

Anticomunismo, the Early American Conservative Movement and the Liberal Consensus (1955-1964)

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ABSTRACT: This article re-examines the role that anticommunism played during the emergence of the early American conservative movement. Through a detailed re-assessment of published and archival material it challenges the two main assumptions consistently reproduced by the literature, and according to which evangelical anticommunist played a doubly crucial role. According to the established view, anticommunism set apart conservative intellectuals and activists from their liberal counterparts and, secondly, acted as the element holding together different ideological strands within the conservative community. These pages demonstrate that anticommunism itself was, in fact, never as dividing an issue as both conservatives and liberal activists claimed. Instead, relatively marginal differences of opinion about the Cold War were blown out of all proportion and employed by both conservatives and progressives as a tool in the midst of intensely sectarian partisan struggles. Similarly, anticommunism was never an element of consensus within a wider conservative community that at this point included traditionalist intellectuals, libertarians and adherents to the populist radical right. In fact, anticommunism often acted as an element furthering already existing ideological tensions.

KEYWORDS: American conservative movement; Traditionalism; Libertarianism; Liberal-progressivism; Post-war consensus; Radical right.

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RESUMEN: *Anticomunismo, el movimiento conservador temprano estadounidense y el consenso liberal (1955-1964).* – Este artículo reexamina el papel jugado por el anticomunismo en la evolución del movimiento conservador temprano. Mediante una nueva evaluación de las fuentes primarias publicadas y archivísticas, este artículo cuestiona dos asunciones consistentemente reproducidas en la literatura académica y según las cuales el anticomunismo evangélico jugó un papel crucial en al menos dos aspectos de esa evolución temprana. En primer lugar, el fervor anticomunista constituyó uno de los elementos diferenciadores fundamentales entre los miembros del movimiento conservador y los intelectuales progresistas; en segundo lugar, también fue el elemento aglutinador fundamental entre las distintas tendencias ideológicas dentro del propio movimiento conservador. Estas páginas demuestran que el anticomunismo en sí mismo, en realidad, nunca jugó ese papel divisivo que tanto progresistas como conservadores le adjudicaron. En realidad, diferencias relativamente modestas acerca de la Guerra Fría fueron usadas fuera de toda proporción tanto por conservadores como por progresistas dentro de intensas disputas dominadas por el sectarismo partidista. Sin embargo, ese mismo anticomunismo nunca jugó el papel de elemento de unión entre las distintas familias que componían el movimiento conservador estadounidense y que en ese momento incluían a los conservadores tradicionalistas, neoliberales (o 'libertarios') y grupos afines a la derecha radical populista. En realidad, el anticomunismo actuó como un agravante de conflictos preexistentes entre estos grupos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Movimiento conservador estadounidense; Conservadurismo; Neoliberalismo; Progresismo; Consenso de posguerra; Derecha radical.

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The current literature examining the post-war American conservative movement tends to consistently reproduce the ‘fusionist’ analysis, according to which visceral anti-communism played a pivotal, two-pronged role in the expansion of the American conservative movement that coalesced around the activists and intellectuals gathered around the pages of the weekly journal *National Review* in 1955 and eventually led to the advent of the presidency of Ronald Regan (Wilentz, 2008).

Firstly, according to this view, the conservative movement was divided between the proponents of various forms of what may be termed neoclassical liberalism (or libertarianism in American political parlance) and those belonging to ‘traditionalist’ conservatism, two otherwise disparate and frequently at odds epistemic communities which were ‘held together’ by shared opposition to communism. The first to articulate this argument cogently was George H. Nash in his *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (Nash, 1998, p. xv), which was seminal at the time of publication and still remains a monumental historiographical work.¹ The academic literature published subsequently, however, still fails to treat Nash’s work as that of an ‘insider’ within the group of conservatives *National Review* and to understand Nash’s research as very much focused on the evolution of the ‘hardcore conservatism’ that evolved from and around the *Review*. In the second place, continues this analysis, anti-communism also became a (possibly *the*) key differentiating element between American conservative intellectuals and activists and their liberal (in the American ‘progressive’ or ‘left-of-centre’ sense of the term) counterparts, perhaps even the most important source of the “jarred fissure” that anti-communist champion and conservative cult-figure Whittaker Chambers ([1952] 2001, p. 793) thought that divided American conservatives and American liberals during the 1950s.

This article re-explores both of these assumptions. Through a careful reassessment of both archival and primary published material, these pages examine first the nature of the that “jarred fissure” that Chambers saw as separating conservatives and, quite crucially, “common” Americans on one hand and the liberal intellectuals who constituted the cultural and political leading elite of the nation on the other. In contrast with the bulk of the academic literature, but consistently with work undertaken by the author exploring the activities of American conservative leaders acting in the international arena, this article proposes an alternative view according to which, in reality, the distance between cold-warrior liberals and cold-warrior conservatives was considerably smaller than both post-war conservatives and the liberal elites that led the nation during the age of the post-war consensus (ca. 1944-1972) themselves maintained (Sarias Rodríguez, 2014).² The real conflict between nascent conservatism and liberal intellectuals was about their respective perceptions of the nature of liberalism and conservatism, rather than in disputations about Cold War policy or the nature of communism. According to this reconsideration of the role of anti-communism within the conservative canon

and in American society at large, men such as *National Review* editor-at-large cum “patron saint of the conservatives” (Judis, 1998) William F. Buckley and Columbia professor cum leading liberal luminary Richard Hofstadter used anti-communism as a proxy to attack the opposing side in the series of certainly ideological but also partisan battles that unfolded during the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s. In this view, for conservatives, engaged during those years in the search for a respectable place in post-war American society and politics, anti-communism served as a convenient conduit through which pre-war isolationism could be abandoned and, in a remarkable *volte face*, Cold War internationalism could be embraced. In the process, conservatives employed anti-communism to propel themselves into if not quite respectable, at least viable politics and away from the political cul-de-sac where market-royalism and isolationism had taken them into during the inter-war years.

The second part of this article re-considers the role of anti-communism within the wider conservative community, concluding that although opposition to communist ideology was shared by all conservatives (as it was, indeed, by all consensus liberals) and while vigorous cold warrior anti-communism was certainly central to the conservative narrative put forth by the *National Review* intellectuals, support for the expanded state apparatus and vigorous internationalism brought about by the Cold War was quite a different issue that was by no means accepted by all conservatives. George H. Nash’s view of a three-pronged (libertarians, traditionalists and anti-communists) conservative movement held together by anti-communism is certainly undisputable as long as one focuses—as Nash did—on the evolution of *National Review* conservatism. However, these pages conclude that the conservative movement was considerably larger and more diverse, including activists and intellectuals with relatively little in common with the Buckleyites of *National Review*’s self-styled conservative ‘hard core’, and that the behavioural and ideological characteristics of the *National Review* conservatives should not be automatically extended to other factions of the movement. In fact, rather than fostering greater cohesion between right-wingers belonging to different ideological ‘families’ and organisational networks, differences over Cold War policies actually intensified internal disputes between the traditionalist-minded intellectual leadership and the libertarian wing of the movement.

WHAT “ARRED FISSURE”? CONSERVATIVES, LIBERALS AND ANTI-COMMUNISM

Since its emergence in the early 1950s, *National Review* placed radical, uncompromising cold-warriorism at the centre of its renewed conservative identity. Thus William F. Buckley, the magazine’s editor-and-large, histrionically threatened to ‘dye the Potomac red’ as a greeting to visiting Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev (Nixon, 1978, p. 71; see also Buckley and Bozell, 1954). Along similar lines, L. Brent Bozell, a senior *Review* editor and Buck-

ley's brother-in-law, was known to muse about whether a nuclear holocaust was preferable to an accommodation with the USSR (Judis, 1998, p. 318). Antedating the foundation of the *Review*, both Bozell and Buckley penned a deliberately polemical book devoted to defending the trajectory of senator Joe McCarthy and—perhaps more significantly—attacking the senator's 'enemies', which they identified as the nation's liberal-progressive elites and, tellingly enough, those elite's representatives in the Democratic party (Buckley and Bozell, 1954). Similarly, James Burnham, *National Review's* premier foreign-policy expert, repeatedly advised the use of nuclear (tactical, he was always clear), chemical or biological weapons in South East Asia as a way of dealing with communist "aggression."³ As a testament to the enduring nature of the anticommunist 'fissure', as late as 2007 *National Review* veteran M. Stanton Evans devoted a full-length monograph to denouncing the conduct of the press, academia and government towards Senator Joseph McCarthy in particular, and anticommunism in general.

At a less intellectually minded level, right-wing populist leaders such as Phyllis Schlafly (1964, pp. 11, 15) needed little encouragement from the *National Review* intellectuals to centre a rather lively conservative message on the dangers of a communist "blueprint for world conquest" which included, as of 1964, "648 state department employees" with "communist activities and associations", to which also should be added 94 "perverts" of undisclosed political affiliation but presumably vulnerable to blackmail (see also Critchlow, 2005, pp. 39-43). Further away from the core of respectable conservatism, Robert Welch, a candy manufacturer who thought Dwight Eisenhower was a "conscious and dedicated agent of the communist conspiracy" and Boris Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago* the product of a Soviet plot, efficiently employed right-wing, populist anti-communism to build his John Birch Society into a nationwide organisation with up to 60000 members (Hodgson, 1996, pp. 58-61; Micklethwait and Woodridge, 2004, p. 61; Diamond, 1995, pp. 52-58).⁴ Needless to say, conservatives themselves were painfully aware of the potentially embarrassing effects of these right-wing activists. William Rusher, who was *National Review's* publisher and sharpest political analyst, forcefully warned his fellow Buckleyites against the dangers posed by what he defined as the "lunatic fringe", which possessed considerable influence over the conservative movement's grassroots (and therefore over the *Review's* readership) but was consistently prone to lapsing into the kind of right-wing populism that exposed the entire movement to political ridicule.⁵ This strategy culminated with less controversial undertones, but still echoing Schlafly's populist style and the power of anti-communism to galvanise the rightwing faithful, when Barry Goldwater proclaimed in his 1964 speech accepting the Republican presidential nomination that, in the context of the Cold War, "moderation in the pursuit of liberty is no virtue" – which was interpreted by a good many liberal-progressive leaders of opinion as placing a question mark upon the policy of containment designed to prevent nuclear Armageddon by contempo-

rising with the Soviets, and by gleeful Lyndon Johnson Democratic partisans as positively advising nuclear war (Perlstein, 2001, pp. 391-393). Clearly, the bulk of the academic literature about conservatism is right to acknowledge that anti-communist passion set conservatives both on political fire and apart from the dominant, containment-minded liberal consensus.

Yet, a closer look at how conservatives behaved indicates that beyond the realm of emotion and rhetoric, anti-communism as an ideological plank always remained a purely negative, surprisingly weak ingredient of their onslaught against the regnant liberal consensus. Consider for instance the "Magazine's Credenda" that opened *National Review's* first number. Liberal politicians and liberal intellectuals were lambasted in it on four separate occasions, whereas communists were mentioned only once. In its "Publisher's Statement", *NR* defiantly set itself at war against "the liberals who run this country".⁶ Communism was not even mentioned. Moreover, leading conservatives were also prepared to administer some judicious moderation, virtuous or not, in their advice about how to deal with the Red Threat. Thus Phyllis Schlafly was happy to side with the growing uneasiness among American public opinion regarding foreign, anticommunist interventionism when she loudly wondered why "the Johnson administration is sending American boys to die 9000 miles away in Viet Nam [sic]," while James Burnham sacrificed ideological purity to both pragmatism and intellectual honesty when he became an early advocate of withdrawal from South East Asia noting that the alternative was all-out war, which Burnham well knew to be not a real option. And this was, not coincidentally, a foreign adventure that *National Review* merrily labelled "Kennedy's war" as often as it could (Kelly, 2002, p. 313; Schlafly, 1964, p. 20).⁷ Beyond Vietnam, Burnham had also managed to fully align himself with the State Department (and hence, liberal) stand after Soviet troops invaded Hungary. Firmly "pro-Hungarian", Burnham was so incensed by the Red Army intervention that he "could not bear to be in the same room as a representative of the Soviet bloc." Still, once he confronted Cold War realities, he merely advocated typical symbolic diplomatic measures such as recalling the US ambassador in Moscow or refusing to play against Soviet teams in the Olympic Games (Kelly, 2002, pp. 232-233; Rusher, 1984, p. 96). To be sure, Burnham's, and *National Review's* views diverged from official foreign policy and liberal assumptions in that he advocated a more forceful stand to isolate the Soviets and their satellites from the international system, while the latter were more inclined to defuse the conflict by working with the USSR within that system. Still, these are differences of grade and nuance that in no way substantiate either the opprobrium with which liberal intellectuals regarded sensible conservatives such as Burnham or the violence with which *National Review* conservatives attacked the liberal establishment.

Of course, intelligent *National Review* readers were as capable of distinguishing between *National Review's* virulent rhetorical broadsides and its more sensible poli-

cy-making suggestions as anyone glancing at the kind of language employed by liberal opinion makers throughout the 1950s and early 1960s would have been able to discern. Consider for instance the rhetorical element in John Kennedy's inaugural speech promise to "pay any price and bear any hardship", which in the midst of the Cold War everybody understood as contemplating nuclear war. In this light, the contents of the above-mentioned Goldwater's acceptance speech denouncing the lack of virtue of the containment foreign policy did not justify either the attention it commanded or the intensely hostile reaction it elicited. The political calculus of Goldwater's Republican rivals during the primary race and of Lyndon Johnson's staffers during the general race however, very much did explain the vitriol poured over the Arizonan (Gid Powers, 1995, pp. 314-317). The speech became a major gaffe because the GOP split during the primaries along the same sectional and ideological lines that opened up between Robert Taft and the 'Liberal Eastern seaboard' of Dwight Eisenhower, John Dewey and the *New York Herald-Tribune* in 1946 and 1950, with the addendum of a new ideological fracture, best reflected by the incorporation into the fray of right-wing Southerners previously attached to the Democratic party. This was a struggle between, in short, 'modern, Eastern Republicans' willing to accept the bulk of the liberal consensus on domestic policies—notably expanding the welfare state and supporting civil rights legislation—such as governors Nelson Rockefeller of New York and William Scranton of Pennsylvania of the one hand, and the nascent conservative movement that had propelled the Goldwater candidacy on the other. In the resulting vicious infighting, the former did not hesitate to employ the conservatives' Cold War anti-communism to portray Goldwater as beyond the political pale.⁸ Yet, less than four years later, during the 1968 primaries, conservatives acknowledged that Rockefeller was "all right on defence" and Cold War policy, and both groups openly admitted that their differences were related to issues such as social spending and Civil Rights (Rusher, 1984, p. 96). Even James Burnham mused about supporting a Rockefeller presidential candidacy as late as 1968 (Kelly, 2002, pp. 250, 317-318). Anti-communism and Cold War policies were, to borrow from Harry Truman, indeed mere red herrings.

Back in 1964, and while the Republicans dedicatedly eviscerated each other, the Democrats (particularly Lyndon Johnson's aide Bill Moyers) proved just as adroit as the Rockefeller Republicans at battling the conservative movement's modernising agenda by demagogically portraying a potential Goldwater presidency as a sure-proof route to the kind of nuclear holocaust that exterminates little American girls holding flowers as portrayed in the infamous electoral TV commercial that told just that event (Hamby, 1992, pp. 111-114). The Johnson campaign was tremendously successful in that smear campaign because that message fitted a stereotype (in the sense articulated in Lippmann, 1922) about conservatives set in place during McCarthyism, and re-used again during the Republican primaries of 1964 by both conservatives themselves

and their liberal counterparts. While the former carefully constructed and projected a self-image of righteous, uncompromising cold-warriors set against traitorous, weak-kneed liberals; the latter could reinforce their perception and portrayal of conservatives as dangerous extremists, or even, in the terms used by John Leonard to describe L. Brent Bozell, as "totally bananas" (as quoted in Judis, 1998, p. 318).

Liberal-progressive intellectuals proved to be about as adroit as the Democratic party's political operatives in their own exercise of demonization. For those intellectuals closer to day-to-day, sectarian politics perspective, the tension between conservatives and liberal activists about the Cold War also reached a peak during the vitriolic presidential campaign of 1964. That year, Richard Hofstadter ([1964] 1992) brilliantly and savagely led the charge against the rightwing candidacy of Barry Goldwater and conflated the candidate's political conservatism and its supporting, *National Review* ideological conservatism, with the right-wing conspiracy-driven radicalism of the John Birch Society. Of course, Hofstadter did nothing but reproduce already existing, and rather sophisticated, evaluations penned by other 'consensus' intellectuals such as Daniel Bell, Seymour Martin Lypsett and Earl Raab who quite correctly and persuasively concluded that McCarthyism and grassroots anticommunism were a radical, populist (in the sense that it portrayed common good Americans as pitted against corrupt elites) consequence of the 'status anxiety' suffered by the traditional middle classes and blue-collar workers at a time of affluence and, more specifically, of enhanced upward social mobility by, among others, hitherto subordinated minorities.⁹ Noticeable by its glaring absence, however, is any direct connexion between this political divide and cold war differences. At any rate, as the intellectuals threw doubts about conservatism's political sanity, others went quite beyond political science and into medicine to cast aspersions about Goldwater's actual mental health.¹⁰

Predictably, conservatives responded indignantly if disingenuously. Disingenuously, because as William Rusher gleefully acknowledged, *National Review* conservatism consciously "roams at will in areas far beyond the narrow zone of Permissible Dissent."¹¹ In other words, a good deal of conservative provocation was quite calculated to cause outrage. Indignantly, because they, also quite correctly, pointed at the arrogance of an intellectual class prone to, as Buckley aptly put it, "diagnose rather than analyse" its political adversaries. Giving weight to the conservative critique, the whole Goldwater affair caused the introduction of the 'Goldwater rule' whereupon the American Psychiatric Association introduced changes in its ethical codes advising its members against publishing opinions about public figures without actually examining them.¹²

And yet, in practical terms and beneath the doubtlessly intense partisan sectarianism, anti-communism *stricto sensu*, defined as the need to check, confront (perhaps roll back when safely possible) the advances of the Soviet Union overseas and of communism at home, was effective-

ly a non-issue (Heale, 1990, pp. 167-196). To begin with, conservatives in the United States were latecomers struggling to adjust to Cold War realities and ultimately harking the initiatives of successive Democratic administrations. As shown by the biographical trajectory of a significant number of leading members of the conservative movement such as William F. Buckley Jr.'s mentor Frank Chodorov, journalists Felix Morley and John Chamberlin, and even Buckley himself (whose family had sympathised with America First), the bulk of the American right, throughout the interwar years and straight up to the 'day of infamy', was firmly installed in the isolationist, anti-interventionist camp and opposed any moves to increase US presence overseas. Ironically enough, in its adoption of Cold War anti-communism, the new post-war conservatism espoused by *National Review* was effectively embracing one of the main tenets of the regnant post-1945 political consensus first defended by no less than Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt (Doenecke, 1979, pp. 244-247). To be sure, as the 1960s went on and the Cold War consensus began to show genuine cracks splitting consensus liberals from the anti-war new left which in turn pushed the position of some Republicans towards withdrawal from Vietnam, it became possible to find the likes of *National Review* publisher William Rusher threatening to cross partisan lines in Cold War fervour and "vote [for Lyndon] Johnson if the Republicans select... a dove" willing to pull out from Vietnam (at this point, apparently, somewhat more than only 'Kennedy's war'), and even a gleeful Buckley publicly wondering about "talk... among anti-communist conservatives of a mass movement to support Johnson in the event the Republicans nominated a dove."¹³ Earlier on, however, Cold War doves were indeed so difficult to find that conservatives had to invent them, while liberals created hawks from fairly non-descript statements.

While employing anti-communism to present conservatives as dangerous extremists helped liberals to demonise the right, conservative intellectuals and activists efficiently employed it at two distinct levels. Firstly, in the short run anti-communism was at the centre of rather inglorious instances of intensely partisan politics aimed against the Democrats. During the two decades that spanned the end of World War II and Barry Goldwater's 1964 presidential race, conservatives found themselves as an unhappy minority within a minority party dominated, at least until 1964, by the cited Eastern 'modern' or liberal Republicans.¹⁴ Anti-communism provided conservatives with the means to mount politically damaging attacks against the Democrats (as well as against 'Me Too' or insufficiently conservative Republicans) and in so doing also helped the Right to secure a degree of influence over the upper echelons of the GOP. Up until 1964 Republican senior figures, on their part, wilfully allowed themselves to be beholden to a degree of unsavoury radicalism in a relatively non-controversial field such as Cold War anticommunism in order to first garner, and then preserve, grassroots right-wing support.

Thus, for instance, Richard Nixon employed aggressive anti-communism in his campaigns against Democrats

Helen Gahagan Douglas and Jerry Voorhis and as a result became a darling of the conservative grassroots. He again and most famously performed the same act during the prosecution of Alger Hiss but, as was the case during the 1964 election, the Hiss case had more to do with vicious partisanship than with ideological differences as the Truman administration, already bruised by allegations of consorting with the kind of 'fellow travelling' noisily denounced by the anticommunist right, desperately tried to cover up a case of plain treason and espionage using the Justice Department for strictly partisan purposes, hoping it could protect itself by protecting Hiss.¹⁵ Even Nixon later acknowledged that the whole affair, in a reversal of the strident anti-communism of his own earlier campaigns, was the consequence of Truman's low political answer to Republican rather undignified political pressure in the midst of clearly deteriorating electoral prospects for the Democrats (Greenberg, 2003, pp. 44-45; Ambrose, 1987, p. 195; Reinhard, 1983, pp. 16-17). Similarly, Burnham and Schlafly's sudden, Vietnam-related dovishness could only be explained by the damage that denouncing 'Kennedy's war' and 'Johnson's war' could do to the Democrats.

Of course, the fact that conservatives were as adept at employing judicious political cynicism as anybody else should not be construed as casting doubt on their firm belief in the dangers posed by communism, but rather than in Moscow's actual and present military capabilities or in the activities of American Communists, they thought the threat lay in the more or less immediate future and in the lack of moral fibre exhibited by the liberal political and intellectual elite. As Burnham graphically put it ([1964] 1985), the intellectual leadership of the American conservative movement did not believe that Communism would win the Cold War, what they feared was the "suicide of the West". That pervasive pessimism also impregnated Whittaker Chambers *Witness* (1952) as well as Buckley's blasts against Yale and the Ivy League universities as, for instance, in his *opera prima*, *God and Man at Yale* (1951) and is central to understanding modern American conservatism. Within it, the communism menace is at best a subordinated and secondary issue.

Intertwined with the above-mentioned and most crucially, a certain reading of Cold War realities also helped to ease conservatism, and hence right-wing Republicanism, into a new brand of populist anti-elitism that had first emerged during the New Deal under the leadership of the likes of father Coughling and which garnered considerable support among the type of Catholic voters of Irish and Eastern European descent that would later be termed 'ethnic' and would play a crucial role in the Republican-conservative resurgence of the late 1960s and 70s (Kazin, 1995, pp. 109-135, 245-260). Thus, anti-communism allowed the right to adopt the kind of discourse previously espoused by radical left-tinged populism, except that the enemy, rather than being big capital, the robber barons or Wall Street, was now the federal government; the faceless bureaucrat; and the kind of politicians, journalists and academics that both conservatives and their sometime ally Richard Nixon personified in Alger Hiss and have ever

since identified with Georgetown cocktails, Ivy League institutions and the mass media (Kazin, 1995, pp. 166-167; Berlett and Lyons, 2000, pp. 167-168, 198; Postel, 2012, pp. 32-40). Anti-communism, to a very great extent, served as both a way out of the political cul-de-sac that conservatives and the GOP built for themselves with what Franklin Delano Roosevelt disdainfully called 'market royalism', and as an efficient proxy for attacks on the 'liberal establishment' that, according to conservatives, inhabited the nation's elite institutions.¹⁶ William F. Buckley's ferocious 1951 critique of his alma mater in particular, and of the universities in general, in *God and Man at Yale* was one early example of what would become the crux of the conservative cultural and political onslaught against the post-war liberal consensus. As Buckley would later nicely sum up (2004 pp. 57-94), the likes of James Burnham, Russell Kirk and William Rusher located the main danger to the survival of the United States in the weakness of its elites and the ill-effects of liberal progressivism. Rather than a plank in itself, anti-communism became an extremely successful form of political dog-whistling which resonated with a growing number of suburbanised Americans worried about the inadequacies of the post-war liberal consensus in a way that could not be achieved through other elements of the conservative canon, such as government withdrawal from peacetime economics, hostility towards the expansion of university education (which conservatives believed should be restricted to an intellectual aristocracy) and sympathy towards European imperialism (Brennan, 1995, pp. 175-176; Sarias Rodríguez, 2014).¹⁷ Whittaker Chambers ([1952] 2001, p. 793) reflexions about the Hiss case are, tellingly enough, particularly clear on the subject: the trouble was not so much communists, but American liberals.

No feature of the Hiss Case is more obvious, or more troubling as history, than the jagged fissure, which it did not so much open as reveal, between the plain men and women of the nation, and those who affected to act, think and speak for them. It was not invariably, but in general the 'best people' who were for Alger Hiss and who were prepared to go to almost any length to protect and defend him. It was the enlightened and the powerful, the clamorous proponents of the open mind and the common man, who snapped their minds shut in a pro-Hiss psychosis of a kind which... in a nation is a warning of the end.

Liberal intellectuals, on their part, could and did dismiss the conservative movement in the abstract as "un-American", reactionary and even, as the disgruntled but influential conservative thinker Peter Vierek (1963, pp. 158, 163-164) had it, "traditionless." Yet if the liberal intellectuals of the 1950s and 1960s "never took conservatism [meaning the *National Review* variety] seriously", they were, however, forced to deal with conservatism with regards to the specifics of right-wing anti-communism (McLean, 2007, p. 27). Norman Podhoretz (1979, p. 4), a vigorous liberal during the 1950s and 60s wrote in "a

letter to [his] son" that "if you really want to understand [liberalism] you have to think of it more in terms of what it was against... and what it was against was communism."¹⁸ Podhoretz exaggerated somewhat but he nicely reflected the guiding spirit moving intellectuals such as Arthur Schlesinger, Diana Trilling and Sidney Hook (1987, p. 421-422) who enthusiastically participated in organisations such as the Congress for Cultural Freedom. The fact that left-of-centre individuals such as the aforementioned could cohabit in the CCF with *National Review* types such as James Burnham and Willi Schlamm (a founding editor of *National Review* and early confidant of William Buckley) right up until McCarthyism, not to mention that the CIA saw fit to channel funds to support said organisation, clearly indicates the extent to which anti-communism was a core element of the liberal-progressive canon (Hook, 1987, pp. 422-426) as much as of the conservative narrative. Liberal commentators were forced to engage in a defensive battle of attrition when conservatives employed such a core element of liberalism to sap the liberal consensus and, in the process, allowed Republicans of all stripes (not least of the variety who selected Dwight Eisenhower as presidential candidate) to happily use these renewed right-wing for partisan purposes.

Of course, while conservatives ruthlessly employed anti-communism, which happened to be one of the pillars of the liberal consensus, to blast liberalism and galvanise an expanding grassroots base, liberals deliberately employed conservative provocations and the (admittedly embarrassing) behaviour of the least politically sensible elements of right-wing anti-communism to tarnish the entire conservative community. In short, through anti-communism the conservative movement embraced post-war modernity and addressed the anxieties and demands of post-war public opinion, while retaining the core of right-wing criticisms of liberal progressivism that had already been developed against the New Deal and that were not (yet) sufficiently unpopular to sustain a successful challenge to the dominance of progressive ideas (McGirr, 2001, pp. 175-181).

'FUSSER'? ANTI-COMMUNISM WITHIN THE CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT

In strictly philosophical terms, the post-war American conservative movement was constituted by two distinct, and frequently at odds, ideological groupings: traditionalism on the one hand, and libertarianism or neoclassical liberalism on the other. The core of the former's social vision was the creation of a 'virtuous society' sustained by government use of its law-making and enforcing functions. The heart of the libertarian just society was the free interaction of individuals in the marketplace. For libertarians, any expansion of state activity beyond its essential functions (defence and law and order) constituted a violation of *the* fundamental social good. According to the established narrative about post-war conservatism, the movement was an uneasy marriage between these two ideological traditions brought together by the Herculean

efforts of synthesis carried out by the *National Review* intellectuals. Frank Meyer, a *National Review* editor, was the first and most articulate proponent of ‘fusionism’ between neoclassical liberalism and traditionalism. In this schema, ‘fusionism’ was, in turn, held in place by a shared anti-communism.

This is a useful and illuminating narrative as long as one focuses, as George H. Nash did, on the development of the intellectual conservatism proposed by the *National Review* ‘hard core’ of conservative intellectuals. Not so much, however, if one expands the object of analysis to the entire movement. In the first place, although this perspective acknowledges that classical liberalism was an older branch of the American right than the Buckleyites, it obscures the fact that after 1945 and throughout the post-war years neoliberals had been developing a rich intellectual, political and organisational life fully independent and frequently at odds with that of the *Review*.

Thus, the debates that took place within *NR* about the proper equilibrium between a ‘virtuous’ society in which public authorities exercise a vigorous role, and a ‘free’ society in which the state abdicates any interference with the behaviour of the individual beyond bare minimum public order matters seemed to have had remarkably little impact upon the libertarian community. Rather than ‘fusing’ traditionalism and classical liberalism, the *National Review* Buckleyites proved to be more adept at employing Cold War related arguments to excommunicate the libertarians from the American conservative movement. Even in the highly overcharged circumstances of the Korean War and McCarthyism, the bulk of the libertarian minded wing of the movement refused to support the war effort (as would later happen with the war in Vietnam) and were severely divided in their views about the witch hunts, while remaining firmly attached to the kind of isolationist pacifism that was anathema to the evangelical cold warrior anti-communism defended by the traditionalist conservatives later attached to *National Review*.¹⁹

A significant conflict between the libertarians and the Buckleyites broke out as early as 1957, when the former’s most successful champion, Ayn Rand, was summarily dispatched from the movement by Whittaker Chambers. That Rand was a Russian emigré and no friend of communists did not stop the traditionalists from refusing to accept her blind faith in radical individualism and the unfettered market. The leading libertarian Murray Rothbard suffered a similar fate, despite attempts to reach some accommodation.²⁰ Traditionalist Russell Kirk proscribed Rothbard as a ‘loony’ author of ‘doctrinaire Benthamism’ and “Manchesterian outpourings” and told William Buckley that collaboration with such people was “a foolish thing”.²¹ A year later, William F. Buckley defended the *Review*’s Cold War evangelicalism, particularly as pertaining to internal policing as undertaken by the infamous House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and Joe McCarthy, and fought against libertarian pacifism and anti-interventionism when reminding his fellow conservatives that it was ‘an empirical question... whether a Western nation can pursue a truly effective pro-Western policy while ad-

hering to conventional libertarian attitudes’. According to Buckley, it was a “tragedy” that the American right could be “frozen in in-action” by the “lofty and other-worldly pronouncements of John Stuart Mill.”²²

Some from within the libertarian community, such as those around the Foundation for Economic Education and its veteran journal *The Freeman* or the old libertarian mentor of Buckley Frank Chodorov, quite simply opted for steering clear of foreign policy issues after engaging in bruising contests during the war in Korea (Nash, 1998, pp. 21-23; Smith, 2007, pp. 96-104, 114-122). Similarly, Milton Friedman, the immensely influential Chicago economist who eventually became a close friend of Buckley and the *Review*’s “economic oracle”, but never became a regular contributor to the magazine, remained sceptical of the whole Cold War enterprise and critical (even if in a somewhat discreet fashion) of the massive expansion of the federal-state brought by the Cold War.²³ Others, such as the influential libertarian economist and leader of opinion Murray Rothbard (1963, p. 2) were considerably less accommodating, resented such “contemptuous” treatment and, predictably enough, returned the compliments in spades. Rothbard, for instance, didn’t hesitate to denounce *National Review*’s internationalist anti-communism and inclinations for domestic political policing as covering for *NR*’s “foreign interventionism” and “authoritarian tendencies”, which in turn emerged from the hard core’s status as the “servant of dollar imperialism”. At around the same time, even the considerably less radical and enormously prestigious Austrian school economist Friedrich von Hayek severed all ties with *National Review* and, despite Buckley’s efforts to avoid a confrontation, declared that the *Review* “means to aid a cause similar to mine [but] does grave harm to the reputation of that cause.”²⁴ Yet a third group of libertarians, led by students of the University of Chicago gathered around the pages of *New Individualist Review* (which counted with the enormously prestigious, later-to-be Nobel laureate in Economics Milton Friedman, as well as with fellow economics Nobel awardee Hayek on its masthead), reproduced identical disputes with the *Review*.²⁵ Rather than acting as an element of union the Cold War and evangelical anticommunism, from the war in Korea to the Vietnam debacle, seem to have exacerbated the tensions between the two main conservative families. At any rate, some libertarians remained irritating and occasionally able to embarrass the Buckleyites. In 1969, for example, the split between traditionalists and libertarians not only nearly caused the youth organisation Young Americans for Freedom to implode, but the libertarians’ exploits actually reached the mainstream press (Crawford, 1980, p. 97; Diamond, 1995, pp. 124-125).²⁶ Yet the persistence of classical liberalism on the campuses and the outer reaches of the conservative movement signalled a crucial aspect of neoliberal canon: as numerous campus activists found out, libertarianism went beyond a mere defence of free markets and could not be equated merely with “providing the rationale and policy recommendations that benefit big business” (Hardisty, 1999, p. 169).²⁷ Throughout the

1960s, in a context where both the economics profession and policy makers' minds remained firmly installed in the dominant Keynesian post-war consensus, classical liberalism's main significance derived from its emphasis on individual freedom, rather than from its economic policy recommendations, and not least from its opposition to the military draft (which most conservatives supported) as an infringement of basic liberties (Nash, 1998, pp. 270-271).

This explains why neoclassical liberalism continued to retain a noticeable degree of influence within the universities and the youth segment of the movement. According to *National Review* correspondence, a substantial segment of the right-wing youth thought that traditionalist conservatives such as 'Old Foggy [Russell] Kirk' were more attuned to 'housemothers' than to the type of student determined to, for instance, "invest his libido where he wishes."²⁸ Besides the benefits of a frequently supportive attitude towards the sexual revolution, another libertarian advantage on the campuses was their refusal to accept Cold War anti-communism as a proper reason for government expansion including, crucially, the draft (Nash, 1998, pp. 295-297).²⁹ Thus, even if in the process they exacerbated the centrifugal forces within the movement on issues such as Vietnam and Cold War strategies, libertarians at least helped to keep conservatism alive on the campuses (Friedman and Friedman, 1998, pp. 377-381).

It seems clear, then, that throughout the 1950s and 1960s, radical libertarian individualism held relatively little significant influence within the senior ranks of Buckleyite-dominated American conservatism and that both epistemic communities were far from 'glued' in one single movement by anticommunism or Cold War enthusiasm. From the viewpoint of the internal dynamics of conservatism, neoliberals contributed to *National Review's* ambivalence, or even paralysis, towards certain aspects of the culture wars, such as when Buckley favoured the legalisation of marijuana and contraception, or when the journal had to resort to a public debate in order to make up its mind on abortion.³⁰ Subsequently, as sophisticated left-wing observers have noted, neoclassical liberalism's emphasis on individual freedoms has remained both a major force propelling the ascendancy of the entire conservative movement and a major source of conflict between different elements of the same conservative movement.³¹ As the work of Whittaker Chambers, Ayn Rand and Friedrich Hayek repeatedly stated, these fundamentally diverging ideological families remained together under the same broad movement because of their shared opposition to the regnant progressive liberalism of the post-war years, but there was little agreement in the way their anti-communism manifested itself and in their preferred Cold War policies.

To the extent that there was a positive ideological element acting as the 'glue holding together' these diverging forms of anti-liberalism, it has to be located elsewhere. Further research should examine, for instance, the shared celebration of inequality and the role that the free markets beloved by libertarians can play as replacements, if not rebuilders, of the hierarchical orders which traditionalists

prefer as forms of social organisation, particularly when 'hierarchy' is recast as 'meritocracy'. The case of conservative proposals for education is particularly illustrative of this tendency. There, the combined force of traditionalist elitism and classical liberal solutions to the ills of failing schools such as Milton Friedman's ([1962] 2002, p. 204) voucher system constituted a powerful alternative to post-war notions of universal, publicly owned and free-at-the-point-of-delivery education.³² Yet, again, this proposal was aimed at destroying the 'schooling equalitarianism' of John Dewey rather than at combating the threat of Joseph Stalin. From a comparative perspective, it is also worthwhile to note that, tantalisingly, the same alliance between classical liberalism and traditionalism can be found outside the United States, and has survived beyond the Cold War years in political environments, such as Britain, Sweden and later on Spain, where the weight of cold-warrior anti-communism was substantially weaker.³³

CONCLUSIONS

Few will dispute that, throughout the Cold War and before it, political actors in the United States frequently employed anti-communism as a useful tool for legitimising their own political proposals, as well as to erode those espoused by political adversaries. That a given organisation and its aims may be fundamentally unrelated to communist activities such as say the Civil Rights movement or the consumer movement, was by no means an obstacle to find it at the receiving end of warnings about the Red Threat—as, implausibly enough, occurred to the astonished, thoroughly alarmed and otherwise quite capitalistic members of the League of Women Shoppers (Cohen, 2003, pp. 59-60, 130). In the same way, clear evidence of genuine communist activities—notice Alger Hiss—was no obstacle to stubborn denials. And yet, the bulk of the literature about the conservative movement still interprets the role of anti-communism within the conservative ascendancy through an uncritical assessment of both conservative and liberal sources. The preceding pages have examined how anti-communism—specifically the apparent criticism of Cold War policy by the same *National Review* intellectuals who, on the whole, supported its practice—was efficiently used by conservatives to further their political agenda, and how liberal progressive intellectuals' engagement backhandedly reinforced the conservative strategy. From the outbreak of the Cold War and into the 1960s, anti-communism provided a useful populist argument employed by the conservative movement to reach an accommodation with a significant (and growing) segment of the Republican party also engaged in short-term partisan struggles against a common foe (liberal Democrats, rather than communists). Fanning the anti-communist passions of the nation also provided conservatives with an efficient vehicle in which to travel from pre-war 'market royalist' isolationism to post-1945 anti-elitist conservative populism that caricaturised liberal progressivism as the product of an aloof, knee-jerk, if not treacherous, elite. Liberal intellectuals, on their part,

successfully employed right-wing anti-communism to place conservatism beyond the pale of respectable politics until at least 1964. Quite frequently, however, this took the form of intellectual carpet-bombing that, as in the case of Richard Hofstadter among the highbrow public and the infamous instance of Gore Vidal during his debates with Buckley as late as 1968, conflated the plain political lunacy of fringe elements such as the John Birch Society with the far more sophisticated stands of *National Review* and all under the partisan passions of a presidential race. In the process, both liberals and conservatives actually helped to reinforce each other in the creation of what Walter Lippmann (1922) would have described as the “image in the public’s head” of a severe divide about Cold War policy.

If the disputes about Cold War anti-communism served to magnify a relatively minor divide between liberal and conservative intellectuals, it did not, however, act as the glue ‘holding together’ two different right-wing ideological families. While the position of Buckley, Goldwater and Burnham departed from prevalent liberal progressive anti-communism in little else than style and rhetoric, it diverged a great deal from the theses put forth by a very significant sector of the libertarian wing of the conservative movement. As often as not, Cold War developments were actually the cause of friction between neoliberals and traditionalists—as nicely reflected in the debates between William Buckley and the *New Individualist Review*. Rather than a fusion between two distinct ideological families, the conservatism put forth by *National Review* was basically built upon traditionalism, which always remained the dominant ideological half of the tandem to the point of almost asphyxiating neoclassical liberalism and remanding it to an entirely subordinate role within the respectable American right.

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NOTES

- 1 Nash’s views are consistently repeated in just about every book surveying the post-war conservative movement in the United States, such as Hodgson, 1996, pp. 44-45, 51; Himmelstein, 1990, pp. 49-60; Diamond, 1995, pp. 29-35; Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 2004, p. 51; Schaller, 2007, pp. 4-6; Hardisty, 1999, pp. 39-40; Edwards, 1999, pp. 78-79. Hijjiya’s analysis has been partially answered according to more orthodox assumptions in Scanlon, 2009, p. 259, f. 6.
- 2 The notion of ‘postwar consensus’ is not unlike pornography: everybody understands what it is provided no-one attempts to define it. A simple, clear and therefore rather inadequate solution is to take, as in the text, a narrow economic approach that assimilates that age with the duration of the economic arrangements initiated during the Bretton Woods conference of 1944 and the collapse of said arrangements under the Nixon presidency in 1971. For an excellent overview of these economic affairs see Odell, 1982, which might be completed with the adjustment of said narrative incorporating the not inconsequential role of the same American conservatives that populate these pages under the Nixon presidency in the highly informative albeit horrendously written Sarias Rodríguez, 2013. Of course, one might also argue that the brackets should be expanded, for instance, to the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, which also appears simple, straightforward and clear for an article that assesses the issue of anticommunism in American politics. But then again, the nature of the Cold War, of Anticomunism in the United States, not to mention the American conservative movement shifted quite considerably under and after the presidencies of Lyndon Johnson (that roughly marks the end of the analysis here) and Richard Nixon and the war in Vietnam, hence rendering this alternative just as problematic.
- 3 James Burnham, “What Chance in Vietnam?” *National Review*, October 8, 1963, p. 304.
- 4 See “The John Birch Society,” an explanatory pamphlet published by the society which included a biography of Robert Welch, f. John Birch Society, box 10, William F. Buckley Jr. papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library (hereafter Buckley papers).
- 5 William Rusher to William F. Buckley, March 2, 1961, f. IOM, box 20, Buckley papers; Frisk, 2012, pp. 114-116, 130-131. See also William F. Buckley, “The Uproar,” *National Review* (hereafter *NR*), April 22, 1961, pp. 241-243; Russell Kirk, “Conservatives and Fantastics,” *America*, February 17, 1962, pp. 643-645; and the memoirs of Russell Kirk, 1995, p. 257.
- 6 “The Magazine’s Credenda”, *NR*, November 19, 1955, p. 6; “Publisher’s Statement,” *ibid.*, p. 9.
- 7 Jean Jeffries, “Why Vietnam is Kennedy’s War,” *ibid.*, April 23, 1968, pp. 396-397.
- 8 The infighting was wonderfully described in George Bush et al., “The Republican Party and the Conservative movement,” *NR*, December 1, 1964, 1053-56.
- 9 See Bell, 1955. It is worth noting that very many of these intellectuals were to suffer their very own attacks of such phenomena twenty years later. As is frequently pointed out, and not a little ironically, the names listed in the index of this book could have well passed in the early 1970s for a roster of neo-conservative intellectuals. See also Bell, 1960, pp. 101-103 and 105-107; Nash, 1998, p. 125; Diamond, 1995, pp. 183-184). Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 2004, p. 43. For examinations of right-wing anti-communism as a form of populism see Diamond, 1995, pp. 51-52, 58; Kazin, 1995, especially pp. 165-194; Berlett and Lyons, 2000, particularly pp. 175-198.
- 10 “1189 Psychiatrists Say Goldwater Is Psychologically Unfit to be President,” *Fact*, September-October 1964. For further examples of liberal intellectuals ‘diagnosing’ (as Buckley put it), see Lipset and Raab, 1970. For the conservative response (including the remarks about the liberal need ‘not to analyze but to diagnose’ conservatism), see Buckley, 1970a, pp. xv-xvi, 32; 1970b, pp. 31-32. For views similar to those proposed in this article, see the persuasively argued Hijjiya, 2003, pp. 214-218.
- 11 William Rusher to William F. Buckley, March 2, 1960, F. IOM, box 20, Buckley papers.
- 12 A recent iteration of the issue in Kroll and Pouncey, 2018; and Levine, 2017.
- 13 William A. Rusher to William F. Buckley Jr., March 26, 1968, f. IOM (Jan-Mar 1968), box 50, Buckley papers. Rusher’s letter agrees with Buckley’s *NR* column of March 28, 1968.
- 14 For an insider’s view of how conservatives displaced ‘Eastern’ moderates from the Republican party leadership, see Saloma, 1984, pp. xvii-xix, 94-103. Saloma, a Republican cadre, worked within the Ripon Society, a Republican liberal-leaning organization much maligned by the Buckleyites. As might be guessed, little love was lost in return either.
- 15 The vicious and less than dignified sectarian partisanship surrounding 1940s and 50s anti-communism has been excellently described in Hodgson, 1996, pp. 51-55. See also Ambrose, 1987, pp. 166-196, particularly p. 188; Haynes, 1996 pp. 51-55;

- see also Hamby, 1992, pp. 87-88; Lubell, 1965, p. 152; Reinhard, 1983, pp. 60-63. For a recent journalistic (and conservative oriented) but highly informative account see Novak, 2003.
- 16 Frank Meyer, "What Next for Conservatism?," *NR*, December 1, 1964, p. 1057.
 - 17 For an example of latter-day 'market royalism' and hostility to government-led expansion of access to the universities, see Milton Friedman to William F. Buckley Jr., April 26, 1964, f. 13, box 22, Milton Friedman papers, Hoover Institute, Palo Alto (hereafter Friedman papers).
 - 18 Interview with Norman Podhoretz, June 28, 2004, telephone.
 - 19 For a comprehensive overview of libertarian dissidence from the Cold War see Murray Rothbard, "The Transformation of the American Right," *Continuum*, Summer 1964, pp. 220-231.
 - 20 "Big Sister is Watching You," *NR*, December 28, 1957; Murray Rothbard to Buckley, September 18, 1958, f. Roberts-Royo, box 7, Buckley papers; Buckley to Rothbard, April 7, 1960, f. Rothbard, box 11, *ibid.* For an account of Ayn Rand's peculiar career and difficult relationship with the rest of the conservative movement, see Burns, 2009.
 - 21 Russell Kirk to Buckley, April 8, 1961, f. Russell Kirk, box 14, Buckley papers.
 - 22 William F. Buckley Jr., "A New Look at a Controversial Committee," *NR*, January 16, 1962, p. 21.
 - 23 James Buckley to Friedman, July 19, 1972, f. 12, box 22, Friedman papers; Friedman to Buckley, February 13, 1962, f. 12, box 37, *ibid.*; Buckley to Friedman, February 23, 1962, *ibid.*; Interview with Milton Friedman, May 25, 2004, San Francisco; Interview with William F. Buckley Jr., July 25, 2005, New York City.
 - 24 Buckley to Friedrich von Hayek, December 6, 1961; Hayek to Buckley, November 21, 1961 and December 8, 1961, f. Hayek Controversy, box 14, Buckley papers.
 - 25 Ronald Hamowy, "National Review: Criticism and Reply," *New Individualist Review*, November 1961. Hanowy's article offers an overview of the ideological tensions between 'libertarian-liberals', 'rationalists', 'traditionalists' and 'authoritarians'; see also James O'Connell, "The New Conservatism," *ibid.*, spring 1962, p. 17-22.
 - 26 Interview with David Keene, August 24, 2005, Washington DC; David Friedman to Frank Meyer, December 1, 1969, f. YAF, box 66, Buckley papers; James Gatsby, "Seeds of Schism on the Right," *The New Republic*, March 5, 1962.
 - 27 For similar stands associating classical liberalism and the interests of 'big business' see Blyth, 2002, pp. 258-259; Phillips-Fein, 2010, pp. 42-52; Jenkins and Shumate, 1985; Schaller, 2007, p. 35.
 - 28 Dorothy to the editors, "Memo on Letters," May 25, 1966, f. Interoffice Memos, box 39, Buckley papers.
 - 29 See also "Cold War Revisionism: The Major Historical Task," *Left and Right*, spring 1966.
 - 30 See Buckley to Rusher, March 29, 1966, f. IOM, box 39, Buckley papers.
 - 31 For an intensely hostile but sophisticated and informative evaluation of neoliberal ascendancy, see Harvey, 2007, pp. 19-22, 41, 205.
 - 32 For a rather clear example of traditionalist elitism applied to education, see Russell Kirk, "Expansion and Decay in British Education," *NR*, January 1964; for an introduction to the voucher system, see Friedman, [1962] 2002, pp. 85-108.
 - 33 For a comparative perspective the British experience can be approached from Gunn, 1989, pp. 1-40, 52-53; Gamble, 1988, pp. 1-60; Eatwell and O'Sullivan, 1989, pp. 3-17, 99-123, 167-191; Levitas, 1986, pp. 1-54. For the case of Sweden see Blyth, 2002. For Spain see González Cuevas, 2005; as well as the hilariously confused but still useful if taken with care Carmona, García and Sánchez, 2012.

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