
Miša ĐURKOVIĆ (ed.)

FAŠIZAM U NAŠOJ EPOHI

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The last two decades have seen serious challenges to the hegemony of the existing liberal democratic order. A range of crises – economic, social, environmental, along with the inability of the liberal and more mainstream conservative parties and governments to tackle them, have led to the destabilisation of different parties and political systems across the globe. Partly this has been due to the rise of more radical left parties, which have also seen a rapid decline in the last few years or adapted to the status quo, but it is primarily due to the rise of new right-wing parties, often labelled fascist. Within this framework, the edited volume entitled *Fascism in our Epoch* (*Fašizam u našoj epohi* in the Serbian language, a paraphrase of the title of the famous study of Ernst Nolte *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche*), tackles the different historical emanations and theoretical discussions about fascism. The book is edited by Miša Đurković and collects 12 different contributions (divided into 2 parts with 6 chapters, where the first deals with theoretical reflections and the second with the different manifestations and emanations of fascism) all written, except one, by scholars from the post-Yugoslav space.

In chapter one, Roger Griffin demythologises the ‘March on Rome’ on 28 October 1922, namely, a crucial myth of the fascist regime in Italy, since it never happened. He stresses the im-

portance of the March in the sense that it was neither a coup nor a true putsch, and more a specific exchange between the king and Mussolini. The fascists entered Rome only on 31 October, after Mussolini had already been appointed prime minister.

In chapter two, Todor Kuljić describes how in the early 1960s the focus of German historiography and anti-fascism remained based on the connection between fascism and capitalism. However, ever since the 1970s the leftist anti-fascism, which was also anti-capitalist, has gradually been replaced by the rise of anti-totalitarianism, especially given the conversion of the French generation of 1968. The highest point of revisionism was reached in the works of Ernst Nolte and his thesis that fascism was the answer to Bolshevism, making Bolshevism the true and original evil. Following the famous *Historikerstreit* in the 1980s, Habermas argued that Auschwitz cannot be compared to the Gulag, which temporarily prevailed. Still, after the defeat of socialism in the Cold War, the discourse changed and anti-fascism was transformed into a hegemonic anti-totalitarian discourse. Anti-fascism has become devoid of anti-capitalism and subdued to anti-totalitarianism.

Jovo Bakić investigates in chapter three the relationship between fascism and other related concepts like the extreme right, the far right and the radical right. He claims that fascism was a specific answer to the crisis of capitalism and liberal hegemony after the First World War. The fascist regime quickly turned into a bourgeois and capitalist regime based on nationalism, racism

and oppression. He argues that fascism is a particular type of extreme-right politics. Extreme-right politics is a subtype of far-right, reactionary, authoritarian and xenophobic nationalism, whereas not every extreme right is already fascist, while claiming that the radical right is the right-wing politics seen in many European countries under the guise of defending the democracy narrative, yet is often nationalist, even xenophobic. Crucially, Bakić claims that the radical right can serve as a bridge between the extreme right and the conservative right.

In chapter four, Tihomir Cipek explores three different analyses of fascism: Marxist-Communist, conservative, and liberal interpretations, and points out their strengths and weaknesses. The communist interpretations were based on the class nature of fascism, viewing it as a new and specific type of bourgeois rule. The conservative insights are important because they stress the religious aspect and symbols in fascism, albeit fascism has never replaced other organised religions. The liberal position stresses the totalitarian nature of fascism while pointing out that the problem of this theory is that it takes liberal democracy as the only normal way of rule, while projecting totalitarian tendencies way back to ancient times. This position also equates communism with fascism and disregards the important differences between them, and views fascism as a consequence of Bolshevism. The greatest merit of the chapter is that Cipek also considers their political embeddedness and motives, showing how and why the liberal totalitarian narrative has pre-

vailed and is used today to ensure the reproduction of the status quo.

In chapter five, Rastko Lompar looks at the case of Yugoslav interwar right politics in the framework of the 'new consensus' in the studies on fascism; i.e., the idea of the existence of generic fascism and the idea of a fascist minimum. Lompar continues by analysing different political movements, youth organisations and parties, before classifying them according to the theories presented in the first part, which provides a very interesting overview not just for specialists but also those who only occasionally glance at the history books describing Yugoslav political life between the world wars.

Miša Đurković considers the concept of the fascist minimum in chapter six. He initially sketches the attempts to construct the theory of the fascist minimum, as already made by Nolte and later Sternhell, Griffin, Payne and Eatwell. His core question is whether the concept of fascism can be applied to explain movements and regimes after 1945. He then presents Umberto Eco's theory of Ur-Fascism and contends that this could be a much more fruitful way of thinking about fascism and applying it to the analysis of particular manifestations of fascist politics.

In chapter seven, Dušan Dostanić delves into a very interesting theory of fascism. He explores the works of Armin Mohler, a crucial figure among the German new right, and focuses on his conceptualisation of fascism as a style, while criticising Nazism and the Führer for having very little to do with fascism. The critical idea of Mohler's conception

of fascism as a style is that it is based on certain reactions to the world that vary between liberals and leftists. It is based chiefly on declining universalism, abstractions, joy in struggles, and primarily symbolic violence.

Saša Gajić writes in chapter eight about traditionalism/perennialism and fascism. In the first part, Gajić explores in which ways traditionalism and fascism are similar, arguing that many more differences exist than commonalities. He then moves on to consider the impact of various important theoretician traditionalists (Evola, Eliade) with different fascists and the far right before, during and after the Second World War. The author concludes the chapter by arguing that the close connection between perennialism and fascism has in fact been weak.

In chapter nine, Aleksa Filipović provides a concise and interesting overview of the Soviet and Russian scholarly analysis of fascism. Three topics are in focus: analysis of the rise of fascism and its evolution during the time of the Soviet Union; analysis of contemporary fascism in the post-Soviet region; and analysis of fascism in Russia. He introduces several authors largely unknown to a Western audience, ones who have explored fascism and Nazism, and thus his contribution is very important for understanding the historical and contemporary analysis and contribution of the (post)-Soviet space in debates on fascism.

In chapter ten, Stevan Gajić presents a very interesting analysis of various radical and extreme right-wing movements in post-Soviet spaces. He looks at different phenomena like National

Bolshevism, neo-Nazism, and other extremes on the right, while also considering the war in Ukraine in the context of identity confusion and changes in the post-Soviet and especially Russian world. He also elaborates on the complex situation in Ukraine and the emergence of Nazism there, while also describing the particular anti-Russian nationalism in Ukraine and the anti-Russian identity politics in Belarus.

Rajko Petrović takes a closer look at the relationship and position of fascism in the Hispanic world in chapter eleven. First, he analyses the emergence and development of fascism in Spain. Petrović claims that important differences exist between Francoism and fascism/Nazism, arguing the former should not be classified as a fascist regime. A short overview of different fascist movements in Latin America is then presented, where it is claimed that Peronism, Pinochetism, Stroessnerism and Vargasism were not truly fascist; even though they were militant and extreme-right political movements and regimes, they were neither antisemitic nor corporatist.

The last chapter written by Srbojub Peović asks whether it is justifiable to use the concept of fascism to explain different movements in the Muslim world during the 20th century. He applies the definition of the fascist minimum developed by Griffin to various movements. He initially analyses the concept of Islamic fascism/Islamofascism, before analysing the Muslim Brotherhood, and exploring movements and regimes in Syria, Iraq, Iran and Türkiye.

While the overall book has a co-

herent and logical structure, it must be stressed that the theoretical part appears to be stronger (especially the chapters by Kuljić and Cipek stand out to the author of this book review for their theoretical depth and political reflections). The empirical chapters consider different geographical cases and emanations of right-wing politics and fascism. Still, on occasion, these empirical investigations tend to be either somewhat too narrow (albeit their great strength is that they are always comparative) or include cases that seem

to have little to do with fascism. Notwithstanding these remarks, overall, the volume provides an excellent guide and overview of the main topics surrounding fascism. This means that is a very important contribution to the research of fascism not simply in the Serbian context, but also for the entire post-Yugoslav space given that it brings synthetic – theoretical and empirical – insights into a topic that is often overlooked.

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