

Global Elites in Flux: Cultural Capital and Power after Globalization

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In the post-globalization era, global elites face a transformed landscape of resurgent national sovereignty and civilizational rhetoric. This article examines how transnational power-holders—once emblematic of a borderless world — are recalibrating their cultural strategies and legitimacy mechanisms amid these shifts. Drawing on cultural sociology and elite theory (Bourdieu, Bauman, Castells, Gramsci), the analysis integrates non-Western scholarly perspectives. It reconceptualizes cosmopolitan elite culture under conditions of de-globalization. We argue that global elites are neither passive victims of “de-globalization” nor static cosmopolitans. Instead, they act as cultural brokers who selectively adjust their identities and narratives. Some accentuate patriotic or civilizational themes to align with ascendant state-centric discourses, while others redouble on universalist rhetoric through new transnational alliances. Comparative illustrations from Western countries, Russia, China, and Türkiye demonstrate that elites are actively adapting to a fragmented world order. These shifts suggest that sociological inquiry needs to move beyond treating globalization as a given context and toward analyzing the cultural dynamics of elite power in a fractured world—one where questions of meaning, identity, and legitimacy have become as pivotal as economic forces.

Keywords: Global elites, Post-globalization, Cultural broker, Cultural capital, Network power, Value commitments.

Introduction

The proclaimed end of high globalization has prompted sociologists to reassess assumptions about transnational elites and power. Global elites — transnational power brokers once heralded as embodiments of a borderless world — now navigate resurgent nation-states, neo-imperial ambitions, and civilizational rhetoric. In April 2025, a G7 leader declared “the end of globalization and the beginning of a new era,” underscoring the perceived shift toward state-centric power¹. Yet globalization’s legacy endures: decades of economic and cultural integration cultivated cosmopolitan elite culture, transnational networks, and influential groups that Zygmunt Bauman famously termed the “elite of globalization” (Bauman, 1998).

This study examines how global elites are transforming their cultural capital, value systems and legitimacy strategies as old empires reassert influence and new networks

1. See Editorial

emerge. How are elites recalibrating their strategies to maintain power and legitimacy amid resurgent nationalism and a fragmented world order? Drawing on cultural sociology and elite theory, this article analyzes how global power-holders adapt when the “flat world” of ever-expanding globalization can no longer be taken for granted. The analysis engages classical globalization, cosmopolitanism and power paradigms (Bauman, 1998; Beck, 2006; Castells, 1996; Bourdieu, 1986) and contemporary critiques, incorporating empirical illustrations (from World Economic Forum speeches to BRICS summit rhetoric) to ground the argument. The study also compares elite adaptations across following contexts: Western liberal democracies with those in Russia, China, and Türkiye.

We find that global elites act as strategic cultural brokers² selectively reconfiguring their identities and narratives rather than simply retreating or remaining unchanged. This view echoes Peterson’s (2010) notion of “agents of hybridity” — cultural brokers who creatively forge links between universal market practices and local cultural values. Some emphasize patriotic or civilizational themes to align with state-centric discourses; others reinforce universalist ideals through new transnational alliances. These shifts suggest that sociological inquiry must move beyond treating globalization as a static backdrop and examine instead the cultural dynamics of elite power in a fragmented “post-global” World where questions of meaning, identity, and legitimacy have become as pivotal as material resources.

Methodologically, this research is conceptual and qualitative, relying primarily on discourse analysis of elite speeches, writings, and secondary sources rather than original fieldwork. In particular, the study compares elite discourse across four cases—Western liberal democracies, Russia, China, and Türkiye. These cases capture diverse geopolitical and cultural contexts. Western democracies exemplify liberal-internationalist traditions; Russia and China illustrate resurgent civilizational or state-centric paradigms; Türkiye provides a hybrid context bridging Western and non-Western spheres.

This comparative approach yields interpretive insights but comes with limitations: without direct interviews or ethnography, the evidence remains illustrative and conclusions tentative. These methodological constraints define the study’s scope and situate its theoretical claims.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Globalization, Elites, and Cultural Capital — Classical Perspectives

Late 20th-century globalization theory highlighted the emergence of a transnational elite class characterized by cosmopolitan mobility and outlook. Zygmunt Bauman (1998, 2001) described how globalization produced “winners” able to move freely — business-people, bureaucrats, professionals, creatives— versus the “localized masses” left behind in place. These privileged elites of globalization were effectively extraterritorial and cosmo-

2. The term “cultural broker” refers to an actor who mediates between disparate cultural contexts, a concept first noted by anthropologists in studies of cross-cultural intermediaries (Geertz, 1960).

politan, moving through what Bauman (after Castells) called the “space of flows,” while others remained trapped in the “space of places,” increasingly insecure and resentful.

Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) theory of cultural capital explains this cosmopolitan disposition. Cultural capital denotes the repertoire of cultural knowledge, competencies, and credentials that signal elite status and secure power. During the globalization era, transnational elites accumulated cosmopolitan cultural capital: fluency in English and other major languages, degrees from prestigious global universities, ease with diverse cultural codes, extensive travel or expatriate experience. This cosmopolitan capital distinguished them from non-elites and was valorized as a source of legitimacy in an emerging “world society” where global norms and expert knowledge carried weight (Meyer et al., 1997). Cosmopolitanism functions as a form of capital marking a symbolic boundary between elites and the wider public: advanced education and international exposure instill cosmopolitan attitudes, which become scarce cultural resources that elites use to maintain stratification (Igarashi & Saito, 2014; Weenink, 2008). Theorists posited the rise of a relatively coherent transnational capitalist class (Sklair, 2001) and even a global power elite (cf. Mills, 1956 at the national level), wielding not only economic capital but also cultural capital aligned with globalist norms.

Manuel Castells' network society theory illuminated the structural basis of this global elite power. Castells (1996, 1997) argued that in the information age, networks became the dominant form of organization in economy and society. Key economic and political functions were organized in transnational networks of flows (of capital, information, people), diminishing the primacy of territorially bounded hierarchies like nation-states. In Castells' oft-cited phrase, “the power of flows takes precedence over the flows of power” (Castells, 1996: 469). Power accrued to actors who served as “switches” or nodes connecting multiple networks—for example, corporate executives, global financiers, and high-level bureaucrats linking corporate, state, and NGO networks (Castells, 1996). These networked elites operated in a placeless space of flows that transcended locality, shaping global agendas in their interests. Meanwhile, activities and populations not essential to global networks were relegated to fragmented “spaces of places.” Castells noted a bipolar opposition of the Net and the Self: global networks versus identity-based resistance (Castells, 1997). Nation-states lost some sovereignty and had to reposition themselves as “network states,” collaborating in supra-national webs of power (Castells, 1997). In this framework, global elites derived power from network capital—the ability to navigate and connect influential networks—complementing their cosmopolitan cultural capital.

Other perspectives similarly envisioned an ascendant cosmopolitan elite in an increasingly borderless world. World-systems theorists saw late-20th-century globalization as the latest phase of a long expansion of the capitalist world-system, anticipating that a transnational ruling class aligned with core economic interests would continue to dominate. Neo-Marxist analysts likewise posited the rise of a transnational state apparatus (e.g., Bretton Woods institutions, the WTO) serving the common interests of a global bourgeoisie (Robinson, 2004). Anthony Giddens (1990) described late modernity as intrinsically globalizing –characterized by disembedded institutions and reflexive co-

ordination across distances. Ulrich Beck (2006) advocated a “cosmopolitan vision” for social theory, arguing that nation-bound frameworks were obsolete amid global interdependence and shared fate. Sociologist Saskia Sassen (2001) highlighted the role of global cities as key nodes where these elites agglomerate and command the world economy. In cities like New York, London, Tokyo, Shanghai, Dubai and others, financial and professional elites formed transnational communities with lifestyles often more similar to each other than to their own countries’ lower classes. Samuel Huntington (2004) even popularized the term “Davos Man” to critique this global elite’s detachment from patriotic loyalties—describing a class that “has little need for national loyalty, views national boundaries as obstacles, and sees national governments as residues from the past” (Huntington, 2004: 38). Though polemical, this characterization underscored a perceived values gap between global elites and more rooted populations.

By the early 2000s, a broad theoretical consensus recognized a cosmopolitan-oriented global elite embedded in transnational networks that conferred structural power. This elite championed globalist values — free markets, technocratic governance, liberal internationalism—which provided legitimating narratives for their dominance. Their legitimacy was further buttressed by what world-polity theorists described as a diffuse world culture into which nation-state elites were socialized (Meyer et al., 1997), emphasizing universalistic scripts of progress, rationalization, human rights, and market economics.

The prestige of cosmopolitan cultural capital was high: to be an “internationalist” leader or corporation was to be modern and enlightened. As Bourdieu would predict, this cultural capital translated into social power: international organizations, NGOs, and media often valorized globalist perspectives while marginalizing nationalist views as backward. However, this global elite project also sowed seeds of contestation. The linear narrative of ever-expanding globalization was increasingly challenged by unexpected crises and pushback from below. (Bauman and Castells had already warned that global integration would breed resistance identities.) Indeed, by the late 2000s, cracks in the globalist consensus were evident.

Post-Globalization: Fragmentation and Legitimacy Crisis

The first decades of the 21st century — especially after the 2008 financial crisis and into the 2020s — upended many assumptions. A series of ruptures signaled that globalization was neither inevitable nor unidirectional: global recession, rising inequality, nationalist-populist revolts, geopolitical conflicts (the 2014 Crimea crisis, Syrian civil war, Russia-Ukraine war beginning in 2022), the COVID-19 pandemic, and US-China economic decoupling. Observers began speaking of de-globalization or a “post-global” era.

Integration gave way to fragmentation and regionalization. Supply chains shortened, borders hardened (or closed during COVID), and international cooperation often faltered in favor of nationalist agendas. The same global elites once seen as all-powerful were now portrayed by critics as vulnerable or in retreat amid this turmoil — even as some populists blamed them for the chaos. Across the West, insurgent move-

ments from Brexit to the election of Donald Trump explicitly railed against “globalist elites”. This backlash delegitimized many cosmopolitan narratives: free trade was recast as a corporate scheme, and multilateral institutions were attacked as infringements on national sovereignty. Scholars questioned whether concepts like “global capitalism” or “world society” still retained explanatory power. Some argued there was a return of geopolitics and neo-imperial spheres of influence (e.g., renewed Russian and Turkish regional ambitions, China’s Belt and Road Initiative) that earlier globalization theory had underplayed. Others contended that globalization had merely changed form. Pan-kaj Ghemawat (2018) noted that trade, investment, and information flows remained high, though regionally concentrated, suggesting a trend of “slowbalization” rather than full-scale reversal. Clearly, the legitimacy of global elites and their cosmopolitan cultural capital came into question.

Even establishment figures acknowledged the rift. Klaus Schwab, founder of the World Economic Forum, observed that “people are revolting against the economic ‘elites’ they believed have betrayed them,” forcing a reckoning in business and policy circles (cited in Lashitew, 2020). In response, corporate and political leaders adjusted their discourse, embracing “stakeholder capitalism” to restore crumbling public trust (Lashitew, 2020; Stiglitz, 2020). The 2020 Davos theme, “Stakeholders for a Cohesive and Sustainable World,” explicitly recognized the need for a new social contract to address inequality and discontent (Lashitew, 2020). The World Economic Forum’s Global Risks Report 2022 highlighted rising societal polarization and eroding trust as urgent issues, underlining elites’ need to rebuild legitimacy (World Economic Forum, 2022).

Sociologically, this post-global turn shifts attention to value conflicts and identity narratives. Earlier structural-economic forces are now mediated by cultural and ideological battles. Manuel Castells (1997) noted that alongside the global network economy arose powerful identity-based movements resisting globalization—from religious fundamentalism to ethno-nationalism. These often frame cosmopolitan elites as corrupt, unpatriotic, or impious.

In the post-global context, global elites increasingly engage in deliberate legitimization work—seeking to justify their power in terms that resonate with particularistic loyalties (national, ethnic, religious) or by articulating a renewed universalism capable of withstanding charges of elitism. Classical theories of elite adaptation (Pareto, 1901/1968) become relevant: can the global elite renew itself by co-opting elements of the counter-elite (e.g., bringing nationalist-populist figures into the establishment) or adopting the “the people’s” language? Or will distinct elite factions emerge—some fully assimilating into the nationalist narrative to align with nationalist regimes, and others forming a kind of dissident cosmopolitan bloc committed to global common causes (climate action, human rights, etc.) regardless of state pressures?

Contemporary elites face changing standards of symbolic capital. Power-holders need more than money—they require recognition and legitimacy from others (Bourdieu, 1986). Under high globalization, cosmopolitan cultural capital itself conferred symbolic capital: being fluent in global codes signaled modernity and competence. Now, howev-

er, alternative value hierarchies have gained ground. For example, patriotic capital³—demonstrating one's service to the nation — or civilizational capital — affiliating with a broader cultural-religious identity (like the Islamic ummah or a "Russian World") — can grant legitimacy that cosmopolitanism alone might not, especially outside the West. In Gramscian terms (2000), the dominant elite worldview (global liberalism) is facing a hegemonic crisis. New ideological formations are contending for hegemony, forcing elites either to reform and incorporate these values or to risk being supplanted by a new hegemonic bloc built around different principles.

Network power relations are also evolving. Castells recently noted "the return of the strong nation-state" and warned of a looming "specter of inter-state confrontation" even within the network society (Castells, 2022). Rather than networks wholly displacing states, we observe hybrid structures: states actively reassert control over networks (through digital firewalls, data sovereignty laws, financial sanctions creating parallel systems) even as they remain interconnected. Thus, network power remains crucial—but now the ability to disconnect or compartmentalize networks has become an important facet of power.

Authoritarian states like China wield this by curating their own cyberspace and financial circuits. Western alliances have used selective decoupling as a tool, excluding rivals from global payment systems through sanctions. Global elites today operate in a polarized, bifurcated network environment, navigating partially decoupled circuits. Aligning too closely with one geopolitical bloc's rules may limit an elite actor's access to another bloc's market or networks. Flexibility and cross-network brokerage have therefore become even more valuable elite skills.

The context in which global elites operate has been fundamentally transformed. Globalization can no longer be treated as an unquestioned backdrop; instead, elites actively reorganize and narrate global interdependence in new ways. We now turn to how these dynamics manifest in practice, examining elite adaptations in regions and in the forging of new transnational alliances.

Comparative Analysis

Russia: From Cosmopolitan Oligarchs to Patriotic Elites

Russia exemplifies how a globalized elite can reconstitute its cultural capital in nationalist terms. In the 1990s, Russia's emerging power elite epitomized what Bauman (1998) termed the "elite of globalization" — cosmopolitan oligarchs and technocrats comfortably operating in the global *space of flows* (Castells, 1996). They converted economic capital into cosmopolitan cultural capital through Western education, English fluency, and offshore wealth, projecting themselves as transnational actors (Kryshtanovskaya, 2008).

By the 2010s, however, the Kremlin under Putin had re-nationalized this field of power. An explicit nationalist-civilizational narrative cast Russia as a distinct Eurasian civi-

3. The symbolic resources earned by demonstrating loyalty to national values or causes.

lization and made elite status contingent on displays of patriotic loyalty. This ideological pivot — essentially a Gramscian bid for a new hegemonic bloc — compelled Russian magnates to recalibrate their identities. No longer could a tycoon boast of Ivy League degrees or London mansions without also professing loyalty to “Mother Russia” and its great-power revival.

After the 2014 incorporation of Crimea into the Russian Federation and the ensuing Western sanctions, many oligarchs ostentatiously repatriated assets and invested in high-profile national projects (e.g. the Crimea bridge) to prove their utility to state goals (Kheyfets, 2018). As Kryshtanovskaya (2008) observed, Putin’s tenure ushered in a “patriotic turn” in elite composition, elevating security insiders and Eurasianist ideologues while marginalizing globalists. Cosmopolitan cultural capital now had to be augmented by patriotic capital — mastery of Russian historical narratives, Orthodox symbolism, and nationalist rhetoric — to maintain legitimacy in the domestic field.

Russian elite discourse now frames globalization as a contest of values rather than a shared project. Officials like Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov champion a “multipolar world order” with Russia defending “traditional values” against Western liberalism. Intellectuals propagate a vision of a pluriverse of equal civilizations, encapsulated in the mantra “Russia is not just a country, it is a civilization.” This civilizational discourse legitimates Russian elites as cultural guardians leading one pole of a fragmented world, rather than mere participants in a homogenizing global culture.

They seek to convert their prior cosmopolitan credentials into a new source of symbolic power: positioning themselves as standard-bearers of a self-declared Eurasian renaissance (Maslovskiy, 2021). In Castells’ terms (1996), Russian elites are building alternative networks of power flows (e.g. Eurasian Economic Union, BRICS) to rival Western-centric networks, thereby preserving influence on their own terms (Lukyanov, 2022).

Some formerly Westernized elites have publicly embraced Eurasianist thinkers like Aleksandr Dugin to signal alignment with this narrative, even if their lifestyles remain cushioned by transnational luxuries. This performative shift represents a struggle for cultural hegemony: the Kremlin and its affiliates are actively constructing a new “common sense” that prizes civilizational authenticity over globalist technocracy. In effect, Russia’s power-holders have become cultural brokers, mediating between the cosmopolitan norms they once embraced and the nationalist-civilizational values now required for legitimacy (Maslovskiy, 2021).

These changes are evident at elite forums such as the Valdai Discussion Club. In a 2016 address, Putin pronounced that the Western liberal order had failed to respect other cultures and that Russia would henceforth pursue its own model (President of Russia, 2016). Even Russian academia reflects this turn. As Filippov (Editorial) observes, powerful states and empires are reaching back to “traditional elements of culture” to replace the “value communities” once nurtured by globalization. This trend encapsulates the Russian elite view that the cosmopolitan world society of the 1990s–2000s — with its Davos meetings and “flat world” ethos — has given way to an era of civilizational pluralism. To maintain power, Russian elites align themselves with this shift, presenting themselves as

patriots rather than globalists and thereby seeking moral legitimacy as defenders of an embattled national idea.

A key consequence of this reorientation is the domestication of elite cultural capital. Fluency in English or an Ivy League MBA, once reliable markers of elite status, are no longer sufficient (though they remain materially useful). Today's Russian power brokers are expected to accumulate national cultural capital — for example, patronizing patriotic historical societies or conspicuously attending Orthodox liturgies — to signal ideological conformity. Such performances accrue symbolic “patriotic capital” analogous to the Soviet-era *nomenklatura*'s requirement of ideological fealty (though now tied to nationalism rather than Marxism).

This has not meant a total retreat from global engagement: many Russian billionaires still keep offshore accounts and foreign villas. Rather, it means those global engagements are generally expected to be cloaked in nationalist symbolism to avoid undercutting one's standing at home. In Gramscian terms, the Russian elite has had to renegotiate the social contract, offering cultural-nationalist legitimization in exchange for continued privilege.

Russian elites have not abandoned global networking — they have reconfigured it. As Lukyanov (2022) argues, confrontation with the West “sped up the end of [the old] globalization,” prompting Moscow's elite to seek a “new economic order” independent of the West. Rather than isolation, they pursue an alternative globalization centered on Eurasian and Global South linkages, from energy deals with China to security pacts with Middle Eastern states. This strategy illustrates Castells' notion of network power: by forging new transnational circuits (e.g. BRICS+, Shanghai Cooperation Organization) that operate outside Western dominance, Russian elites aim to remain significant players in the international arena. They cultivate an image not of pariahs but of pioneers of a post-Western world order.

The Russian case shows an elite stratum proactively adapting to a fragmenting global context by redefining what counts as cultural capital and legitimacy. The cosmopolitan-to-patriotic shift among Russia's elites underscores a broader pattern: global elite actors will invoke local civilizational narratives and rearrange their network affiliations as needed to sustain power in a world where globalization no longer provides an uncontested source of legitimacy.

The Russian case demonstrates how elites redefine cultural capital in nationalist terms, shift legitimization strategies toward civilizational-patriotic narratives, and reorient network power by cultivating Eurasian and Global South alliances to sustain influence in a fragmenting world.

China: Elite Nationalism with Global Ambitions

Chinese elites present a somewhat different adaptation: they remain vocal proponents of economic globalization while coupling global integration with an assertive nationalist and civilizational narrative. Under Xi Jinping, China's ruling elite frequently invokes the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” and describes China as a “civilization-state”

reclaiming its historical primacy. Xi's hallmark foreign policy slogan — building a “Community of Shared Future for Mankind” — reads on the surface as “normal globalism”, but it is intertwined with calls for a multipolar order and a “democratization” of international relations that dilutes Western dominance (Nathan and Zhang, 2022; Zeng, 2020).

This posture has been characterized as a form of nationalist cosmopolitanism, wherein China's elites embrace globalization but on their own cultural-civilizational terms (Bayram, 2019; Zhang, 2012). In practice, Chinese business and political leaders remain deeply engaged in trade, investment, and multilateral institutions, yet they frame these global engagements as vehicles for national rejuvenation and as proof of China's developmental model. For example, participation in UN agencies or the World Economic Forum is portrayed not just as cosmopolitan networking, but as advancing a distinctly Chinese vision of modernity (Nathan and Zhang, 2022; Zhang, 2012).

At the same time, loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party's ideological line has become a non-negotiable credential for elite status. An illustrative case was Jack Ma — the globally famous Alibaba founder — who fell afoul of authorities after a 2020 speech criticizing regulators (Qiu et al., 2020). His abrupt disappearance from public view sent a clear signal that no amount of cosmopolitan success exempts an elite figure from toeing the party line. Conversely, entrepreneurs and firms that align with state priorities (e.g. Huawei's role in 5G rollout and digital geopolitics) are lauded as model patriots.

In Bourdieusian terms (1986), China's elites have fused global cultural capital (world-class education, technical expertise, international savvy) with nationalist capital (definite support for Chinese Communist Party doctrine and heritage) to secure their position (Zhang, 2012). It is now common for a Chinese CEO or minister educated at Harvard to pepper speeches with references to Confucius or Xi Jinping Thought, thereby converting cosmopolitan credentials into symbols of loyalty. This dual repertoire was vividly demonstrated by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): on one hand, BRI is a massive global infrastructure and investment network spanning Asia, Africa, and Europe (a cosmopolitan outreach aligned with Castells' space of flows); on the other hand, it is narrated as a revival of the ancient Silk Road spirit and a contribution of Chinese civilization to the world. The BRI thus allows Chinese elites to exercise network power internationally by linking dozens of countries into new trade and finance networks while buttressing a domestic narrative of benevolent Chinese leadership (Castells, 1996; Zeng, 2020).

Elite rhetoric at venues like the Boao Forum for Asia (China's “Davos”) further illustrates this blend. Chinese leaders simultaneously criticize Western dominance and position China's rise as offering more equitable, culturally respectful globalization. In a 2021 Boao address, Xi Jinping asserted that no civilization is superior to another and that China's vision of a shared future respects each nation's path (Xi, 2021). This message serves a twofold legitimization purpose. Internationally, it projects Chinese leadership as championing civilizational pluralism and South–South solidarity (implicitly contrasting with what is portrayed as Western ideological arrogance). Domestically, it reinforces the Party's narrative that China's elite are the guardians of an indigenous value system — a mix of socialist and Confucian principles — now vindicated on the world stage.

Chinese elites claim global moral leadership (defending diversity, win-win development) even as they insist on China's sovereign right to chart its own course. This strategy can be seen as authoritarian cosmopolitanism or what Zhang (2012) calls a civilization-state paradigm: China engages the world on a globalist plane but asserts a civilizational uniqueness that defies full convergence with Western liberal norms. Thus, Chinese leaders epitomize the cultural broker role — translating global expertise into the idiom of Chinese civilization (Zhang, 2012) — to legitimize their continued engagement with globalization on their own terms.

Chinese elites have not abandoned globalization per se — rather, they advocate what might be called Globalization 2.0 or “inclusive globalization” under Chinese stewardship (Nathan and Zhang, 2022; Zeng, 2020). They decry what they frame as a US-led push for “decoupling” or a new Cold War, and instead champion continued interdependence but on a multilateral, Asia-centric basis. In Xi's famous 2017 keynote at Davos, he cast himself as a defender of open markets and warned that retreating into protectionism is like “locking oneself in a dark room” — safe, perhaps, but devoid of light or growth (Xi, 2017). Such rhetoric signaled to global audiences that Chinese elites intend to sustain and reshape global connectivity rather than sever it. Simultaneously, the Party emphasizes at home that this interconnected world needs to accommodate China's political system and cultural values, rather than forcing Westernization. The result is a two-level legitimation strategy: internationally, China's elite claim legitimacy by upholding global prosperity and presenting Beijing as filling the leadership void left by an “inward-turning” West; domestically, they claim legitimacy by stoking national pride and asserting the moral superiority of China's governance model (Nathan and Zhang, 2022; Zeng, 2020).

In Bourdieu's terms (1986), Chinese elites are constructing a novel synthesis of cultural capital. They are expected to be fluent in global markets, institutions, and discourses — and equally fluent in Chinese nationalist and socialist symbolism. An ideal Chinese leader today might negotiate a WTO deal in English by day, and by evening quote Marxism–Leninism with Chinese characteristics to demonstrate ideological orthodoxy. This adaptive “bi-cultural” habitus has enabled Chinese elites to remain central in transnational networks (from climate negotiations to AI governance) while retaining strong nationalist credentials at home. In other words, China's power-holders have become cultural brokers par excellence — translating cosmopolitan expertise into the idiom of Chinese civilizational revival. This strategy has buttressed their legitimacy in a fragmented global order: rather than being seen as compradors of Western-led globalization, Chinese elites portray themselves as architects of an alternative globalization with Chinese values at its core (Zhang, 2012; Zeng, 2020).

The Chinese case illustrates a pattern of syncretic elite identity: global and local sources of authority are merged to hedge against the vulnerabilities of either alone. In a post-globalization era, China's elites demonstrate that embracing interconnectedness need not mean surrendering cultural autonomy — a pattern evident among other non-Western elites. The Chinese case exemplifies how elites fuse cosmopolitan and indigenous cultural capital, pursue dual legitimation strategies by projecting global prosperity while champi-

oning national rejuvenation, and leverage expansive transnational networks like the Belt and Road Initiative to assert network power on their own terms.

Türkiye: Civilizational Populism and Neo-Ottoman Visions

Türkiye offers a case where elite cultural strategy shifted from a pro-Western, secular cosmopolitan orientation to a hybrid of Islamic civilizational populism and assertive strategic autonomy. For much of the 20th century, Türkiye's secular-republican elite — military-bureaucratic cadres and business dynasties in Ankara and İstanbul — defined the national project as Westernization. These “Kemalist” elites accumulated significant cosmopolitan cultural capital (with Bourdieu's concept): French or American university degrees, secular lifestyles, and affinity with Western political norms (Bali, 2002). İstanbul's old-money bourgeoisie were sometimes dubbed “Euro-Turks” for their orientation toward Europe. However, in the past two decades under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the AK Party, this hegemonic position of Westernized elites was upended by an intentional reorientation of Türkiye's identity narrative. Erdoğan elevated Ottoman–Islamic heritage and positioned Türkiye as a leading voice of the Muslim world rather than a junior partner of the West (Coşkun & Ülgen, 2023).

Foreign policy was even cast in civilizational terms. Ankara co-sponsored the United Nations “Alliance of Civilizations” initiative to promote East–West dialogue, even as Erdoğan's domestic discourse stressed Türkiye's role as the modern heir of Islamic civilization (Ardıç, 2014). In Gramscian terms, the AKP elite sought to construct a new historical bloc, delegitimizing the old secular establishment as alienated “elites” and valorizing a more pious, nationalist elite identity rooted in Türkiye's Ottoman–Islamic past.

One immediate consequence was the partial devaluation of the cultural capital held by the former secular elite. The traditional Kemalist establishment — with its Parisian educations, cocktail parties, and strict *laïcité* — came under heavy criticism by pro-AKP media as out-of-touch “White Turks” lacking authentic connection to “the nation” (Bali, 2002; Yilmaz & Morieson, 2022). In their place, a new elite cadre aligned with Erdoğan's vision rose to prominence: individuals who might maintain global business connections, but who ostentatiously display religious piety, conservative values, and neo-Ottoman nostalgia.

AKP-era cabinet ministers and business magnates are known to quote Ottoman poetry or emphasize Türkiye's role in defending Muslim causes like Palestine in international forums, thereby accruing what we might term civilizational capital. Markers of membership in this new elite class include attending Friday prayers in high-profile mosques, funding the restoration of Ottoman-era monuments, and promoting Ottoman Turkish language or Islamic curricula in education. These behaviors signal an Islamic habitus that differentiates the AKP's “native” elite from the earlier Westernized one. Conceptually, this represents an attempt to redefine legitimate cultural capital in the Turkish field of power: Western cosmopolitan markers have been supplanted by Islamic-national ones (Buğra, 2021).

The Alliance of Civilizations initiative in the mid-2000s was emblematic of this dual-track strategy. Internationally, it was framed as fostering intercultural dialogue (a cosmopolitan ideal), but for Turkish policymakers it reinforced the notion that Türkiye is a unique civilizational bridge with a special Muslim identity to offer — not merely a secular nation-state (Ardıç, 2014). Under Erdoğan, Turkish elite discourse often echoes themes similar to Russian and Chinese elites, arguing that “the West is in decline” and a more multipolar, culturally plural world is emerging.

Turkish elites carve out their own niche in this landscape. They tout a “Turkish model” of governance — blending political Islam, electoral democracy (albeit majoritarian), and economic development — as a template for other Muslim-majority societies. This positions Türkiye’s ruling elite as global thought leaders within an Islamic civilizational sphere, in implicit rivalry with Western liberal leadership. The invocation of Ottoman history and Islamic solidarity serves to legitimize Turkish elites as inheritors of a grand civilization, thereby bolstering their claim to leadership at home and abroad (Coşkun & Ülgen, 2023; Yilmaz & Morieson, 2022).

The AKP’s rise also involved engineering a new alliance between political power and devout business elites. Conservative entrepreneurs from Anatolian cities (“Anatolian tigers”) surged in influence during Erdoğan’s tenure, buoyed by state patronage and Islamist networks (Buğra, 2021). They formed their own business associations (e.g. MÜSİAD) to rival the old Istanbul-based, secular business club TÜSİAD. These new Muslim-oriented business elites often frame their enterprises in terms of service to the nation and the ummah (global Muslim community), not merely profit. They dramatically expanded trade and investment with the Middle East, Africa, and Central Asia, aligning with Ankara’s strategic pivot away from an EU-centric orientation. At the same time, they maintain many global ties — exporting to worldwide markets and holding degrees from Western universities — but ideologically present themselves as champions of a “non-Western internationalism” that emphasizes cultural authenticity over Western approval. This reflects what Castells (1996) calls networking in alternative circuits: Türkiye’s elite have leveraged new transnational networks (Islamic finance, pan-Turkic partnerships) to amplify their influence outside traditional Western channels. By doing so, they enhance their network power on their own terms, embedding Türkiye in emergent blocs like the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Organization of Turkic States, and even approaching BRICS alignment (suggestion to add Türkiye to “BRICST”).

Erdoğan-era elites also skillfully employ populist rhetoric to legitimize themselves. They cast the ruling class as part of “the people” in opposition to both external Western “imperialists” and their “internal collaborators” (the old secular elite). This populist stance — claiming to be anti-elitist elites — blurs the line between elite and mass, and redefines what it means to be “elite” in Türkiye (Yilmaz & Morieson, 2022). Erdoğan routinely rails against supposed conspiratorial “global elites” or an “interest-rate lobby” (a code for international financiers) on one hand, while extolling Ottoman-Islamic glory and “the people’s will” on the other. The result is what scholars term civilizational pop-

ulism: a fusion of populist anti-Western, anti-establishment messaging with a civilizational identity narrative that elevates Islam and Ottoman heritage (Yilmaz & Morieson, 2022). In Gramscian terms, the AKP elite constructed a new hegemonic narrative that aligns their class interests with the cultural values of the conservative masses, thereby securing consent. This strategy has paid tangible dividends: Erdoğan and his circle have maintained power through multiple elections by persuading a large segment of society that they represent “the real Türkiye” against cosmopolitan secularists.

Turning eastward and southward has given Turkish elites new platforms for influence. Türkiye has become highly active in organizations like the OIC, has vocally championed Muslim causes from the Rohingya crisis to Jerusalem’s status, and launched the Organization of Turkic States to leverage ethnic and linguistic ties in Central Asia. These moves allow Turkish elites to exercise leadership outside Western-led forums, enhancing their standing in a multipolar context. Each of these networks also reinforces their domestic legitimacy: for example, leading the Organization of Turkic States burnishes Türkiye’s image as a regional patron, while advocacy for Muslim minorities abroad resonates with the AKP’s Islamist base. Such initiatives underscore Castells’ insight that network-making power is key in the information age (Castells, 1996): Turkish elites are creating and steering new networks (Muslim solidarity, Turkic cooperation) that bypass traditional Western gatekeepers (Coşkun & Ülgen, 2023).

Türkiye’s ruling elite have not completely severed ties with the West. The country remains a NATO member, engages (contentiously) with the EU, and participates in global markets. However, they approach Western alignment on their own terms. We can describe it as a constant balancing act: invoking Western partnerships when useful for trade, investment or security, but defiantly opposing Western influence when rallying domestic or regional support. This pragmatism reflects a realization that total decoupling from the global economy is impossible, yet a one-sided dependence on the West is no longer politically tenable. Thus, Türkiye’s elite cultivates dual competencies: they can speak the technocratic language of NATO or the G20 when needed, yet just as easily pivot to quoting the Quran or celebrating the 1453 Ottoman capture of Constantinople when addressing a home audience. This duality mirrors the broader pattern of global elites becoming culturally bilingual, though in Türkiye’s case with a pronounced Islamic-populist characteristics.

Turkish elites, too, act as cultural brokers—positioning Türkiye as both a global player and a civilizational leader by translating their cosmopolitan skills into the idiom of Islamic nationalism and neo-Ottoman authenticity. Their continued success in maintaining power (e.g. Erdoğan’s two decades in office) suggests that this strategy of blended legitimacy—rooted in both global economic performance and civilizational identity politics—effectively secures elite dominance amid a fractured global context. Turkish ruling elites thus function as cultural brokers, leveraging their global connections (e.g. G20, NATO ties) while simultaneously projecting an Islamic-heritage identity at home (Yilmaz & Morieson, 2022). Türkiye’s case reveals how elites redefine cultural capital through Islamic and neo-Ottoman narratives, employ populist civilizational appeals as

legitimation strategies, and cultivate alternative networks (pan-Islamic and Turkic blocs) to exercise network power outside Western dominance.

Western Elites: Liberal Internationalism Under Strain

Elites in Western Europe and North America have also had to recalibrate in response to resurgent nationalism and populist backlash, albeit in subtler ways than their Russian, Chinese, or Turkish counterparts. Throughout the post-Cold War era, Western political and business elites were widely seen as the principal architects and beneficiaries of liberal globalization — a cosmopolitan establishment committed to open markets, multilateral institutions, and technocratic governance. Many Western elites still publicly espouse these liberal-internationalist values, but by the late 2010s they began tempering their globalist rhetoric and acknowledging local grievances to shore up legitimacy at home. In the wake of shocks like the Brexit referendum and Trump's election, segments of the Western elite recognized that a strategy of legitimacy-building needed to address the dislocations and identity anxieties that pure globalism had overlooked. As Huntington (2004) presciently argued, Western elites had become increasingly “denationalized” in outlook, prompting fears among publics that their leaders no longer served the national interest. Post-2016, Western elites implicitly responded to this critique by reasserting national and regional commitments alongside global ones — in effect, trying to reconnect with the “space of places” (Bauman, 1998) they had long downplayed.

In Europe, this shift was exemplified by new slogans and policies emphasizing protection and sovereignty. After Brexit, European Union officials and pro-EU leaders started advocating for a “Europe that protects.” They incorporated language about strategic autonomy in defense, technology, and industrial policy, implicitly conceding that unfettered globalization had produced social vulnerabilities. The EU's integration project — once sold almost entirely on cosmopolitan ideals of openness — began marketing itself as a guardian of Europeans' security and welfare (e.g. tighter external borders, reshoring of critical supply chains). In France, President Emmanuel Macron (a leader with a background in global governance) nevertheless popularized the idea of “European sovereignty” and even referred to “European civilization” in need of defense. By invoking a shared civilizational identity for the EU, Macron and others signaled to domestic audiences that Western elites understood the electorate's desire for community and cultural continuity. This can be seen as a partial reinvention of Western elite legitimacy: they continue to lead on global issues (climate change, trade rules), but simultaneously stress that they are protecting their own people in a more dangerous, competitive world. In Gramscian terms, Western elites moved to incorporate certain nationalist and populist elements into their governing ideology, seeking to neutralize dissent by addressing it within the elite discourse.

In the United States, a similar recalibration occurred. The Biden administration — staffed with many veteran globalists — conspicuously branded its agenda as a “foreign policy for the middle class” (Smeltz et al., 2021). This slogan aimed to demonstrate that

international engagement would yield tangible benefits for ordinary Americans, directly responding to the populist narrative behind “America First”. US foreign-policy elites, while still defending the liberal rules-based order, began framing great-power competition with China or Russia not just in abstract geopolitical terms, but as necessary to protect American jobs, communities, and “way of life”.

High-level discourse under Biden often cast the global contest as “democracies vs. autocracies,” which carries a quasi-civilizational overtone: it portrays “the West” as a distinct community of liberal-democratic values rallying against authoritarian great powers. This framing is reminiscent of Huntington’s thesis (albeit invoking ideology rather than religion as the core of civilization) and marks a departure from the triumphalist universalism of the 1990s. By emphasizing value-based solidarity — essentially a “Free World 2.0” narrative — American and European elites attempt to legitimate their leadership through shared identity and principles, not just technocratic expertise or global growth promises. In doing so, they tacitly acknowledge that Western publics crave a sense of collective purpose that globalization’s managerial rhetoric had failed to provide.

Ironically, civilizational language has crept into Western elite discourse largely as a defensive maneuver triggered by their rivals. NATO’s 2022 Strategic Concept (NATO, 2022), for instance, described the war in Ukraine as an attack on ‘our values and the rules-based order,’ implicitly contrasting a Western civilizational sphere of rule-of-law and human rights against an adversary characterized by brute force. While Western leaders do not invoke a single religion or ethnicity as the foundation of identity, they increasingly emphasize a cultural-political civilization centered on liberal democracy and human dignity. This represents a striking evolution from the 1990s, when Western globalists downplayed civilizational differences under the banner of a universal “end of history.” Now, faced with open civilizational challenges from Russia and China, Western elites themselves deploy a soft form of civilizational rhetoric to rally domestic and allied support (e.g. framing summits as gatherings of “Democracies” united against “Autocracies”). Global power competition has “civilizationalized” the rhetoric of all sides. Western elites, while still wary of ethno-nationalism, have found it necessary to present their liberal values as a quasi-sacred heritage requiring defense. This is a deliberate strategy of legitimacy-building: by casting themselves as guardians of an embattled democratic civilization, Western leaders aim to regain the moral high ground and bind their publics to them in a shared struggle.

Beyond rhetoric, Western economic elites have also adapted their practices to address legitimacy concerns in a fragmented environment. In recent years, many Western corporations—with tacit government backing—pursued re-shoring and supply-chain “resilience” initiatives, bringing certain manufacturing and procurement closer to home. The COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine starkly exposed how vulnerable hyper-globalized supply lines could be, threatening national security and self-sufficiency. In response, CEOs who once single-mindedly chased efficiency through offshoring now speak about “trusted suppliers” and “economic security”. This shift is partly pragmatic business strategy, but it also reflects new political realities: a corporate

leader's legitimacy can suffer if they appear too beholden to China or indifferent to their home country's resilience. In public forums, Western CEOs increasingly trumpet their contributions to national strength — e.g., semiconductor executives testifying how new chip fabs in Arizona will secure America's technological edge, or German industrialists highlighting investments to reduce dependence on Russian gas. Such narratives align corporate actions with national strategic goals, blunting populist criticisms of rootless global capital. In Bourdieusian terms (1986), Western economic elites are converting their economic and organizational capital into symbolic capital by demonstrating allegiance to national well-being. The fact that even "Davos Man" now emphasizes local job creation and community investment (Lashitew, 2020) indicates how far the dynamics of legitimation have shifted since the heyday of neoliberal globalization. The Western case illustrates how elites balance cosmopolitan cultural capital with renewed national commitments, craft legitimacy narratives emphasizing security, sovereignty, and liberal-democratic values, and reinforce their network power through strengthened alliances and selective economic realignments to maintain authority in a turbulent post-globalization era.

In summary, across contexts — Russia, China, Türkiye, and the West — global elites have been selectively infusing nationalist and civilizational themes into their repertoires. In doing so, they seek to maintain authority by resonating with the resurgence of collective loyalties that a purely cosmopolitan stance had often downplayed. Some, like Russian and Turkish elites, lean heavily into civilizational narratives as central pillars of legitimacy. Others, like Chinese elites, promote a syncretic vision that upholds globalization while embedding it in a nationalist revival. Western elites still espouse liberal internationalism but have subtly recalibrated to stress community, security, and identity when needed. Broadly, the pattern is that the cultural capital of global elites now requires a dual legitimacy — they are expected to demonstrate both global competence and local (or at least cultural-communal) credibility to justify their continued dominance. We now synthesize the theoretical implications of these parallel adaptations and examine how elite strategies of legitimacy-building are reshaping the global sociological landscape.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our comparative analysis reveals a unifying pattern: global elites are proactively adjusting their cultural repertoires and legitimacy strategies to sustain power in a fragmented global order. They have transformed their cultural capital from unabashed cosmopolitanism to hybrid "cosmopolitan-plus-local" repertoires, incorporated nationalist or civilizational themes alongside global commitments, and evolved new bases of consent — from patriotic appeals to transnational causes. What do these changes portend for our sociological understanding of power and culture? And how is the focus of elite theory and global sociology itself changing in this era, as Filippov and others have queried? Several key conclusions emerge.

The End of Globalization as Context, Not Connectivity

The “post-global” world is not one of total disconnection or a simple return to sealed nation-states. Rather, globalization can no longer be taken for granted as a legitimating ideology. It is crucial to distinguish between material globalization (which persists — trade, the internet, financial flows, and supply chains still bind societies, albeit unevenly) and ideological globalization (the belief in inexorable integration under a shared set of liberal norms, which has indeed receded). Global elites have adjusted to the latter’s decline by reframing their roles vis-à-vis the nation-state and cultural communities, even as they continue cross-border activities.

Research should therefore move beyond binary debates of “globalization vs. de-globalization” and instead examine how global interdependence is being reorganized and re-narrated. As we observed, elites are actively constructing new coalitions and networks (city alliances, BRICS+, Belt and Road, etc.), even as they narrate these efforts in nationally or civilizationaly inflected terms. For sociology, the implication is to focus on these recombinant forms of global connectivity — what new institutional forms arise, which actors gain or lose influence, and how meaning and power are co-constructed within them. Globalization’s context has shifted from an integrative paradigm to a contested field of multiple projects, but the connectivity remains; elites, accordingly, are not abandoning global networks but reshaping them to fit new legitimation needs.

Cultural Capital in Flux: From Cosmopolitan to “Cosmopolitan-Plus-Local”

The “rules of conversion” between capitals (Bourdieu, 1986) are shifting. Previously, cosmopolitan cultural capital — elite education, worldliness, fluency in global business and diplomatic idioms — reliably converted into economic and political capital. Davos participation was a badge of legitimacy. Now, as our cases show, cosmopolitan capital often requires augmentation by local legitimacy markers to remain effective. A global CEO finds that to operate in India or China demonstrating respect for local culture and nationalism may matter as much as their Ivy League MBA. A politician with international stature (say a former UN official) might struggle for domestic office unless they cultivate a grassroots, patriotic image. Elite reproduction has become a two-level game: elites need to maintain standing in both global and local or national fields, which may demand different habitus and symbols. In practical terms, we observe dually oriented elites who “speak two cultural languages,” switching between globalist and nativist frames depending on the audience. Future research should investigate these new cultural repertoires — for instance, how young elite cohorts are trained to blend cosmopolitan skills with nationalist credentials. Preliminary observations suggest that many younger business and political leaders (“glocal” generation) are indeed more adept at this dual game, having grown up with global connectivity but also witnessed nationalist revival. This dynamic exemplifies what Robertson (1995) terms “glocalization”, the simultaneous co-presence of globalizing and localizing tendencies. This trend invites a revisiting of educational and

socialization processes for elites: how do elite schools, transnational organizations, and local institutions jointly shape a new kind of hybrid habitus? By mapping the evolution of elite cultural capital, we gain insight into which combinations of attributes (e.g. technical expertise + populist charisma) are most successful in the current environment.

Legitimation and Value Contestation

Questions of meaning and legitimacy have moved from the background to the foreground of elite dynamics. During high-globalization, elites operated under an overarching legitimizing myth – globalization equals progress — which muted explicit struggles over values to some extent. Now every elite claim faces normative scrutiny: are you serving the nation? Upholding religious or democratic values? Protecting “our” civilization? Competing elite factions brand each other illegitimate by accusing opponents of value betrayals (e.g. globalist elites are denounced as unpatriotic or corrupt, while nationalist elites are denounced as xenophobic or anti-democratic). Elites in each context engage in a Gramscian renegotiation of hegemony, often by co-opting populist language (“anti-elitist elites”) to maintain power.

This amounts to an elite-level culture war over whose principles will define the social order. From Moscow to Washington, elites engage in what Gramsci (2000) would recognize as battles for hegemonic leadership — striving to align their particular interests with widely resonant values. For sociology, this means that elite studies must therefore engage squarely with ideology, discourse, and semiotics, not just networks and institutions. The narratives elites construct — civilizational clash, populist “people vs. elite” tropes, technocratic utopian visions like Davos’s “global citizenship” — are now critical instruments of power. An analytic focus on these narratives is essential to understand how consent is manufactured or disrupted at the top. Our analysis confirmed: by examining symbolic strategies — Putin’s civilizational posturing, Xi’s blend of socialist patriotism and globalism, Erdoğan’s neo-Ottoman populism, Western elites’ invocations of a “Free World” — we could decipher how each elite secures (or struggles for) legitimacy. In short, the cultural and ideological legitimation work of elites has become as pivotal as their control over economic resources or bureaucratic machinery. This underscores the need to integrate cultural sociology (à la Bourdieu and Gramsci) into elite studies traditionally dominated by structural analysis.

Plural Elite Projects in a Multiplex World

The post-global world features not one transnational elite but multiple elite circuits that sometimes cooperate and often compete. Instead of one transnational capitalist class sharing a monolithic outlook, we see, for example, a Russian energy oligarch, a Silicon Valley tech titan, a Chinese state banker, a Turkish construction magnate, and an EU technocrat — all highly influential, yet operating within different normative universes and network alignments. They interact in certain arenas — trade, climate talks — but

diverge profoundly on human rights, sovereignty, and cultural values. Power has become more diffuse and networked in clusters, with no single integrative project like the neoliberal globalization of the 1990s. This pluralization can increase instability (clashing visions and misunderstandings) but also potentially adds resilience (multiple centers of initiative can address problems from different angles).

For sociologists, this calls for renewed comparative and network analyses of elites. Quantitatively, one could map overlapping board memberships, think-tank affiliations, or social media influence patterns to see where elite networks still globalize and where they provincialize. Qualitatively, researchers should compare how elites in different regions define core concepts — e.g. “development,” “merit,” “security” — to identify both convergences and profound divergences. Such studies could reveal, for instance, whether a new global consensus might emerge around issues like climate change (where many elite interests align), or whether fragmentation runs too deep (as on questions of political ideology or cultural values). In essence, we may be entering an era of “competing globalizations” (multiple visions for the world order led by different elite coalitions).

Reflexivity in Sociology

Finally, this shift in elites and global structures has reflexive implications for sociology as a discipline. Much theory — from world-society institutionalism (Meyer et al., 1997) to methodological cosmopolitanism (Beck, 2006) — assumed intensifying globalization and Western hegemonic norms. If contexts change, frameworks must evolve toward a “post-global” sociology that incorporates non-Western perspectives. Classical theories (Bourdieu on capital, Castells on networks, Gramsci on hegemony, Mills on the power elite) remain invaluable, but can be extended through indigenous concepts — Chinese ideas of a “Tianxia” order or Islamic notions of leadership — to grasp how elites outside the West conceptualize their roles. Pluralization of elite projects calls for pluralization of theoretical tools. By putting Western and non-Western theories in dialogue, sociology can more adequately capture the diverse ways power and culture intersect in today’s world.

In conclusion, global elites in flux offer a microcosm of how globalization’s legacy is being reworked rather than erased. Rather than witnessing an “end of elites” or straightforward class replacement, we observe nuanced evolution: elites adapt, reconfigure alliances, and reinterpret values to retain influence. They act both as opportunists and as brokers — some cynically wielding nationalist or populist rhetoric to shore up their position, others sincerely mediating between global and local demands.

For sociology, this underscores the importance of a holistic approach marrying structural analysis (of networks, capital flows, and institutions) with cultural analysis (of narratives, identities, and symbolic power). We are essentially revisiting themes from Pareto and Mosca about elite circulation and formulas of consent, but now on a global canvas and with a cultural lens. Our central argument: global elites are neither vanquished by de-globalization nor static; they proactively recalibrate cultural repertoires and legitima-

tion strategies. This redefinition of elite power in a fragmented world reflects a parallel redefinition of sociology's subject matter. No longer can we assume a universal trajectory of modernization or a singular global elite field; instead, we need to analyze the dynamic interplay of unity and fragmentation, cosmopolitanism and communalism, in shaping power relations. By focusing on these elite adaptations, we open new research frontiers — where cultural capital, networked influence, and competing ideological projects collectively shape the trajectory of societies after globalization.

Future research should explore several questions. How sustainable are these hybrid legitimacy strategies (can elites indefinitely balance global integration with local populism)? Will one set of values or a single narrative eventually regain hegemonic status (for example, a swing back to a cosmopolitan consensus on global challenges like climate change)? How do non-elite publics perceive these elite maneuvers — are people convinced by the new performances of patriotism and civilizational leadership, or do they remain skeptical of any elite claims (as evidenced by ongoing protests and distrust)? Early evidence is mixed: some national publics have rallied behind rebranded elites (Erdoğan's prolonged political tenure in Türkiye attests to that), while others remain deeply distrustful of establishment figures despite their concessions (witness the persistent populist currents in Western democracies). This suggests that the elite–mass relationship is the next critical piece to examine in the post-global puzzle. Elites may adapt, but their success ultimately hinges on mass reception; studying this interaction will be vital to completing the picture of global change.

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Глобальные элиты в трансформации: культурный капитал и власть после глобализации

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В эпоху постглобализации элиты сталкиваются с изменившейся реальностью, характерной чертой которой является возрождение национального суверенитета и цивилизационной риторики. Настоящая статья исследует, каким образом транснациональные носители власти, некогда олицетворявшие собой идею мира без границ, переосмысливают свои культурные стратегии и механизмы легитимации в контексте происходящих изменений. Опираясь на культурсоциологию и теорию элит (Бурдьё, Бауман, Кастельс, Грамши), предлагаемый анализ включает в себя незападные исследовательские перспективы и предлагает реконцептуализацию космополитической культуры элит в условиях деглобализации. В статье демонстрируется, что глобальные элиты не являются ни пассивными жертвами «деглобализации», ни неизменными космополитами. Вместо этого они действуют как культурные посредники, избирательно адаптируя свою идентичность и нарративы. Одни акцентируют внимание на патриотических или цивилизационных темах, стремясь соответствовать усиливающимся государствоцентричным дискурсам; другие, напротив, усиливают приверженность на универсалистской риторике посредством формирования новых транснациональных альянсов. Сравнительные примеры из стран Запада, России, Китая и Турции демонстрируют, что элиты активно приспосабливаются к фрагментированному мировому порядку. Эти трансформации указывают на необходимость перехода социологических исследований от восприятия глобализации как данности к анализу культурной динамики власти элит в расколотом мире — мире, в котором вопросы смысла, идентичности и легитимности приобретают не меньшее значение, чем экономические факторы.

Ключевые слова: глобальные элиты, постглобализация, культурный посредник, культурный капитал, сетевая власть, ценностные ориентации.