

# **The New Class of Neoconservatism and the De/legitimization of American Capitalism**

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**Abstract:** The essay presents the U.S. debate on new class as a political category that pivoted to the rise of neoconservatism, the public writing of the neoconservative discourse – particularly Daniel P. Moynihan and Irving Kristol – and their strategy aimed at attacking the scientific and political foundations of the *liberal* order of American capitalism, which between the 1960s and 1970s no longer found in the *middle class* the public word that had laid to rest the social and political conflict of the 1930s fueling the post-World War II consensus. In the neoconservative discourse, also in dialogue with neoliberalism, new class identified an "ideological enemy" that had to be disciplined in favor of capitalism, that is, educated in respect to the authority – of society and its moral foundation, the market and its hierarchies – that social movements were challenging.

**Keywords:** New Class, Middle Class, Neoconservatism, Liberalism, Neoliberalism, Social Sciences, Capitalism

The objective of this essay<sup>1</sup> is to present some outlines of the U.S. debate on the new class as a category that has pivoted to the political and cultural rise of neoconservatism. While scholarly literature has framed the new class within the semantic field of the social sciences to understand the post-industrial transformation of capitalism, it has not attracted particular attention in historiography.<sup>2</sup> Instead, it is the writer's belief that it constitutes an essential notion of neoconservatism and its dialogue with neoliberalism, particularly in the public discourse and political action of two relevant figures of the neoconservative movement: Daniel P. Moynihan – author of the famous *Report on Negro Family* that inaugurated a widespread and bitter national discussion on the welfare state – and Irving Kristol – the New York intellectual who was trained in the 1930s in the Troztskysta milieu and considered “the godfather of neoconservatism.”<sup>3</sup> In this sense, while making reference to other important signatures of neoconservative discourse such as Norman Podhoretz and Michael Novak, the essay is not meant to be exhaustive, but is intended to provide some traces for future research.

Between the mid-1960s and the late 1970s, reference to the new class gained in frequency and polemical vehemence what it lost in scientific rigor. As Kristol wrote, the new class was not a sociological

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1 This essay is a translation of an essay previously published in Italian in the academic journal *Scienza & Politica*: <https://scienzaepolitica.unibo.it/article/view/10188>

2 Two exceptions are: Steinfels 1980, pp. 188-213; 273-294; Hartman, 2015, pp. 38-69.

3 Heilbrunn, 2008, p. 8.

issue but a political one.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, in the neoconservative discourse its social composition emerged vaguely and uncertainly. It denoted university professors and teachers, or intellectuals, journalists and media workers, professionals, administrators and white-collar workers employed not only in the public but also in the private sector, up to and including all those with college degrees. From a political point of view, the reference to the new class, on the other hand, offered a polemical, precise and coherent indication. New class had strategic value in the construction and affirmation of the conservative movement because it provided a binding force that articulated the main themes of neoconservatism: the critical analysis of the welfare state that controlled the economy and redistributed income, the political battle against the watchword of equality to reaffirm hierarchies and differences on the basis of merit, the ideological emphasis on personal freedom and individual responsibility that did not, however, overflow into what Karl Polany had called "market fundamentalism," not even into a purely economic conception of the individual, but instead emphasized their moral constitution. New class thus identified an "ideological enemy" that should not be expelled from public administration and private bureaucracies but should be educated to respect the institutions of the market and the moral foundation of society, the principle of authority that social movements were challenging. In this sense, the new class was the child of what Lionel Trilling – a literary scholar and critic of the New Left – had negatively termed "adversary culture." That is, it was born out of the 1960s counterculture that sociologist Alvin Gouldner referred to positively as the "culture of critical discourse."<sup>5</sup> A culture judged anti-capitalist because it weakened the work ethic, anti-democratic and elitist because of its paternalistic claim to speak on behalf of the "underclass" of minorities and the poor. In a word, an un-American culture that – as we shall see – was an expression of the ideological decline of the great middle class that had underpinned the liberal order, of its economic and social shattering into a white working class and lower middle class that had to be mobilized in a "culture war" in order to regain the "soul of America:" a civil war waged by other means through and for capitalism.<sup>6</sup>

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4 Kristol, 1979.

5 Trilling identified the origins of *adversary culture* in the modernist avant-garde critical of the traditional values of bourgeois society. What had been a minority anti-intellectual attitude, but that nonetheless had characterized American conservatism, with the full establishment of mass society after World War II, became a widespread threat and especially one with a nihilistic bearing, of rejection and negation of American culture. In this sense, Daniel Bell distinguished between *adversary culture of the Old Left* of the first half of the twentieth century and *counterculture of the New Left* of the 1960s and 1970s. See Trilling, 1965; Bell, 1972, pp. 11-38; Hofstadter, 1962; Gouldner, 1979.

6 Hartman, 2015; Armitage, 2017.

## 1. The New (Middle) Class

The scholarly literature framed the new class in a long transnational conceptual history that encompassed different currents of social and political thought: from French sociology to Italian political science that had studied elites, from anarchism and Trotskyism that had criticized the “bureaucratic” and “authoritarian” consolidation of the Soviet regime to Fabianism that had identified intellectuals and technicians as the possibility of achieving “industrial democracy” by administrative means, from German sociology on the middle class during Weimar to U.S. theories that had shed light on the presence of a “hidden technocracy” between the folds of the development of capitalism.<sup>7</sup> This is not the place to delve into the scientific genealogy of a new class that, between the 1960s and 1970s, was also at the center of Marxist literature that identified in it a new intellectual proletariat or a bureaucracy to fight against.<sup>8</sup> To understand the neoconservative notion of the new class, however, it has to be placed in the historical framework of the rise and fall of the middle class as the founding category of the liberal order in twentieth-century America.

Since progressivism, but especially between the 1930s and 1940s, considering the crisis of capitalism, the middle class had become an object of study among social scientists who discussed the consequences of the economic depression on white-collar labor figures: their proletarianization and union alignment with the working class, their impoverishment and their administrative function within the enterprise and the emerging New Deal welfare state. The various academic disciplines not only traced its occupational profile and consumption habits, but also surveyed its cultural, political and electoral orientation. The middle class was thus being socially and ideologically constructed within the material and symbolic horizon that the class conflict had opened up, with the aim of integrating small property with those who performed functions delegated to business management (managers, directors and planners), those within the lower ranks of office work (clerks and sales clerks) with those employed in public administration (executives, professionals and teachers) and with those who performed manual labor. The skilled and unionized worker whose high wages meant that they shared an adequate level of income, education and consumption, thus a common way of life built around the homeownership family in white suburban areas, with the male breadwinner and the woman responsible for a consumption-centered household. From this plural composition, the middle class became *unum* through the public

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7 Szelenyi - Martin, 1988, pp. 645-667; Pryor, 1981, pp. 367-379; Kellner - Heuberger, 1992; Ferrari, 2017; Borgognone, 2015.

8 Djilas, 1957; Gorz, 1967; Belleville, 1963; Mallet, 1975; Walker, 1979; Wright, 1986, pp. 114-140.

communication of a symbolic order consistent with the nation's political culture updated to New Deal liberalism. The social scientists involved in the formulation of public policy, employed in research institutes or the mass media, fueled a process of identification with the middle class that, periodically recorded in opinion surveys, culminated in the post-World War II consensus. As Daniel Bell wrote in the late 1970s, the middle class had defined a "code of behavior" or an "ideology that provided symbols of recognition" thereby normalizing society.<sup>9</sup>

The liberal order built politically on the "social contract" tacitly entered with the New Deal between capital, organized labor and government thus rested on the middle class.<sup>10</sup> In the 1960s and 1970s, this order was entering a crisis. The consensus was being shredded at the hands first and foremost of the civil rights movement and black nationalism, which showed the racial boundary of a middle class custom-built on and for white America. Moreover, a new and composite social mobilization revealed how the middle class was riddled with hierarchies and divergent interests. The student movement rejected a knowledge that was functional to the industrial-military complex, the pacifist movement against the war in Vietnam showed the imperial nature of liberalism, and the feminist movement criticized the position of women in a society that, while encompassing them in increasing numbers in the labor market with occupations inferior to those of men in terms of occupations and income, relegated them as wives and mothers within the family. Finally, what business journalism called a "new breed of workers" – made up mostly of young people, not only whites, but also blacks and women, better educated and more affluent than their parents – expressed an indocile character that rejected the discipline of the Fordist factory. The "revolt against work" took place through wildcat strikes, the rejection of stipulated contracts, sabotage of production and insubordination against the very bureaucracies of the union. In this sense, in his 1971 Labor Day speech, President Richard Nixon claimed that the work ethic would be re-established through the shared commitment of government, business and the union:

Recently we have seen that work ethic come under attack... What's happening to the work ethic in America today? What's happening to the willingness for self-sacrifice that enabled us to build a great nation, to the moral code that made self-reliance a part of the American character, to the competitive spirit that made it possible for us to lead the world?<sup>11</sup>

While pursuing different paths, this set of social forces converged – sometimes explicitly, mostly implicitly – in the contestation of the liberal

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<sup>9</sup> Bell, 1979, pp. 144-164, 155.

<sup>10</sup> Battistini, 2022, pp. 139-148.

<sup>11</sup> Nixon, 1971.

order of American capitalism. As Zbigniew Brzezinski admitted, it was "a middle-class rebellion against middle-class society."<sup>12</sup>

The middle class thus left the public scene, leaving an ideological vacuum that would be filled by the new class of neoconservatism. During the 1950s a number of critical voices – most notably Charles Wright Mills – had denounced the other-directed nature of white-collar workers. In the following decade, Alvin Gouldner enunciated the contradictions that invested a middle class torn between personal profit and collective welfare, free market and welfare state. While his sociology denounced the "public charade ... in which people act as if there were no one here except middle-class people," in Erving Goffman's diagnosis the identification with the middle class became a suspected pathology reflecting the deep economic, social and cultural rifts that marked society.<sup>13</sup> Even more significant was the silence that fell on the middle class in the work of John K. Galbraith, liberal economist *par excellence* and president since 1967 of the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), the organization that had supported and staffed the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. In the late 1950s, in *The Affluent Society* (1958), Galbraith explained that economic science had failed to grasp the formation of a new class because it had been blinded by the theoretical effort to regard manual, professional and intellectual labor as work in general, thus delineating a theory of value that combined wages and profit as a function of the continuous increase in consumption. Instead, the level of education and prestige of the technical and scientific professions, rather than money, had animated an "index of prestige" that socially degraded and culturally separated "ordinary labor" from the "caste" of millions of college-educated individuals who were the bearers and performers of a "new economy" whose development was no longer measured on the consumption of goods, but rather on knowledge or rather on the enjoyment of intangible goods and services.<sup>14</sup>

This insight was developed in *The New Industrial State* (1967), where Galbraith emphasized the numerically significant presence of intellectual labor figures who, applying science to production in an increasingly "planned" way, directed private and public technical and organizational structures. While the rise of corporations had brought about – as Adolph Berle and Gardiner Means had shown in *The Modern Corporation and Private Property* (1932) – the loss of control of the enterprise by the owner of capital, the following technological

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12 Brzezinski, 1970, 88. On the middle-class racial divide after World War II, Katznelson, 2002, pp. 157-177.

13 Mills, 1951; Gouldner, 1971, pp. 101-112, 124-125, 230-231, 242-247, 439; Goffman, 1963. See Gambino, 1989, pp. 63-87.

14 Galbraith, 1958, pp. 342-343. See Machlup, 1962.

advance took the monopoly of decision-making away from the manager, assigning it to a concentric "collective body" that ranged from the board of directors to the managerial staff of corporate departments, to the involvement of a broad spectrum of specialized figures (technicians, designers, analysts) who possessed a level of "expertise and skills" indispensable to decision-making: "the location of decision moves in the direction of the body of white-collar workers." Moreover, since it made the highly skilled labor force the "decisive factor of production," the new industry required "a highly developed educational system" and its state promotion. This indispensable state action toward the enterprise, together with policies that expanded social welfare programs in the 1960s, consolidated the presence of an "educational and scientific estate" – a fifth estate that integrated the decision-making processes of the corporations and the state, supplanting the union's governing function: it was this new estate, not the unionized working class of the New Deal, that was a shareholder in the new industrial state.<sup>15</sup>

The use of the term estate was significant because it portended sinister consequences for the political tensions that arose from the propensity of educated figures – especially those with degrees in the humanities – to "minimize the role of the market and profit maximization." "The growth and influence of college and university communities are in response to the needs of the industrial system. But this does not necessarily create a primary obligation to the needs of the industrial system." Galbraith denounced that "the tendency of the mature corporation in the industrial system to become a part of the administrative complex of the state" posed "in urgent form" the problem of liberty because it sacrificed the individual and their preferences to the "social purpose" of the new estate. His political assessment, however, was uncertain: on one hand, he did not believe that the "freedom of the businessman" was in danger because he glimpsed the "subordination" of the state to the needs of business; on the other hand, after 1968 his own political role as a liberal economist was being challenged by the radicalization of social movements and the role that students, professionals and intellectuals were claiming within the ADA in support of George McGovern's presidential campaign.<sup>16</sup>

Recording the rise of the new class not only acknowledged the economic and social rifts that prevented the reproduction of the middle class, but also proclaimed its ideological decline. What sociologist Peter L. Berger – close to the neoconservative world – called the "capitalist revolution" had divided the middle class "horizontally" according

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<sup>15</sup> Galbraith, 1967, pp. 79, 141, 268, 282-292, 370.

<sup>16</sup> Galbraith, 1967, pp. 235, 376, 395, 397. On Galbraith's presidency of the ADA and his loss of consensus, Vaisse, 2010, pp. 48, 84-85, 90-91. McGovern's candidacy was interpreted by neoconservatives as a sign of the rise of the new class. See especially Podhoretz, 1972a, pp. 4-8.

to income and "vertically" between those who were employed in traditional industry and those who were employed in the "production and distribution of symbolic knowledge" in the world of research and public communication. In this sense, Daniel Bell, who in his study *The Coming of Post Industrial Society* (1973) had drawn on Emil Lederer's German sociology on the middle class to oppose the Marxist literature that advanced the thesis of the proletarianization of intellectual labor, admitted in 1979 that knowledge workers did not constitute a class capable of mediation, but rather embodied and nurtured the fractures brought about by the politicization of the university, communities, the factory and the family. Because they upheld the identity politics of race and gender while expressing the neoliberal vision that rejected any mediation to entrust the relationship between individual and market to "meritocracy," the new class exacerbated the racist and sexist tendencies of a white working class and lower middle class that were undergoing the entrepreneurial initiative aimed at undoing the Newdealist social contract. Within these "cultural contradictions" that invested the post-industrial transformation of society, the neoconservative discourse on the new class began.<sup>17</sup>

## **2. The "administrative war:" Daniel P. Moynihan and the New Class.**

In 1964, David T. Bazelon – a professor of public policy at the State University of New York – published *Power in America: The Politics of the New Class*, a sociological and psychological study of the new class, its social composition into "technologist intellectuals" in the private sector and "administrative intellectuals" in the public sector, the lifestyle in large suburban areas and the frustration of those who failed to realize the social "ideal" accrued through their education. The volume triggered the neoconservative debate because it focused on the historical question of power: from the bourgeois revolution to the political rise of the new class in the twentieth century, from progressivism to the New Deal to the new Kennedy frontier, the "weapon" for the conquest of the state was no longer provided by "money-capital," but by "education-capital." Since this process was a sign that the nation's "basic faith" was moving in the direction of "values-beyond-money," the new class had the moral and political task of guiding the movement of blacks and the

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<sup>17</sup> Berger, 1986; Bell, 1976; Bell, 1979. On the social and cultural inconsistency of the new class, see the reflections of the man who also claimed to have introduced the issue in 1941 with the volume *The Managerial Revolution*, Burnham, 1978, pp. 98-99. See J. Muravchik, 1981, pp. 150-191; Wrong, 1982. On Galbraith, Bell and the concept of the new class in the new industrial or post-industrial capitalism: King - Szelényi, 2004, ch. 7. See also Cento, 2014, pp. 103-126. On German sociology on the middle class, Battistini, 2015, pp. 123-148.

colorless poor by institutionalizing their claims to access wealth in a "new political coalition."<sup>18</sup>

What the neoconservative authors were interested in was not so much this stance outlining the political battle that would envelop the Democratic Party after the 1968 contestations, but the question raised: would this new class be at the top of a "rigidly rational hierarchy" or would it lead a new "human democracy"? Such a question identified two political perspectives that, while for the radical and socialist left remained alternatives,<sup>19</sup> for the emerging neoconservatism were conjoined. The radicalization of the new class in the light of social movements and its potential institutionalization in the political system coincided with the danger of an antidemocratic twist in U.S. politics. Between the lines of the review to the volume published in *Commentary* emerged – as Bazelon had announced in the volume's conclusion – the fear of "moving farther into a period in which formal democracy will become ever more a cover for authoritarian bureaucratic structure." Bazelon was invited to explore this topic further in the pages of the journal. In Washington, he explained, "thousands and thousands of *educated people*" were analyzing social problems and devising programs that responded to the "common denominator of their education" namely "planning:" an organizational action that stifled the freedom of "competition." The further transfer of powers to the executive that the reforms of the 1960s brought about established a "new style of patronage" that consolidated the power of the new class. The public stage was thus being set for "the coming administrative war" – a war that would be fought especially by Daniel P. Moynihan in the columns of *The Public Interest*.<sup>20</sup>

Moynihan, a Ph.D. in history and professor of political science at Syracuse University, had entered the federal government under President Kennedy. In 1965, as undersecretary of Labor, on behalf of the Office of Policy, Planning and Research he drafted the *Report on Negro Family* in which, while arguing that civil rights and voting rights legislation was not a sufficient remedy after centuries of slavery and segregation, he emphasized the responsibility of the African American family for the condition of poverty and exclusion that gripped the black community. Liberal criticism denouncing the report's racism summarized in the charge of blaming the victim marked the fundamental juncture of his political parabola, until he entered the Nixon administration.<sup>21</sup>

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18 Bazelon, 1964, pp. 15-21, 307-329. See also Bazelon, 1966, pp. 48-51.

19 Harrington, 1967, pp. 7-22. Cf. Harrington, 1979, pp. 123-138.

20 Bazelon, 1964, pp. 21, 329; Bazelon, 1966, pp. 52-53. In addition to Vann Woodward, 1967, pp. 93-95, see also Novak, 1972, pp. 52-62, 60; and Podhoretz, 1972b, pp. 7-8.

21 Hodgson, 2000; Katzmann, 2004; Weiner, 2015.

In *The Professionalization of Reform* (1965) Moynihan explained that the incentives in favor of technical and scientific education – the G.I. Bill of 1944 – had resulted in an extraordinary expansion of higher and college education. The social consequence was not only quantitative – about two-thirds of teenagers (the figure dropped to one-third when minorities were counted) possessed a college degree – but also, and more importantly, qualitative. In becoming tendentially universal, at least for white America, education placed in tension the institutional relationship between politics, science and the professions that, as Talcott Parsons had shown, characterized the social structure of order.<sup>22</sup> According to Moynihan, lawyers not only ensured the constitutional right to defense in a fair trial, but also developed their own "philosophy of law" that is, their own way of administering justice. Those who were employed in public statistics processed data on wages and prices to steer "collective bargaining," and interpreted data on poverty and unemployment by depicting a "growing divide" between the poor and the middle class to direct social service planning. Similarly, doctors demanded to determine how health services should be financed, delivered and distributed among the population, while social workers claimed a voice in social legislation: they had demanded and obtained the inclusion in the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act of community organizing programs that provided for the participation of the poor, thereby strengthening ethnic communities and organizations that, according to Moynihan, fueled racial divisions and tensions. These and other scientific and intellectual labor figures classified in the federal census as professionals and technicians numbered more than nine million – well beyond the number of managers, officials and owners who made up the top of the social pyramid – and increasingly enjoyed the entitlement to plan policy. In this sense, the "war on poverty" had been proclaimed not "at the behest of the poor," but of public officials. The unprecedented expansion of social services had resulted in the emergence of a large body of professionals: a new unelected class that influenced legislative measures and developed their execution in a self-referential manner. Their interlocutor was not "organized labor" as in the New Deal, but "organized professional interests." The danger was thus posed by a "a combination of enlightenment, resources and skill which, in the long run, to use Harold D. Lasswell's phrase, becomes a Monocracy of power."<sup>23</sup>

Here it is not relevant to highlight the biographical aspect, whereby from 1965 to 1968 Moynihan overcame liberalism to embrace the Republican administration: as executive secretary of the Council of

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22 Parsons, 1939, pp. 457-467.

23 Moynihan, 1965, pp. 6-16, 8-15. See Steinfels, 1980, pp. 108-160. Cf. Glazer, 1979, pp. 89-100.

Urban Affairs in the Nixon presidency, he drafted the Family Assistance Program, which was intended to replace welfare assistance with a guaranteed income that would empower the poor and scale back the political influence of social workers. What is rather important is the fact that the program was not approved, which led Moynihan to deepen his critique of the welfare state by raising two interrelated issues – the role of university and the function of social sciences – that allowed the neoconservative discourse to attack the scientific and political foundations of the liberal order. Between 1970 and 1972, Moynihan brought "administrative warfare" inside university as the institution that materially and ideologically reproduced the new class. In a report presented to the America Council of Education and in an article published in *The Public Interest*, he pointed the finger at the tendentially universal nature of education by combining the neoliberal argument of the school's economic crisis – for which greater investment in wages and resources would not lead to greater productivity – with polemical reference to the new class: its "growing politicization" in university and schools fed an "adversary culture" that reproduced "revolutionary appetites."<sup>24</sup> . To counter them, the political function of the social sciences needed to be changed. As was evident in his analysis of Johnsonian policies and his proposal for guaranteed income – *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding: Community Action in the War of Poverty* (1969) and *The Politics of a Guaranteed Income* (1973) – experts employed in public administration would have to abandon scientist optimism and technocratic enthusiasm and embrace a limited – skeptical and realist – conception of social science: this was not to determine the content of policies, but was to be limited to the measurement and evaluation of the outcome. The social scientist was, in other words, to become a "policy professional," no longer the architect of society, but the arbiter of a policy aware of the limitation that state action encountered on the threshold of society (and the market) where individuals acted responsibly, but also obscurely and unpredictably. In this sense, the Irish-born Catholic and neoconservatism recovered the moral imperative of the German-born Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr against the "moralism" that marked the social – but elitist – idealism of the new class: *Beware of the Children of Light!*<sup>25</sup>

Moynihan was not nurturing the anti-intellectualist sentiment characteristic of the U.S. conservative tradition and the "new right" heir to McCarthyism. He would depart from it again in the 1990s when, criticizing President Clinton's proposed health care reform as a Democratic senator, he denounced it as an expression of the

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24 Moynihan, 1975, pp. 288-290; Moynihan, 1972, pp. 69-89, 83-84.

25 Novak, 1972, pp. 52-62, 61.

"professional monocracy."<sup>26</sup> Although this anti-intellectualist sentiment was fomented against the "snobbery and self-righteousness," the "moral superiority" and "indignation" that intellectuals and writers – such as Philip Roth, the "New-Class writer *par excellence*" – expressed against white America's racism, militarism and consumerism, the polemical reference to the new class had a different target.<sup>27</sup> The neoconservative discourse was not generically against the elite, but against elites radicalized by social movements. Nor did it allude implicitly to the extension of democratic participation. As much as it was strategically aimed at the white working class and lower middle class, thus contributing to the electoral rise of the *Middle American Radicals* and the establishment of the new Republican majority,<sup>28</sup> it was pronounced by the mouth of a part of the new class itself. The goal was thus more ambitious because it aimed at the conversion of the new class, that is, the cultural predominance within it of professionals committed to what Moynihan called the "politics of stability:" a politics of professionals against the social disorder that was "polarizing and fracturing American society" to the point of pushing it to the "onset of terrorism." A politics to be implemented first and foremost by limiting the field of initiative won on the institutional ground by the social sciences of liberalism and "getting private business involved in domestic programs in a much more systematic, purposeful manner."<sup>29</sup>

### 3. The "civil war" for the New Class: Irving Kristol's Militant Capitalism.

Moynihan thus intended to restore the stability of the social order by recomposing through institutional and administrative means the tensions that marked the historical relationship between politics, social sciences and professions shaken by the rise of the new class to power. In this sense, his focus was primarily on the state and its administration. Irving Kristol, on the other hand, looked at society by focusing his thinking on the crisis of legitimacy of capitalism. Both were, however, engaged in a war within the new class and for a "new" new class. While the former extolled "policy professionals" so that the state would favor a

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26 Moynihan, 1995, pp. 23-41, 40. On the anti-intellectualism of the American Right, Hofstadter, 1964.

27 Novak, 1972; Podhoretz, 1972b, pp. 6-8. On the art and literature of the new class: Podhoretz, 1979, pp. 19-31.

28 The *Middle American Radical* identifies white working class and lower middle class figures whose incomes were lower middle class, who did not have a college degree and who shared a negative attitude against blacks and the poor. Warren, 1976.

29 Moynihan, 1967, pp. 190, 194.

renewed prominence of business, the latter focused the neoconservative discourse on the new class toward a broader spectrum of figures. The new class acted not only in the public administration, universities and schools, but also in the press and mass communication where they acted as "symbol specialists" who were by no means strangers to "totalitarian temptations" as Harold Lasswell and Daniel Lerner had shown in their study of elites, even within the ranks of the business world, where those who were concerned about being accused of undermining the welfare of labor and thus of the nation believed they had a "social responsibility."<sup>30</sup> The conversion of the new class was thus not to be exclusively political – within the state – but also social. Since the contestation of capitalism was born in society, order had to be restored from within the social relationship: the "administrative war" was in this sense to become a "civil war" to be waged through and for business.

In the first half of the 1970s, in a series of articles published in *The Public Interest*, a journal he founded with Bell in 1965, Kristol addressed the "so precarious" condition of capitalism. The voice of "youthful rebels" was not to be considered "inarticulate" as "sociological and psychological theories" did. Although it appeared to be the result of "lunatic fringe" and resulted in "nonsense," its political meaning was "clear enough:" the rejection of the "offer of citizenship" that was being proposed by the reforms and aversion to "liberal, individualist and capitalist civilization." The "youthful rebels" were therefore not to be regarded as "lunatic." Nor was it useful to explain to them how many steps forward had been taken for "racial equality " and "abolishing poverty." The classic progress argument, with its promise of the fulfillment of the American ideal, was unserviceable because what was being challenged was not America's "failure" to realize itself, but rather America as an "ideal" was being rejected. Similarly, the "technocratic ethic" that legitimizes capitalism on the basis of its "performance" in terms of "economic growth," "managerial efficiency" and "technological innovation" was not only ineffective, but was to be counted among the causes of the weakening of the "bourgeois ethic" of work and responsibility: the institutions of "bureaucratized society" were "impersonal," that is, they had lost "their vital connection with the values which are supposed to govern the private lives of our citizenry. They no longer exemplify these values, they no longer magnify them; they no longer reassuringly sustain them." The crisis of capitalism was thus not measurable economically, coinciding instead with the loss of the values of diligence, rectitude and sobriety.<sup>31</sup>

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30 Lasswell - Lerner, 1965; Kirkpatrick, 1979, pp. 33-48. Republican journalist Kevin P. Phillips talked about mediocracy: Phillips, 1975. On the social responsibility of business, Riesman, 1964, pp. 300-308. For a neoliberal critique: Friedman, 1970, pp. 122-126.

31 Kristol, 1970, pp. 3-4, 8-11, 13; Kristol, 1975a, pp. 124-125.

On this moral basis Kristol initiated the dialogue with neoliberalism. Although he considered Hayek – and his *The Constitution of Liberty* (1960) – "the most intelligent defender of capitalism," he believed that as much as it was a "superb economic mechanism," the free market was "not self-justifying." Even the reference to "personal freedom" ended up being a "kind of scholasticism" that ended in a "dogmatic attachment" that was not matched by the "common man." In his view, freedom constituted a concept that was both subtle and complex, whose meaning was inseparable from its moral and religious content. Since the "decline in religion" and the secularization brought about by mass scientific education had thinned out the ethical dimension that had historically legitimized capitalism, its defense could not take place "in purely amoral terms."<sup>32</sup>

This was the political sense of his speech at the twenty-fifth anniversary meeting of the Mont Pelerin Society (1972), where Kristol acknowledged that neoliberalism had won the economic battle against collectivism and planning but felt that capitalism still did not enjoy full cultural and political vindication because of the "spiritual expropriated ... masses of citizenry." If religion was being confined to the private sphere, if traditional "moral philosophy" was being annihilated by utilitarianism and market hedonism, if nationalism was being challenged in its function of "political obligation" by the multinational character that corporations were assuming, then capitalism's ethical sources of legitimacy were exhausted. Therefore, business had to take charge of the "moral" reconstruction of society. It could not regard counterculture as *business as usual*, commodification opportunities to revive consumption and profit. Instead, it had to educate and integrate into its ranks a new class that, precisely because it had grown up and matured in the counterculture of movements, expressed an "anti-capitalist spirit" and an "anti-democratic culture" that nurtured "a reactionary revulsion against modernity" that is, against "economic man."<sup>33</sup>

Placed in the historical framework of the legitimization of capitalism, the "civil war" for a "new" new class was fought first and foremost against the watchwords of equality, participation and liberation that the movements had imposed on society and that the new class claimed to institutionalize. In *About Equality* (1972), Kristol accused economists and sociologists of accepting without question the thesis that John Rawls had presented in his *Theory of Justice* (1971), that is, of accepting the principle that a social order is legitimate only by minimizing inequality, without clarifying what equality consisted of, how much income redistribution it should correspond to, without

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32 Kristol, 1978, pp. 139-140; Kristol, 1971, p. 105; Kristol, 1970, pp. 7-8. On secularization and the new class, Berger, 1970, pp. 49-55. On the moral foundations of capitalism see also Novak, 1982.

33 Kristol, 1973, pp. 3-13. See also Kristol, 1979; pp. 23-24.

considering the incontrovertible fact that – as Seymour M. Lipset had shown – American society had already become more egalitarian. The accusation was of uncritically using "pseudo statistics" that described an "oligarchy of the rich." These "paranoid fantasies" were an expression of a large class of college graduates and students, scientists and teachers, psychologists and social workers, doctors and lawyers, administrators and public servants, who looked at society in a profoundly critical way, taking an "adversarial stance." The new class was engaged in a "class struggle with the business community:" as it translated the demands for equality, participation and liberation emanating from society into "a demand for authority" and "lust for power," the student and black movement, as well as the young and black working class, made increasingly radical and militant demands. Faced with the danger that different movement experiences might converge under the "banner of equality," faced with the fear that the new class might provide an institutional channel for expression, it was necessary to pursue a "complete reversal of popular opinion" by leveraging the "bourgeois ethic" and resistance to radicalism that instead characterized the skilled and unionized figures of white working-class labor and the lower spheres of white-collar work. The reference was not exclusively to the nascent tax rebellion against a tax levy considered oppressive because it served to fund welfare policies toward blacks and the poor. Reversing popular opinion involved leading a cultural revolt that could activate the ethical sources of legitimacy of capitalism.<sup>34</sup>

This goal came into focus in the second half of the decade, despite the fact that the defeat of the New Politics Democrats in the 1972 presidential election showed the growing disconnect between the new class and the working class. With reference to the price and wage control policies of the Nixon administration, although he had publicly supported his re-election,<sup>35</sup> Kristol denounced how new class figures employed in the public sector carried out a "hidden agenda" for an economic system "so stringently regulated" that "the basic economic decisions are being removed from the marketplace." He also pointed the finger at the "gradual usurpation of managerial authority" by underlining the responsibility of the corporations themselves. When the Committee on Economic Development – an organization of business executives formed in 1942 to guide the war economy under the Newdealist social contract – declared that it was the manager's job to balance "the interest of many diverse participants and constituents in the enterprise ... employees, customers, suppliers, stockholders, government," it showed that corporations were no longer acting as "private property" but as

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34 Kristol, 1972a, pp. 41-47. See also Kristol, 1974, pp. 6-7, 27-28; Kristol, 1972b, pp. 3-11; Kristol, 1970, pp. 11-14. See Weaver, 1978, pp. 45-62; Bartley, 1979, pp. 57-66.

35 Display Ad 182, 1972.

"quasi-public institutions." Because this subordination of business to the state threatened American democracy and individual freedom, business was called to act on the front lines to overthrow the social – and institutional – relationship with the new class in its favor. It was time for capitalism to become militant.<sup>36</sup>

This call for militancy was launched in the pages of the American capitalist newspaper *par excellence*, the *Wall Street Journal*, which on May 19, 1975, published a brief but incisive article giving the question of the power of the new class a hitherto unprecedented public resonance. In *Business and the "new class,"* Kristol denounced the bitter "climate of hostility" toward business that hovered in the Washington government, in the news and communications organs, and in the universities. A climate caused by the formation of a "generation of young people" who, because of the education they received, were unfamiliar with the world of work and fantasized about a world without work. A climate fueled by the "average college professor" – of history, sociology, literature, political science, even economics – who preferred "fantasy over reality:" the fantasy of the pharmaceutical industry denying cures, of multinational corporations making American foreign policy, of business enthusiastically welcoming the depression because it created a reserve army from which to recruit "more docile workers." These were some of the fantasies of a new class that Kristol nevertheless judged "indispensable" in post-industrial society, albeit "disproportionately powerful," both "ambitious" and "frustrated." For this, it was not enough – no matter how necessary – to appeal to the "individual freedom" of Americans and their "profound distrust" of government. Since the new class intended to mobilize society through the issues of environmentalism, consumer protection and planning by empowering the government to "politicize the economic decision-making process," its "assimilation" had to be initiated. This was the long and burdensome *business* that awaited capitalism: an "immense educational task" that primarily involved the re-education of the "business community" and its managers, an even more arduous task that saw the militant Kristol personally engaged in.<sup>37</sup>

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36 Kristol, 1975b, pp. 124-141, 134-139.

37 Kristol, 1975c, reprinted in Kristol, 1978, pp. 25-31. On the radical or moderate orientation of university docents, there were several conclusions of research conducted by authors more or less close to the neoconservative *milieu*, see Lipset, 1979, pp. 67-87; Ladd - Lipset, 1975; Ladd, 1976-1977, pp. 577-600.

#### 4. A Capitalist Manifesto.

The *idéologue* role Kristol played at the American Enterprise Institute, contributing to its emergence as the leading neoconservative think tank, or in the Collegiate Network project that funded independent newspapers on college campuses, scholarships and internships in leading national newspapers, was an integral part of the communicative strategy that the neoconservative intellectual *milieu* put in place first and foremost to re-educate business. In 1978, William E. Simon – secretary of the Treasury in the Nixon and Ford administrations, and founder with Kristol of the Collegiate Network – published *A Time For Truth*, a pamphlet in which he denounced the responsibilities of business executives and managers who, from the New Deal onward, had renounced the ideal of "free enterprise" by adapting their economic action to the philosophy of "planning" of the new class. Against this, the "business community" was supposed to initiate public education projects through the mass media, funding universities that agreed on teaching and research contents, investing money in institutional advertising, i.e., advertisements that advertised not commodities but corporate values. The "massive and unprecedented mobilization of the moral, intellectual and financial resources" would lead to the formation of a "counter-intelligentsia" capable of undermining the "ideological monopoly" of the new class.<sup>38</sup> In the same year, on behalf of the American Enterprise Institute, Michael Novak published *The American Vision*, in which he presented the vision of a "class struggle" that business could no longer conduct exclusively on the terrain of production, but also on the public, scientific and cultural stage imposed by the new ruling class. In this sense, executives and managers were to equip businesses not only with an in-house team of scholars but also with an external "network of sympathetic intellectual workers," to be entrusted with the corporate task of elaborating and disseminating a public discourse that rejected the ideological "accusations" of "alienation" and "other-directedness" of society, in order to propose an alternative "worldview" that would reclaim from the spirit of business the value of associationism and cooperation, that of social mobility and equality of opportunity. This was the "manifesto of capitalism" called to renew the "manifest destiny" of liberal civilization that America had embodied.<sup>39</sup>

Although one cannot attribute the cultural and political counteroffensive of business against the labor movement and social movements exclusively to neoconservatism and its dialogue

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38 Simon, 1978, pp. 195-198, 223-234.

39 Novak, 1978, pp. 14, 19-59. On Kristol's role in the ranks of business, Steinfels, 1980, pp. 81-107; Binder - Wood, 2013, pp. 107-108; Micklethwait - Wooldridge, 2004, pp. 63-93; Halper - Clarke, 2004, pp. 40-74; McAdams, 2015, pp. 1-27.

with neoliberalism, nevertheless its impact was significant: in the publication of volumes and essays, in the funding of advertising and media campaigns, in activating close collaboration between business, universities and private foundations, in general in the public effort that executives and managers made to influence values and ideals of the new class. In the second half of the 1970s, Mobil Oil funded the Hudson Institute to publish a series of position papers against public regulatory policies, the International Telephone and Telegraph allocated funds for the publication of volumes on the American economy, including the Bruce-Briggs edited volume on *America's Educated Elite*. Between 1975 and 1976, corporations allocated some \$240 million to "institutional advertising," not aimed at advertising consumer goods. In the same years, *Chairs of Free Enterprise* were established at many universities including Cornell, Columbia and Wisconsin. In 1978, the Council for Financial Aid to Education estimated that there were about a hundred programs linking corporations to colleges: the Association of Private Enterprise Education was founded with the aim of fostering their development. In this sense, while not without precedent because it had its roots in the business opposition to the New Deal and the *boulwarism* of the 1950s,<sup>40</sup> nevertheless the renewed militancy of business in the late 1970s took on an unprecedented systemic character, organized around the dual social and political goal indicated by neoconservatism: to bind the new class to the society of capitalism and to transform "policy professionals" into public agents of capital. The economic, social and cultural activism of business practically negated the theoretical and political assumptions of social scientists and intellectuals – such as Gouldner – who at the end of the decade still believed that, despite its elitist character, the new class constituted the "the most progressive force in modern society" and was "a center of whatever human emancipation ... possible in the foreseeable future." In *World Economic Development* (1979), outlining the new global coordinates of American capitalism, Herman Kahn, founder of the Hudson Institute (1961), recorded in this sense a first fundamental cultural and political shift in this direction: the new class no longer appeared "lunatic," but positively market oriented. While in the second half of the 1960s at least part of the "business community" had underestimated the delegitimization of capitalism, during the 1970s neoconservatism became popular among executives and managers who in the political category – and in the political discourse – of the new class found a fundamental tool for analysis and action. As the economist and scholar of business ethics, David Vogel, wrote in an article, significantly titled *Clear as Kristol*,

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40 Named after General Electric's personnel director Lemuel L. Boulware, who in the 1950s implemented a company policy aimed at eroding the union's grip on workers. Cf. Fasce, 2011, pp. 171-184, 182; Phillips-Fein, 2009; Waterhouse, 2014; Winkler, 2018.

*Business's "New Class" Struggle* (1979), the "new class doctrine" was succeeding because it made business aware that it was once again possible to combine business interest and public interest, that is, to reconcile capitalism, state and society through an – administrative and cultural – civil war against the new class and for a "new" *new class*. American capitalism had thus on one hand found the *villain* against whom to unify white America in order to reassert its supremacy in a society fractured along class, race and sex lines, and on the other hand the historical subject to whom to entrust – once educated in the moral, as well as economic, value of the market – the political and scientific direction of the American state in the globalization of the last quarter of the last century. In October 1982, the new president of the National Association of Manufacturers, James B. Henderson, could thus proclaim without fear of contradiction that business had returned to exercising legitimate social and political authority in academia, government and unions.<sup>41</sup>

In conclusion, the historical features of the new class debate we have traced show not only the ideological decline of the middle class, the impossibility for the democratic New Politics of the 1970s to rethink it as the subject that had sustained the post-World War II liberal order. Kristol considered the middle-class identification of the "vast majority" of Americans – and especially blue-collar labor – as an "artifact" issue, unmasked by the rise of the new class to power. Neoconservatism deprived the "new middle class" of the social sciences of liberalism of the consensual "middle" reference to denote an elite that, although culturally opposed to white America, was assimilated into capitalism through a "public philosophy" that restored the market to its ethical foundation. Neoconservatism and neoliberalism became hegemonic in this sense because of their dialogue.<sup>42</sup>

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41 Vogel, 1979, pp. 625-628; Gouldner, 1979, p. 83; Bruce-Briggs, 1979, p. 923; Kahn, 1979, pp. 140-177. See also Davison Hunter - Fessenden, 1992, pp. 157-188. On Henderson see Cartosio, 1998, pp. 50-51, 113.

42 Kristol, 1979, p. 24; Kristol, 1971, p. 105.

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