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LATIN AMERICAN NEO-FASCISM(S) I – FROM FASCISM TO NEO-FASCISM: COMPILING THE DEBATE

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Abstract

This article deals with the historical (re)construction from the use of the category 'fascism' and its specificities to think about Latin America until the use of the category 'neo-fascism' and its applications. It is the first part of a triptych that presents the phases of the debate on neo-fascism in Latin America. Methodologically, we opted for a historical-critical analysis through a compilation of the debate found by classic and contemporary authors. In this specific article, three sections were elaborated. The first deals with the problem of 'fascism' and its debate as a counterpoint to neo-

fascism in the region. A second one presents the Latin American debate and the central categories that need to be revised for a debate on its concrete reality. And, a third one deals with the emergence of 'neo-fascism' in an attempt to differentiate itself from the fascism lived in the 1930s. Finally, partial considerations were raised.

Descriptors: Fascism; Capitalism; Marxism; Derivationism; State.

<p>NEOFASCISMO(S) LATINOAMERICANO(S) I – DEL FASCISMO AL NEOFASCISMO: COMPILANDO EL DEBATE</p> <p>Resumen: Este artículo trata de la (re)construcción histórica desde el uso de la categoría 'fascismo' y sus especificidades para pensar América Latina hasta el uso de la categoría 'neofascismo' y sus aplicaciones. Es la primera parte de un tríptico que presenta las fases del debate sobre neofascismo en América Latina. Metodológicamente, se optó por un análisis histórico-crítico a través de una recopilación del debate encontrado por autores clásicos y contemporáneos que abordan el tema. En este artículo específico, se elaboraron tres apartados. El primero aborda el problema del 'fascismo' y su debate como contrapunto al neofascismo en la región. Un segundo que presenta el debate latinoamericano y las categorías centrales que necesitan ser revisadas para un debate sobre la realidad concreta de la región. Y, un tercero, que trata sobre el surgimiento del 'neofascismo' en un intento de diferenciarse del fascismo vivido en la década de 1930. Finalmente, se plantearon consideraciones parciales.</p>	<p>NEOFASCISMO(S) LATINO-AMERICANO(S) I – DO FASCISMO AO NEOFASCISMO: COMPILANDO O DEBATE</p> <p>Resumo: Este artigo trata da (re)construção histórica desde o uso da categoria 'fascismo' e suas especificidades para pensar a América Latina até o uso da categoria 'neofascismo' e suas aplicações. Este artigo é a primeira parte de um tríptico que apresenta as fases do debate sobre o neofascismo na América Latina. Metodologicamente, optou-se por uma análise histórico-crítica da categoria por meio de uma compilação do debate encontrado por autores clássicos e contemporâneos que discutem o tema. Neste artigo em específico, três seções foram elaboradas. Uma primeira que trata do problema da categoria 'fascismo' e seu debate em contraponto ao neofascismo na região. Uma segunda que apresenta o debate latino-americano e as categorias centrais que precisam ser revistas para um debate sobre a realidade concreta da região. E, uma terceira, que trata da emergência do 'neofascismo' na tentativa de diferenciar-se do fascismo vivido nos anos de 1930. Por fim, considerações parciais foram levantadas.</p>
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Descriptores: Fascismo; Capitalismo; Marxismo; Derivacionismo; Estado.		Descriptores: Fascismo; Capitalismo; Marxismo; Derivacionismo; Estado.
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INTRODUCTION

In the scenario of contemporary ultra-liberal capitalism,¹ the emergence of new types of fascism has been a constant throughout the world, and in Latin America it has been no different.² Reflecting on this phenomenon - not just as an appearance, but questioning whether there really is anything new - is a task that critical thinking must analyze with great caution. This is because it is becoming **commonplace**, especially among those who advocate a political way out via a reissue of various progressivisms, that what we are experiencing today is **not** fascism, or cannot even be understood as something similar.^{3,4,5}

Therefore, when faced with this type of analysis, it is practically impossible not to ask ourselves: why deny the category 'fascism' in order to understand the world scenario in which we live - even with various attacks from an **extreme right** that is updating fascist techniques and practices? Why does the debate on fascism in Latin America not seem appropriate and why do some analysts have reservations about using 'fascism' to understand the specificity of this region? Why, despite the permanence of fascist practices and fascist groups in Latin America, do certain analysts advocate abandoning the category 'fascism'? Is it possible to say that there is a new type of fascism (neo-fascism) being experienced in Latin America, with traces of originality? Is it possible to construct another understanding of (neo)fascism in Latin America that doesn't involve political exits that bet on the new progressivisms of the 2022 elections - such as Xiomara (Honduras), Boric (Chile), Petro (Colombia) and Lula (Brazil)?

We believe that without a radical critical reflection on these questions, it is practically impossible to answer them. Therefore, the aim of this article is to retrieve the content of the category 'fascism', and its new expression called 'neo-fascism', in order to think about Latin American realities from the perspective of the understanding carried out primarily by Latin American authors. The aim of this task is to compile what has already been produced on the 'uses' and 'disuses' of this category for thinking about Latin America. The intention is that this will help us to identify the relevance (or not) of the category 'fascism' for the present day. As a theoretical-political way out of this debate, we suggest the contributions of the State Derivation Debate can make to thinking about neo-fascism(s) at this juncture.

It is pertinent to remember that the State Derivation Debate is part of a tradition of analysis on the relationship between the state and capital, developed by what is known as the Derivationist Debate.⁶ This debate took place in the former Federal Republic of Germany between 1970 and 1974, mainly in West Berlin and Frankfurt, and within the Conference of Socialist Economists (CSE) in the United Kingdom during the same period. Even today, forty years after its development, this debate is little known in Latin America, even among Marxists - the perspective from which it originated. Since its inception, this debate has been consolidated into a complex materialist theory of the State. Although Marx didn't develop a theory of the State, the presence of the State pervades his work as a whole, especially in the three books of "Capital".^{7,8,9} This specter of the modern State is the category that, in his analyses, underlies the genesis of capitalism, completing the understanding of the capitalist mode of production, after the Marxian legacy and, especially, with Lenin, in "The State and Revolution".¹⁰ Evguiéni Pachukanis, in his book "The General Theory of Law and Marxism",¹¹ takes up a renewed focus on the State as an important category in understanding the dynamics of capitalist sociability. After a long period of stagnation (1930's to 1970's), the derivationist debate reignited with Joachim Hirsch and in a revisited version by John Holloway. The latter, together with Sol Piccioto, produced a pioneering analysis to rethink the debate in the light of social antagonism, emphasizing the role of the class struggle and moving away from very abstract analyses.¹² We believe that this perspective seems well suited to thinking about Latin American States, thus opening up a path to understanding the specificity of the legal form of these States in their unique social formations.

We have therefore opted for a historical-critical analysis of the categories of fascism and neo-fascism through a compilation of the debate found by classic and contemporary authors who discuss the subject. When we identified the theoretical and political complexity of the debate - which is certainly a strength of this topic - we found that it is impossible to summarize it without incurring in reductions of the arguments, which would fatally lead to a **hasty** review that would be of little help in understanding the problem. In order to avoid this problem, we decided to divide this article into three parts.

Thus, we will develop this theme in a triptych. The first part - to which this article refers - deals with the historical (re)construction from the use of the category 'fascism' and its specificities for thinking about Latin America to the use of the term 'neo-fascism' and its applications, with the aim of compiling this debate. The second article deals with the continuity of this debate, starting

from the controversies over the term 'neo-fascism' for understanding Latin America, through the intense dissent of the 1970's and 1980's, to the new directions and limits that the debate took in the 1990's. The last article, which concludes this triptych, proposes an understanding of neo-fascism through Pachukanian-Hollowoyan *derivationism* as a way of rethinking and reorienting the debate on this phenomenon in Latin America.

For this article in particular, the path chosen sets out the arguments in three sections. The first section deals with the problem of the category 'fascism' and how its debate in counterpoint to neo-fascism could be delimited in the region. The second section presents the Latin American debate and the central categories that, from a Latin American perspective, need to be reviewed from the concrete reality of the region, and not by mimicking or importing Eurocentric interpretations that do not correspond to the local reality. The third section deals with the emergence of 'neo-fascism' or 'new type fascism' as an explanatory category, in an attempt to differentiate itself from the fascism experienced in the 1930's.

THE PROBLEM WITH THE CATEGORY 'FASCISM'

Certainly, the only convergence in the debate on fascism is its **scientific divergence** as a category. This is because there is a considerable difference between the matrices of social analysis as to what fascism is or is not. Depending on the matrix, internal disputes over the term also occur. Added to this is the 'starting point' from which we are talking about the term. Is it the 'empirical phenomenon' or the 'idealized political project'? This is an important point, but, as if it weren't enough to generate so much noise, another point is added to it: are we talking about fascism as 'institutionalized State action' (in legal, political or even implied^a form!) or fascism as 'socio-political and cultural action in everyday social relations' (groups that assume a fascist stance or even identity)? To make the debate even more complex, it is important to bear in mind the following question: what is fascism in 'what place' (nation-state and its specific social formations) and in 'what time' (socio-historical)?

This last question inevitably leads us to think about the difference between fascism located historically in the period 1920-1940 (interwar period) and the fascism that lasted after the Second

^a We understand an "implied form" of institutionalized action as a tacit commitment to fascist projects by agents of the State (members of the established powers: legislative, judiciary, executive and their bureaucracies - civil servants). Although this would also be a dimension or product of socio-political and cultural action, there is a difference: they are subjects who 'make/shape the State institution', unlike socio-political and cultural action outside this institution.

World War (1945 onwards). For the post-1945 socio-historical period, various authors^{13,14,15} present analyses that lead us to consider the category 'neo-fascism' as the most appropriate to name what is being lived (or revived) today under the banner of inter-war fascism. So, in order to begin to separate interwar fascism - also known as classical or historical fascism - from neo-fascism, it is necessary to note a few elements.

The first of these concerns neo-fascist tendencies, which in some respects resemble the fascisms that historically emerged in the first half of the 20th century. Although they are sometimes similar, given that even the conditions that generated the first fascisms are not identical to those that exist today, it is possible to find many similarities - especially in the context of the crisis of capital. It is therefore possible to draw certain parallels between the structural crisis of capital of 1929 and the crisis of 2007-2008, especially in terms of severity, depth or scope. Nevertheless, its consequences have already been documented as “similar” by various experts^{16,17} and even foreseen by others¹⁸. This is a point that has traditionally been criticized by both culturalist authors¹⁹ - who restrict fascism to its groups and symbols - and historicist authors²⁰ - who “imprison” fascism in the interwar period, justifying that after this period nothing can be called 'fascism'. In addition, there are sociologist authors²¹ - who criticize the similarities of the structural crisis of capital²² - saying that this argument is an **economicist persistence** in explaining the genesis of fascism, tending to qualify neo-fascism as “low intensity”. We argue that, in an orthodox Marxist^b analysis,²³ the role of the crisis of capital and its socio-historical repercussions are the nodal points in understanding the neo-fascist reality. Even if we recognize these points, they are far from being **the** only absolute determination in explaining such complex political phenomena^{c25}.

For this reason, the second element is just as necessary as the previous one for understanding the fascist phenomenon: the dialectical and contradictory movement of social classes. Neither the relations of production nor the class struggle have ceased their dialectical movement and remain the same as they were in the first half of the 20th century. On the contrary, they **fermented** their dissatisfactions throughout the social democratic course of the 'partial

^b We consider 'orthodox analysis' to be that which is based on the Marxian method, that is, on the development of the historical-dialectical materialist method of exposition-investigation.

^c We agree with Mara when he says that: “[...] just like historical fascism, neo-fascism doesn't seem to reduce down to a **mechanical** expression [emphasis added] of the economic needs of big business either.” But that doesn't mean that there isn't an 'organic' link with it.

reforms' that inhabited the history of the second quarter of the 20th century. The fragmented, disciplined and closed reforms along the lines of the capitalist Welfare State acted by taming the class struggle and postponing the possibility of social dissatisfaction on the part of the bourgeoisie. This has been widely reported in the literature on neo-fascism as a time of necessary “germination” of social consciousness about the fallacy of class conciliation and “social harmony” in capitalism.²² Under intense reformism, the social classes realize the intrinsic contradiction of capitalist social production and the incapacity of the State to resolve these contradictions, clearly demonstrating its limits (and those of its public and social policies) in “inexorably improving” living and working conditions (an expectation known as: **improvementism**). Not infrequently, when the politicization of the working class was not enough to qualify its criticism, organization and political action on the left, improvementism promoted the opposite mechanism: the explosion of the bourgeoisie. With the limits of its patience exhausted, the bourgeoisie unveiled the veil of the supposed pact of harmony, demonstrating that its dissatisfactions have an expiry date. The breakdown of **bourgeois tolerance** erupts first in disgust, then in hatred, and then in aggression. This course of the social formation of fascism, with due regard for the specificities of each country, is the same in neo-fascism.

The third element is the care that must be taken with the use of the term from an institutional, legal and even cultural point of view. Although the possibility of indefinitely encompassing various regimes and cultural practices within the category is tempting, one must guard against this in order to prevent the term from being trivialized and emptied. Thus, in a Gramscian-Poulantizian Marxist analysis²⁶, the dialectics between force and consensus and the political role of the class struggle within the capitalist state have been the most used to characterize fascism institutionally as the most aggressive stage of “degeneration”^d of bourgeois political domination. In this stage, a bourgeoisie whose consensus is in a process of destabilization and whose capacity to exercise repression is exhausted, resorts to naked violence, demonstrating the real nature of the capitalist state, even if this means suspending bourgeois democratic freedoms for a period of time. This is the time needed to take measures to save capital, and the relationship between state and society will depend on the ability of the classes to react in their own way - either

^d Here, we use the idea of 'degeneration' in the very sense of the action of changing to a qualitatively inferior state or condition.

by pushing for the State to wither away or by reinforcing the State as the holder of the monopoly of violence.

Therefore, understood as a **progression**, the category of fascism is used in the way that Thalheimer²⁸ defined it in relation to Bonapartism:

Bonapartism is therefore a form of bourgeois state power in a situation of defense, of fortification, of strengthening against the proletarian revolution. It is a form of the open dictatorship of capital. Its other very similar form is that of the fascist state. The common denominator is the open dictatorship of capital. Its form of manifestation is the autonomization of executive power, the annihilation of the political dominance of the bourgeoisie, and the political submission of all other social classes to executive power. Its social or class content, however, is the domination of the bourgeoisie and private owners in general over the working class and all the other layers exploited by capitalism.²⁸⁽²⁷⁾

Thus, according to Thalheimer²⁸, democracy, Bonapartism and fascism are (gradually distinct) faces of the same form of political domination in capitalism: bourgeois domination. However, this alone is not enough to demonstrate what fascism is capable of in terms of the hatred it foments.

Compared to neo-fascism, the institutional appearances are different, but the mechanism remains exactly the same. In 21st century^e neo-fascism, there is no need to change the political regime to a dictatorship, as in the case of 20th century^f fascism. The political domination of financial capital and the role played by the institutions of globalized capital have already made it possible for capitalist sociability to advance to every corner of the planet. This is enough to make the moments of political regime inflection in traditional dictatorships meaningless. After all, in actuality, we are already living under the absolute dictatorship of capital! With a largely weakened international workers' movement, a left subservient to post-modern neoliberal progressivism and

^e One question that always comes up is: 'Was there neo-fascism in the 20th century?' There are a multitude of answers to this question that necessarily depend on the assumptions that constitute the broad scientific disagreement about the category of 'fascism' and that are reproduced in the category of 'neo-fascism' - as explained at the beginning of the section: The problem of the category of 'fascism' in this article. In addition, there was a debate within Marxist Dependency Theory, also permeated by much dissent, about whether or not there was neo-fascism in Latin America. This last point will be dealt with specifically in the second article of this triptych.

^f Especially in the case of Brazil, in relation to the 2016 coup against President Dilma Rousseff, it might seem questionable to make this claim. Coups, for the most part, are almost always attempts to break up a political regime (from democracies to dictatorships and vice versa, just to take this simplest example). However, *coups d'état* in the 21st century have not necessarily been at this level of rupture. They are passive coups, without the use of explicit force - but with strong military support - which use legal form/legality to remove democratically elected leaders who are dysfunctional to the process of capitalist accumulation, while maintaining the democratic façade of the institutions. In other words, there is no regime change (even if there is a desire to do so), but it is often not so necessary given the level of consensus that capitalism has acquired in its universalizing advance since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

a strongly dissipated political-radical imagination, the bourgeoisie doesn't necessarily need to make substantial efforts at regime change, since the necessary force that a dictatorship could impose is already being applied on a daily basis. What's worse, it's politically consensual - there seems to be no alternative to capitalism, and it's culturally naturalized that human beings are selfish by nature. Thus, capitalism is the only way to exist^g.

Thus, while old-fashioned “declared” fascism was the most authoritarian expression of capitalism in times of crisis, today it no longer works in this way, with the exception of rare experiences where that same fascism seems to return^h. Neo-fascism today is a strange and unlikely combination of two things that appear contradictory: neo-liberalismⁱ and neo-authoritarianism^{j29}. The expression of the new fascism, that is, this fusion of neo-liberalism and neo-authoritarianism, is sustained by the updating of this dyad in the State apparatus. Thus, the authoritarianism inherent in capitalism is not very authoritarian, generating a polyphony of discourses denying neo-fascism and a lot of deliberate confusion in the scientific world^k. Many scientists, mostly based on positivist understandings, expect an automatic “replication” of interwar fascism in the present day, becoming biased to the phenomenon. If we don't pay critical attention to these points, it is at this moment that the great triumph of the neo-fascists occurs.³⁰

Social class relations in fascism expose the leading role of the middle classes as its main ideological propagators. In neo-fascism, this is no different. The feeling of ownership combined with the aspirations of a typical bourgeois life make the middle layers (or middle classes^l)^{31,32} want a change of life, and the crisis of capital is seen as an opportunity and not as a problem (even though there are concrete material losses for this class). As Ribera characterizes:³³

^g It is important to emphasize that this does not exclude class struggle. This argument might seem to suggest that capital is being totalized in a way that extinguishes its contradictions. On the contrary, this should not provide an idea of defeatism, as if everything were already dominated and there were no experiences, even if spontaneous, of struggle against class exploitation. If fascism is advancing, it is because the working class's struggle is putting pressure on capital.

^h As is the case of Myanmar, for example.

ⁱ Understood as new forms of freedom in terms of the market and in political terms.

^j Understood as new forms of political repression with a certain degree of market protectionism.

^k It is about a (neoliberal) freedom increasingly restricted to the 'free' movement of goods and a (neo-authoritarian) coercion increasingly aimed at taming rebellious aspirations so that they 'fit' into the logic of accumulation, that is, so that they produce value. This appearance of the phenomenon, as much as it may make sense, obscures the essential: capital is authoritarian by nature. Therefore, to speak of capitalism is to speak of authoritarianism. Thus, there is nothing strange or unlikely about this.

^l Petty bourgeoisie is a term that describes the middle class in Marxism, since the idea of a "middle" class would not make much sense when discussing the category of 'class.' Therefore, Marxism prefers the term "middle strata" of classes, precisely because these classes (and not just one) tend to converge politically and ideologically through a very diffuse mix of political interests and worldviews. Broadly speaking, they try to imitate the consumption patterns and

As an ideological construction, fascism corresponds to the ideology of the middle class or, rather, to the specific segment that Marxism characterizes as the petty bourgeoisie. In other words, not all middle classes, which is a concept that corresponds more closely to the level of income and therefore to the social relations of distribution or consumption, but those whose position in this social stratum comes from their position in society. [...]. Because they own the means of production and employ wage labor, they are closer to the condition of the bourgeoisie, but because of their scarce capital, the few wage earners they employ, their daily contact with them and their personal participation in the work, they would be closer to the situation of the workers.³³⁽⁶⁰⁹⁾

This is how small landowners, rentiers, merchants, liberal professionals, white-collar workers, civil servants and bureaucrats of all kinds - even some intellectuals and artists - allow themselves to be seduced by fascism (they become easily *fascistized*). Another specific segment of this social sector that is massively mobilized by fascism is made up of the employees of the coercive apparatus: police officers, judges, soldiers and judicial officials. Because of their social function and class ideology, they tend to sympathize with the counter-revolutionary and reactionary postulates of fascism. Generally, they are first-rate collaborators in guaranteeing impunity for their aggressions and acts of violence, depriving their victims of the possibility of appealing to law enforcement agents or judicial bodies, where fascism's sympathizers and militants predominate. In the countryside, fascism will succeed in uniting not only the big landowners, but also many medium-sized landowners and peasants who own small plots. They are convinced by the anti-union and anti-communist rhetoric, in a situation where the struggle of day laborers and agricultural proletarians for demands is on the rise. They are also seduced by the imperialist discourse of territorial expansion that fascism proclaims.³³

Fascism also recruits among those whom Marxism describes as the **labor aristocracy**^{34m}, either because they are slightly better paid or, above all, because they occupy positions of control or direction. These are the store managers and foremen, promoted from the bottom up, who often behave despotically towards their former colleagues. Those workers who were previously silent and passive, often viewed with suspicion, will now dare from their new fascist militancy to shout against the agitators and enemies of the country. They offer a precious opportunity to weaken class organizations, break their unity and prepare the conditions for the promotion of corporatism or

tastes of the traditional bourgeoisie. However, this term has also become, in popular usage, a qualifier for a social group that holds a reductive, prejudiced, or narrow-minded worldview.

^m The labor aristocracy—doctors, lawyers, engineers. Imperial professions typical of modernity.³⁴

vertical unionism.³³ It is also essential to say that the lineages that think they are **noble** and the bourgeoisie will collaborate with fascism, giving it strong funding, but almost always behind the scenes and avoiding appearing publicly so as not to be 'identified with the movement'. The anti-bourgeois rhetoric of fascism is even “apparently socialist” in its early stages, but it doesn't exactly help to overcome the reluctance of the ruling class, which, however, will not hesitate to use it as an instrument to save its positions of power threatened by the imminent proletarian revolution.ⁿ³³

From the point of view of the long-angle course of history, fascism is linked to a necessary pattern of political articulation between the center and the periphery of the capitalist world^o. The probability (or improbability) of eliminating it lies in “revolutionary nationalism” or “revolutionary socialism”, two realities that are in short supply in a historical scenario sclerosed by strongly pro-imperialist national bourgeoisies and sterilized directly or indirectly by the pressures of the central capitalist countries themselves.³⁵ Thus, when discussing fascism in Latin America - even interwar fascism! -the debate on the subject tends to fall into two areas. Let's see.

The first area is related to the historical legacies of fascism from Europe in Latin America. At this point, there is an emphasis by researchers on examining the question of the influence of fascism, distinguishing it from the historical experience of the Mussolini regime as an international model, exalting fascist ideology as a political philosophy of universal cultural aspiration adapted to *pan-Latinism*. These studies end up insisting on comparisons of so-called **fascist** phenomena with **imitations** or surface phenomena - whether institutional, movement or military - of phenomena that are close or similar. These studies come to conclusions, sometimes apologetic towards fascism, claiming that by not identifying the difference between the **original** fascist ideology - that of the documents or rhetoric - and the ones that were actually made, this would generate a lot of confusion and misinterpretation.³⁶ These types of analyses, however welcome they may be, tend to fall into a strongly culturalist perspective of understanding the fascist phenomenon. By emphasizing what the fascist group says it is, what it proclaims or even what it suggests in its letters and statements, it tends to hide fascist practice from its class position and its

ⁿ It is worth emphasizing, as historical materiality, for example: the legitimacy of Jair Messias Bolsonaro's government built on his (apparently) anti-system rhetoric, with the appearance of criticism of bourgeois institutionalization through its mechanisms of consensus.

^o This is a highly controversial statement within Marxism that sparks a debate that cannot be fully addressed here. However, for the sake of a very brief clarification, there is a thesis that argues for a relationship between fascism as a form of advancement of capitalist social structures (both in the center, but with much greater intensity in the periphery), to the point that, in peripheral countries, fascist practices would be so ingrained in the daily fabric of social interactions that they become naturalized.

struggle for hegemony, diminishing its counter-revolutionary role and ultimately generating conclusions of a normalizing nature.

However, what is found in these studies on fascism in Latin America is the same for neo-fascism, only this time to a much higher degree. Culturalist analyses of neo-fascism in Latin America, broadly speaking, take two main courses: one that follows an explanation that falls back on some kind of post-modernism - it's a problem of discourse, rhetoric, identity or fascist representation. Or another course, which argues that the problem simply doesn't exist, since what is presented in Latin America is not fascism, but a certain type of 'new authoritarianism' of the State - as if in Latin America the tradition of the capitalist State wasn't authoritarian in itself, and as if capitalism wasn't either in its essence.

The second point concerns the imposing influence of the Communist Parties (CP) in Latin America and, in particular, the influence of the Russian CP and the III International on the interpretation of fascism in Latin America^p. Gonzalez³⁷ proves this by analyzing the practices of certain CPs in the region. In the case of Chile, for example, it was stated that:

[...] the first turn of the Latin American Communist Parties in Latin America in relation to the thesis of the frontal struggle against the bourgeoisie and imperialism occurred around 1935, when the thesis of the popular fronts began to apply with the subsequent rejection of Trotskyist ideas [...]. This is the case of the Chilean Communist Party in 1938, which in the text 'The Popular Front in Chile', signed by its general secretary, Carlos C. Labarca, maintains that the revolutionary struggle is a struggle for "democratic freedoms" and against imperialism, a reaction that took the form of fascism. According to this document, in order to carry out this struggle, an alliance is needed in which communists, Catholics, certain bourgeois groups and intellectuals are present. In addition, it is a question of having a policy of "good neighborliness" with the United States, which means that legality must be respected by all those who [...], in the fight against fascism, opted for democracy [our translation].³⁷⁽⁹⁾

According to Gonzalez,³⁷ this is the tone that reverberated, making this way of thinking about fascism reach all the places where the CP had some influence. The case of the Cuban Communist Party in 1939 went in the same direction. The author reports that, for the Cuban CP, Fulgencio Batista was seen as a defender of progressive and democratic tendencies and that, as head of the American Fascist Front in formation, he was attacked by the anti-fascist reaction. The

^p The III Communist International (1919–1943)—also known as the Comintern—was an international organization founded by Vladimir Lenin and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik) in March 1919 to unite the communist parties of different countries.

Argentine Communist Party, in 1939, was also part of this trend. For this communist leader, the politically reactionary - fascism - must be swept away by the democracy that will flourish with the rise of young, progressive and revolutionary forces. A democratic government is one that relies on the broad masses against the reactionary oligarchies. In Latin America, democracy cannot be implemented in one swoop, as this requires basic economic and social conditions. In this sense, the most important thing would be political democracy. And for this, it would require the formation of a liberal national bourgeoisie. Moreover, the popular masses were aware that there could be no anti-imperialist - anti-fascist - struggle without a related struggle for democracy. The latter would have to make room for broad sectors of the population who wished to engage in it.³⁷

At the end of the 1930's, when the attraction of October 1917 began to fade, Stalin led the anti-fascist struggle with which the liberating spirit of the Russian communists was recovered with unusual force. In short, Stalinist anti-fascism has two very different phases: in the first, which practically covers the 1930's, Stalin promotes the critique of fascism⁹, but in fact maintains rapprochement with Hitler, to the point of signing the German-Soviet pact (1939) in which he undertakes not to attack the USSR militarily. This situation leads to confusion in some communist circles and among some militants, who don't understand the alliance between the enemies of humanity and its saviors. However, everyone ends up accepting the Stalinist criticisms and appeals against fascism, overlooking the fact that the rapprochement between the two leaders completely contradicts the calls to fight the Nazis formulated from the top of Soviet power. The second phase was the frontal and deadly attack on Nazifascism, which resulted in its military annihilation.³⁷

Nowadays, the influence of the CPs in the public debate on politics - even electoral politics - is practically non-existent. With the end of the USSR, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the advance of mass procedural democracies, the effect of the Communist Parties in the world has disappeared. There is not enough evidence today that communist organizations have any relevance in the contest for the electorate,³⁸ for the youth³⁹ or even for fractions of the working class.⁴⁰ The historical mistakes of the real socialism experienced in the USSR have exacted an inestimable price on future generations, to the point of completely blurring the communist horizon. The option of reviving the socialist debate and the possibility of other ways of producing has cooled its discourse, making

⁹ It is also worth highlighting the criticisms that Trotsky and Zetkin made of the theory of social-fascism led by Stalin and later by Dimitrov. Pachukanis also offers some critiques. Although the focus of this article is on Latin America, it is worth remembering these classic authors.

any word that departs from the term communism tolerable. Thus, one of the ways out for the global left has been to prevaricate discursively through agendas^r that claim to be socialist or anti-capitalist. Another way out, in Latin American territory, was to make social reforms the possibility of some kind of socialization under the tutelage of the capitalist state, reminiscent of the most **advanced** way of conducting the struggle for the state in 20th century Europe, but with the contradictions and incompleteness typical of heterogeneous social formations and inconclusive capitalist sociability^s.

In this scenario, in Latin America, any kind of political proposal aimed at socializing goods, technologies or social rights is seen as a “communist threat”. Even if it's something tiny within the capitalist order, which sometimes doesn't present anything threatening - but rather conciliatory - it is understood by the Latin American bourgeoisie as an enemy that must be eliminated beforehand. This is how the neo-fascist tendency of the bourgeois fractions and their fascist counterparts ideologically drag down feelings, desires and expectations. Crisis situations are ideal for these fascist ideas to flourish and reach other audiences. But, of course, these ideas are not generated by the crisis. In Latin America, they are genetically ingrained in our social formation. Unlike Europe, in Latin America we always have the specter of fascism lurking, but not necessarily formalized in groups or parties, not expressed specifically in dictatorships or movements, but in the desperate desire of a subaltern bourgeoisie to keep itself separate from poverty. A bourgeoisie that only grows in association with foreign capital and that doesn't budge an inch from its class status because it knows it has been artificially forged. The Latin American subaltern bourgeoisie is not a bourgeoisie that fought for liberal freedom but received it as an imposition in order to keep property in its hands. Its social position is a lifelong debt, which it makes a point of paying in advance because it is not willing to lose or “step down” from its class position under any circumstances.

THE LATIN AMERICAN DEBATE: CENTRAL CATEGORIES

^r Agendas that fit within capitalism, not societal projects.

^s The word "unfinished," from a Latin American perspective, is an unfortunate term. This is because the condition of 'incompleteness' is always compared to a condition of 'completeness'—which takes as its benchmark the economic, political, and ideological conditions of central capitalist countries. This word conveys the idea—erroneous, in our view—that Latin America "lacks" development. Certainly, this depends on which parameters and purposes one considers something to be 'developed' or 'undeveloped.' It is common for researchers on fascism, particularly those of Latin American nationalities, to fall into the 'European gaze' on the issue, reproducing it. Therefore, its use requires caution.

In both Latin American fascism and neo-fascism, certain categories must be analyzed with great care. For a critical Marxist analysis of these political phenomena in Latin America, five central categories must be reviewed from the reality of the specific social formations in each country. Furthermore, they must be analyzed in conjunction with the history of the Latin American geo-economic bloc and its insertion into the constituted world economy, if adequate precision is desired. These are the 'State', 'democracy', 'domestic characteristics', 'ideology' and 'anti-communism'.

As far as the State category is concerned, statism in Latin America has always implied an admiration for an authoritarian and corporative State which, theoretically, would solve political-economic crises and be the “engine” of social development. This commitment to the State is partly the result of developmentalist theories that assume the neutrality of the State and that consider this *Statehood* to be sufficient - when based on developmentalist policies - to guide the nation to prosperity. In this understanding, economic success would depend on a **strong State**^t, which would transcend social conflict by repressing the actors who foment class struggle and incorporating those considered truly nationalists^u and concerned with improving the nation's political-legal and corporate institutions.⁴¹

It is under this developmentalist-statist^v conception that Latin American fascism sought to promote a strong and authoritarian corporatist state as the regulator of social life^w.⁴² This system rejected party politics and other institutional mediations typical of representative bourgeois democracy. Instead, corporatist social bodies were the vehicles for social integration within the organic entity of the nation, a measure taken to avoid conflicts based on the regulated political participation of the population. Trade unions, universities, the Church and the Armed Forces are some of the actors and spaces summoned for the construction of the fascist nation-State, which, paradoxically and unlike European cases, did not constrain democracy, but expanded it, generating an amalgam between 'democratic advance' and 'tutored incorporation'. Thus, in functional terms,

^t It is at this point that the idea of a strong State quickly becomes mistaken as an authoritarian State.

^u It is here that the role of 'nationalisms' is redirected from a revolutionary perspective to a reactionary one.

^v We do not ignore that the foundation of the economic thought that gave rise to the ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) developmentalist theses already considers the State, in Latin America, as responsible for the industrializing push that, in theory, would lift the region out of "backwardness." However, to make the role of the (capitalist) State even clearer, we resort to the term we coined: 'developmentalist-statist.' We also rely on the idea that development (as an arbitrary term) requires a qualifier. Develop 'what'? In which direction? We ultimately understand that a Latin American development is possible without the role of the capitalist State, and this should occur in the direction of developing another mode of production based on autonomy and anti-statism.

^w A controversial case, and one still lacking extensive historiographical data, is that of the Vargas Era in Brazil.

peripheral fascism is a new space of representation and inclusion for those excluded from the system who, when included, aim to reproduce the rites, processes and institutional order, rather than break it.⁴¹

Thus, those who are included but rebel against the State - a tiny minority - are considered ungrateful or “traitors”. It is then legitimately up to the State to clean out the traitors, as they are identified as enemies of the nation, which is why violence takes on a sacred character. This is why, in peripheral fascisms, exalting violence as an action in a revolutionary and purifying sense is a symbolic mechanism that is often recovered. For the fascists who lead the State, the meaning of “revolutionary” is evoked as the maximum expression of the political will to change injustices. The sense of “purifying” emerges as an attempt to use the State to **redeem** society from its **original sins** - recognized as a place of mestizos, deserters and stateless people - with the aim of homogenizing it. State violence then becomes a **liberating** tool against the evils responsible for national decline. Communism and national or ethnic-religious minorities become the 'scapegoats' responsible for national backwardness and whose presence must be eliminated.⁴¹

In both Europe and Latin America, paramilitarism was established as a basic organization of fascism aimed both at incorporating the masses into the nationalist project and as an instrument for achieving the purification of violence. The formation of paramilitary units is a symptom of the fascists' concern to build a social base to legitimize their projects, contrary to the conservative oligarchy's fear of the masses. Within the organizational structure of these groups, it was a priority to establish militias that, through demonstrations of force and violence, would express the will to transform the decadent nation. Paramilitary violence emerges as the means that articulates violence at the social level, allowing for the reorganization of social relations based on the unification of the 'we' and the annihilation of the 'other'. We must not lose sight of the fact that the struggle for hegemony that fascism waged was not only political, but also cultural, due to its desire to build a new world.

The “hard core” of Latin American fascism was made up of a series of elements inherited from oligarchic conservatism and the critical sense of the times of liberalism and communism^x. Nationalism in Latin America excluded those classified as enemies of colonial historical values

^x Integralism in Brazil was one of the most significant cases.

and traditions reminiscent of the classical European past^y. Thus, the defense of a strong and corporative statism was closely linked to nationalism as a means of overcoming social conflict, perceived as one of the notable consequences of the evils that modernity has produced with its questioning of order and hierarchies, principles that in conservative thinking are the creators of cohesion and harmony in the community.⁴¹

There is one last characteristic of the **State** category when we think of Latin American fascism. The State becomes the space where the political trajectories of various characters who will become notable figures on the Latin American right and left over the years - including the Cold War - begin. The fascist experiences represented a communicating vessel between two eras, marked by the radicalization of politics, ideologies and the worsening of violence, the latter expressed in the armed struggles of the revolutionary left and the complex systems of annihilation devised by the State and the conservative sectors that supported them. These conversions to political terrain that, in the abstract, are seen as irreconcilable, invite us to think about the fact that the right and the left have common ideological elements that allow them to build bridges between them, recurring in the fact that in those years they were united by hatred of the oligarchy, economic nationalism and the need to strengthen the State.⁴¹

When we think about the category 'democracy' and its relationship with fascism, we need to bear in mind what is meant by democracy. Roughly speaking, democracy can be understood from its expression as a **political regime** - democracy as an electoral procedure, translated by periodic universal suffrage - which is, therefore, a narrower view. Or in a broader sense, in which it is recognized as a **social democracy** - broad participation by the social classes in everyday institutional decisions and access to the system of constitutional guarantees on a daily and complete basis, routinely experiencing them in the form of social rights.

Both meanings of democracy become highly threatened/restricted or 'suspended' in times of fascism. However, what appears as the Latin American specificity of democracy in times of fascism concerns the link to party mediations between State and society in order to operationalize democracy. In the narrow sense of democracy, one of its objectives was to try to build 'mass parties'

^y This persists to this day. Who doesn't know someone in Latin America, especially from the middle class, who highlights their European lineage as a way to elevate their family in terms of tradition? For example, the European surnames of part of the Brazilian middle class point in this direction, and it is very common in social sectors easily prone to fascistization—universities, the judiciary, among others—to appeal to European tradition as a way to awaken a nationalism that mimics this history.

capable of participating in the electoral field with the aim of expanding their social base at a national level. This difficulty was due to the fact that the incursion of Latin American fascism into electoral (and therefore party) politics could not be as eugenic as it had been in Europe, since Latin America's mixed society would contradict their discourse, as well as disapproving of the inclusion of so-called "subaltern" social classes in party democracy. This is a good example of their specificities in relation to European cases, as a result of the dilemmas they faced over whether or not to enter the representation mechanisms of the institutional-liberal political system that they so repudiated.⁴¹

In the expanded sense of democracy, in Latin American fascisms, the notion of democracy is embodied and updated (and constantly reproduced) in the connection between **class totalitarianism, national salvation (or defense of order)** by autocratic, reactionary and violent means, and **institutional revolution** (in other words, a double counter-revolutionary action, which unfolds simultaneously, in fact, against democracy and, nominally, against communism^z).³⁵ This is why fascism presents itself as a reaction. Fascism was able to triumph because of the ineptitude of democratic governments, stuck in this impasse. It was a response to the crisis, a reaction to democracy's inability to respond to the transformation that society needed to overcome the critical situation.⁴ This is why, once again, in Latin American countries, the democracy-fascism relationship is even closer than in central capitalist countries, while it is possible to say that, in countries, where the colonial route was used to transform sociability towards capitalism, the constitution of the State-society relationship tends to degenerate more easily into fascism than in places where the transition via active bourgeois revolution was better consolidated.

Another necessary category in the debate on Latin American fascisms is what is considered to be the 'domestic characteristics' of each country. Since fascism is an exceptional feature of bourgeois rule, as a State form of a certain configuration of class relations, it has tended to be interpreted in a **formalistic way** by the left. This led to an understanding that fascism in Latin

^z This happens because, in regions where bourgeois legal institutions are not yet well consolidated and were not the result of the political struggle of a revolutionary bourgeoisie, but rather of a process of "*aggiornamento*" (updating or re-presentation), the advancement of democratization in institutions sounds like a threat to the bourgeoisie's power, since, for them, the State is their "patrimony." In other words, the constitutive blend between 'domestic unit' and 'production unit,' which gave rise to Latin American States (especially the Brazilian one), demonstrates the persistence of the patrimonial logic of the State by the bourgeoisie. This means that any attempts to democratize this institution are "ideologically" framed as socialist or communist actions in discourse. However, in reality, it is a sophisticated form of blocking bourgeois democratic institutionalization, which today translates into limited access to higher education for subaltern classes, limited access for women to party mandates, and so on.

American countries was something that could be reproduced in any capitalist social formation, regardless of its degree of development. Thus, as Borón states,⁴³ some works considered, for example, that the regimes established by Somoza in Nicaragua in 1928; Trujillo in the Dominican Republic in 1929; Stroessner in Paraguay in 1953; and Duvalier in Haiti in 1953, could be a certain type of “primary fascism”, which was:

[...] likely to flourish in archaic societies during the initial period of crisis of the system of North American domination in Latin America, while in the more advanced countries of capitalist development it can be seen that the resolution of this crisis generated what is known as “neo-fascism”, that is, a more elaborate and modern fascism such as that which occurred in Brazil (1964), Uruguay (1972), Bolivia (1973), Chile (1973), and that which is trying to impose itself in Argentina and other countries in the midst of bloody battles against democratic forces [our translation]. ⁴³⁽⁴⁸⁾

Let's see: these dictatorships, which have been addressed by various different nomenclatures (“dependent fascism”, “neo-fascism”, “bureaucratic-authoritarian”, “nationalism”, “bureaucratic-military dictatorships”, etc.) are situated in a different phase of the evolution of capitalist monopoly, which bears absolutely no resemblance to the phase of imperialist capitalism characterized by Lenin. Even though Lenin was correct in his analysis at the time, the changes produced in capitalist accumulation after 1970 affected both the system's metropolises - mainly the United States - and its peripheries. First of all, it is worth mentioning the emergence of the large transnational conglomerate, whose internal complexity and dimensions are unprecedented in the previous history of capitalism. For example, monopoly corporations are emerging in the economy as self-sufficient units to guarantee the process of accumulation, which substantially modifies the role attributed to banking capital. Also: the international conglomerates have developed certain schemes for organizing the production process, which, although they don't immunize them against the cyclical depressions of capitalism, certainly significantly reduce their vulnerability to the cycle. By diversifying the branches in which the multinational uses its productive capacity, it also reduces the risks that can arise from a contraction in demand in a given sector. Thus, for example, 236 of the 1,000 largest US corporations in 1962 produced between 16 and 50 types of products, the nature of which covered a very broad spectrum of goods, ranging from desserts, cookies and sliced bread to nuclear technology and electronic telecommunications equipment. In addition, multinational corporations maximize the profitability of their operations by participating in very dynamic markets and on a world stage where, combined with their immense monopolistic character, they possess a financial mass whose volume could not even be

dreamed of by the classics of Marxism. This allows them to withstand the impacts of capitalism's chronic depressions and recessions without major losses.⁴³

In short, we are facing changes that make it necessary to update the ways in which monopoly capital operates in the last quarter of the 20th century, which, in terms of considering a 'major crisis' that would provide the necessary ground for the emergence of fascism - as happened between the wars - was not the case in Latin America. These changes in the pattern of accumulation allowed them to strongly counteract the downward trend in the rate of profit, obtaining super-profits in certain branches and countries in which these companies operated and managing prices within the framework of a global oligopolistic system.⁴³ Therefore, when examining fascism in Latin America, it is essential to consider the domestic characteristics, including the economic dynamics of the region in relation to the capitalist world, in order to avoid errors in analysis. We will return to this point later.

A fourth category should also be viewed with great caution when studying fascism in Latin America. This is what is considered to be fascist "ideology". Fascism as an ideology, or even fascism as an ideology and utopia that persisted on the horizon, both diffusely and as a powerful organized political force, as Florestan Fernandes points out.³⁵ From a sociological point of view, a new manifestation of fascism tends to take hold whenever major crises of capitalism emerge, but in Latin America, they use a process of ideologization that is different from that of central capitalist countries. In Latin America, fascist ideologization appeals to the palingenetic traits of Latin American societies through the defense of more or less open or hidden tendencies, of a "strong" industrial version of pluralist democracy that contains internal fascist structures and dynamisms.³⁵ This goes back much more to the role of Latin American authoritarianisms than necessarily to the contents of Italian fascism or German Nazism, which means that, in Latin American lands, the fascist encyclicals chanted in speeches or versed in documents by European fascists are not exactly the ones used for capitalist restoration in the Global South.

Finally, all this is not dissociated from the 'anti-communism' that serves as a justification for adherence to fascist ideology. In the discourse of "Avoiding new Cubas", eliminating "Castro-Chavismo" or even "protecting the nation from communist evil", the anti-communist discourse, in fact, aims to yield a project of a **secure** and **established** periphery, so that capitalism becomes the central target of the composite (internationalized and imperialized) pattern of domination of bourgeois political power. The confluence of these processes has given the dependent and

powerless bourgeoisies of Latin America an active and considerable role in the capitalist counter-revolution, rather than a **siege of communism**, both of which are global in scope, and has brought, in return, a clear intensification of the tendencies towards the fascistization of the state, supported by police-military and political advice, material or human resources and external strategies (as part of global modernization).³⁵

THE CATEGORY OF 'NEO-FASCISM' OR 'NEW-TYPE FASCISM'

Unlike what Bull¹⁴ says about the category of neo-fascism in the post-1945 period, we argue that the category of 'neo-fascism' is as plural as its expressions that have spread around the world, and that it is therefore dangerous not to use a qualifier with this category, at the risk of generating even more confusion than analytical precision. Thus, while classic fascism took on a European version - original: Italy and Germany; and derivative: Spain, Portugal, among others - and a Latin American version - stemming from the geopolitical expansionist ambition of European fascism - neo-fascism is a multiple plurality that does not necessarily relate to its fascist past in terms of historical continuity, but which, yes, can be an original phenomenon in certain countries and with much broader scope that goes beyond the continuist understanding.

Only in this way does Fernandes³⁵ statement make sense when he talks about the decline of Latin American fascisms and the persistence of the defense of capitalism in the region, leaving the fascist reasoning of the sociability of capital on this side of the world understated:

[despite the fact that] fascism has lost salience, [it] has not lost its instrumental character for the defense of capitalism and the crisis of capitalist industrial civilization. Latin America has all been involved in this trend, but as a “periphery”. Not that the tragedy of the center becomes the comedy of the periphery. On the contrary, the melancholy reality of the center becomes the dirty reality of the periphery.³⁵⁽¹⁶⁾

This is why Fernandes³⁵ says that a new type of fascism linked to the characteristics of dependent capitalism could occur if necessary for the accumulation process, given the specificities of Latin social formations and their bourgeois institutions. It is therefore important to emphasize the Latin American discussion of neo-fascism that has been attributed by authors from this region.

Therefore, starting from the premise that fascism as a political regime, due to its historical and class character, “is a regime of exception of big business, using terrorist methods as its main form of action”,⁴⁴⁽¹⁴³⁾ García *et al*⁴⁴ see it as linked not only to the era of imperialism, but specifically to its crisis. The European fascism of the 1920's and 1930's is, for him, a product of

the great depressive wave from 1918 to 1945: these crisis situations “are the ones that force the ruling class, and in the specific case of the imperialist era, financial capital, to seek a ‘regime of exception’ to prevent the consequences of the imbalance of revolutionary conjunctures that crises establish”.⁴⁴⁽¹⁴⁴⁾ From 1966 onwards, imperialism would once again enter a great wave of depression, ushering in a period marked not just by isolated counter-revolutions, but a “period that tends to amplify international counter-revolutionary waves”.⁴⁴⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ In this sense, fascism is not a national problem - despite having its own domestic characteristics - but an international phenomenon, inextricably linked to the dynamics of the international crisis of capitalist accumulation and the rising temperature of the class struggle.⁴⁵ This being the case, Latin America would inevitably experience a fascist wave once again if necessary. It therefore makes more sense to think of 'fascism and neo-fascism', whether European or Latin American, in a totalizing way.

In this logic of thinking of a 'central neo-fascism' and a 'dependent neo-fascism', Bambirra and Santos⁴⁶ identify in the regimes of exception in the subcontinent 'essential aspects'⁴⁶⁽¹⁷¹⁾ of fascism as a political regime in general, which authorizes them to designate such historical expressions as fascist, albeit under the adjective of dependent due to the particular, non-essential aspects. They are therefore distinguished from both traditional military regimes and Bonapartist regimes. The essential aspects of fascism are the following, according to these authors: 1) “the need to desperately defend the capitalist system against the ‘subversion of order’ by the dominated classes”⁴⁶⁽¹³⁸⁾. This is a counter-revolution in the face of the real or potential threat of an offensive by the popular movement; 2) “the need to systematically and ruthlessly repress the popular movement, to destroy revolutionary organizations [...]. Repression becomes unscrupulous, undeterred by democratic vehemence” [our translation]⁴⁶⁽¹³⁸⁾; 3) Repression becomes totalitarianism, “the concept of citizenship and civil society separated from the state disappears”.⁴⁶⁽¹³⁸⁾ The ideology of the State is sought to be internalized in the most recondite spaces of private life, through the militarization of the whole of social life, especially with the education of the new generations.⁴⁵

Therefore, in new fascisms, especially in unfinished bourgeois democracies, as in the case of Latin America, State coups are mechanisms that will be required more frequently. For Santos and Bambirra, the coup machinery in Latin America differs significantly from the classic processes

of fascism, with repercussions on the **State of exception**^{aa} that emerges from it. In classic fascism, the radicalized petty bourgeoisie becomes a social force represented by the fascist party, which is co-opted by big business during the process of fascistization, while maintaining ideological and organizational ties with its traditional base, which guarantees conditions for active support for the regime and permanent mobilization, especially of the petty bourgeoisie. In the case of Latin America, Santos states that the “petty bourgeoisie [...] proved to be insufficient to lead a fascist process”,⁴⁴⁽⁶²⁾ which made it incapable of forming a strong movement and a solid organization for the seizure of power.⁴⁵ “Today [...] it is big business that mobilizes the petty bourgeoisie in a fascist sense, using it as a mass instrument; [once it had] achieved the objectives of seizing power and destroying the liberal and popular opposition, it was immediately demobilized”.⁴⁴⁽¹⁴⁶⁾

It is along these lines that some researchers from the Marxist Theory of Dependency (TMD) characterize the Latin American States of exception of the 1960's and 1970's as neo-fascist or dependent fascist, because (similarly to European fascism of the 1920's and 1930's), they were the last resort of domination available to the bourgeoisie to safeguard capitalism besieged by a deep economic crisis and, above all, a revolutionary political crisis. Furthermore, dependent fascism - like classical fascism - would not only guarantee the survival of capitalism but would also lead it to a new form of accumulation, marked by the economic dominance of monopoly capital, and to a new form of political domination, expressed in the hegemony of big capital in the dominant bloc of each Latin American social formation. This group of researchers, in following this path, ends up adhering to the reading of the Third Communist International, sidelining the mass movement and the organization of the petty bourgeoisie in the concept of fascism, imprinting a particular “formal aspect”, the non-existence of which would not invalidate the qualification of fascist to the dictatorships established in the Southern Cone, in their opinion.^{45,47}

In trying to understand what guarantees neo-fascism its peripheral and therefore original character, it is possible to criticize Payne's thinking⁴⁸ and what this author refers to as '(neo)peripheral fascism'. Stanley Payne,⁴⁸ to explain the reasons for the fragility of fascist experiences in Latin America, outlines a series of reasons, including: low political mobilization,

^{aa} Executive democracy, delegative democracy, and false "State of exception" can be translated into Marxist terms as an approximation between these concepts. It refers to the extreme level of centralization in decision-making processes. The fatal preponderance of the executive branch and the practical prevalence of a "legal dictatorship" (or one legitimized only by the minority that constitutes civil society) foster an enormous ease in using the normal apparatus of bourgeois democracy as if it were a State of exception, or in quickly transitioning, through "emergency laws," to a State of siege, a redemptive dictatorship, and a state of exception characterized as such.

unlike in Europe; the non-competitive nature of nationalism, referring to the need for an external enemy to catalyze mobilization; the multiracial composition of Latin American societies, which obscured national identities in their claim to radical homogeneity; the fragility of the left, which served as an incentive, and the dependent economic condition of Latin American countries.⁴¹

We agree with Torre⁴¹ when he argues that Payne's interpretation of Latin American reality is limited by a Eurocentric view of history. In Latin America, a rather notorious exclusionary nationalism has developed in its discourses and practices, becoming competitive and militant by invoking the defense of the nation against external and internal enemies, putting the United States or Latin American countries with long-standing border conflicts first. Likewise, the role of the left at the time cannot be underestimated, as various repressive and authoritarian measures were intended to contain and eradicate them. To refer to Latin America's dependent capitalist condition is to condition fascist experiences solely on the economic aspect, running the risk of falling into a determinism that leaves aside socio-cultural imaginaries as a variable that gave them strength. As for the lack of political mobilization, it's enough to remember that the crisis of the liberal-oligarchic model, the context in which fascism emerged in **these parts**, was the result of its internal contradictions and a growing social effervescence that demanded greater participation and political inclusion, achieved in some cases through institutional reforms as a result of social pressure, as in the case of Argentina with the Sáenz Peña Law of 1912 and Yrigoyenism, or through violence and armed civil conflict, the paradigm of which at the time was the Mexican Revolution. It is therefore essential to refute the theses that deny or give a marginal role to fascism in Latin America, emphasizing that, at least, they are and have an original character. It is possible to say that there were **peripheral** fascist projects of a new kind, marked by a deeply nativist and exclusionary nationalism that sharpened the political tensions of the time. The condition of periphery is not adopted in a pejorative sense, but to highlight the fact that they are not entirely similar to European cases due to the conditions of the region, which, far from diminishing them, make them original phenomena.⁴¹

The deep roots of Latin American peripheral fascism can be found in the emergence of exclusionary nationalisms in the middle and end of the 19th century, a century marked by the difficult process of consolidating nation states. The elites of the time developed national projects that were discursively inclusive, but in practice were characterized by mechanisms of discrimination and exclusion typical of the contradictions of modernity, aimed at maintaining a

certain hegemony through the differentiation of the inferior and dehumanized other. In the most radical cases, they even called for their symbolic and physical death. This contradiction can be seen in the transition from the liberal project of a **civic nation** and a **civilized nation** to the aristocratic and exclusionary one of **oligarchic conservatism**, a model that will feed future peripheral fascist experiences by proposing that: what cannot be assimilated must be destroyed for the good of the countries in the process of modernization.⁴¹

The new type of Latin American peripheral fascism was born out of criticism of the oligarchy and its aristocratic vision of the world, which developed within conservatism itself, seeing within it a more militant stance and a popular discourse that sought to unite the excluded masses around a new national project. The emergence of this new phenomenon stemmed from the need to confront the dilemmas of the time, which is why they had a great sensitivity, as well as a concern for national and social problems that had hitherto been neglected. The projects of this nationalist right were driven by a global context that was critical of liberalism and found in fascism a guiding model for solving national problems.⁴¹

The hybridity of Latin American fascism forces us to analyze the **hard core** of its thought and practices from its structural foundations, which can be divided into two fields: the constitutive elements that it shared with other world experiences and the specific ones that gave it its local originality. For the first, it is possible to perceive and observe fascism as a global ideology easily applicable to Latin America. The guiding themes formulated by this ideology that are seen in Latin America are nationalism, statism, the importance of social conflict, cleansing and paramilitarism.⁴¹

The furious nationalism of the Latin American fascists appeared when they questioned the liberal-cosmopolitan positions of the oligarchies, who looked abroad for the contributions of civilizing progress as the disastrous result of leading nations down the path of liberal decadence. This pessimistic view of the world reinforced the defense of the organicist paradigm of the nation and of justice in the fight against the ills from which it suffered. Chile's National Socialist Movement (MNS) offers a good example of this. Its nationalism was permeated by the pessimistic theses expressed by Oswald Spengler⁴⁹ in "The Decline of the West". In response, this movement set out to save the spirit of the Chilean nation from its unfortunate situation, for which it blamed a specific enemy: Jewish materialism. Latin American fascist nationalism differs from European cases in the diversity of elements that fed its nationalist discourses, thanks to the multiculturalism

that characterizes the region and which provided various foundations for building its organic and exclusive conception of nationhood.⁴¹

If we think about the relationship between dependent neo-fascism and the political regime, the tendency is that in Latin American neo-fascisms the regimes of 'oligarchy despotism' (through personal dictatorship or restricted democracy) are enough for this social class, because it has greater economic, social and political stability or because it has an “automatic surplus of arbitrary power”, can control the shift towards new political regimes, which equips them with police-military, “legal”, “extralegal”^{bb} and political resources to serve foreign interests without having to resort to extreme political rigidity or the overt fascistization of certain state structures and functions.³⁵ Therefore, the security of these interests, both economic and political, could be guaranteed spontaneously, but efficiently within the “normal” frameworks of the exacerbation of the authoritarian elements inherent in the established order, since this availability of a “reserve of arbitrary power” came up against definite pressures towards democratization.³⁵ What matters is that this “normal state” is not an example of bourgeois democracy in its absolute or “duly consolidated” sense, making us resort to two typically Latin American understandings of neo-fascism: 1) that consolidated (or high quality) bourgeois democracies in Latin American countries are exceptions, not the rule; 2) that this type of democracy experienced in Latin American countries is more akin to what Demier⁵⁰ calls 'armored democracy' for the working class than to a de facto social democracy. This inverts the rule-exception relationship in such a way that it is possible to say that, historically, in Latin America, the rule of bourgeois political domination is interruptions – coups^{cc,30,51} dictatorships - and the exception is moments of political domination through the **stability of** incomplete, armored (or low-quality) democracies.

For these reasons, it is possible to say that there is a fallacy surrounding the idea of dependent neo-fascism as something **light**. The historical data reported above does not allow us to say that. For this reason, adopting derisory concepts (such as **sub-fascism** or **pre-fascism**), apart

^{bb} Influence peddling, kinship, among others, as described by Miliband.

^{cc} When analyzing all the processes of coups and attempted coups in Latin America, as well as the rise of a peculiar new political current—neofascism—it is common to neglect two fundamental points: 1) the aesthetic dimension of the problem is ignored at all levels; 2) the objects of analysis are taken individually, rather than as part of the whole—whether analyzing a process in a specific country in isolation from others, or analyzing aspects of that process individually, even within a specific country. Carnut and Mendes, for example, argue that the political regime is central in shaping the State to readjust to the new accumulation pattern and, historically, in gradually shielding democracy by offering scenarios of restricted legitimacy regimes where political phenomena like coups help accelerate the required pace of these political transitions.

from being an analytical inaccuracy, doesn't change the gravity of reality at all. These and other names do not apply to the counter-revolution organized politically and militarily by dependent neo-fascism and its political implications, which are so complex and destructive that they are unprecedented, in terms of the combination of **genetic social dissimulation** and **systematic institutional violence**, anywhere in the world.³⁵

PARTIAL CONSIDERATIONS

So far, the similarities and differences between fascism and neo-fascism have been highlighted. Although these phenomena have undeniable similarities, historical times are definitely different. However, if we calmly identify the movements of society and its classes - in terms of struggle and domination - there is an internal logic that closely resembles them.

The categories that need to be revised in the context of Latin America to explain both fascism and neo-fascism emphasize how much the local reality must be considered in its own contradictions. Nevertheless, this was reflected in the criticisms made by Latin American Marxist authors - especially Fernandes and other TMD authors such as Bamberra and Santos - who defended the specificity of the phenomenon in the region. These authors opened up space for a critical analysis from a Latin American perspective - recovered here in Torre's critique of Payne - thus avoiding mechanical imports, but without disregarding the apprehension of the phenomenon within our condition of insertion in the capitalist world.

In the second article of this triptych, we will continue compiling the debate, but this time showing how the historical accumulation of this discussion will have repercussions on the controversial nature of the term neo-fascism for thinking about Latin America, making this category the heir to this dissent.

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