

the **"GOLDEN AGE"**

ANALYSING THE NORTH
ATLANTIC FAR RIGHT PT.1



Typically, the far right is designated as “populist” in the North Atlantic (i.e. North America and Europe). Although this is a vague term, it usually refers to a political force that is “anti-establishment.”

In our context, anti-establishment implies a break from the “neoliberal consensus,” which is broadly defined by free market orthodoxy (i.e. the extension of markets in all aspects of social life), the privatisation of social services, the expansion of the repressive state apparatus, unconditional acceptance of US unipolarity, and the ideological surrender to capitalism (i.e. “there is no alternative”).

But does the far right really pose a credible challenge to this neoliberal order? →

Origins of the North Atlantic Far Right

The Polish Law and Justice Party (PiS) was one of the first North Atlantic political formations to be qualified as “populist.” Founded in 2001, the PiS advocated for increased economic intervention by the state and a traditional cultural orientation to the Catholic Church, both of which clashed with the market deregulation and social liberalism of the EU.

In 2005, the PiS became the largest party in Poland. **Its success was soon modelled by Fidesz (Hungary), Freedom Party of Austria, Lega Party (Italy), National Rally (France), and the Alternative for Germany.** What distinguished them from neoliberal bloc (represented by the traditional centre left and centre right) was their social conservatism, extreme hostility to immigration, economic nationalism, and euro-skepticism.

Source: Tricontinental, *The False Concept of Populism* (2024).

Image: A pro-government (PiS) demonstration in Warsaw (2015). Wojtek Radwanski.





However, when these far-right forces came to political power, they did not abandon the neoliberal consensus.

They oversaw financial deregulation, social austerity, European market integration, and a commitment to the US-led world order (i.e. NATO-related defense spending, constraining China, military aggression against Russia*, support for Israel's genocide).**

If the far right is committed to neoliberalism, then why are they considered populist?

***Note:** This differs from the Global South, with most countries refusing to isolate Russia after its invasion of Ukraine.

****Note:** A notable exception to the far-right's obedience to Washington is Viktor Orbán, who used Hungary's presidency of the Council of the European Union to try to stop the expansion of NATO and to end the war in Ukraine. He is however an ardent supporter of Israel.



Revenge of the Superstructure

What distinguishes the far right from the neoliberal bloc is its **“anti-liberalism.”**

The neoliberal bloc defends liberalism as a project of “lifestyle and social choices for the middle class.”*

It advocates for gender, racial, and sexual diversity so long as it does not challenge capitalist social relations. The symbol of this kind of progressive neoliberalism is the girl boss CEO or black defense secretary.

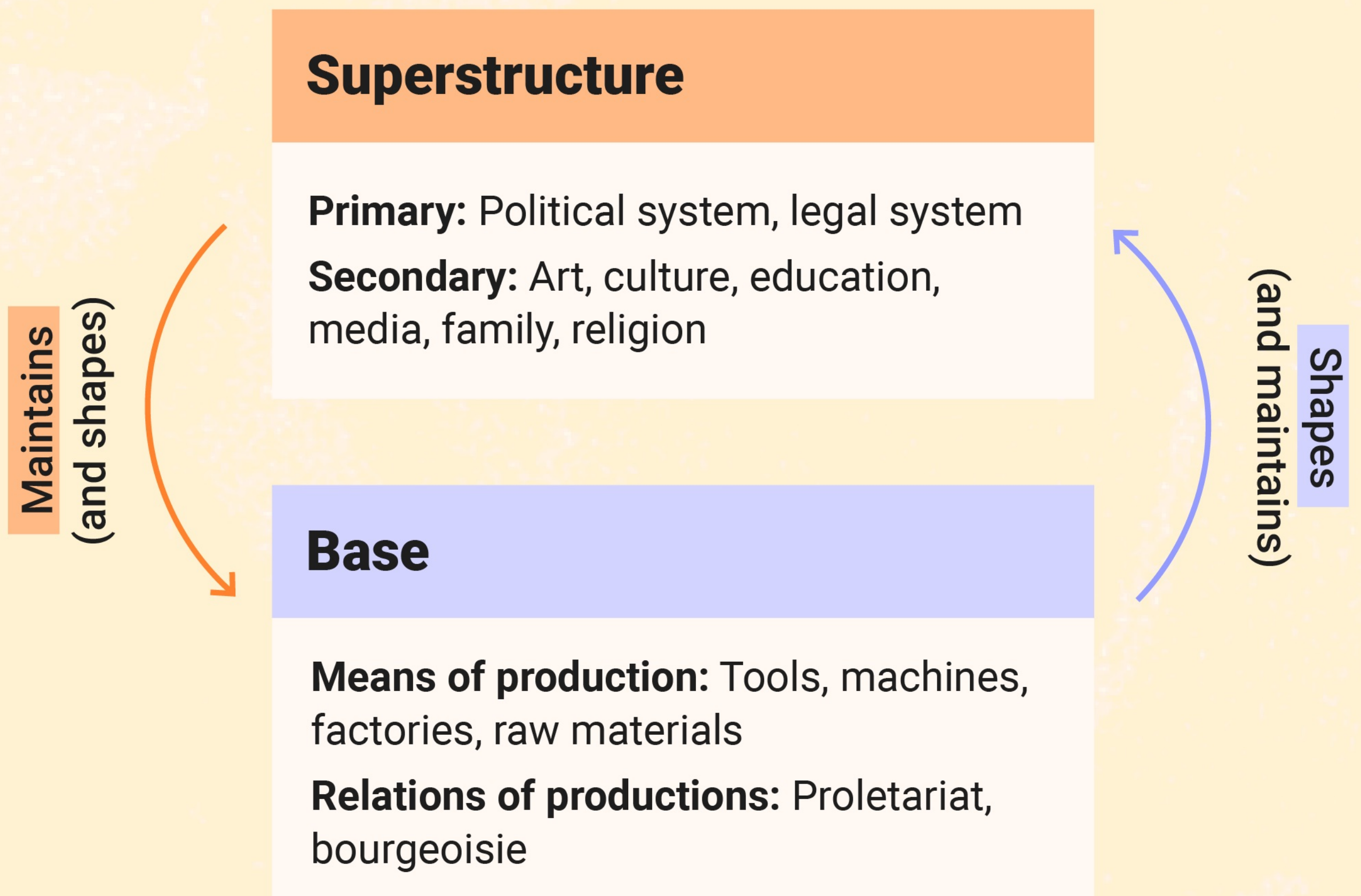
***Note:** This is a distortion of classic liberalism, a political tradition that fused bourgeois democratic rights (e.g. freedom of speech and political assembly) with capitalist property relations (i.e. the exploitation of wage-labour).



The far right openly rebels against this “woke” liberal performativity by mounting a political crusade against what they view as “globalists” (i.e. state elite) letting immigrants, feminists, and queer people run roughshod over the patriarchal nuclear family and the Church.

The far right is populist insofar as it represents a break from liberal politics, but it does not break from the neoliberal economy itself.

The Marxist concept of **base and superstructure** helps us further analyse the far right's political strategy →



Note: The base is the economic mode of production (i.e. the manner in which things are produced) while the superstructure is the political, legal, and cultural systems that maintain it, e.g. private property rights are codified in law. While it is the base that usually determines the superstructure, the superstructure can also influence the base.

Saving Neoliberalism from Itself

In 2008, the capitalist global economy experienced its **greatest crisis since the 1929 Wall Street crash and ensuing Great Depression.**

Rather than curtail the power of the financial perpetrators and engineer a transition out of neoliberalism, the neoliberal bloc tried to stabilise the system by punishing the working class and lower middle class with permanent austerity.

With traditional working-class institutions (e.g. unions and socialist parties) in a state of historic weakness, **people had little means of resisting worsening living conditions,** typified by precarious, highly exploitative work and shrinking state support.

Without cohered pressure from below, the neoliberal bloc was able carry to on with its technocratic crisis management, seeding further anger amongst the people against an unaccountable “state elite.”



The far right took advantage of this historic opportunity.

Unlike the neoliberal bloc, it leaned into the severity of the crisis by creating emotive explanations for people's anger through a combination of distorted class rhetoric and vicious identity politics.

For example: *woke globalists have flung open the door to migrants and force-fed us diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), harming the working, law-abiding man, his family, and society's Christian values.*

Source: Tricontinental, *The False Concept of Populism* (2024).

Image: Marine le Pen (2022). Newsweek.

Through these kinds of rhetorical strategies, **the far right turns the legitimate anger of the people into fuel for an electoral advance.**

More specifically, they deflect popular anger away from the neoliberal economy – the root cause of people’s misery – by leveraging attacks on the liberal superstructure upheld by the neoliberal bloc. As such, they act as **pseudo-populists, taking aim at only one part of the established order, and in so doing, reviving an embattled neoliberal base.**

In pt. 2, we will continue to analyse the North Atlantic far right through the example of Donald Trump and his MAGA movement.

