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ANALYTICAL ESSAY

Civilizationism and the Ideological Contestation of the Liberal International Order

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Discourses and practices reproducing a world where a plurality of distinct civilizations clash or dialogue, rise or fall, color multiple facets of global politics today. How should we interpret this unexpected surge in civilizational politics, especially notable in the United States, Europe, the Middle East, China, and Russia? This paper argues that the growing turn to civilizations or, better, *civilizationism* should be understood as a counter-hegemonic ideological reaction to the globalization of the liberal international order. It theorizes the deepening and widening of the liberal international order in the aftermath of the Cold War as enabled by powerful constitutive ideological forces, which congeal into a distinctively modern, informal, universal standard of civilization. This liberal civilizational standard can be experienced by a particular category of non (fully) liberal actors within and beyond the West as ideologically entrapping them—through processes of socialization or stigmatization—in a state of symbolic disempowerment. The paper shows how civilizationism provides an ideological path for resisting and contesting the liberal standard of civilization by articulating a distinct and valued (essentialized) sense of collective

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belonging, and an alternative (generally illiberal) normative system and (broadly multipolar) vision of international order. Along with theorizing and exploring in original ways the drivers of civilizational politics in the current historical juncture, the paper makes two further contributions. It highlights and unpacks the key role of ideological dynamics in the making and contestation of international orders in general and the liberal one in particular. It suggests and shows why civilizations are best approached as ideological constructs rather than cultures, identities, or discourses.

Los discursos y las prácticas, que reproducen un mundo en el que existe una pluralidad de civilizaciones distintas que chocan o dialogan entre sí, que alcanzan su apogeo y su declive, y dan vida a múltiples facetas de la política global de la actualidad. ¿Cómo debemos interpretar este aumento inesperado de la política «civilizacional», que ha sido especialmente notoria en los Estados Unidos, Europa, Medio Oriente, China y Rusia? Este artículo argumenta que el creciente enfoque en su propia civilización o, mejor dicho, en el «civilizacionismo» debe entenderse como una reacción ideológica contrahegemónica a la globalización del orden internacional liberal. El artículo teoriza acerca de la profundización y la ampliación del orden internacional liberal después de la Guerra Fría, que se vieron facilitadas por poderosas fuerzas ideológicas constitutivas, que convergen en una norma de civilización distintivamente moderno, informal y universal. Esta norma de civilización liberal puede ser percibida por una categoría particular de agentes no (plenamente) liberales, en Occidente y más allá, como algo que los atrapa ideológicamente (a través de procesos de socialización o estigmatización) en un estado de «desempoderamiento» simbólico. El artículo demuestra cómo el «civilizacionismo» proporciona una vía ideológica para resistirse a la norma liberal de civilización y para refutarla, articulando un sentido distinto y valorado (de manera esencial) de pertenencia colectiva, así como un sistema normativo alternativo (generalmente no liberal) y una visión (ampliamente multipolar) del orden internacional. Además de teorizar y explorar los impulsores de la política «civilizacional» en la coyuntura histórica actual de manera original, el artículo realiza dos contribuciones adicionales: destaca y desentraña el papel clave de las dinámicas ideológicas en la creación y en la refutación de los órdenes internacionales en general, y del orden liberal en particular; sugiere y demuestra por qué las civilizaciones pueden abordarse de mejor manera como construcciones ideológicas en lugar de como culturas, identidades o discursos.

Dans les discours ou pratiques, la reproduction d'un monde dans lequel nombre de civilisations distinctes se disputent ou échangent, apparaissent ou s'effondrent, influence plusieurs aspects de la politique mondiale actuelle. Comment devons-nous interpréter cette tendance inattendue en politique civilisationnelle, et tout particulièrement visible aux États-Unis, en Europe, au Moyen-Orient, en Chine et en Russie ? Cet article affirme que l'intérêt croissant pour les civilisations, ou mieux encore, pour le civilisationnisme, doit s'interpréter telle une réaction idéologique contre-hégémonique à la mondialisation de l'ordre libéral international. Il théorise l'approfondissement et l'élargissement de l'ordre libéral international après la guerre froide, rendus possibles par de puissantes forces idéologiques constitutives, qui se cristallisent en une norme de civilisation tout à fait moderne, informelle et universelle. À cause de cette norme civilisationnelle libérale, une catégorie spécifique d'acteurs non (ou pas absolument) libéraux, vivant au sein ou en dehors de l'Occident, ressentent une impuissance symbolique, par socialisation ou stigmatisation. L'article montre que le civilisationnisme fournit une voie idéologique à la résistance et la contestation de la norme libérale de civilisation en articulant un sentiment distinct et précieux (essentialisé) d'appartenance collective. Il présente aussi un autre système normatif (généralement illibéral) et une

autre vision (plutôt multipolaire) de l'ordre international. Outre la théorisation et l'analyse originale des facteurs explicatifs de la politique civilisationnelle à l'époque actuelle, l'article offre deux autres contributions. Il met en évidence et décortique le rôle clé de la dynamique idéologique dans la formation et la contestation des ordres internationaux en général, et de l'ordre libéral en particulier. Plutôt que des cultures, des identités ou des discours, il montre pourquoi il est plus pertinent d'appréhender les civilisations comme des constructions idéologiques.

Keywords: civilizationism, constitutive power, ideology, liberal international order

Introduction

The idea that humanity is divided into distinct civilizations and that relations among these macro-entities are the central drivers of global politics has acquired tremendous hold in our times. A multiplicity of intellectual and cultural elites around the world—most significantly in the United States, Europe, the Middle East, Russia, and China—have represented the post–Cold War world as being either in the thralls of a global clash among civilizations (Huntington 1996; Lukin 2014) or in a desperate need for greater dialogue and understanding among these (Camilleri and Martin 2014; Dallmayr, Kayapinar, and Yaylaci 2014; DoC Research Institute 2019).

Civilizational imaginaries are being embraced by major political actors too, whether state or non-state based, around the world. These imaginaries are often closely interlaced with anxieties of civilizational crisis and decline, perceived to be caused by powerful cultural, economic, and political forces within and beyond one's own civilization. Right-wing populists in the United States and across Europe—from Donald Trump to Geert Wilders and Viktor Orbán—have all called for a vigorous defense of what they refer to as the Judeo-Christian West. Very different Islamist actors—from Mohammad Khatami of Iran, to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey, and *jihadist* groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)—have consistently articulated a civilizational understanding of the Muslim world. Civilizational themes have come to the forefront of Xi Jinping's rhetoric about China as a state civilization. Vladimir Putin, and much of the Valdai Club intelligentsia around him, subscribes to a view of world politics defined by inter-civilizational relations with Russia as the epicenter of a broad Pan-Slavic, Christian Orthodox, or Eurasian civilization.

Beyond discourse, these imaginaries appear to legitimize and underpin a range of international practices and institutions. Trump's "Muslim ban" seemed driven by a logic of civilizational clash. The Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is shaped by Eurasianist ideas and its war in Ukraine by the civilizational imaginary of the "Russian World." Civilizational themes infuse China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), most visibly in the context of the 2019 Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations. Turkey has been a leading force in the institutionalization of the UN Alliance of Civilizations since 2005.

In short, the notion that we live in an international system shaped by the internal dynamics and external relations of a plurality of civilizations colors multiple facets of world politics today. As Amitav Acharya (2020, 139) argues, ""Civilization" is back at the forefront of global policy debates" (see also Katzenstein 2010a; Bettiza 2014; Coker 2019; Hale and Laruelle 2021). This article asks, how should we make sense of the surge in civilizational politics at this historical juncture? We argue that the growing political salience of civilizational discourses and practices is best understood as an ideological reaction to and contestation of the liberal international

order, particularly in the context of its globalization since the end of the Cold War.[1] We call this ideology, borrowing from Rogers Brubaker (2017), *civilizationism.*

This paper places ideology centrally in the analysis of the making and contestation of international orders in general and the liberal international order in particular. In doing so, we build on existing constructivist (Allan, Vucetic, and Hopf 2018; Bettiza and Lewis 2020), critical (Jahn 2018, 2019), and analytically eclectic (Cooley and Nexon 2020) scholarship highlighting the ideological character of the present international order. As this literature shows, ideologies play a central role in structuring international orders as well as mounting collective efforts to challenge and transform them. "The ideological content found within international orders," Cooley and Nexon (2020, 32) for instance note, matters to challengers "because they tend to organize around alternative beliefs and values." This paper seeks to contribute to this literature by unpacking in greater detail the role and power of ideological dynamics in deepening and expanding the liberal order in the Cold War's aftermath, and in generating particular forms of contestation expressed through civilizational politics.

Theoretically, we proceed in the following three steps. First, we adopt a nonpejorative view of ideology developed by contemporary ideological analysis, and inspired by the work of Michael Freeden, as "distinctive political worldviews that shape how individual and collective actors interpret, evaluate, and act in politics" (Maynard and Haas 2022, 5; also Freeden 1996). Rather than dogmatic ideas that supposedly mask real material interests, ideologies are understood as a pervasive and diffused feature of political life itself. They may certainly matter as means of instrumental manipulation (or legitimation), but also as a source of real internalized beliefs and as intersubjective structures (e.g., public discourses, institutionalized norms, and organizational routines) (Maynard and Haas 2022, 9–11).

Second, we complement this understanding by approaching ideology as an independent form of power, what Barnett and Duvall (2005, 42) define as "constitutive power." In this sense, as Beate Jahn (2019, 330) puts it, ideologies do not simply provide metal maps or reflect interests, but come to "constitute the very actors, interests, and policies they subsequently justify" (also Allan, Vucetic, and Hopf 2018). Our theorization of the power of liberalism in the making, and civilizationism in contesting, of international order is grounded in a constitutive view of ideology.

Third, we theorize the implications and effects of the constitutive power of ideology in international (dis)ordering dynamics, by drawing from a complex body of critical and constructivist literature on modern standards of civilizations (Bowden 2004; Millennium 2014; O'Hagan 2017), socialization (2012, Epstein 2014), ontological security (Kinnvall and Mitzen 2017; Steele and Homolar 2019), and stigmatization (Adler-Nissen 2014; Zarakol 2014). Our effort is principally syncretic, to connect and bring these concepts together with the intent of providing a nuanced understanding of the ideological processes driving the current resurgence of civilizational politics.

Following these three theoretical steps, we argue that the post–Cold War deepening and widening of the liberal international order—within the West and around the world—has been enabled by powerful constitutive ideological forces congealed into a distinctively modern, informal, universal liberal standard of civilization. This liberal standard defines contemporary understandings of what are considered val-

[1] Narratives of civilizational difference and crisis are not an entirely novel phenomenon, but have a relatively long history. They appeared most prominently on the world stage between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, whether in East Asia (Aydin 2007), the Middle East (Aydin 2017; Dalacoura 2019), Russia (Bassin 2016; Tsygankov 2017), or Western Europe (O'Hagan 2002). This was a period of great transformations associated with modernization, imperialism, decolonization, and two world wars. This history explains in part the current resonance of civilizationism as it taps into longer intellectual traditions. Yet, what is distinctive about current civilizational discourses—we argue—is that they are being reactivated and rearticulated primarily in relation to a global context marked by the widening and deepening of the liberal international order.

ued and authoritative ways of being and acting (i.e., civilized), and what are instead viewed as problematic or deviant (i.e., uncivilized). We then suggest that a particular category of non (fully) liberal actors within and beyond the West experience this liberal civilizational standard as ideologically entrapping them—through diffused processes of socialization or stigmatization—in a state of ontological insecurity and symbolic disempowerment.

It is in this context that civilizationism gains ground as a counter-hegemonic ideology, especially among a category of non (fully) liberal actors and social forces across the United States, Europe, Russia, China and the Middle East, which exhibit particular characteristics favorable to the production of civilizational imaginaries. We argue, and seek to empirically illustrate, that civilizationism allows these actors and social forces to ideologically articulate an essentially distinct and (seemingly) temporally continuous collective identity that provides a sense of ontological security and a way to resist liberal socializing pressures, assign this collective self a sense of value and shared norms that help reject and counter liberal stigma, and ultimately provide a different conception of a multipolar and multicultural world order that challenges the universal liberal standard of civilization and symbolically empowers alternative—non (fully) liberal—ways of being and acting in global politics.

While seeking to explore the ideological dynamics making civilizationism a formidable "alternative principle of vision and division" (Brubaker 2017, 1211) to liberal universalism, this paper also aims to shift thinking about civilizations in international relations (IR). A view of civilizational politics prevalently as an ideological phenomenon broadens and challenges existing perspectives that approach civilizations principally as cultural entities, as socially constructed identities, or as (Western) hegemonic discourses. We find that current global efforts to uphold "cultural diversity" or defend "civilizational identities" cannot be completely divorced from ideological political projects intended to reject and articulate alternatives to liberal universalism. Likewise, rather than constituting a single hegemonic (Western) discourse, we show that civilizations are often instantiated in a complex range of counter-hegemonic discourses and practices contesting—across multiple milieus—the perceived dominant liberal ideological structures of international order.

The article is structured as follows. The first section theorizes the entanglements between the liberal order, its post–Cold War globalization, and the constitutive ideological dynamics underpinning this process. The second section teases out the constitutive logics and functions of civilizationism as a counter-hegemonic ideology, who is likely to articulate this ideology and find it appealing, and the value of approaching civilizations through an ideological—compared to a cultural, identity, or discursive—lens. The third section empirically illustrates the ideological logics of civilizationism at work across four cases: the West; the Middle East; China and parts of Asia; and Russia. The conclusion outlines the shared substantive ideological claims of civilizationists across cases and identifies two areas for future research and thinking: one on the world reordering potential of civilizationism and the other on the wider significance of placing the generally neglected concept of ideology more centrally in constructivist analysis of global politics.

Liberal International Ordering and Ideology

Liberal Ordering, Ideology, and Constitutive Power

For much of the twentieth century, the liberal international order was chiefly a regional order (Ikenberry 2009, 76; Jahn 2018, 45). This order's scope was to protect and advance, while also constituting and defining, the values and interests of the United States and its allies—the so-called liberal West—in the context of their geopolitical and ideological rivalry against Fascist and then Communist regimes and forces (Jahn 2019, 324–29). With the collapse of Soviet Communism, the liberal or-

der began to globalize from its Euro-American, transatlantic, core across the globe. "During the Cold War, the liberal international order existed 'inside' the global bipolar system," Ikenberry (2009, 78) writes, "With the end of the Cold War, this inside order became the 'outside' order" (also Jahn 2018, 43; Cooley and Nexon 2020, 6–9).

This process has occurred to varying degrees across the three main pillars of liberal international ordering: political, associated with the diffusion and unparalleled legitimacy of human rights norms and democratic governance; economic, associated with the spread of free-market capitalism propelled by neo-liberal and "Washington Consensus" ideas; and intergovernmental, associated with the expansion of international institutions and regimes managing state and human affairs along liberal principles (Cooley and Nexon 2020, 6–9; also Jahn 2018, 43; Lake, Martin, and Risse 2021, 229–32). Liberal scholars have generally viewed these developments as in lockstep with the progressive forces of history (e.g., Fukuyama 2006; Ikenberry 2009). From this vantage point, the liberal order is understood as overcoming a Hobbesian world of power politics and war against all, by placing rights over might, trade over war, and institutionalized cooperation over conflict (Lake, Martin, and Risse 2021, 226–27).

Yet, as noted by scholars across different theoretical traditions, the liberal international order is not simply a normatively *thin* order that regulates in mutually beneficial ways relations among states through value-free rules, institutions, and markets. It is rather an ideologically *thick* order (Allan, Vucetic, and Hopf 2018; Jahn 2019; Cooley and Nexon 2020), infused with a complex set of ideas, norms and principles, whose main institutions, actors, and practices seek to transform states and their societies both beyond and within the West.[2]

These transformations would be in multiple instances welcomed and promoted by state actors and social forces across the globe and have clearly produced a variety of tangible benefits—including important commitments to multilateralism, representative forms of government, and economic prosperity. However, such developments are not simply the product of a natural universal historical convergence toward one type of (liberal) modernity and order. They are instead often entangled with the exercise of considerable forms of *ideological constitutive power* aimed at bringing this (liberal) modernity and order into being (see also Jahn 2012, 147–51; Cooley and Nexon 2020, 49–52).[3]

Constitutive power is the power to shape "what actors are as social beings, that is, their social identities and capacities" (Barnett and Duvall 2005, 42; also Berenskoetter 2007, 10–11). In this sense, the power of ideologies lies in their capacity to "constitute the very actors, interests, and policies" they often appear to "subsequently justify" (Jahn 2019, 330; also Allan, Vucetic, and Hopf 2018). Ideological power that functions through social relations of constitution is, furthermore, always implicated in defining what are considered legitimate and normal or, vice versa, illegitimate and abnormal subjectivities, meanings, interests, and practices (Berenskoetter 2007, 10–11).

We build on this to argue more specifically that the constitutive power of liberalism as a universalist ideology congeals into what critical scholars have con-

[2] Beyond the West, this includes the very actors and social forces on the receiving end of the post–Cold War expansion of the liberal international order and Western/American hegemony (Blaney and Tickner 2017). Yet, liberal ordering effects can and do reshape also Western states and societies themselves. Cooley and Nexon (2020, 43–45) note that while Western/American hegemony and liberal ordering dynamics are related, they ought to be conceptually separated. Although hegemons shape in fundamental ways international orders, the structures of international orders can and do shape hegemons in turn. This is especially the case under conditions of liberal globalization, which contribute to blurring and eroding neat domestic/international, inside/outside, and Western/non-Western divides (Jahn 2018; Adler-Nissen and Zarakol 2021).

[3] We adopt a non-pejorative understanding of ideology, as "interconnected sets of ideas and values, which are patterned across groups and societies [. . .] and which create distinctive propensities for perception, interpretation and action" (Maynard and Haas 2022, 3; also Freeden 1996).

ceptualized as a modern, informal, multifaceted liberal "standard of civilization" (Bowden 2004; Millennium 2014; O'Hagan 2017). This standard is profoundly implicated in the deepening and widening of the liberal order in the aftermath of the Cold War—as we discuss in the next subsection—by defining what are "civilized" and thus valued and authoritative ways of being and acting, and what are instead considered "uncivilized" and thus viewed as problematic or deviant.

The Liberal Standard of Civilization and Symbolic Entrapment

Being "civilized" liberal moderns in the present international order is generally associated with embracing democratic principles and universal (social and political) human rights norms; free-market, preferably (neo)liberal, capitalist principles; and a liberal internationalist and cosmopolitan outlook.[4] Western and non-Western actors and social forces that are not recognized—and do not view themselves—as liberal or fully liberal may reject all or some of these key normative aspects underpinning the current international order's informal standard of civilization. Those perceived to fall short of this standard thus become the objects of particular diffused constitutive power dynamics, expressed through processes of *socialization* or, alternatively, *stigmatization*. Both processes—as we shall see—can be experienced by non (fully) liberal actors and social forces as entrapping them into symbolic power asymmetries.[5]

Civilizational standards require those falling below them to become objects of civilizing processes. These processes entail the exercise of particular forms of constitutive power aimed at socializing individual and collective actors into those identities, norms, and practices deemed civilized. Indeed, socialization into prevailing ideological categories and normative standards is central, Allan, Vucetic, and Hopf (2018, 839) show, to the legitimation and stability of international orders in general and the liberal one in particular.

An extensive constructivist literature exists precisely exploring how a complex range of transnational civil society, governmental, or supranational actors and institutions have consistently sought to socialize states and societies globally into liberal norms and identities (Risse-Kappen, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999; Checkel 2005; Simmons, Dobbin, and Garrett 2006; Sikkink 2011; Tallberg et al. 2020).

Much of this literature, however, overlooks how these processes are not only intimately tied to liberal international ordering dynamics, but also shot through with important ideational power relations (Bettiza and Lewis 2020). Returning to Barnett and Duvall (2005, 46), we can appreciate how socialization into liberal norms and identities can "generate different social kinds that have different self- (and other-) understandings and capacities." The result is that such dynamics "have real consequences for an actor's ability to shape the conditions and processes of its existence" (Barnett and Duvall 2005, 46).

This means that socialization into liberal norms and identities can be experienced as empowering for certain state actors and social forces that perceive they stand to benefit symbolically (and materially) from being fully fledged members of the liberal international order.[6] Yet, it also means that becoming "civilized liberals" can be

[4] The complex of norms that constitute this standard are based on the ideological elements that define the liberal order: political, economic, and intergovernmental liberalism. One site where these standards are especially notable is in the proliferation of international ranking systems that evaluate actors in terms of their freedom, democracy, good governance, human rights, economic openness, globalization, and so on (Broome and Quirk 2015; also Katzenstein 2010b, 33).

[5] The use of (fully) in brackets suggests that certain actors may reject all while others only certain elements of the three key pillars defining what it means to be liberal "civilized" moderns.

[6] Most notably in the case of Germany and Japan that, in the wake of World War II, disavowed their imperial and ideological histories to become key participants in the liberal international order. In more recent decades, certain countries in East Asia, notably South Korea, and former Communist ones in Central and Eastern Europe, have followed a similar socialization trajectory.

experienced by others as fostering ontological insecurity by undermining the perceived continuity and distinctiveness of their collective identity and eroding their normative systems—thereby constraining their sense of autonomy and capacity for ideational agency.[7] This is especially the case for a range of non (fully) liberal actors and communities within and beyond the West who, following Epstein (2012, 136), can be thought of as "reluctant socializees." Indeed, for such actors, "becoming liberal" in so far as it "involves losing an identity to acquire another," may not be experienced as a positive process of change but as a form of domination that involves substantial costs (Epstein 2012, 143).[8]

In the context of the liberal order, reluctant socializees outside and within the West may express this concern either as (1) the suppression of difference through homogenization or (2) the erasure of the "self" to become the "other." Beyond the West, for instance, Bowden (2004, 63–65) notes that the liberal standard of civilization is often experienced as encouraging not just "universalism" but "uniformity." Similarly, Acharya (2014, 649) argues, the post–Cold War expansion of the liberal order is driven by a logic of "monistic universalism" responsible for the "suppression of diversity." In other cases, the universalist impulses of liberalism may appear too particularist instead, too deeply entangled with Western identity, values, interests, and ultimately hegemony. Liberalizing one's economy, politics, and society is seen as participating in certain forms of cultural and ideological colonization: losing a particular self to become the Western(ized) "other" (Epstein 2014; Blaney and Tickner 2017).

Within the West, forces on both the left and the right have developed their own critiques of the homogenizing tendency of the liberal order. These are especially notable in the way that calls for the recognition of "diversity" have become a rallying cry across the political spectrum (Fukuyama 2018). When it comes to fears of becoming an "other," a social and ideological distinction is notable across Western societies. Forces on the left share an understanding with critical intellectual currents that view the West as exporting and imposing its ideology and norms on the rest of the World. Certain conservative and reactionary forces on the right perceive a diametrically opposite reality. The current era of liberal globalization appears to them as generating a variety of dynamics that from the inside-out and the outside-in are instead contributing to the de-Westernization and thus decline of the West (Bialasiewicz 2006; Lehti and Pennanen 2020).

However, if non (fully) liberal actors and communities—whether in or beyond the West—resist liberal socialization, they are viewed as falling below modern standards of civilization. The result is that reluctant socializees are then stigmatized for being "uncivilized" by the very same complex network of actors and social forces driving the globalization of the liberal order. Processes of stigmatization express the second face of the constitutive ideological power at the heart of the liberal standard of civilization and are deeply implicated in how the liberal international order expands and hangs together. As Adler-Nissen (2014) and Zarakol (2014) show, stigma contributes to sharpening and strengthening shared norms and identities on which international orders rest, precisely by shaming or excluding nonconforming deviants.[9]

[7] At its most basic, ontological security refers to the "security of being or becoming" as opposed to "security as survival." For excellent recent overviews, see Kinnvall and Mitzen (2017) and Steele and Homolar (2019). Existing literature generally emphasizes the role of disruptive macro-trends, exogenous shocks, or incongruent autobiographical narratives as the main forces undermining collective actors' ontological security. We suggest that processes of socialization into novel identities and norms driven by the constitutive power of ideologies can have similarly destabilizing effects.

[8] This article focuses on constitutive power relations. It is worth noting that liberal standards can be implicated in legitimizing "civilizing missions"—such as liberal wars—where more coercive forms of power are deployed.

[9] Existing scholarship has touched only briefly upon the intersection of stigma and ideology. Zarakol (2014, 314), for instance, draws on Goffman to argue that stigmatization is often "accompanied by a 'stigma-theory,' which is an

Stigmatization symbolically disempowers reluctant socializees in two key ways. First, stigmatization is integral to the production of particular recognition and status hierarchies in international orders, including the liberal one (Adler-Nissen and Zarakol 2021). Actors and social forces that become object of stigma for falling below liberal standards of civilization are therefore likely to be seen and may come to perceive themselves as having a lower international status. Second, stigmatization contributes to delegitimize those non (fully) liberal ideological structures that reluctant socializees draw on—whether genuinely or instrumentally—to secure their identities, promote their ideas, justify their practices, and advance their interests domestically or internationally (see also Allan, Vucetic, and Hopf 2018, 849).

Non-Western actors and societies are, for instance, consistently cast by powerful Western agents constitutive of the liberal order as "irresponsible," "backwards," "rogue," "barbaric," "irrational," and—ultimately—"uncivilized" (Millennium 2014). Beyond the West, a widespread perception has emerged that the liberal standard of civilization does not simply sustain universal norms. Rather, it produces international status hierarchies that legitimize Western values and interests in ways that are reminiscent of the more formal nineteenth-century standard of civilization integral to European colonial practices (see also Adler-Nissen and Zarakol 2021, 613).[10]

Within the West, gender, race, class, and religion have long been the basis for the stigmatization of individual and collective actors assigned subordinate positions within society. More recently, however, particular actors and communities that enjoyed high standing historically—whether white, male, Christian, conservative, or prizing certain local communal identities—see themselves increasingly on the losing end of a liberal order, which in formal ideological terms subscribes to universal equality and rights. These social forces view attempts at preserving their "self-perceived rightfully dominant position in the world" (Adler-Nissen and Zarakol 2021, 613), being stigmatized as racist, sexist, chauvinist, and "deplorable" by intellectual, economic, and political elites that they perceive as the main drivers and beneficiaries of the liberal international order's globalization (also Jahn 2018, 59). The liberal standard of civilization is here, therefore, experienced as implicated in undermining the status and delegitimizing the ideas of particular—historically privileged—social forces in the West.

To sum up. The post–Cold War globalization of the liberal international order is entangled with the exercise of particular forms of ideological constitutive power that give rise to a modern, informal, universal liberal standard of civilization. This standard symbolically empowers actors and social forces whose identities, norms, interests, and practices are recognized as "civilized" compared to those that are not. Indeed, a multiplicity of state and civil society actors that are not recognized as (fully) conforming to the liberal standard of civilization may find that they become objects of either socializing or stigmatizing pressures. These pressures may be experienced by reluctant socializees as eroding or delegitimizing their collective identities and norms, and consequently undermining or constraining their authority and capacity to exercise agency, mobilize support, and advance their interests in world politics. Ultimately, reluctant socializees find themselves ideologically entrapped by the liberal order's standard of civilization experienced as enabling and sustaining—through either socialization or stigmatization—asymmetric power relations.

ideology" that explains the inferiority and danger represented by the stigmatized (also Goffman 1963, 5). Ideology here functions mostly as an ex-post rationalization, however. Recently, Adler-Nissen and Zarakol (2021) link more consistently the role of (liberal) ideology to the constitution of social hierarchies.

[10] This article focuses on constitutive power relations. It is worth noting that stigma can become entangled with certain coercive and institutional forms of power designed to discipline, punish, or exclude those deemed uncivilized.

Civilizationism as Counter-Hegemonic Ideology

It is precisely in the context of the constitutive power and ideological entrapment produced by the liberal order's standard of civilization that *civilizationism* (also Brubaker 2017) is acquiring growing political salience as a counter-hegemonic ideology for a multiplicity of non (fully) liberal actors in the present international system. In this section, we begin by teasing out four ideological logics, or functions, of civilizationism aimed at resisting, contesting, and overcoming the constitutive power of the modern, informal, liberal standard of civilization. We then briefly outline the conditions that lead certain actors, more than others, to articulate and embrace civilizationism today. Lastly, we tease out the interpretative value of an ideology perspective on civilizational politics compared to more established cultural, identity, and discursive approaches.

The Ideological Logics of Civilizationism

Civilizationism provides, first of all, an ideological system for interpreting and articulating a sense of disempowerment and crisis in response to liberal socialization and/or stigmatization dynamics. Civilizationism will thus systematically point to a sense of insecurity that non (fully) liberal actors experience in the liberal international order. This sense of insecurity is often not exclusively physical or economic, but more profoundly lived as a crisis of and threat to particular—ontological—ways of being, understanding, and acting in the world.

Civilizationism is thus the springboard for articulating particular "crisis narratives"[11] that are implicated in identifying not only the ideological sources of threat, but also what is being threatened. In this latter sense, civilizational crisis narratives are deeply entangled with the ideological formulation of the very alternative civilizational entities and normative value systems perceived to be under siege by the hegemonic constitutive power of the liberal order. The production of this alternative civilizational entity and normative value system coincides with the second and third key ideological logics of civilizationism.

The second ideological logic of civilizationism relates to the pursuit of ontological security and resisting socialization. Civilizationism produces its own constitutive power relations implicated in the social construction of a distinct and continuous sense of self, in order to counter the socializing pressures of becoming modern "civilized" liberals experienced by non (fully) liberal actors and social forces. This generally involves drawing on particular histories and traditions, to ideologically articulate what Peter Katzenstein (2010b) labels "primordial" understandings of civilizations as culturally and normatively coherent units. Primordialism specifically aims at "creating a taken-for-granted sense of reality that helps in distinguishing between self and other and right and wrong" (Katzenstein 2010b, 12).

Katzenstein's notion of primordialism easily relates to ontological security theorizing, which argues that the "essentialization" and "othering" of identities are powerful ideational means for delineating and securing a distinct sense of self (Kinnvall and Mitzen 2017, 7). It is in "clash of civilizations" discourses and practices, we claim, that these dynamics of self–other constitution along mutually exclusive essentialized lines are most starkly developed.

However, ontological security literature also finds that when constructing a secure sense of self, "others" do not necessarily have to be framed as enemies. Berenskoetter and Giegerich (2010) show how actors might seek out "friends" who positively reinforce their own identities. Yet, even when drawing together, actors must be able to maintain some form of essentialized difference unless the self becomes indistinguishable vis-à-vis others (Bolton 2021). These underlying logics very

[11] On the centrality of "crisis narratives" in civilizational imaginaries—especially Western ones—see Jackson (2010) and Lehti and Pennanen (2020).

much underpin "dialogue of civilizations" discourses and practices, which not only stress mutual understanding and respect between civilizations but also maintain that foundational self/other differences persist. This perspective furthermore suggests that civilizationists, by reinforcing each other's more general views of a multicivilizational world, can come to view each other as friends and allies.

Moreover, the notion of primordial civilizations provides the ideological means for constructing a seemingly continuous collective self, key to the production of a sense of stability and authenticity on which a secure collective identity relies (Steele and Homolar 2019, 215–16). This ideological effort is vital to resist liberal pressures that instead promote change through socialization. Civilizational imaginaries in fact constitute remarkably powerful ideological constructs for connecting the deep past to the present, especially since these entities are generally understood to exist across extensive temporalities.[12]

The third ideological logic of civilizationalism relates to its function in managing stigma. Actors may adopt three broad approaches to stigma management (Adler-Nissen 2014; also Zarakol 2014). One approach involves stigma *recognition*. Actors seek to avoid actions that might potentially generate condemnation, while conversely engaging in those practices that produce recognition and standing according to the dominant standards. This course of action, however, would imply a high degree of socialization, which, in the context of the liberal order, may be experienced as disempowering for reluctant socializees. Alternatively, where agents "are unable or unwilling to conform to 'normal' standards" (Adler-Nissen 2014, 150), they may *reject* or even *counter* the stigma attached to them. Rejection involves contesting the negative representations of actors' collective identities and values. Counter-stigmatization goes further by proposing an alternative value system to the established norms that provide the basis for their stigmatization to begin with.

Given the central role of liberalism in defining what is normatively (un)desirable, the articulation of countervailing ideologies such as civilizationism is especially salient to managing stigma.[13] Civilizationism allows actors to formulate both a sense of civilizational *value* and set of *values* aimed, respectively, at *rejecting* and *countering* liberal stigmatization. In terms of value, while drawing on and mobilizing distinct identities, histories, and traditions, civilizationism also represents these as glorious and illustrious. Such a move is inherent in the very notion of "being civilized" and the intellectual, artistic, and technological feats understood to define what constitutes a "civilization." Discourses and practices here may *reject* negative representations by (re)claiming high status for a particular civilizational self on the par with others, or veer toward exceptionalism that involves presenting "the characteristics of one's own group as [. . .] superior to those of others" (Acharya 2014, 651).

In terms of values, civilizationism provides the intellectual resources for articulating an alternative normative system to the established liberal standards that produce stigmatization. Reluctant socializees are likely to put forward a set of values and norms that are essentialized as constitutive of the deepest and most authentic cultural, religious, and intellectual traditions of the civilizational self. We expect these to be largely framed in relation and opposition to liberal universalism as a whole or to certain specific aspects of liberal ordering.

The fourth ideological component of civilizationism centers on the formulation of a competing vision of international order to the liberal one. At its most basic, civilizationism ideologically articulates plural and distinct civilizational paths to modernity and regional orders, compared to a universal and convergent path toward one liberal modernity and global order. Indeed, the notion of a world of plural

[12] Ontological security literature has generally emphasized the role of religious nationalism and populism as especially appealing ideologies during change and disruption, because they hold out the promise of certitude and/or authenticity. We argue that civilizationism can function in similar ways.

[13] Goffman (1963, 25) notes how stigmatized groups may seek to formulate an "ideology" that lays out "their complaints, their aspirations, their politics" in order to manage stigma.

civilizations constitutes an especially powerful ideological critique, in the words of Katzenstein (2010b, 2), of "the liberal presumption that universalistic secular liberal norms are inherently superior to all others." In the process, it also provides an alternative ordering logic that promises to overcome the constitutive power driving the deepening and expansion of the liberal international order and entrapping non (fully) liberal reluctant socializees in a state of symbolic disempowerment.

Who Articulates Civilizationism

Non (fully) liberal actors and social forces in world politics are certainly manifold. However, those that can and will formulate a civilizationist ideological critique of the present system are not endless or entirely arbitrary. Civilizationism is most likely to emerge among and be appealing to states and societies that have an imperial and cultural history they memorialize and glorify; that perceive themselves as symbolically and materially powerful regional or global players; where a sense of shared identities as well as common cultural, religious, social, political, and economic norms and practices exists that transcend immediate national territorial boundaries; and that have come—in their own right—to develop some sort of civilizational intellectual tradition and consciousness.

Multiple states and societies across distinct regions exhibit these characteristics (Katzenstein 2010a). It is those, however, that predominantly experience the liberal universal standard of civilization to be especially disempowering, which most forcefully will be drawing on these characteristics to effectively articulate a civilizationist ideology in the current historical juncture. These include, as we shall see, certain reactionary and conservative social forces in North America and Europe, key states and Islamist movements across the Middle East, and particular political and cultural elites in China, parts of Asia, and Russia. The Indian subcontinent, Japan, or Israel and the Jewish diaspora display certain features that make them receptive to civilizational politics, yet they have been less involved in such a project. That is because they have largely—although not uniformly—come to ideologically embrace the present universal liberal standard of civilization.[14]

Ideology and Civilizations

Whereas civilizationists will not necessarily understand themselves as engaged in an ideological enterprise, we argue that they are inextricably involved in one. Such a claim provides a distinctive perspective that challenges and complements existing scholarship approaching civilizations principally as cultural entities,[15] social constructions of identities,[16] or (Western) hegemonic discourses.[17]

There may certainly be a complex reality to civilizational dynamics and relations, as the more sophisticated cultural accounts suggest. Nonetheless, a shift to ideology allows us to clearly illuminate how multiple cultural resources and traditions are often appropriated and mobilized for very specific political projects. For instance, in the current historical juncture, claims of cultural and value diversity along civilizational lines presented in opposition to liberal universalism are not just statements of fact, but also ideological interventions intended to contest and propose an alternative to a particular way of organizing domestic and international order (see also Jahn 2019, 334).[18] Indeed approaching civilizationism as an ideology allows to

[14] Things may be changing in both India and Israel, although, as more conservative, religiously infused, forms of politics are gaining ground producing a disjuncture with the principles of liberal international ordering.

[15] Cultural accounts vary, from the essentialism of Huntington (1996), to more communitarian and dialogical perspectives (Petito 2016, Pabst 2018), to constructivist approaches who present civilizations as heterogeneous, pluralist, evolving cultural complexes (Katzenstein 2010b; Reus-Smit 2018; Acharya 2020).

[16] See O'Hagan (2002), Bettiza (2014), and Hale and Laruelle (2021).

[17] Especially Said (2001); see also Salter (2002) and Hall and Jackson (2007).

identify not just what is unique, but also what is shared across certain non (fully) liberal state and non-state actors as they seek to resist and overcome the symbolically disempowering dynamics at the core of the modern liberal standard of civilization.

Treating civilizations solely as (socially constructed) identities has certain limits too. First of all, it underestimates the central role that ideologies—such as civilizationism in our case—play in the very production, reification, and political mobilization of identities themselves—like civilizational ones.[19] "Because human beings are ideological creatures," Siniša Malešević (2011, 281) pithily puts it, "no identity claim is free of ideology."[20] Moreover, we suggest that civilizationists often go beyond simply defining—as they seek to defend—particular identities. They are also actively involved in articulating—by drawing on cognate ideologies, religious beliefs, and local intellectual traditions—a wider set of norms, values, and visions of international order.

Finally, although an ideological perspective certainly shares with discursive approaches a concern with power, the former is different from the latter in two key respects. A discursive approach tends to focus on discourses implicated in the exercise of Western hegemony by "othering" and "orientalizing" Muslims through clash of civilization discourses. An ideological perspective more clearly helps to highlight instead the counter-hegemonic—although not necessarily emancipatory—nature of much of today's civilizational politics. Moreover, an emphasis on civilizationism captures the complex, often contradictory, ways in which civilizational identities and norms are articulated and instantiated, compared to more bounded and one-dimensional notions of discourse.

Illustrating Civilizationism in World Politics

In this section, we provide an empirical illustration of the ideological logics of civilizationism in response to the constitutive power of the liberal standard of civilization. We examine primary sources, such as speeches or texts, by leading political figures and intellectuals who are today—in the West, the Middle East, China and parts of Asia, and Russia—most explicitly articulating and embracing civilizationist identities and ideas. We complement these sources by drawing on a growing secondary literature focusing on specific cases.

We divide the four main case studies that structure this section, in three subsections: the first charts the rise and role of civilizational crisis narratives; the second points to civilizationism's constitutive logics in relation to the production of a distinct identity, sense of value, and set of values; and the third subsection unpacks this ideology's role in articulating an alternative vision of world order. Along with illustrating the ideological functions of civilizationism, the empirical cases help identify the substantive content of the boundaries, norms, and international ordering visions that civilizationists currently formulate.

Western Civilizationism

Crisis Narratives

On the American and European right, the idea that Western civilization is in crisis has become pervasive (Bialasiewicz 2006; Brubaker 2017; Haynes 2017;

[18] Jahn contends that all political struggle in the modern—liberal—epoch takes the form of ideological struggle, meaning that even "traditional belief systems" are turned into ideologies when mobilized "into competing political programs" to liberalism (Jahn 2019, 334).

[19] Indeed, this is a key premise of understanding ideology as implicated in constitutive power relations (also Allan, Vucetic, and Hopf 2018; Jahn 2019). Maynard and Haas (2022, 5) reach a similar conclusion when discussing the "mutually constitutive" relationship between ideology and identity, noting the ways that "Nazism" or "cosmopolitanism" privilege certain identity categories over others.

[20] We find Malešević's statement, which focuses on nationalism, to be equally applicable to civilizational identities.

Abrahamsen et al. 2020, 100–102, Greene 2020; Lehti and Pennanen 2020; Stewart 2020). Although this sense of crisis has a long intellectual history tracing back—among others—to Oswald Spengler (O'Hagan 2002, chapter 3; also Jackson 2010), anxieties about Western decline have powerfully resurfaced in recent decades. Economic dislocations or security threats are clearly of concern, but what is often more fundamentally perceived to be in decline are Western identity, culture, and values. The reasons for the West's looming "death" are generally traced to the ideological forces and powerful elites driving the globalization of the post–Cold War's liberal international order. While being connected to different strands of conservative thinking, we argue that these ideas constitute a distinct ideological formation that we label "reactionary Western civilizationism."

The West that these right-wing forces have in mind varies. More extreme right-wing intellectual milieus—commonly occupied by paleoconservatives in the United States and European intellectuals associated with the French *Nouvelle Droite*—principally define it along ethnoracial lines. Elsewhere Western civilizationism is expressed in religiocultural terms, as Judeo-Christian, by scholars such as the late Samuel Huntington, propagandists such as Steve Bannon, or figures associated with the Center for European Renewal. A growing army of right-wing populists have embraced reactionary Western civilizationism including, most notably, France's Marine Le Pen, England's Nigel Farage, Holland's Geert Wilders, Hungary's Viktor Orbán, and America's Donald Trump.

Alain de Benoist—a leading figure of the *Nouvelle Droite* and founding member of the *Groupement d'Eťudes de Recherches de la Civilisation Europeénne* (GRECE)—does not mince words in his *Manifesto for a European Renaissance* coauthored with Charles Champetier. "Liberalism," which the manifesto argues "embodies the dominant ideology of modernity," is the "main enemy" (De Benoist and Champetier 2012, 14). Three broad overlapping lines of critique are discernible across reactionary Western civilizationist articulations.

First, liberalism is viewed as complicit in promoting economic globalization and disastrous humanitarian interventions that are causing an influx of migrants perceived to undermine Western identity and traditions. Such "foreign" threats are further aided, according to reactionary Western civilizationists, by multicultural and open border values embraced by "domestic" liberal elites. Widespread socialization into these values is seen as eroding the distinctiveness of Western culture and societies or even leading them to become an alien "other," by actively encouraging the "Islamicization" of Europe or the "Hispanicization" of North America (Bialasiewicz 2006; Greene 2020). In Huntington's (2004, 171) words: "multiculturalism is [. . .] basically an anti-Western ideology" (also Huntington 1996).

Second, liberal elites are viewed as abandoning local communal forms of belonging, to embrace and promote instead rootless cosmopolitan identities and universal norms. These are most starkly represented, according to civilizationists, by the glorification of the so-called Davos man as the archetypical global citizen or their enthusiasm for supranational governance arrangements (Abrahamsen et al. 2020, 98, Glencross 2020; Stewart 2020, 1213–15). Becoming cosmopolitan liberal moderns is therefore experienced as hollowing out Western identity and culture (see also Pabst 2019, 54).

Third, liberalism is perceived to be socializing communities into adopting a uniform secular, individualistic, materialist culture. On the one hand, when associated with the logics of neo-liberal capitalism, this is seen to be homogenizing behaviors and thoughts toward a narrow rational, self-interested, and economic-maximizing model of human being (Abrahamsen et al. 2020, 97). On the other hand, liberalism is viewed as corroding the religious and moral foundations of the West and undermining traditional family, gender, and sexual roles (Bialasiewicz 2006; Haynes 2017). "The Judeo-Christian West is in a crisis," Steve Bannon warned in

a speech delivered to the Vatican in 2014, "a crisis of our faith [. . .] a crisis of capitalism" (BuzzFeed News 2016).

Despite certain differences, a range of shared fears are identifiable, which reveal a deep sense of crisis posed by the socializing dynamics entangled with the globalization of the liberal order. "The fundamental question of our time is whether the West has the will to survive," stated President Trump in a 2017 speech delivered in Poland constituting one of the most high-profile manifestos of reactionary Western civilizationism. This "will" needs to be cultivated also in the face of opposition by liberal elites, seen to stigmatize civilizationists' concerns—about the decline of American, European, and Western ethnic groups, cultural practices, or religious traditions—as "racist," "xenophobic," or "nativist" (Bannon in CNN 2018).

Civilizational Identity, Value, and Values

The immaterial, ideological, stakes of the enterprise civilizationists are called upon to embark on, if they are to secure the West, are spelled out clearly by Trump (2017): "Our own fight for the West does not begin on the battlefield—it begins with our minds, our wills and our souls." Efforts to overcome socialization into and stigmatization by the forces associated with the modern liberal standard of civilization involve articulating a primordial Western identity, which is continuous in time and endowed with a set of distinct essential(ist) characteristics and values (also Lehti and Pennanen 2020, 75–77).

Against the threat of "indifferentiation and uprooting" brought about by the liberal order, De Benoist and Champetier (2012, 32) call for "clear and strong identities" including civilizational (also Huntington 2004). A sense of ontological order and certitude is cultivated by ascribing cultural and historical continuity to the West from the classical, to the Medieval, to the modern era. It is imperative, in Trump's (2017) words, to "never forget who we are." Publishing houses such as Arktos, and educational institutions such as Marion Maréchal-Le Pen's *Institut de Sciences Sociales, Économiques et Politiques* (ISSEP), or the US-based Charlemagne Institute, have emerged to promote reactionary Western civilizationist values and history. Border walls and immigration policies are sites through which self–other distinctions are reinforced in practice by reactionary civilizationists such as Trump or Orbán (Brubaker 2017, 1209; Haynes 2017). Ideas of a culturally continuous and distinct West underpin the establishment in 2019 of a new European Commission priority area focused, among other, on migration and asylum policies titled "Promoting our European Way of Life."

These efforts are closely entangled with multiple strategies for rejecting and countering stigma. Stigma management includes, for instance, emphasizing the historical and cultural achievements of Western civilization. One of the key values driving ISSEP, for instance, is to "transmit to our students pride in their history and their civilizational heritage."[21] In parallel, civilizationists articulate a distinct normative stance, which elevates a communitarian, particularist, collectivist, and majoritarian view of society over the supposedly corrosive cosmopolitan, universalist, individualist, and pluralist values promoted by liberal forces and elites despairingly labeled as "globalist" or the "new class." Civilizationists stress the importance of shared cultural belonging and heritage—and in some cases ethnic and racial too—seen as sources of strength for the West. Religious belonging and values are often central, which reinforce a traditionalist view on family and gender roles, and an emphasis on human "dignity" over "rights." In Trump's (2017) words, Europeans and Americans ultimately need to have "confidence in our values," "protect our borders," and summon the "courage to preserve our civilization."

[21] https://www.issep.fr/presentation/ (accessed May 19, 2022), authors' translation.

Civilizational World Order

Finally, reactionary Western civilizationism articulates a distinct view of world order in contrast to liberal internationalism. Against understandings of the liberal international order as open and globalizing, a civilizational international order would be instead bounded and integrating regionally (Stewart 2020, 1214). Civilizationism insists on the defense of a particular, macro, collective Western identity against liberal imperatives to universally protect individual human rights (Glencross 2020; Greene 2020, 431–36). Civilizationists' critique of "globalism" finds expression in a general skepticism or downright hostility toward multilateral and global governance institutions (Glencross 2020).

Civilizationism embraces a strong perspective on global ethnocultural pluralism and regional geocultural orders, which contests and provides an alternative to the universalizing tendencies of the modern liberal standard of civilization. In the words of De Benoist and Champetier (2012, 29–30) "[liberal] civilization pretending to be universal and regarding itself entrusted with a redeeming mission ("Manifest Destiny) to impose its model on all others" is the main threat of the world's "pluriversum," by which they mean a "multipolar order" of "great cultural groups" and "emerging civilizations" (see also Huntington 1996; Pabst 2018).

Islamist Civilizationism

Crisis Narratives

The birth of the idea of the "Muslim world" in the late-nineteenth century coincided with the beginning of its "crisis" (Aydin 2017; Dalacoura 2019). Civilizational narratives, however, have acquired renewed urgency in recent decades across multiple Muslim-majority societies. The 1991 Gulf War, the Bosnian war in the 1990s, and the post–9/11 War on Terror along with the 2003 US invasion of Iraq—consistently justified in defense of human rights or promoting democracy—represented, for some, not only a military security threat by the West, but also an attempt to impose a particular liberal standard of civilization on the broader "Muslim world."

The wider expansion of a Western-led liberal international order following the Cold War's end—associated, among others, with processes of globalization and the spread of human rights—compounded a sense among multiple communities that Muslim values and traditions were being undermined by the ideological forces of the liberal order. Concerns with becoming liberal have generally dovetailed with fears of cultural colonization in the form of Westernization. As certain Muslim-majority states or social forces within them either resisted or rejected being socialized in the liberal project, these would however become the objects of stigmatization—expressed also through Orientalist and Islamophobic tropes—for falling below liberal modern standards of civilization (Pasha 2007).

In so far as Islam is seen as the cultural underpinning of a particular civilization—rather than a universal religion (Dalacoura 2019)—Islamists in Iran and Turkey, and, more marginally and controversially in the context of Al Qaeda and ISIS, have sought to present themselves as the leading defenders of an Islamic civilization in crisis and under assault. Civilizationist perspectives vary. There is intense competition for who is the legitimate leader of the Muslim world between states such as Turkey, Iran, or Saudi Arabia and non-state actors including transnational *jihadist* groups. This said, two broad civilizationist orientations are distinguishable: a dialogical and conflictual one.

Some of the most prominent and legitimate Islamist civilizationist perspectives—largely articulated along dialogical lines—have originated from major regional powers, especially Iran and Turkey. Notable here are the roles of Mohammad Khatami, president of Iran between 1997 and 2005, an early proponent of the

idea of Dialogue among Civilizations (Khatami 1997; see also Dallmayr and Manoochehri 2007), and Ahmet Davutoğlu and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, of the Turkish Justice and Development Party, who spearheaded initiatives such as the United Nations (UN)-based Alliance of Civilizations (Ardiç 2014).

A sense of a Muslim world on the defensive is palpable in all their civilizationist outlooks. "Our era is the era of preponderance of Western culture and civilization," Khatami (1997) thus began in a famous speech delivered at the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) laying out his civilizationist vision in the late 1990s. The "Islamic Ummah," Khatami (1997) continued, finds itself in "a state of passivity vis-a-vis the ostentatious dominant civilization of the time." Similarly, for Davutoğlu (2014, x, xi) the contemporary Western-driven process of "globalization" is akin to the "monopolization and homogenization of human culture," which can lead to the potential "vaporization of non-Western civilizations."

Civilizational Identity, Value, and Values

The ideological constitution of an essentially distinct, temporally continuous, and proud Islamic civilizational self is central to Khatami, Davutoğlu, and Erdoğan's narratives. In Khatami's (1997) words, Islamic civilization is "fundamentally different" from the West whose "peculiar orientation and identity" are tied to the Greco-Roman period and Christianity (see also Davutoğlu 1994, 18; Erdoğan 2017). The Muslim world instead traces its millennial history and distinctive characteristics to the birth of Islam, which Khatami (1997) argues created a "culture, with its unique and distinct view of existence." "The essence of our identity," according to Khatami (1997), is constituted by the values of "wisdom and reason" and "unity and solidarity" espoused by Islam's holy Quran. Ahmet Davutoğlu (1994, 47) similarly contrasts Western civilization with the Muslim one based on "the Islamic belief of *tawhid*." Meaning "one-ness" and entailing "complementarity" in personal and social relations (Davutoğlu 1994), *tawhid* implies the rejection of individualism, rivalry, competition, and atomism seen to characterize the West in favor of family, community, solidarity, and unity presented as the core of Islamic civilization (also Erdoğan 2017).

Securing a positive sense of self in the context of stigma involves both highlighting the historical status of Islamic civilization and reclaiming a pride of place internationally for Muslims. Recognizing Islamic civilization as "one of the most glorious civilizations in history," according to Khatami (1997), provides confidence for a "future more splendid." While Erdoğan and Davutoğlu's vision has considerable similarities with Khatami's, it also has a different historical reference point focused on the glories of the Ottoman empire (see Davutoğlu 2001). In the twenty-first century, a vibrant Islamic civilization would be led by a newly assertive Turkey, seen as embodying a new civilizational synthesis between East and West. References to the Ottoman past are central in producing a sense of historical continuity and status, but also serve to claim Turkish leadership of the Muslim world, thus revealing the enduring power of nationalism within a wider civilizational discourse that is supposed to overcome national divisions (see also Ardiç 2014).

Transnational *jihadist* groups, who are highly unrepresentative forces but nonetheless a vocal category of self-styled defenders of the Muslim world, articulate a civilizationist discourse that embraces clash. Such ideology posits an extreme rejection of the liberal standard of civilization, which is viewed as threatening Islam, disempowering Muslims, and enabling Western hegemony. The construction of an essentialized, historically continuous and glorious Muslim identity in ISIS propaganda, for instance, dovetails with efforts to "other" and counter-stigmatize the liberal West as "deeply sinful, uncivilized, entity that is corrupt and corrupting of anyone who comes in contact with it" (Baele et al. 2019, 908).

The secular and liberal West is represented by ISIS as "deviant" and "perverted," supporting "gay rights," and allowing "alcohol, drugs, fornication, gambling, and

usury" (Baele et al. 2019, 899). While these values are framed as posing an indirect cultural and ideological threat to the Muslim world, the West is also accused of directly subjugating Muslims by supporting "apostate" regimes and "fake scholars" that promote moderate, liberal, Islam (Baele et al. 2019, 907). It is in this context that ISIS presents itself as the only entity capable of, in the words of Baele et al. (2019, 900), "stopping this expansion of Western sin, restoring the dignity of Muslims, protecting the purity of Islam, and putting contemporary *jahiliyyah* [i.e., age of ignorance] to an end." Overall, ISIS has articulated and mobilized a clashist civilizationist ideology presenting itself as a virtuous organization intent on reestablishing Muslim unity and glory through its supposed Caliphate.

Civilizational World Order

Because of their dialogical underpinning, both Iranian and Turkish civilizational articulations do not wholeheartedly reject the West and universal norms. Islam, in Khatami's (1997) rendering, is compatible with "human rights." The West and the Islamic world are "not necessarily in conflict" and thus should find constructive ways to learn from each other (Khatami 1997; also Dallmayr and Manoochehri 2007). Similarly, Turkish dialogical civilizational discourses entail "an emphasis on 'universal' values of mankind" such as justice (Ardiç 2014, 110). Turkey is presented, by Erdoğan and Davutoğlu, as a synthesis "where the cultures of Islam and democracy have merged together" (Erdoğan quoted in Ardiç 2014, 113; also Davutoğlu 2001). For Erdoğan, "Christian, Islamic and Jewish worlds [. . .] can understand one another" (quoted in Ardiç 2014, 112). It is not surprising, therefore, that the UN—a key institution of the liberal international order—has been an important site for promoting Khatami's ideas of the Dialogue among Civilizations in 2001 and institutionalizing the Turkey-sponsored Alliance of Civilizations in 2005.

Yet, liberalism and Islamic civilizationism are not entirely reconcilable. For instance, the communitarian—and even authoritarian—implications of concepts such as *tawhid* (when applied at the social and political levels) go against the essence of individual rights. While emphasizing certain commonalities, both Iranian and Turkish discourses insist on value pluralism and civilizational difference, which they view the present Western-led liberal international order as undermining. Such an order therefore needs reforming, especially to overcome the socializing and stigmatizing logics underpinning its liberal standard of civilization.

Khatami (1997) calls for a "new and just world order," which should be "based on pluralism" rather than on the "monopoly of any single power." Against Western "civilizational hegemony," Davutoğlu (2014, xi), proposes instead a "future world order" marked by "pluralistic civilizational interaction." This order would ensure that the identity and values of a distinct Islamic civilization are secured and recognized, thus creating the ideological conditions for enabling greater regional cooperation among and global leadership by Muslim-majority countries. In such an order, "Muslim countries" should find ways to "arrive at political solidarity and consolidation," according to Khatami (1997), and "strive towards [. . .] effective participation in international decision-making." Key in this regard, according to Erdoğan (2017; also Ardiç 2014, 112), is ensuring that the UN Security Council has greater cross-civilizational representation—including from the Muslim world.

For its part, ISIS has hardly articulated a comprehensive vision of world order. We nonetheless can infer the organization's thinking from some of the most iconic images associated with the group's propaganda. These include a series of maps representing—shaded in black—aspirational future areas of conquest. Such maps encompass areas that transcend contemporary state boundaries and overlap with—and at times even extend beyond—those held by multiple historic Caliphates. Such areas appear to constitute a putative Islamic geocultural civilizational space according to ISIS's imaginaries.

Chinese Civilizationism

Crisis Narratives

By the 1990s and through the first two decades of the 2000s, two interlocking civilizationist discourses became ever more politically salient across parts of Asia: a South-East Asian one centered on the idea of "Asian values" and a Sino-centric discourse reviving the notion of China as a civilizational state. Political leaders in Singapore and Malaysia, such as Lee Kwan Yew and Mohamad Mahathir, appealed in the 1990s to Asian values in response to Western post–Cold War triumphalism and universalistic claims about liberal democracy and human rights. In the Asian values discourse, the liberal standard of civilization was represented not just as a potential threat to local political power structures, but more profoundly as ideologically enabling Western—especially American—hegemony by either contributing to the Westernization and progressive erosion of local identities or the stigmatization of Asian countries as "backward" (Moody Jr 1996, 167; Subramaniam 2000, 20).

Similar concerns would become increasingly prevalent in China, where "fears of Westernisation" and "spiritual slide" in recent decades coincided with the declining ideological role of Marxism–Leninism, rising domestic unrest throughout the 1980–1990s, and growing turn toward capitalism (Dynon 2014, 25; also Moody Jr 1996, 188–92). The result, Callahan (2015, 219) notes, has been an "identity dilemma" wherein rather than trying to determine how China fits within the liberal international order, the focus has been on "the identity politics of answering the question 'Who is China?'." Answers to such a question would become intertwined in post–Cold War China with the need to both safeguard regime legitimacy and counteract the "existential threat" posed by the "ideological penetration" of liberal "Western values" (Wilson 2016, 136, 142; also Wu 2014, 972–73; Callahan 2015, 223).

Civilizational Identity, Value, and Values

With the view of constituting a distinct, stable, and valued self, aimed at resisting the constitutive power of liberal universalism, intellectuals and party officials in China would turn to "cultural and civilization themes" (Wilson 2016, 142; also Wu 2014; Mayer 2018). Drawing on Chinese history and cultural traditions, especially Confucianism, a strong essentialized distinction began to be made between Chinese civilizational values presented as emphasizing community, harmony, and justice against the West and liberal norms framed as promoting individualism, conflict, and imperialism.

In the 1990s, President Jiang Zemin would increasingly promote the concept of "socialist spiritual civilization," which fused components of China's cultural traditions with socialist ideas to articulate a civilizational "alternative to 'modernisation as Westernisation'" (Dynon 2014, 27; also Wu 2014, 989–90). While continuing to emphasize Marxism–Leninism, President Hu Jintao likewise began to draw more heavily upon Confucianism and Chinese history to develop the themes of "harmonious society" and "harmonious world" (Mayer 2018, 1226–27).

Cultivating especially a sense of continuity, pride, and distinct normative commitment, President Xi Jinping and other leading party ideologues such as Wang Huning have placed even greater emphasis on Chinese premodern history and intellectual traditions emphasizing the millenarian roots and status of China as a civilizational state (Kaufman 2018; Mayer 2018). Exemplary here is, for instance, an address Xi gave to the College of Europe in 2014, where he presented Chinese–European relations principally as an encounter between civilizations. To his European audience, Xi (2014) framed China primarily as a "time-honored civilization," with "great thinkers such as Laozi, Confucius and Mozi" whose teachings still today underpin "the unique value system in the Chinese outlook of the world." Despite "many vicissitudes" associated with the century of humiliation, Xi (2014) noted, this

cultural and intellectual tradition allowed China to successfully achieve its own non-liberal path—"socialism with Chinese characteristics"—to modernization (Xi 2014).

Civilizational World Order

Chinese civilizationism constitutes a key ideological premise for contesting the present Western-led liberal international order and articulate an alternative to it. As Rolland (2020, 24) puts it, China's calls for a "non-Western value system" domestically lead by extension also to calls for the "de-Westernization of the global system." There is a tension, however, in China's civilizationist vision of world order between one that embraces greater cooperation among Asian states while emphasizing global pluralism and a second more exceptionalist view of a Sino-centric regional order that positions China as a leading world ordering force.

In the former case, efforts are made to construct a shared intra-civilizational Asian identity and worldview, building also on the Asian values theme. Here, Chinese leaders present their traditions as embodying "the deep wisdom of eastern nations" in opposition to liberal universalism and Western ideological hegemony (Moody Jr 1996, 187). A notable instantiation of this approach was on display during the 2019 Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations. In the conference's keynote speech, Xi (2019) emphasized how "Asian countries are closely connected and share a natural bond of affinity," have gone "through similar historical trials," and "hold the same dream for the future." Stressing a pluralist understanding of world order, Xi (2019) claimed "no civilization is superior over others." Against liberal homogenization where "human civilizations are reduced to only one single color or one single model," what is needed instead is to "respect each other as equals," "deepen understanding of [. . .] difference," and "promote interaction, dialogue and harmony among civilizations" (Xi Jinping 2019).

Efforts to stress China's intra- and inter-civilizational dialogical posture, however, are in tension with discourses focusing on China's unique status and global contributions as a state civilization. Although often emphasizing "mutual respect, mutual trust, reciprocity, equality," Xi's civilizationism is nonetheless marked—Callahan (2016, 231) suggests—by "traditional Chinese ideas of a hierarchical Sino-centric regional system." Chinese bid for regional leadership is being legitimized, Mayer (2018, 1231) finds, by highlighting its civilizational history as a "benevolent center." Despite stressing "the "equality" of civilizations," Kaufman (2018) shows how Xi presents China as a "great civilization," which is "uniquely capable of taking a leading role in the future of humankind." These exceptionalist civilizationist themes underpin Xi's "China Dream," the renewed interest in the notion of *tianxia* (all-under-heaven) as an international ordering principle and major projects such as the BRI (Callahan 2016, 2015; Mayer 2018; Rolland 2020). To borrow from Callahan (2016, 238), civilizationism thus appears ideologically entangled with China's attempts to promote a shift from "US-led global liberal order to Chinese-style globalization."

Russian Civilizationism

Crisis Narratives

From a relatively marginal idea among Russian intellectuals in the 1990s, civilizationism has developed into something akin to official doctrine, notably after the "civilizational turn" that characterized Putin's third term in office between 2012 and 2018 (Linde 2016; Tsygankov 2016). Despite its appearance in official texts, civilizationism in Russia remains a highly contested and often contradictory discourse reflecting a complex intellectual heritage (Bassin 2016; Tsygankov 2017), one that combines different strands of Russian political thought—including nineteenth-century thinkers such as Nikolai Danilevsky, the Eurasianist tradition of the 1920s, and the esoteric work of Lev Gumilev—with non-Russian sources—including Carl

Schmitt's anti-liberalism and more recently Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" thesis.

Despite the eclectic character of Russian civilizational imaginaries, a commonality across thinkers in the present historical juncture is notable. These largely share a view of the concept of civilization as a means to counter a globalizing liberal order, and the socialization and stigmatization dynamics accompanying it, seen to be deeply implicated in ideologically sustaining Western hegemony and disempowering Russia. Civilizationist articulations have always had a profound existential flavor, whereby Russia is perceived to be in danger either of losing its identity within an expanding European project or of simply disappearing from world history altogether. Conservative historians point to 1917 and 1991 as two moments in the twentieth century when Russia "appeared on the edge of a complete loss of its civilizational identity" (Marchenya 2010).

Yet, since the end of the Cold War, such narratives of decline and death have been revived, with conservative thinkers in Russia viewing socialization into liberal norms as a project intent on depriving "the Russian people of political subjectivity and civilizational identity" (Markov 2012). Presidential aide Sergei Glazyev (2014, 84), for instance, has argued that "Russia is facing a clear choice: either become a powerful ideological and civilizational centre in its own right . . . or integrate with one of the existing power centres and lose its identity."

Civilizational Identity, Value, and Values

While a sense of crisis permeates current Russian civilizational imaginaries, these simultaneously construct an alternative and valued identity that challenges liberal universalism as Western particularism. Official discourses, articulated by the Kremlin and intellectuals tied to the Valdai Discussion Club for instance, offer a carefully crafted historical narrative that underlines the temporal continuity and cultural constancy of the Russian civilization as opposed to the novelty of those liberal values and political forces presented as undermining it. These discourses are furthermore deeply implicated in a boundary-drawing exercise instantiating a sharp distinction between a Russian-centric civilization and the West. Such narratives likewise frame Russia as a great power at the core of a larger civilizational space, against discourses that stigmatize it as a backward and uncivilized state on the periphery of Europe or one whose status is secondary to the West.

Official discourses tend to draw on two broad, at times contradictory, civilizational imaginaries. One version promotes a Slavic and Christian Orthodox civilizational imaginary, known as the "Russian World" (*Russkiy Mir*). The Russian World combines linguistic and ethnic definitions of Russian-ness with Orthodox values in a civilizational space that spreads beyond Russia's frontiers into Ukraine, Belarus, and parts of other post-Soviet states (Feklyunina 2016; Suslov 2018). A highly politicized version of Russian World civilizationism is deeply implicated, for instance, in driving and legitimizing Moscow's military intervention in Ukraine in 2014 and even more explicitly its full-scale invasion in 2022 (Young 2022).

A second civilizational imaginary informing current thinking is Eurasianism, which shifts the geography eastward and incorporates the Muslim peoples of Central Asia into a multiethnic and multiconfessional civilization (Laruelle 2008; Lewis 2018). Eurasianism also includes multiple interpretations, ranging from the radically anti-liberal neo-Eurasianism of Alexander Dugin to the moderate technocratic thinking that partly informs the EAEU, a trading bloc promoted as an alternative to the European Union.

The normative content of these civilizational spaces is contested, but some common values can be identified (see also Lukin 2014). Civilizationists tend to reject ideas of individualist liberal rights in favor of a discourse of hierarchy, stability, and authority in which the state is the central, privileged actor. They promote "traditional values," defined as fixed social identities, whether of sexual

orientation, family structure, or gender roles. Some institutions such as the Russian Orthodox Church promote these norms as part of a wider moral agenda, but for most civilizationists these values are of interest primarily for drawing dividing lines and challenging Western liberalism.

Issues such as LGBTQ rights, for instance, are used to construct polarizing lines within Russian society and to mark internationally the normative contours of a Russian "Christian" civilization distinct from contemporary "post-Christian" liberal Europe (Lewis 2020, 94–99). Russian conservatives also view traditional values as a form of soft power with universal appeal and a means for building coalitions with civilizationists abroad—especially in the West—to contest liberal norms and order. These include, for instance, Alexander Dugin's efforts to disseminate Eurasianist ideas across far-right circles in the West and initiatives such as the Berlin-based Dialogue of Civilization Research Institute.

Civilizational World Order

Civilizationism in Russia, in almost all its versions, is closely tied to geopolitical thinking. Civilizationists promote a view of the international system based on cultural diversity and distinct civilizational spaces, in which macro-regions act as the building blocks for a new multipolar world order (Laruelle 2008; Linde 2016; Lewis 2018; Suslov 2018). Conservatives such as Mikhail Remizov advocate geopolitical and civilizational thinking as "strategies for cultivating the spatial identity of communities" against a "spaceless" liberalism (cited in Lewis 2020, 42).

As such Russian civilizationism sustains a vision of a world order organized around multiple spheres of influence that are dominated politically, economically, militarily, and—ultimately—culturally and normatively by regional great powers. Russia's attempts to create new geopolitical realities in its neighborhood also demonstrate the profound dangers of a foreign policy informed by civilizational thinking. Russia's claim to be the center of a civilizational space beyond its borders has informed a violent revanchism toward its neighbors, such as Georgia and Ukraine, which have instead pursued their own national projects aimed at closer integration with Europe and the institutions of the liberal order.

Conclusion

There has been a growing turn toward plural civilizational discourses and practices across multiple regions over the past three decades. This article argued that these phenomena should be understood as an expression of a particular ideological formation defined as civilizationism, which has been gaining ground in reaction to the post–Cold War globalization of the liberal international order. Theoretically, this paper drew upon and brought together in innovative ways a rich conceptual apparatus developed by constructivists and critical scholars to provide an explanation of the ideological dynamics at play in the making and contestation of the liberal international order.

We suggested that the deepening and widening of the liberal order in the aftermath of the Cold War has been enabled by powerful constitutive ideological forces congealing into a distinctively modern, informal, universal liberal standard of civilization. We argued, and sought to show empirically, that this liberal civilizational standard is experienced by a complex range of non (fully) liberal actors and social forces within and beyond the West as ideologically entrapping them—through processes of socialization or stigmatization—in a state of ontological insecurity, inferior status, and symbolic disempowerment.

Civilizationism embodies a particular set of constitutive ideological logics that contest and seek to overcome the liberal standard of civilization through the articulation of an essentialized and valued sense of collective belonging, and an alternative normative system and vision of international order. These alternative identities,

norms, and ordering visions are not constructed out of thin air. They draw upon and resonate with (1) existing histories, cultural resources, and intellectual traditions and (2) the symbolic meaning that the concept and notion of "civilization" carries. Because of its current counter-hegemonic impulse, civilizationism can display important emancipatory themes (e.g., Acharya 2020). Our cases, however, show that civilizationism is largely intertwined with conservative, illiberal, and authoritarian political forces across the West, the Middle East, China, and Russia who perceive themselves on the sharp end of the liberal order's ideological constitutive power.

While certainly complex and diverse, civilizationism exhibits a series of common themes that emphasize, vis-à-vis liberalism, collective duties over individual rights, communitarian over cosmopolitan ethics, religiosity and spirituality over secularism and materialism, order and stability over freedom and change, particularism and regionalism over universalism and globalism, and unique and distinct paths to modernity based on ostensibly long-standing ethnocultural and value differences over a common converging human trajectory toward one model of modernity. Civilizationism advances a vision of world order defined by deep international heterogeneity and a sense of shared intra-civilizational identity and norms, against a view of the liberal international order seen as encouraging international homogeneity and standardization while producing intra-civilizational heterogeneity and fragmentation.

These findings demonstrate in important ways the conceptual relevance of an ideological analysis of civilizations compared to existing cultural, identity, or discursive approaches. This paper shows how global efforts aimed at defending and promoting "cultural diversity" partake in an important political project intended to contest liberal universalism. It highlights how civilizational imaginaries and practices are not exclusively aimed at constructing (primordial) identities, but also articulate alternative (non-liberal) norms and values. Lastly, it illustrates how—rather than through a single Western hegemonic "clash of civilizations" discourse—civilizations are largely instantiated in multiple—at times contradictory—counter-hegemonic discourses contesting the dominant ideological structures of the present international order.

We propose two areas for further research and reflection. The first focuses on the world reordering potential of civilizationism. A multicivilizational vision of world order is closely intertwined with a shift toward multipolarity (Petito 2016). What is interesting to inquire is whether and how civilizationism is not just reflecting but also enabling such a shift. One pathway is through legitimation. In the West, for instance, civilizationism appears to legitimize certain forms of American global disengagement and retrenchment, while in Europe it aliments opposition toward American unilateralism and further European enlargement. In the context of China, Russia, and the Middle East, civilizationism is mobilized to delegitimize liberal interventionism and Western hegemony as well as supporting regionalist projects and certain geopolitical spheres-of-influence logics.

Another pathway enabling multipolarity is by producing a disjuncture between the hegemony of liberal ideology and the distribution of identity in the international system. Allan, Vucetic, and Hopf (2018) argue that the liberal international order remains hegemonic to the extent that consent and support for its reigning ideology is related to and reinforced by a favorable distribution of liberal identity globally. By constituting alternative identities and norms, civilizationism provides the ideological foundations for eroding liberal hegemony and facilitating a shift toward a post-liberal international order. For this to occur, however, civilizationism would need to be embraced by societies at large rather than solely elites. Hale and Laruelle (2021) suggest that civilizationism may already have some appeal at the mass level. Our illustrative cases are unable to confirm this. Further research could explore the extent that civilizational identities and ideas permeate the societal level, also by virtue of being increasingly articulated and mobilized—as our cases do show—by elites.

International reordering also depends—Allan, Vucetic, and Hopf (2018, 854–55) furthermore note—on the capacity of alternative ideologies to generate counter-hegemonic coalitions. Some of these trends are already noticeable, with civilizationism providing the ideological lubricant connecting actors across borders. Examples include the transatlantic solidarities formed around a concern over Western decline among American paleoconservatives and the European New Right as well as among right-wing populists such as Trump, Farage, Le Pen, Salvini, and Orbán (Haynes 2017; Abrahamsen et al. 2020; Stewart 2020). Huntington has been avidly read in Moscow (Tsygankov 2016), and Dugin's ideas are increasingly circulating within Western right-wing circles (Abrahamsen et al. 2020). Civilizationist intellectual affinities brought together Russian, Chinese, and Western scholars in the Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute (e.g., DoC Research Institute 2019). In a notable 2022 joint statement, Xi and Putin have called for a new "world order" based on the "respect" of "cultural and civilizational diversity" (Joint Statement 2022). Iran and Turkey's inter-civilizational initiatives have been welcomed across multiple Western and global milieus (e.g., Dallmayr and Manoochehri 2007; Dallmayr, Kayapinar, and Yaylaci 2014).

A second area for further reflection revolves around the implications and significance of integrating ideology more firmly in constructivist theorizing and analysis. So far, constructivist research has overwhelmingly privileged more apolitical concepts such as norms, culture, or identity. The so-called new constructivism follows this trend (McCourt 2022), especially with its emphasis on practices. Reasons for constructivists' aversion to ideology may be diverse, including political, sociological, and philosophical, which cannot be fully explored here due to space limitations.

The payoffs, nonetheless, of embracing ideology more substantively are multiple. Ideology can provide a new conceptual vantage point for better understanding the dynamics and political significance of processes of norms diffusion and contestation, identity construction and ontological (in)security, cultural reproduction and reification, or status-seeking and stigmatization. The general neglect—although certainly not complete absence—of considerations of power in constructivist research has been a recurring theme.[22] The very political nature of ideology would help bring power considerations of ideational dynamics more firmly to the fore. We are furthermore entering an era "beyond" the end of history marked by intensifying ideological struggle in global politics.[23] Constructivism as an interpretivist theoretical framework is exceptionally well placed to make sense of these ongoing challenges and contribute to key debates of our times, that is, if constructivists make ideology more central to their analytical toolkit.

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[22] For a recent intervention in this debate, see Bettiza and Lewis (2020).

[23] Reflected also in the growing attention paid to ideology in IR, see Maynard and Haas (2022).

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