

Technofascism, maxiconfusion

Autonomie de class (A2C), France

Historian Robert O. Paxton, a specialist in fascism, laments that the term is used so indiscriminately that it has come to refer to “anyone you don’t like.”¹ To effectively combat the distinct phenomena of the radicalization of the ruling class and the fascist threat, we need effective tools. “Technofascism” is not one of them.

The analysis of fascism found in Norman Ajari’s book **Technofascism: The New Dream of White Supremacy** follows in the tradition of the concept of “late fascism” developed by Alberto Toscano. The idea is that fascism is the culmination of a process whereby repressive policies—which already exist but are reserved for the treatment of minorities, particularly racialized minorities—are extended to society as a whole.

“Technofascism”: The Billionaires’ Project.

For Ajari, one of the seeds from which a new form of fascism could be taking root is the major American tech companies, owned by far-right billionaires. These billionaires view their companies as political vehicles capable of transforming society, combining “a campaign to undermine the welfare state with the generation of substantial profit.”

The prime example is Peter Thiel, an American billionaire who openly admits to having invested in Lyft (a company similar to Uber) with the aim of “reshaping the labor market by eliminating the protections workers had enjoyed since the New Deal.” His company, Palantir, provides governments with tools for military and social control: monitoring welfare fraud in the United Kingdom, tracking undocumented immigrants in the United States, and assisting with military targeting for Israel.

These reactionary billionaires, with their authoritarian, imperialist, and racist political vision, would prefer to do without the people altogether, aiming solely to influence the state and the rest of the ruling class. A “fascism” without a party, without members, without a movement.

The trajectory of capital and the fascist threat

It is necessary to highlight, as Ajari does, the actions of a faction of the bourgeoisie that seeks to steer state policy in a direction favorable to increasing its profits. While we agree with his assessment, we reject his analysis.

Historically, in Europe, the political system that has proven most capable of ensuring stability for capitalism has been liberal democracy. However, in times of crisis, when profit rates fall, attacks on workers intensify; the use of coercive measures increases; imperialist tensions escalate; the economy becomes militarized; and capital draws closer to the state. It is this hardening of capitalism that Ajari analyzes as fascism.

This characterization is inaccurate. Fascist movements develop and operate through mass mobilization. While they take root in contexts of economic and political crisis, are reinforced by the authoritarian and racist policies of states, and are ultimately brought to power by them, they develop independently of the bourgeoisie and are not to be conflated with it.

In the United States, the fascist threat stems primarily from the existence of a mass movement centered around Donald Trump and the MAGA movement, as demonstrated by the storming of the Capitol on January 6, 2021. While certain billionaires play a significant supporting role, what propels Trump is a mobilizable militant base. A similar dynamic can be observed in France. Vincent Bolloré plays an important role, but the central danger lies in the Rassemblement national (RN), which seeks to build a mass base. As Robert O. Paxton points out, “whatever the exact nature of Trumpism may be, it is a mass phenomenon that comes from below. This is how Italian fascism and Nazism came into being. (...); focusing solely on its leaders prevents us from understanding the fertile ground in which it thrives.” It becomes clear, then, why it is mistaken to analyze the fascist threat through the lens of a few Silicon Valley billionaires. To view the current capitalist offensive as fascism is to risk overlooking the real fascist threat—which, yesterday as today, takes the form of a mass movement and must be fought as such.

Combating fascism effectively

In his conclusion, Ajari quotes Gramsci, who argued that “fascism, as a general phenomenon, can only be eradicated by a new state power in the hands of the proletariat, the only class capable of reorganizing production and thus all social relations.” Gramsci is right: the only way to get rid of fascism as a “general phenomenon” is to get rid of capitalism once and for all. But that does not address the current threat: fascist organizations are growing stronger until the ruling class, mired in crisis, decides to rely on them.

In the face of this possibility, we at A2C call for intensifying the struggle against racism—which provides fertile ground for fascists—and for building a broad and massive front against the RN and its street-level affiliates. Just as we did on May 9, let’s prevent them from gaining strength and taking to the streets by organizing a response in every neighborhood, workplace, and school.