic movements: climate action movements and the feminist movement."

"There's been quite a bit of discussion about the prospect of left populism as an effective response to the rise of nationalism. That's worrisome insofar as it's hard to find examples of populist movements that embody a multiracial conception of 'the people' and that embrace racial and gender justice struggles as part of a universalist project." Tarso Ramos

It is easy to become pessimistic given the urgent threats and the failure, so far, of the left to come up with a popular, integrated political platform. Wolfram Schaffar fears that a monastic approach might be necessary. “We could rather think about where to retreat, where to organize non-authoritarian pockets, self-organized communities where we can save and further develop the knowledge about humanism, human rights, and solidarity,” he says. “We may have to go through a difficult time until we can reconstruct what we now take for granted as civilization.”

Another option is to ignore the new right, particularly if the movements are simply making a lot of noise and are not in control of key institutions. “Right-wing populists attack institutions and, because of that, they are not governing. Therefore, they can’t produce results,” points out Jan Nederveen Pieterse. “By criticizing, attacking, and targeting them, you may make them appear stronger than they are.” The identitarians, for instance, have a limited following that doesn’t even add up to a movement. And new right figures like Steve Bannon often exaggerate their own global clout.

Preparing for battle is a third option. “We need to be prepared when the next crisis hits. Sooner or later, something will break, whether it’s financial, climatic, or geopolitical in a way that will speed up of the reorganization of the global system. The last time this happened in 2008, we were not prepared,” Lorenzo Marsili points out. “When it hits, we’ll need a few clear ideas of what needs to be changed, notably in the international system, and sufficiently worked out alliances between movements and parties across the world to use that window of opportunity that a crisis gives you to change the global structures. It will be a race: who will best manage the coming crisis. We are not winning this race.”

But, he adds, “That’s how all the beautiful movies begin. You have to be lagging behind in order to catch up and win. Otherwise it’s not fun and no one watches it.”

The 80 interviewees provided a wealth of suggestions about how the transnational left can catch up by building a long-term transformational movement as well as achieving game-changing wins along the way.

Providing Services

In the late 1970s, reviving an older tradition from the nineteenth century, the Polish underground organized a “flying university” to provide anti-government activists with an education about Polish history, politics, and culture that could not be found in the official classrooms. The movement was, in other words, providing a concrete service.

European Alternatives is doing something similar for the left of today by launching a nomadic [School of Transnational Activism](#). Still in the pilot phase, the school has two functions. “One is more didactic,” explains Lorenzo Marsili, “to work with young activists who might be part of NGOs or movements or even party politics to develop

an awareness of the importance of the transnational scale of their action and area of concern. The second is more research-based, to bring together early career thinkers to reflect on the meaning of transnationalism, the current crisis of globalization, and to come up with new ideas.”

This kind of learning exchange is a key part of transnational cooperation. The Land, Water, and Climate Justice team at the American Jewish World Service has sponsored delegations of Thai peasant and indigenous organizations to learn from their counterparts in India and brought activists and officials from El Salvador to share the success of the national campaign to ban metal mining in that country with mining-affected communities in Haiti. “People learn best from their peers,” Nikhil Aziz concludes. “When they see the possibilities on the ground in terms of what people are able to do, there’s a lot of optimism.”

A similar sharing has taken place around the integrated community-building structure of worker cooperatives in Cleveland that supply local institutions like hospitals and schools. A comparably depressed part of the UK—Preston in Lancashire—has [copied the model](#) to pull itself out of the economic doldrums. Both cities have drawn inspiration from the much older Spanish cooperative model in Mondragon.

“Idea transfer is usually underplayed but can be very significant,” Gar Alperovitz observes. He lists exchanges, conferences, site visits, and meetings of activists to work out common strategies. But it’s the big ideas that really need this process of sharing as activists and thinkers come together to “look for common areas for the simultaneous production of new models for organizing or institution-building to generate a sense of the next political economic system,” he continues. “In the realm of idea shifts—and this is what the right wing has done so well and we don’t do well—we haven’t found a way yet to catalyze the notion that we are transforming and building a new system as distinct from doing important and useful projects and campaigns.”

Storytelling

The transnational left is adept at producing manifestos, laundry lists of demands, and policy papers. Telling stories, connecting at an emotional level, and boiling down ideas to simple messages have not been as prominent in the communication strategies of progressives. “We need better storytelling that is linked to a vision,” argues Alexandra Strickner of Attac. “The right has a story and a vision—‘We First. America First. Italians First.’ We need an alternative narrative that touches people’s hearts and minds.”

Consider the story-sharing program called Invisible Giants sponsored by Africans Rising. “We started out locally in communities telling stories of women doing great things that no one knows about,” relates Coumba Touré. “At first it was to recognize what those women are doing individually, but it’s also a movement-building tool.” It is also becoming transnational, as the organizers introduce stories from the diaspora.

The Transformative Cities project has come up with an [Atlas of Utopias](#) that features 33 new stories each year of successful economic transformation at a local level from around the world. Readers then vote on the most inspirational. One of the reward recipients in 2018 was Solapur in India where a women workers association built tens of thousands of homes for its members. “No one in India knew about this case,” Fiona Dove reports. “But because TNI had given this housing coop an award, the national press took it up, journalists traveled to this area to find out what had happened, other movements in India picked up on this movement and are now linked to it. It helped build the movement and give visibility to the progressive project itself.”

“The game isn’t debating among ourselves whether policy demand X should appear above policy demand Y in a document,” argues Jenny Ricks. “That’s not where we’re going to win our most gains. We have to make sure that our narrative is really powerful and that we’re organizing in numbers.”

“We need to get to a much more visceral analysis,” Sanho Tree of IPS adds. “The right is tapping into primordial fears and hatreds.” People don’t have time to read long documents. “It takes more effort to craft counterintuitive messaging,” he continues, “but if you can communicate a paradigm shift in a sound bite you can get traction.” For Julia Ebner, it’s also a question of reaching younger audiences. “The far right has adopted the language of youth,” she notes. “Steve Bannon and Breitbart and the trolling armies have been very good at that, at adopting the language of young people and tapping into their grievances.”

Reaching a younger audience, crafting more emotionally resonant stories, synthesizing pithier messages—all of this might mean inviting different people to the table, suggests Eric Ward, “bringing together transnationally the artists, the filmmakers, the TV writers, the musicians, the Madison Avenue commercial makers in every country, the musicians to have a discussion around narrative, about how we talk about these moments, and try to identify some key narrative centers that crisscross the countries in the room.”

Getting our stories out there might also mean amplifying and financing independent media so that it operates on a more transnational basis. That could mean, as Fiona Dove says, “pooling independent media not just to put out a transnational internationalist agenda but also content that’s entertaining and fun and that can build a new counter culture.”

Digital Upgrade

The far right has long organized transnationally in the digital realm. The left seems to be a few steps behind. “The playing field is not level,” says Julia Ebner of ISD. “They have a big advantage in terms of algorithms of social media favorable for spreading conspiracy theories and potentially harmful and inciting content.”

“We’re in an age when there’s more instantaneous communication than at any point in human history,” points out Kumi Naidoo. “There’s a constant flow of information but very little coordination on a transnational level in a broad sense. There are lots of reasons: resources, language, access. But we have to figure that piece out: how and who to resource that. We have a five-year window to make some serious strides or we’re going to be in trouble.”

Some activists are trying to up their digital game. Ethan Zuckerman, for instance, is involved in a project to create the tools for professional researchers to track how far-right ideas and memes move through the Internet and social media. ISD has produced [just such a report](#) on the “great replacement.”

Then there are the efforts to create new digital infrastructure. The [Online Progressive Engagement Network](#) (OPEN) links up citizen advocacy groups like MoveOn throughout the world. In the last six years, it has brought together 19 such organizations, including Zazim in Israel, GetUp in Australia, and Skiftet in Sweden. The network can mobilize its members rapidly on key transnational issues such as corporate tax havens or the construction of a new coal mine by a TNC. OPEN has set up on-line forums where members can communicate and has also provided open source platforms that are cheaper and more accessible. Now, it’s pushing to expand in the Global South. “Our members are mostly white and heavily European, so we have to figure out how to diversify,” explains Giovanna Alvarez-Negretti of OPEN who is based in Barcelona. “In order to reach out to people in countries with a lot of poverty and inequality, mobilizing people will have to expand to mobile phones and accessible technology.”

One of the challenges of online organizing is also one of its greatest appeals: anonymity. “You don’t know who’s a real person, so it’s hard to protect yourself from people who are disrupting, who are trolls, or who are just mentally unstable,” observes Annabel Park. But if a person’s ID can be verified, then she imagines a one-stop civics site, a kind of Amazon.com of democracy “where you can do a lot of things: contact your representatives, get vetted news, have discussions with people.”

Naming and Shaming

When Jair Bolsonaro received a Man of the Year award from the Brazilian-U.S. Chamber of Commerce in 2019, activists from both countries put up such a stink that New York venues declined to host the May ceremony. In the end, Bolsonaro [had to go to Texas](#) to accept his award (where he faced further protests).

In a similar way, anti-Trump groups in England, with their threats of mass protests, prompted the U.S. president to [cancel his trip](#) to London in early 2018. When he made his first presidential visit to the UK later that year, the appearance of the Baby Trump balloon led the president to steer clear of London. “I guess when they put out blimps to make me feel unwelcome, no reason for me to go to London,” Trump [said](#).

When the Hindu World Congress met in Chicago in September 2018, several activists from [Chicago South Asians for Justice](#) managed to gain access to a plenary session packed with 1,000 people and featuring the head of the far-right RSS, Mohan Bhagwat. "We stood up and chanted 'RSS turn around, we don't want you in our town,'" reports one of the protesters Mansi Kathuria. "The response was pretty terrifying. The folks attending the conference immediately turned on us, pushing and grabbing. We were standing on chairs to have better visibility, and they pulled the chairs from underneath us. A man was choking one of my friends who was part of the disruption. The crowd took our banner and pushed us out of the hotel altogether into the parking lot." But the protest attracted a lot of media coverage, including [in India](#).

In the United States, the Southern Poverty Law Center has put together a much-cited taxonomy of hate groups, while Hope Not Hate has done something similar in the UK. Other countries, however, lack such an authoritative list of hate groups, so it is more difficult for civil society organizations to pressure outfits like Facebook to ban extremist organizations. "There's no equivalent of ADL or SPLC in most European countries that puts up something that says, 'here are the bad guys and here's what they think,'" says Heidi Beirich of SPLC. "I've been asked repeatedly by Facebook and others, 'Who can we talk to in these other spaces. Who can give us a list of bad actors in Germany?' The answer is basically nobody." A more robust monitoring effort, coupled with stronger regulations on hate speech, could send extremists back to the digital margins.

Naming and shaming of Trump is one thing. But as Patrick Bond points out, sanctions against the United States would go a lot further toward delegitimizing his administration. A Boycott, Divest, and Sanction the United States might not attract the support of organized labor in the United States, but it would certainly thrust Trump's anti-climate and anti-internationalist agenda into the spotlight.

New Zealand has set a different kind of example with its exemplary response to the mass shooting in Christchurch. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern [called the action](#) "terrorism," donned a hijab and reached out to the Muslim community, refused to speak the name of the perpetrator, and introduced sweeping gun-control measures. And, instead of simply focusing on the domestic nature of the tragedy, the government made it an international issue. "They knew that they were unlikely to drive global change on social media as a country of 5 million people far away from the main political centers in the U.S. and Europe," notes Matthew Feldman of CARR. "But they could join up in France in May 2019 leading the social media roundtable through the UN. They put white nationalism very squarely on the UN General Assembly agenda for September of this year. They realized that this was something that needed multilateral action."

In this way, New Zealand is naming the problem of right-wing extremism and helping to shame the international community into doing something about it.

Coordination

Transnational organizing can rise organically from like-minded organizations meeting and designing common projects. But ultimately, any large-scale work across borders requires strategic coordination.

On the right, Steve Bannon aspires to do just that. “Bannon is a global right-wing organizer,” points out Cindy Wiesner of GGJ. “We need many left-wing global organizers. There need to be processes and resources so that people can come together and strategize. We have to up our game in terms of that movement.”

The progressive movement is not looking for a single coordinator. Rather, it is looking for collective coordination. Several multi-issue organizations have played that role at the global level, such as the Transnational Institute in Amsterdam, Focus on the Global South in Bangkok, and now OPEN in Barcelona. “We have supranational forums—G8, G20, UNSC—making a lot of decisions. Without coordination between transnational actors, you’re not getting the right messages to the right decisionmakers at the right time,” observes Phil Ireland. “On our issues, we need an alignment of purposes—because we’re pushing for change and change is hard in a system built on incumbency and conservatism.”

Coordination often involves convening, creating spaces where organizers can come together to strategize. It involves prioritizing, particularly in an environment of scarce resources. But at a more basic level, it can boil down to matchmaking.

“We need how-to workshops as much as what’s-happening workshops, which can begin with conceptualizing where you’re at, understanding what your obstacles are, and how to begin to remove or neutralize each obstacle to get where you need to go.”
Sanho Tree

In their struggle against the transnational corporation BP, involved in a corruption scandal in the country, Senegalese activists “need the groups and movements in Senegal to be connected to groups and movement in England,” says of Coumba Touré of Africans Rising. “We need environmental movements there who have already fought BP. We need lawyers in Europe who have won battles against transnational corporations to be connected to local youth movements here that are saying they want to hear the whole story and how we can get back money for this country.”

Coordination should not leave out young people. Salma Belhassine would put more funding into researching why youth in the Middle East and North Africa region and worldwide are not engaged. “Then I would invest more in elaborating their ideas,”

she says, “and help them improve these ideas with the support of specialists such as political scientists, sociologists, and legal experts.” Birgit Sauer was involved in a similar program in Europe. “We had some projects in schools in Austria, Germany, Italy. I found it interesting how open pupils were when they had a chance to develop role-play games on hate speech or develop their own films on the Internet.”

The World Social Forum served a convening function. Ultimately, many activists felt that it failed to produce strategic coordination, which involves the more political act of determining priorities and proposing collective action. However, one candidate for strategic coordination has presented itself: the Green New Deal. “The climate crisis and complete environmental breakdown is our window of opportunity,” argues Srećko Horvat. “This is the first time in human history that there is a single issue on which all of humanity can agree.”

The new right is unable to rise to this challenge. It has no effective response to the climate emergency other than to pretend that it doesn’t exist. “I think that the right will go into a profound crisis on these questions,” argues Tom Athanasiou of [EcoEquity](#) in Berkeley. “At this point, climate denialism, as a movement with any sort of legitimacy, is over. It’s just a zombie phenomenon with billionaire funders propping up the sock puppets.”

The Green New Deal, meanwhile, offers an inclusive response. The GND is not just about marshalling national (and [eventually international resources](#)) to combat climate change. It is intersectionality par excellence. The policy initiative, in the admittedly sketchy form introduced in the U.S. Congress, involves many of the infrastructure financing, job retraining, and targeted subsidies for green industries that the left has championed as a way to win back voters disillusioned by neoliberalism. It can also serve as a power strip that other movements can plug into: [immigrant rights](#), the [women’s movement](#), [anti-racism](#) activists.

The GND is not an American invention. The Green New Deal Group [began](#) in the UK in 2007. South Korea [launched](#) something similar in 2009. That same year, the UN [proposed](#) taking it global. So, it is no surprise that the Green New Deal has already established (or re-established) a transnational following. Yanis Varoufakis, the former Greek finance minister who co-founded DiEM 25, [calls](#) the Green New Deal the “glue and cement” that can hold together a political alliance of greens, leftists, and liberals and serve as “both the inheritor of and a radical improvement on” the [Juncker Plan of 2015](#), otherwise known as the European Fund for Strategic Investments. In Asia, a GND could [push](#) China’s Belt and Road Initiative toward greater sustainability. For Africa, a GND could provide an opportunity for countries to leapfrog over existing technologies and achieve parity with the Global North at far less cost to the environment.

The Global Green New Deal cannot be solely an initiative of the rich. “If the wealthy countries were to come to a vision of the global GND that involved real public finance for the international burden-sharing mechanisms devised under the umbrella of the Paris agreement—and which have to be animated if we’re to have any hope of holding to the two-degree line, let alone 1.5C—that would certainly get the attention of people in the developing world,” argues Tom Athanasiou.

But setting up GNDs in every country, coordinating among them, and [establishing new international institutions](#) to finance the effort will be an enormous challenge. “The challenge is comparable to the one after World War II, when a set of new multilateral institutions were spun out,” Athanasiou concludes.

CONCLUSION

The new right has hijacked much of the agenda and even some of the tactics of the left. And now it is hijacking the internationalism of the left as well. These forces are increasingly networked at the government and party level, through civil society interactions, and in cyberspace. They have developed a compelling narrative of “make [insert country name] great again” that plays on anxieties over a demographic, economic, and political “replacement” by those of a different ethnicity or religion.

Although the new right has disparaged the “administrative state,” once it takes power at a national level, it often finds the levers of state power to be quite useful for the realization of goals such as border control or the promulgation of “family values.” The same applies at a regional level. The new right discovered that rather than destroying the European Union it might be better served by taking over the institutional apparatus. Despite broadsides against “globalists,” the new right may well come to the same conclusion about international authorities if it gets closer to taking charge of institutions like the World Bank.

The left has not abandoned transnationalism. Environmental, economic justice, and peace groups are perhaps better networked now than ever before. Groups are organizing within regions and across widely dispersed localities. Awareness of the linkages among issues has never been greater.

And yet, the left seems a few steps behind on three fronts. It has not mobilized an effective global response to the far right. It has not woven together a popular and more strategically political successor to the World Social Forum—a large-scale, multi-issue campaign that addresses urgent global threats such as climate change, economic inequality, and endemic military conflict. And it has not come up with a positive alternative narrative that combines messages of hope and urgency while mobilizing people of different backgrounds under a common banner.

“Trump is saying ‘Make America great again’— which is what Modi and Bolsonaro are also saying. It’s a very positive message. The left can be very apocalyptic, very critical, without the positive narratives that give hope.”
Fiona Dove

This report has attempted to delineate the scale of the threat coming from the new right. It has identified a range of ongoing transnational initiatives on the left. And it has sought to pinpoint the remaining challenges as well as the gaps that need to be filled.

Above all, progressives need a quantum leap in transnational networking to counter what the new right is setting up. The left does not need another global network simply for the purposes of communication or one “based on old myths of unity and the effacement of internal inequalities among its participants,” as Gadi Algazi points out. “Superficial international coalitions cannot address local complexity,” he adds.

But a new multi-issue and multi-modal network that respects local differences as it engages in joint efforts, even at a modest level, could begin to fill some of the gaps identified in this report. Such a network could:

1) **Monitor:** Several of the name-and-shame efforts have been successful, but they rely on having information about key right-wing figures and movements and their campaigns. To begin with, this could take the form of an OPEN-like network that links monitoring organizations across borders.

2) **Amplify:** Simply putting all of the transnational efforts of ongoing groups and campaigns on the same page in the form of a global calendar of events and a regular newsletter would be useful for activists, the media, and new recruits alike.

3) **Narrate:** The left can do a better job of telling its stories and, by telling these stories better, eventually learn how to frame a more compelling overarching narrative. To begin with, this could take the form of a set of similar short videos that tackle an issue (like corruption or voter suppression) that is a common problem across borders.

These three modes at least partially address the four gaps of service provision, digital upgrade, storytelling, and naming and shaming. What’s still missing, however, is the fifth function: strategic coordination.

That coordination is particularly critical given the urgency of the situation. This is not 1975 or 1999. “While I have great faith in multi-issue organizing all over the world, I think that the time will not allow them to stop the machinery of destruction,” observes Edgardo Lander. “How do you construct another possible world and be effective in stopping this massive machinery of destruction which is threatening life on earth?”

“On the one hand you have neoliberals and on the other the far right—and they are fighting each other. The left is only a spectator. As far as I know, there is no genuine left response to the conflict erupting in front of our eyes.” Wolfram Schaffar

The challenge, then, is to figure out how to combine the horizontality of organizing that respects local differences with the verticality of politics that the scale of the global problems demands. The Global Green New Deal addresses the urgency of climate change while also addressing the widespread discontent with neoliberal globalization that has provided a significant base of support for the populist

right. With a “thousand flowers bloom” approach, many local initiatives can coordinate a decentralized campaign against the new right through monitoring, amplifying, and story-telling—within or at least near to the larger frame of the Global Green New Deal.

But for the various Green New Deals to move from paper to policy, a more vertically organized campaign is indispensable. That requires cooperation among political parties across borders. It requires sustained NGO campaigns at the UN and through other international agencies. It requires social movements providing the “street heat” necessary at critical junctures to provide inside players with the power they need. It requires, in short, strategic coordination.

Avoiding a climate catastrophe will also require a certain amount of coercion. At a national level, if voters support a Green New Deal, parliaments would still have to coerce a range of powerful interests (coal companies, oil and gas corporations, auto manufacturers, the military) to fall into line. And for any global pact that implements something similar, an international authority like the UN would have to coerce recalcitrant or non-compliant countries to do the same.

For such coercion to be democratic, a Global Green New Deal requires a progressive international: to create a structure that allows for both horizontal and vertical organizing, that employs a coordinated “inside-outside” strategy, and that provides a truly democratic alternative to the authoritarian movements of the right, left, and center.

Another world is still possible, a world that is neither neoliberal nor hyper-nationalist. But it will require progressives to turn weaknesses into strengths, apathy into engagement, and frustration with the status quo into support for transformation. In this way, the best can regain their conviction to stem what Yeats, 100 years ago, chillingly predicted would be a “blood-dimmed tide.”

Quoted Interviewees

1. Christine Ahn, Women Crossing DMZ (Hawaii)
2. Kali Akuno, Cooperation Jackson (Mississippi)
3. Gadi Algazi, Tel Aviv University (Israel)
4. Gar Alperovitz, historian (Washington, DC)
5. Giovanna Alvarez-Negretti, OPEN (Spain)
6. Tom Athanasiou, EcoEquity (Berkeley)
7. Nikhil Aziz, American Jewish World Service (New York)
8. Heidi Beirich, SPLC (Atlanta)
9. Salma Belhassine, Youth Leadership Program (Tunisia)
10. Walden Bello, intellectual, politician, activist (Philippines)
11. Medea Benjamin, Code Pink (Washington)
12. Phyllis Bennis, IPS (Washington)
13. May Boeve, 350.org (Oakland, CA)
14. Patrick Bond, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (South Africa)
15. Brid Brennan, Transnational Institute (Netherlands)
16. Ilya Budraitskis, LeftEast (Moscow, Russia)
17. Cheong Wooksik, Peace Network (South Korea)
18. Tobita Chow, Justice Is Global (Chicago)
19. Ran Cohen, Democratic Bloc (Tel Aviv)
20. Alex Demirovic, senior scholar, Rosa-Luxemburg Stiftung (Germany)
21. Fiona Dove, Transnational Institute (Netherlands)
22. Ethan Earle, researcher (Paris)
23. Julia Ebner, Institute for Strategic Dialogue (London)
24. Cathy Feingold, AFL-CIO (Washington, DC)
25. Matthew Feldman, CARR (UK)
26. André Frappier, Quebec Solidaire (Montreal)
27. Agnes Gagyí, researcher (Hungary/Romania)
28. Luciana Ghiotto, Universidad Nacional de San Martín, Buenos Aires (Argentina)
29. Susanne Götze, journalist (Germany)
30. Oded Grajew, World Social Forum (Brazil)
31. Sarita Gupta, Future of Work(ers) program, Ford Foundation (Washington, DC)
32. Shalmali Guttal, Focus on the Global South (Thailand)
33. Barbarina Heyerdahl, Acorn Fund (Vermont)
34. Srećko Horvat, DiEM 257 (Croatia)
35. Phil Ireland, GetUp (Australia)
36. Zeljko Jovanovic, Open Society (Berlin)
37. Mary Kaldor, London School of Economics (London)
38. Mansi Kathuria, Chicago South Asians for Justice (Chicago)
39. Akira Kawasaki, Peace Boat (Japan)
40. Daniel Kohler, GIRDS (Germany)
41. Edgardo Lander, Central University of Venezuela, Caracas (Venezuela)
42. Yasser Louati, Justice and Liberties for All (France)

43. Magda Malinowska, Transnational Social Strike (Poznan, Poland)
44. Lorenzo Marsili, European Alternatives (Italy)
45. Tchenna Maso, La Via Campesina/MAB (Brazil)
46. Ilya Matveev, Openleft.ru (St. Petersburg, Russia)
47. Francine Mestrum, Global Social Justice (Belgium)
48. Jan-Werner Mueller, Princeton University (Princeton)
49. Kumi Naidoo, Amnesty International (London)
50. Karin Nansen, Friends of the Earth International (Uruguay)
51. Jason Nardi, RIPESS Europe/WSF (Italy)
52. Satoko Norimatsu, Peace Philosophy Centre (Vancouver)
53. Larry Olomoofe, PADLINK (Poland)
54. Márta Pardavi, Hungarian Helsinki Committee (Hungary)
55. Annabel Park, Coffee Party (Washington)
56. Manuel Perez Rocha, IPS (U.S., Mexico)
57. Khury Petersen-Smith, IPS (Washington)
58. Jan Nederveen Pieterse, UC Santa Barbara (California)
59. Kavita N. Ramdas, Open Society Foundations (New York)
60. Tarso Ramos, Political Research Associates (Boston)
61. Jenny Ricks, Fight Inequality (South Africa)
62. Larry Rosenthal, Berkeley Center for Right-Wing Studies (Berkeley)
63. Laura Roth, Barcelona En Comú (Spain)
64. Melissa Ryan, Hope Not Hate (Boston)
65. Bartosz Rydliński, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University (Poland)
66. Birgit Sauer, University of Vienna (Austria)
67. Wolfram Schaffar, International Institute for Asian Studies (Leiden, Netherlands) and University of Passau (Germany).
68. Vandana Shiva, intellectual and activist (New Delhi, India)
69. Esther Solano, Federal University of São Paulo (Brazil)
70. Metta Spencer, Peace Magazine (Toronto)
71. Igor Stokfiszewski, Krytyka Polityczna (Poland)
72. Alexandra Strickner, Attac (Austria)
73. Coumba Touré, Africans Rising (Senegal)
74. Sanho Tree, IPS (Washington, DC)
75. Sol Trumbo Vila, Transnational Institute (Netherlands)
76. Jordi Vaquer, Open Society (Spain)
77. Eric Ward, Western States Center (Oregon)
78. Cindy Wiesner, Grassroots Global Justice Alliance (Florida)
79. Chenchen Zhang, researcher (Brussels/China)
80. Ethan Zuckerman, MIT's Civic Lab (Boston)

Organizational Descriptions

Institute for Policy Studies

IPS is a progressive think tank dedicated to building a more equitable, ecologically sustainable, and peaceful society. In partnership with dynamic social movements, we turn transformative policy ideas into action.

Focus on the Global South

Focus on the Global South was established in 1995 to challenge neoliberalism, militarism and corporate-driven globalization while strengthening just and equitable alternatives. We work in solidarity with the Global South – the great majority of humanity that is marginalized and dispossessed by globalization – believing that progressive social change and Global South solidarity are imperative if the needs and aspirations of oppressed peoples, particularly in Asia, Latin America and Africa, are to be met.

Transnational Institute

The Transnational Institute (TNI) is an international research and advocacy institute committed to building a just, democratic and sustainable planet. For more than 40 years, TNI has served as a unique nexus between social movements, engaged scholars and policy makers.

Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung

The Rosa Luxemburg Foundation is an internationally operating, progressive non-profit institution for civic education. In cooperation with many organizations around the globe, it works on democratic and social participation, empowerment of disadvantaged groups, alternatives for economic and social development, and peaceful conflict resolution.

