



Theories of Antifascism in the Interwar Mediterranean Part I¹²³ Fascism in the *Longue Durée*

Kristin Plys

University of Toronto

kristin.plys@utoronto.ca

Abstract

The current proliferation of authoritarianism across both core and periphery is one political articulation of the current crisis of the capitalist world-system. Authoritarianism similarly proliferated in previous periods of crisis, in the 1970s and 80s in the peripheries, and in the 1930s and 40s in the core. In Part I of this essay, I detail how world-systems analysts have long been attuned to describing and analyzing chaotic moments in between systemic cycles of hegemony, but less attention has been given to the rise of authoritarianism in these chaotic phases. The multiple crises of hegemonic transition engenders an ideological contestation between Fascism and Communism revealing the limitations of Liberalism, the foundational ideology of the world-system. In such periods of hegemonic breakdown, anarchists developed autonomous strategies of resisting authoritarian rule at both the point of production (the worker-occupied and self-managed workplace) and at the point of leisure (the autonomous zone of the infoshop or café as resources and interventions in the joint struggle against capitalism and authoritarianism. These theories are important to recover for the contemporary fight against a resurgent authoritarianism across the world-system in the current conjuncture.

Keywords: World-Systems Analysis; Anti-Fascism; Mediterranean; Workers Self-Management; Café Culture; Anarchist theory; Postcolonial theory

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³ Note on translations: When using quotations from untranslated texts, the author’s translation to English is quoted in the text of the essay. The original Italian or French can be found in the footnotes for those with French or Italian proficiency who would prefer to consult the original language

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*After so much anguish and so much mourning,
so many tears and so many tricks,
so much hate and injustice and despair,
what are we to do?*

Ignazio Silone, *Fontamara* (1933)

The resurgent popularity of fascist ideology in the current conjuncture is, on the surface at least, a puzzle. Fascism was supposed to have been defeated once and for all after the Allied victory in World War II which assured that we would never forget, let alone revisit, Nazism. Certainly, there are important distinctions between the current articulation of fascism compared to the classical fascism of Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Francisco Franco, and António de Oliveira Salazar. After all, their supporters never donned Hawai`ian shirts, brandished tiki torches, or disseminated Pepe memes. In making sense of the resurgence of fascism and the new performance it has assumed, world-systems analysis can provide important insights into its world-historical significance. A *longue durée* perspective of the invention and reinvention of fascisms over the twentieth century reveals that one of the primary reasons fascism once again resonates is because we are in a chaotic moment of transition. Just as the interwar period marked a period of transition from British to American hegemony, in this conjuncture, the crisis of the previous (U.S.) systemic cycle of accumulation necessitates new constituting ideologies to overcome the current crisis (Wallerstein 1991, 2011; Arrighi 1994; Silver and Slater 1999). Currently, fascism is one of several available options to assume that ideological role.

In the current period of hegemonic (or perhaps world-systemic) crisis, the contradictions of historical capitalism and its constituting ideology of liberalism ushered in a return to fascism as a proposed political solution to a range of social dislocations (Berardi 2019: 112). The relative popularity of fascist solutions to the current crisis has aided “the proliferation of Hitler’s imitators” (Berardi 2019: 37). However, this resurgent fascism is distinct from the fascism of early twentieth century Europe. As Bifo Berardi contends, “Fascism will never reappear in its past historical form, but some features of the fascist experience—in both the Italian baroque and the German gothic fashions—may resurface, and are actually resurfacing today” (Berardi 2019: 41). Put differently, “Nazism may be viewed today as an experiment that is now coming back, in a different light and with different colours, and with expanded magnitude” (Berardi 2019: 116–117). The call of today’s “postmodern Hitlers” to working classes facing diminished earning potential and other loss of opportunity is, “do not think of yourselves as defeated, impoverished workers; think of yourselves as White warriors (Hindu warriors, Islamic warriors), and you will win. They will not win, but they are poised to destroy the world” (Berardi 2019: 41–42).

While one of the core intellectual objectives of world-systems analysis has been to describe and analyze chaotic periods of world-history just like the one through which we are currently living, only recently has world-systems analysis given attention to the tendency of these moments to become an ideological contestation between fascism and communism in the context of a crisis

of liberalism. In moments of transition from one systemic cycle of accumulation to the next, the chaos and social dislocation of these moments reveals the limitations of liberalism as the constituting ideology of the capitalist world-system (Wallerstein 1991, 2011; Arrighi 1994; Silver and Slater 1999; Kumral 2014; Kumral and Karatasli 2020; Plys 2020; Silver and Payne 2021). In the 1920s–1940s, when fascism as a rightist alternative to liberalism first emerged in Italy and soon thereafter in Germany, fascism was a problem relegated to a handful of countries within the core. Then, in the 1970s, fascism was resurgent, but largely relegated to the periphery. However, in the current conjuncture, fascism has gone global. As Bifo Berardi (2019) put it in one interview, in the 1930s, there were three Hitlers (Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco) but today, there is a global proliferation of postmodern Hitlers. While some theorists contend that a postmodern fascism is currently resurgent after fascism’s apparent defeat in 1945 (Mouffe 2018; Berardi 2019; Fraser 2019; Carboni 2020), this view that fascism has been latent from 1945 until now obscures not only the endurance of Iberian fascism into the mid-1970s, but also the proliferation of repressive dictatorships across the global South in the aftermath of 1968 (Plys 2017, 2020). I see this period of the long 1970s as a second wave of fascism largely relegated to the global South. Therefore, one can observe three historical waves of fascism; 1922–1945, 1968–1989, and 2010s–present.

Because of the existential threat fascism poses to much of the world’s population, among the most important questions of our current conjuncture is, “will fascism be defeated again? Is there a way out?” (Berardi 2019: 115). In these two essays—“Fascism in the *Longue Durée*” and “Autonomous Workers Movements and the Café Culture in Italy & Tunisia, 1922–1945”—I look to antifascist thought in the interwar Mediterranean for answers. Italian antifascism is a natural starting point because it was in Italy where fascism (like capitalism centuries before it) was born, and even once they were defeated by Mussolini, the movement launched by Italian antifascists had reverberations across the Mediterranean which I trace to Tunisia. Tunisian antifascist theory is particularly interesting as antifascist ideas merged with anti-colonial movements. In locating theories of antifascism in the interwar Mediterranean, I look in particular to the workplace and to the café to examine how these two incubators of anarchist theory at both the point of production, and, at what I term, “the point of leisure,” worked together to construct an antifascist strategy common to the interwar Mediterranean but not without its unique articulations in different geographies. The lesser remembered theories and praxis of pan-Mediterranean anarchist movements of the interwar period should be revisited to aid contemporary antifascists in fashioning strategies to combat today’s postmodern fascism. To that end, I will begin this essay with a brief summary of the three waves of historical fascism from the 1920s to the present. Next, I will explain why the workplace and the café were the two main incubators of anarchist theories against fascism. I then will analyze the theories produced by two interconnected antifascist movements within the Mediterranean, focusing on theories produced by anarchist labor organizers and fixtures of the café culture in Italy and Tunisia.

Three Waves of Historical Fascism

In each systemic cycle of accumulation, there is a dominant ideology that legitimates the world-hegemon. This world-hegemon manifests its supremacy “as ‘domination’ and as ‘intellectual and moral leadership’” (Gramsci 1971: 57). The hegemonic project of a dominant state has the goal of securing power and maintaining it in such a way that all other states in the world-system believe that the interest of the world-hegemon is their interest as well (Gramsci 1971; see also Arrighi 2007). While the hegemonic state’s interests are paramount, the dominant state must also make visible sacrifices to show that it is acting in the collective interest. However, these sacrifices should not erode the economic interests of that dominant state, for hegemony’s appeal is that it benefits the economic interests of the dominant state’s capitalist class (Gramsci 1971). An essential component of achieving and maintaining hegemony is the construction of a political ideology, which Gramsci defines as “a creation of concrete phantasy which acts on a dispersed and shattered people to arouse and organize its collective will” (Gramsci 1971: 126). Political ideology is a project of the dominant state, constructed to convince all other states that it is acting in the collective interest, thereby securing the dominant state’s economic interests across the globe. In other words, ideology is “the ‘cement’ which holds together the structure (in which economic class struggle takes place)” (Hall, Lumley, and McLennan 1977: 53).

The process of hegemonic transition is a stochastic one. When hegemony breaks down, one articulation of the resulting crisis is that the ideology of the waning hegemon is contested usually when the social gains for civil society which have been realized over the course of one systemic cycle of accumulation begin to erode. When such cracks appear in the hegemonic apparatus, consent is no longer sufficient for the dominant classes to maintain their moral authority and so they resort to corruption/fraud, and in some cases, force:

The normal exercise of hegemony on the now classical terrain of the parliamentary régime is characterized by the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force predominating excessively over consent. Indeed, the attempt is always made to ensure that force will appear to be based on the consent of the majority, expressed by the so-called organs of public opinion—newspapers and associations—which, therefore, in certain situations, are artificially multiplied. Between consent and force stands corruption/fraud (which is characteristic of certain situations when it is hard to exercise the hegemonic function, and when the use of force is too risky). This consists in procuring the demoralization and paralysis of the antagonist (or antagonists) by buying its leaders—either covertly, or, in cases of imminent danger, openly—in order to sow disarray and confusion in his ranks. In the period following the World War, cracks opened up everywhere in the hegemonic apparatus, and the exercise of hegemony became permanently difficult and aleatory. (Gramsci 1971: n49)

In the twentieth century, fascism emerged as one solution for the ruling classes to not only employ force in the absence of moral authority, but also as an attempt to legitimate that force through an attempt to fashion the fascist party as the will of the people. However, “the people” that the fascist party represents are typically the faction of the capitalist class whose profit making activities are

becoming obsolete in that moment of crisis, though the popular support for fascist parties is drawn from a relatively privileged segment of the citizen male working class whose social gains are similarly being eroded, just like the faction of capital whose interests they promote. This class alliance is cemented through emphasis on shared masculinity and ethno-national, religious, and/or caste identity.

1922–1945 Classical Fascism

Just as capitalism was born in Italy but then subsequently reached its full potential through the Dutch Republic-led systemic cycle of accumulation, fascism too first came into being in Italy, and then realized its full potential (and most destructive effects) in Nazi Germany (Carboni 2020: 8). Samuel Huntington characterizes this world-historical development (what he terms ‘the first reverse wave of democracy’) as “the introduction of new mass-based, more brutal and pervasive forms of totalitarianism” (Huntington 1991: 17). Fascism was invented in 1922, typically marked by Mussolini’s March on Rome, which signaled not only the end of Italy’s fledgling democracy (Huntington 1991) but also a new politics that would fundamentally remake twentieth century modernity. Just over a decade later, in 1933, Adolf Hitler instated Nazi rule in Germany, and then in 1936, a coup in Spain led to a civil war which resulted in the installation of the Francoist dictatorship by 1939 (Eley 2002; Huntington 1991).

As Enzo Traverso puts it:

fascism was simultaneously a revolution, an ideology, a *Weltanschauung*, and a culture. As a revolution, it wished to build a new society. As an ideology it reformulated nationalism as a rejection of Marxism that served as an alternative to conservatism as well as to liberalism. As a *Weltanschauung*, it inscribed its political project within a philosophy that saw history as a realm for building a ‘New Man’. And as a culture, fascism tried to transform the collective imagination, change people’s way of life, and eliminate all differences between the private and public spheres by fusing them into a single national community (delimited along ethnic or racial lines). (Traverso [2017] 2019: 101)

In other words, fascism is a far right political position whose goal is to build a new nation (albeit one that typically claims to replicate a mythic past) through a mass movement coupled with the suppression of dissent and authoritarian rule. Fascism typically advocates for government subsidies of corporations that are in the national interest while prioritizing capital accumulation. Fascist states may or may not advocate for social programs for working classes, but reject individual rights and liberties. In most instances, fascism has a colonial, ethno-nationalist, caste, and masculinist dimension to it, but fascists do not always seek to eliminate a targeted ethnic, racial, or religious group through violence. Nazism, as a type of fascism, by definition endeavors to eradicate a particular group of citizens who cannot be integrated into the fascist imagination of the new nation.

The causes for fascism’s world-historical emergence in the early 1920s were economic, political, martial, and ideological. Southern Europe and Germany-Austria were characterized by

fledgling democracies (and nations) disproportionately affected by the global economic downturn of the 1930s. These states were also late colonizers, but with well appointed militaries to engage in numerous colonial wars, particularly in the aftermath of World War I. In response to the economic downturn of the 1930s, structural adjustment programs were implemented, leading to social dislocations and capital flight (Silver and Slater 1999). Opportunity structures for fascism emerged from the intensification of social conflict, the rise of nationalism, and the contradictions of the Polanyian double movement that occurred during this transition from British to American world-hegemony (Kumral 2014). While for Beverly Silver and Eric Slater (1999) and Sefika Kumral (2014), the causes of fascism's world-historical emergence are largely macro-economic, Nicos Poulantzas (1970) contends that it is not the contradictions of capitalism that beget fascism, but the contradictions of *imperialism* that lead to the emergence of fascism in certain contexts and not others. The states that were among the first to implement fascism—Italy, Germany, and Spain—were late to transition to monopoly capitalism and “both economically behind other links in the imperialist chain and in ‘advance’ of itself” (Poulantzas 1970: 34; see also Althusser 2005). These “advancements” were primarily articulated as a well developed financial sector and colonial holdings despite a bourgeoisie mainly comprised of landowning classes.⁴ Poulantzas' argument about fascism emerging from the contradictions of imperialism in contexts of uneven transitions to modernity helps better situate fascism in its world-historical context, explaining why it doesn't emerge until the early twentieth century—several centuries after the emergence of capitalism.

While fascism is ultimately a result of macro-economic processes, its more immediate causes are ideological. While fascism emerges as a reaction against the depressive phase of a systemic cycle of accumulation it is a direct consequence of the failures of liberal ideology to explain, manage, and ultimately overcome the depressive phase of a systemic cycle of accumulation. Capitalism never truly solves crises, it simply implements temporary fixes and in this moment of the depressive phase, liberalism not only fails to satisfyingly explain the causes of the depression, but more importantly, liberal policies prove incapable of offering real policy solutions to manage the social dislocations resulting from the depression. These unsolvable structural crises further exacerbate an ideological crisis of the states that are both behind and advanced. In this chaotic moment of transition to a new systemic cycle of accumulation, and particularly in states that are unevenly transitioning to capitalism and imperialism, working class men whose social gains are eroded in the period of transition gravitate to solutions which “opened wide the possibility for Nazism to crush the class struggle under nationalism” (Balibar 1994: 180). The ideological articulation of classical fascism was not, in Étienne Balibar's view, simply “racism and nationalism as ideological instruments” but instead, an “emotional panic... the need of individuals to recognize themselves en masse in the ‘charismatic’ figure of a simultaneously ferocious and maternal leader”

⁴ Barrington Moore (1966) levies a similar contention about the class content of fascism, albeit from the bottom up, contending that the preservation of “labor repressive agrarian systems” (i.e. large landowning classes who rely on the extraction of surplus value from peasant labor) leads to fascism (Moore 1966: 435). However, due to Moore's comparative strategy that was built on a methodological nationalism, he was unable to see the dynamics of imperialism within and among the discrete cases he selected.

(Balibar 1994: 180–181). In other words, “the fascist movement suggests a sort of collective ‘acting out’ tied to the anxiety produced by situations of crisis or social transformation” (Balibar 1994: 188).

The conflict between landowners and the emerging, but less powerful, bourgeoisie along with new ideological expressions of working class masculinity lead to a loss of legitimacy for the fledgling liberal democratic state. With this breakdown of legitimacy, emergent fascist authorities, police (who are likely to become fascist sympathizers), and the judiciary, engage in increasing violence or threat of violence against dissenters. This violence can stem from sympathy to the fascists or can be an expression of hostility towards the opponents of fascism who are often framed as un-patriotic (Linz 1978: 57). In such contexts where a democratic state loses ideological legitimacy and grows increasingly violent towards dissenters, democratic forces that do remain in control of the state, at this point, lose control of the police and military to the fascists (Linz 1978: 58–59). This loss of control of the police and military, claims Juan Linz (1978), was decisive in fascists’ ability to take and retain control of the state in Italy, Germany, and Spain during this conjuncture.

1968–1989 Postcolonial Fascism⁵

After 1945, many observers believed fascism was defeated for good. In the postwar period, the United States, as part of the constitution of its new global hegemony, through international regulatory agencies, began to tackle instead the “problem” of anti-imperialist revolt (Silver 1995, 2003; Silver and Slater 1999). Central to the newly emerging United States-led global order, was a new global ideology; the promise of “development.” While the word “development” certainly existed previously, most notably used by British colonizers in India (Arndt 1981), its usage shifted in the postwar period (Mintz 1976; Arndt 1981; Platsch 1981; Wallerstein 1984; Worsley 1984; Binder 1986; Esteva 1992; Escobar 1995; Arrighi 2007). By the 1950s, development was a major goal of American policy (Rostow 1960; Gilman 2003). “Development” was pitched as an alternative to British Imperialism, and furthermore, the means by which the United States would “liberate” the rest of the world through free market capitalism. “Economic development” as a concept, then, I contend, is inherently contradictory in that, as one of the defining ideologies of U.S. hegemony, “development” both contests the dominant ideology of British hegemony—colonialism and imperialism—while also asserting the United States’ moral grounds for global rule. But at the same time, the ideology of “development” allows the United States to assume the role of the world hegemon to which decolonizing and postcolonial states are economically dependent. However, the spirit of “development” was also embraced by anti-colonial actors to

⁵ While this section focuses on the late twentieth century global South, Afro-diasporic Marxists in the United States saw fascism as a stage in the historical development of racial capitalism, developed in the early 1920s as a reaction to socio-economic crisis and thereafter used to maintain racial hierarchies for the goal of capital accumulation (Padmore 1938; Cleaver 1968; Davis 1971; Jackson 1972; Gilmore 1993; Toscano 2021)

create an anti-systemic challenge to nationalist movements, newly independent states, and generally to the new global order of the mid-twentieth century.

By the 1970s, it was clear that U.S. world hegemony was winning the struggle to define “development” as growth, at the same time that many movements for decolonization that had the promise of bringing about world transformative, radical change descended into authoritarianism. As Louis Althusser contends, “Ideological State Apparatuses function massively and predominantly by ideology, but they also function secondarily by repression, even if ultimately, but only ultimately, this is very attenuated and concealed, even symbolic. (There is no such thing as a purely ideological apparatus.)” (Althusser 1971: 145). There are physical repercussions and punishments meted out to those who resist dominant ideologies, and by the 1970s, with social movements across the globe escalating demands for social justice (Silver and Slater 1999), ideologies of development were increasingly backed by repression as U.S. hegemony began to unravel (Wallerstein 1984, 1995, 2003; Hopkins and Wallerstein 1996). With the first cracks in U.S. hegemony, many democratic states in Latin America, Africa, and Asia transitioned from democracy to authoritarianism. Examples of this wave of authoritarianism include: Chile under Augusto Pinochet, Uganda under Idi Amin, India during Indira Gandhi’s Emergency, Indonesia’s New Order, Brazil’s military junta, Pakistan under Zia ul-Haq, Cambodia’s Khymer Republic, North Yemen, Argentina, Uruguay, Nigeria, and Sudan. This authoritarian moment of the 1970s illustrated that the realities of post-independent “development” were different from its promises. In this moment, the veil of development was lifted to reveal that dictatorship is not the exception to capitalist modernity, but in fact, the very essence of capitalist modernity as seen from the 1970s global South.

2010s-present Postmodern Fascism⁶

By the 2010s, macrostructural conditions around the globe ushered in a new period of systemic chaos that looks similar in many facets to the period of transition from British to U.S. hegemony. This conjuncture is marked by global war, economic crisis, austerity, and multiple social dislocations, particularly significant among them, the crisis of the labor and trade union movement which has left wages stagnant since the 1970s and significantly eroded the power of labor. Luca Carboni (2020) observed that the fascism of this wave can be understood as neoliberalism paving the way back to Nazism through austerity and structural crisis.

This postmodern fascism emerged in contexts of uneven development similar, and yet distinct in its class and colonial character, from what Nicos Poulantzas identified in early twentieth century Europe. Examples of contemporary uneven development would include: the “two Americas”

⁶ Enzo Traverso (2019) uses the term “postfascism” to refer to contemporary articulations of fascism but I prefer Bifo Berardi’s (2019) term “postmodern fascism” to term this wave because while both terms assert that contemporary fascism looks markedly different from its classical iterations because of the way it draws on postmodern rhetorical flourishes, but it is still very much recognizable as fascism. However, I use the term “postfascism” in this section to refer the post-1922 world in which the invention of fascism shaped and continues to shape modernity and postmodernity.

(Revelli 2019: 54); India's urban-rural divide; Italy's North-South divide. All of these popular narratives of "divides" allude to the juxtaposition of highly developed regions with greatly underdeveloped regions in one state container. What might explain fascism's near global spread in this current wave is that the core-periphery distinction has been deterritorialized⁷ in the current conjuncture. We increasingly observe peripheries within the core and cores in the peripheries in many, if not most, state containers. This within country core-periphery divide is synchronous with significant culturo-ideological disparities corresponding to these very economic divides within a given state boundary. Examples of postmodern fascists include: Russian President Vladimir Putin, former U.S. President Donald Trump, President of the Philippines Rodrigo Duterte; Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi; Turkish President Recep Erdogan; Italian politician Matteo Salvini; Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro; Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, Greece's Golden Dawn, and so on.

Similar to fascism's previous waves, postmodern fascism is a reflection of class maneuvering in the context of the ideological collapse of liberalism. Fascism is evoked by the dying faction of the capitalist class (in sectors like coal, construction, real estate, etc.) to capture the state as their profit making opportunities through market mechanisms erode in the crisis moment. They succeed through legitimating their position in an alliance with the citizen male working class whose social gains have similarly been eroded. This alliance emphasizes shared masculinity and ethno-national, religious, and/or caste identity of the male working class and the dying faction of capital. This ideological plea to the citizen male working class is typically articulated through the vilification of groups who cannot be incorporated into the fascist vision of the nation taking shape as racism, sexism, casteism, and the targeting of people of a certain religion (contemporary fascist leaders have engaged in anti-semitism along with anti-islamic, anti-buddhist, or anti-christian rhetoric and actions, depending on the specific local context). In Europe, postmodern fascism has also tapped in to a nostalgia for lost colonial empires (Traverso 2019; Veuglers 2020) echoing Mussolini, Hitler, and Salazar's evocation of colonialism as a cornerstone of the fascist project, while in India, for example, fascists express a similar nostalgia for the ancient Hindu Empires, reminiscent of Mussolini's desire to relieve the glory of ancient Rome. Generally, the class alliance between the citizen male working class and the dying faction of capital is a nostalgia for privileges lost to neoliberal socio-economic dislocations.

Just as the 1930s ushered in a crisis of liberalism, multiple contemporary crises have brought about an ideological crisis of neoliberalism, and in this ideological vacuum, fascism has emerged as a rightist alternative. Yet one of the unique facets of postmodern fascism is the way it is evoked and articulated by its adherents. The incoherence, contradictions, and tension among different articulations of postmodern fascist ideology becomes an asset to their position. This utter incoherence from the perspective of outside observers allows contemporary fascists to disavow themselves from classical fascism, deflect most accusations of fascism, and largely evade detection

⁷ Of course, the core-periphery distinction nonetheless remains an important fact of historical capitalism and still largely tied to particular geographies.

as fascists. The incoherence of their rhetoric is exacerbated by the difficulty most popular observers have in discerning world-historically significant processes in real time. While mainline histories of the rise of fascism typically pinpoint a particular rally or march as the moment in which fascism emerged victorious over a democratically elected state, fascism is a process, not an event. Furthermore, the fascist process is not a linear one, but characterized by fits and starts endemic to the fascist movement, and also shaped by contestation with antifascists left and center. As such, the rise of fascism is difficult to discern in real time (Linz 1978; see also Ermakoff 2008; Plys 2020) and therefore antifascists need to have well developed theories in order to better read the contemporary situation to inform strategy and praxis.

While the inability of contemporary fascists to coherently articulate their positions is one positive legacy from the defeat of Axis forces in World War II, world-history after World War II was indelibly marked by the postfascist and the postcolonial (Slobodian 2018). With fascism's bizarre return (bizarre in the fact that it came back as big as it did, and bizarre in the way that contemporary fascists perform their politics) around 2010, it became evident that fascism was never truly defeated in 1945. We might think of the "post-" in post-fascism as analogous to post-colonialism's "post-," in that we take these "posts" to mean after fascism and colonialism have *begun*, not as a means by which to signal their end.

While fascism emerges from the ideological and structural failures of (neo)liberalism as a legitimating ideology of the capitalist world-system, it is also well to remember that there is a complex tension between the fascist and the (neo)liberal. Liberals and fascists can and do coexist profitably. Neoliberals support, and even prefer, dictatorship if they can levy such dictatorships to achieve neoliberal objectives and thereby save "European civilization" (or whichever "civilization" they set out to "save") from economic redistribution (Slobodian 2018) in moments of crisis. The inaction of contemporary liberals has similarly served to aid postmodern fascism's successes in the current conjuncture. As Juan Linz (1978) contended, "a democratic regime should never be allowed to approach the point at which its survival will depend on the readiness of its supporters to fight for it in the streets" (Linz 1978: 85). Because police and military support goes either to the fascists or liberals (who may even support part of the fascist agenda), the left is resource poor and has little chance of winning an armed confrontation against fascists, especially in cases where the police and military are infiltrated with fascist party members. Developing precise and accurate theories of fascism and antifascism, therefore, is critically important for the left in structuring antifascists' potential to defeating the fascist threat.

The Dialectic of the *Longue Durée*

In what follows, I focus on the strategies antifascists in the Mediterranean developed against the first wave of historical fascism at both the point of production and the point of leisure. This decision to focus on one particular conjuncture in two geographies within the same region is influenced by Fernand Braudel's thinking about the Mediterranean, as both a remarkably diverse region with multiple social, political and economic influences, but also with a coherent *longue*

durée that emerges from an analysis of its secular trends (Braudel 1949). Samir Amin viewed the importance of the Mediterranean as rooted in its changed meaning after the transition to capitalism. Instead of being the center of a regional world-system that linked European and Arab ecumene as it was before the transition to capitalism, in the context of the capitalist world-system the Mediterranean eventually became “the new center/periphery boundary” (Amin 2009: 103). Aníbal Quijano similarly theorizes the role of Mediterranean during the transition to capitalist modernity as a space that typifies the contradictions of Europe as a concept. In other words, it is a space for both “the historical promise of the liberation of humanity from its own ghosts, from social injustice and the prisons of power, and on the other hand, tendencies that saw rationality in instrumental terms, as a mechanism of power, of domination” (Quijano 1993: 145).

Today we see Tunisia as part of the periphery of the world-system and Italy as within its core, but our contemporary view of the Mediterranean as a geographical core-periphery divide has been in Samir Amin’s (2009) assessment, “falsely projected backwards.” Amin writes:

The North-South split, running through the Mediterranean—which only replaced the East-West division at a late date, as we have seen—is therefore, falsely projected backward. This error sometimes yields amusing results. Carthage is a Phoenician city: it is, thus, classified as “Oriental” and the rivalry between Rome and Carthage is said to prefigure the conquest of the “Maghreban Orient” by imperialist Europe—a curious contradiction in terms since *Mahgreb* in Arabic means “West.” From the works of apologists for the French colonial conquest to the speeches of Mussolini to the textbooks still in use throughout Europe, this North-South cleavage is presented as permanent, self-evident, and inscribed in geography (and therefore—by implicit false deduction—in history). (Amin 2009: 168)

Even though the Italian fascist and French colonial states launched ideological and martial efforts to peripheralize North Africa, in the early 20th century, the Mediterranean saw itself as a unified “West” in relation to the “East” of the Arabian Peninsula and Asia.

While we can see French colonial and Italian fascist efforts in retrospect as having been successful in reconceptualizing the Mediterranean as a geographical boundary between global North and global South, we should think of core-periphery dynamics in the 1920s through 1940s Mediterranean as unstable, contested, and in the process of being reconstituted through explicit fascist and colonial efforts. The Mediterranean in this conjuncture was a region in flux with no clearly defined core-periphery boundary which is why the Italian fascist and French colonial state needed to launch explicit efforts to remake North Africa as a periphery in order to achieve their politico-economic goals. But we also can’t neglect that in making North Africa into a periphery, fascist and colonial states were also making themselves more securely a part of the core of the world-system. Ever since, we have witnessed the erasure of North Africans, Islam, Arabic, and other related themes from Mediterranean history and modern Mediterranean Studies, along with

historiographies of North Africa that divorce the southern shores from their pan-Mediterranean context (Tucker 2019).

By the early twentieth century, Southern Europe was either one of the richer semi-periphery regions or the poorest region within the core depending on different scholarly assessments. Fascist and colonial states reconstructed the Mediterranean Sea into a new core-periphery boundary instead of the center of a world-region as it had been for centuries. In that spirit, my aim is not to compare Italy's antifascist workerist movements and café culture with Tunisia's (see Hart 2018 for a critique of this genre of comparison). Instead, I think of Italian and Tunisian anti-fascist movements as part of a singular connected history spanning the Mediterranean. As such, I contend, analyses of colonialism and fascism that fail to include the territories and people colonized by fascist states are incomplete accounts of fascism.

As Samir Amin's (2009) analysis suggests, the *longue durée* history of the Mediterranean and its role in capitalist and pre-capitalist world-systems is complex. However, through a narrower focus on the conjunctural, the historian can better hone in on the nuances of social and political formations during that cycle, or phase of a cycle (Braudel 1949; 1980). Moreover, the conjuncture occurs in the context of, what Braudel terms the "*dialectique de la durée*" and therefore any historical assessment constructed through political and social analysis of the conjuncture, will, subsequently in the analysis, need to be put back in the context of the *longue durée* in order to draw broader conclusions (Braudel 1980). Following the logic of Fernand Braudel and Samir Amin, my endeavor in these essays is the analysis of a single case, the Italian fascist Mediterranean, not a comparative endeavor.

I therefore begin Part II of this essay, "Autonomous Workers Movements and the Café Culture in Italy & Tunisia, 1922–1945," with theories of antifascism in 1920s Italy, as the first historical instance of fascism and antifascism, and then follow this singular entangled history through the Mediterranean of the 1930s to Tunisia where through colonial dynamics a different articulation of the same antifascism was expressed. In this connected history of antifascist resistance in the colonial fascist interwar Mediterranean I analyze how antifascists developed strategies of worker self-management at the point of production and in the autonomous zone of the café culture at the point of leisure to foment resistance against fascism. In the concluding section of Part II, I will then put this back in conversation with contemporary articulations of fascism in order to draw conclusions about how these early theories of antifascism can best serve contemporary movements against fascism.

About the Author: **Kristin Plys** is an assistant professor in the departments of sociology and history at the University of Toronto specializing in critical theory and political economy of the Global South. She is the author of *Brewing Resistance: Indian Coffee House and the Emergency in Postcolonial India* (Cambridge University Press 2020), and *Capitalism and Its Uncertain Future* (with Charles Lemert, Routledge 2022), winner of the 2022 Global Sociology Book Award from the Federation for the Social Sciences and Humanities.

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