



Introduction to the Special Issue

Anti-State and Anti-Systemic – Exilic Spaces and Societies in Movement in the World-System

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While critiques of capitalism and the state were both central to the development of world-systems analysis, historical documentation of anti-systemic movements has tended to center on a two-step strategy—first take control of the state, and second, change the world (Arrighi, Hopkins, and Wallerstein 1989; Wallerstein 2002, 2004, 2014). While this strategy is no doubt historically relevant and state revolutions are important to understanding the inner workings of and resistance to the capitalist world-system, the analysis of non-state anti-systemic movements requires further study from within the world-systems framework.

The revival of traditions of mutual aid during the global pandemic, autonomous Indigenous political territories in the global South as a response to the devastation of colonialism and neocolonialism, calls for abolition democracy in the global uprisings during the summer of 2020, and the important role played by Anti-Fascist Action or “Antifa” in confronting resurgent neofascisms across the world are just a few of countless examples of historical and contemporary anti-state, anti-systemic movements and non-state spaces. These diverse anti-systemic movements include explicitly anarchist mobilizations, experiments in worker/community self-management and direct action, general strikes, horizontal forms of resistance to political authoritarianism and state violence, autonomous Indigenous movements aimed at decolonizing ways of life both



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materially and culturally, and the non-sovereign freedom dreams within the Black radical tradition. In this special issue we aim to further our understanding of the potentials and limits of non-state anti-systemic movements and spaces, explore the ways in which these formations interact with states and other social actors in the world-system, and develop other innovative approaches to studying non-state anti-systemic movements and spaces from a world-systems perspective.

Debates on the left have existed for centuries between those who see the state as a conduit for social change and those who see the state as detrimental to human liberation. These debates can be traced back at least to the First International in which the Anarchists led by Mikhail Bakunin were expelled from the Hague Conference by Karl Marx and the general council for promoting their anti-state ideals. However, within the Marxist tradition there have been some who promoted the use of worker cooperatives, council democracy, and systems of dual power where the state and society share governing responsibilities (Gramsci 1919; Lenin 1975). Even Marx, despite famously calling for the dictatorship of the proletariat in the *Communist Manifesto* (Marx 1848), towards the end of his life wrote in the *Civil War in France* that “the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes” (Marx 1871). It is because of these later writings by Marx that authoritarian socialist states have banned some of Marx’s texts.

Although, scholarship within the world-systems tradition has centered analysis of anti-systemic movements on political movements and their two-step strategy this has not come without a critique of that very strategy (Arrighi et al. 1989; Chase-Dunn 1998; Wallerstein 2002, 2004, 2014). In fact, in Arrighi, Hopkins, and Wallerstein’s (1989) seminal text on anti-systemic movements they posit that although these movements were successful in the first step of seizing state power, they failed in accomplishing the second step of changing the world. Part of this was due to a scalar disjuncture. While the political tool in the world-system was the nation-state, the economic unit was the world economy. Because of this state socialism was doomed to operate within the same logic that the capitalist world-system provided it. States would compete with one another to capture value added and ultimately reproduce the very dynamics of the world-system. This also meant that the core-periphery hierarchy remained in-tact as social democratic core states still extracted value from the peripheries of the world economy. Therefore, anti-systemic movements once in control of the state apparatus often operated like the capitalist states had before them.

This left the door open within world-systems analysis for the study of radical movements that opposed the capture of the state, instead rallying around collective forms of production, grassroots democracy, and direct action in their attempt to resist capitalist relations. Only in a specific time-period in the world-system were state centered movements dominant. This era is referred to as the liberal geoculture denoting the period in-between the 1848 springtime of nations and the 1968 crisis of the world-system. Following the 1848 springtime of nations the capture of the state became the primary goal for anti-systemic movements. Prior to 1848 anti-systemic actions were often spontaneous and aimed at overthrowing capitalist relations to restore the social relations that existed prior to capitalist expansion. Following the 1968 crisis in the world-system, anti-systemic

movements aimed at the capture of state power became somewhat less popular. This was due to the failure of the anti-systemic movements that had achieved state power during the liberal geoculture as well as the increased efficacy of direct action in political struggle. Although state centered anti-systemic movements may have coalesced in the era between 1848 and 1968 it does not mean that anti-state, anti-systemic movements were ineffectual or absent during this period. According to Grubačić (2022), anarchism was the primary anti-capitalist politics around the world from 1870s Russia to the Russian Revolution in 1917 or perhaps even the Spanish Revolution in the late 1930s. Throughout this period anarchism served as an anti-systemic force for both revolutionary struggles in the North Atlantic and anti-colonial struggles around the world (Grubačić 2022).

Beyond the fathers of the world-systems perspective—all of whom this issue is greatly indebted to for their insights on the structural constraints placed on state centered anti-systemic movements in the world-system—there has been a growing subfield of research on non-state movements and spaces from a global political economy, world-historical, and world-systemic vantage point (Scott 2009; Zibechi 2012; Grubačić and O’Hearn 2016; Williams 2017; Smolski, Castro, and Reid Ross 2018; Gibson 2019; Potiker 2019, 2021). Although this scholarship has picked up in recent years it is anything but new. Cedric J. Robinson (1980), who spent the early years of his career at SUNY Binghamton in the Fernand Braudel Center with Immanuel Wallerstein, Giovanni Arrighi, and Terrence K. Hopkins, wrote his first book, *The Terms of Order: Political Science and the Myth of Leadership* as a critique of the discipline of political science because it naturalized the state and political leadership. Ultimately, Robinson was sympathetic to Western Anarchism while also critiquing it as anti-political rather than non-political. Instead, Robinson looked to Africa and to the Black radical tradition to unearth a non-political culture capable of governing itself outside the logics of the state (Robinson 1980, 1983). Furthermore, scholars within the decolonial tradition—a tradition that grew in conversation with the world-systems perspective although from a different vantage point—have also critiqued the states’ central role in political change (Mignolo 2002; Grosfoguel 2006, 2011). Grosfoguel (2006) argues that the centering of the state as the political tool for social change not only reifies the nation-state, but also reproduces the coloniality of power within each national territory. Both traditions—the Black radical tradition and the decolonial tradition—explicitly challenge the naturalization of the modern nation-state and therefore the governance of the world economy.

More recently and of particular importance to this special issue is Andrej Grubačić and Dennis O’Hearn’s (2016) *Living at the Edges of Capitalism: Adventures in Exile and Mutual Aid*. In this momentous text Grubačić and O’Hearn lay out a framework for studying what they call exilic spaces that exist at the edges of capitalism. These spaces do have relations to the larger world-system but govern themselves with different logics. According to Grubačić and O’Hearn (2016), these spaces are less concerned with the endless accumulation of capital created through the surplus time of labor and instead can use surplus time in the collective production of joy. Elsewhere, Grubačić (2022) has claimed that anarchism is the anti-foundationalist ideology in the world-system. While the liberal idea of the state, market, and society could be promoted from both

the left of it through socialism and the right of it through conservatism (Wallerstein 2004), by denouncing the very idea of separating economic and political processes from society anarchism could destabilize the logics of the world-system. This special issue aims to pick up on this argument by studying and understanding the way anti-state movements and non-state spaces interact with the world-system and how through praxis they may be the key to ushering in an era filled with more joy, prosperity, and equality in the future.

Summarizing the Contributions

This special issue offers a world historical and comparative account of anti-state, anti-systemic movements and non-state spaces over the *longue durée* of the world-system. In recent years political upheavals and revolutions such as the anti-capitalist, feminist, and ecological non-state revolutions in Rojava and Chiapas have garnered popular support on the political left. However, anti-systemic movements of this type are anything but new and have existed throughout time and space in the world-system. Communities of maroons proliferated across the Americas from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century as Black and Indigenous people resisted their enslavement through self-managed societies. Classical anarchist and anarchistic revolutions took place across the world from the 1870s to 1930s ranging from urban revolts such as the Paris Commune, to peasant revolutions such as the Makhnovists in the eastern part of Ukraine, to full scale regional revolutions that crossed urban and rural areas such as the Spanish Anarchist Revolution in Catalonia.

This special issue begins with a nine-case qualitative comparative analysis of anti-state, anti-systemic movements by Spencer Louis Potiker, Dana M. Williams, and Jake Alimahomed-Wilson. In the article Potiker and colleagues have two central arguments. First, they argue that anti-state, anti-systemic movements do not fit neatly into a world-systems typology in terms of who participates in anarchist and anarchistic movements. Second, they compare their cases in terms of which succeeded for a long period of time, and which were reabsorbed by their surrounding state and the world-system writ large. They find that success over the long run has to do with the period in which the movement takes place as well as what type of actors repress the movement.

Expanding on the account of historical anti-state movements, Crystal Eddins argues that marronage was a *longue durée* form of resistance to slavery in Haiti. Eddins contends that when enslaved people fled the plantations they reclaimed their time, social relations, forms of knowledge, and other tangible and intangible resources that their enslavers had stolen from them. Furthermore, Eddins successfully argues that maroons were instrumental to the larger movement that ultimately fought to abolish slavery and overturn colonialism. This represented a larger rupture in the world-system which up until that point was dependent on the surplus value created by slave labor.

Next, Marilyn Grell-Brisk writes on the contemporary #BlackLivesMatter movement from 2013–2020. Drawing on both the Black radical tradition and the decolonial tradition Grell-Brisk argues that the movement for Black lives is more than just a movement against police brutality. It

is a demand for the humanity of Black people to be recognized and is a declaration of resistance to the anti-blackness that constitutes the capitalist world-system. She argues that this rejection of anti-blackness through the movement for Black lives must be transnational and translocal in scope therefore implicitly occupying a non-state anti-systemic movement space.

Indigenous autonomous movements across the Americas have always had an important role in resisting the expansion of the world-system and the state—whether that was the colonial state or the post-colonial state. Next in the special issue, we have two articles on Indigenous movements in Mexico resisting the post-colonial state. Ryan Knight draws on field work with Indigenous movements in Mexico to rethink the borders and boundaries of autonomy. He argues that autonomous movements in Mexico are constantly navigating their insides and outsides. These movements rather than having state like borders are in constant flux, themselves negotiating their complex positionality within the world-system. Furthermore, Knight contends that autonomous movements occupy a border or boundary space within the world-system itself.

Carlos Lucio and David Barkin write on post-colonial anti-systemic resistance in Mexico centering Indigenous movements. They argue that the larger Indigenous movement inspired by the Zapatista rebellion deploys a new form of action that breaks with the ideology and narratives of modernity. These movements are interested in governing themselves in autonomous self-determined communities. They are actively diversifying production in their territories and renewing their cultural heritage. Lucio and Barkin argue that the Indigenous movement in Mexico is undergoing a change from the assimilationist slogan of “Never again a Mexico without us” to the radical questioning of the nation-state typified by the slogan “We, without Mexico.”

Finally, Kristin Plys contributes a two-part article periodizing Fascism and resistance to it in three historical moments—classical fascism, post-colonial fascism, and post-modern fascism.¹ In part one of the article Plys lays out a conceptual framework for understanding different historical moments of fascism since its origins in Italy in the first half of the twentieth century. Following the classical fascism of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany Plys argues that there have been two resurgent phases of fascism. First Plys describes post-colonial fascism as the authoritarian and reactionary politics that proliferated around the post-colonial world in the 1970s and 1980s. Next Plys discusses the contemporary moment typified by political leaders like former United States president Donald Trump. She describes this type of fascism as post-modern fascism. In part two of the article (to be published as part of the next issue of the *Journal of World-Systems Research*) Plys analyzes resistance to classical fascism across the Mediterranean in Italy and Tunisia arguing that there are lessons to be learned to combat post-modern fascism from earlier periods of anti-fascist struggle.

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¹ Kristin Plys’ article appears in the main section of the journal rather than the special issue due to being split into two parts. The first part of the article published in this issue lays the conceptual framework for her analysis of fascism overtime in the world-system. Part II of the article, to be released in the Winter/Spring 2023 issue of the *Journal of World-Systems Research*, analyzes anti-fascist resistance to classical fascism in the Mediterranean.

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