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Liberalism and fascism in political scientists' assessments: the problem of the genesis of neo-fascism

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Abstract. The study analyzes the concepts of modern political scientists and economists about the phenomenon of the genesis of modern neo-fascism. One of the aspects of considering the genesis of modern fascism is the problem of liberal transit. Modern globalism and liberalism give rise to new forms of neo-fascism, which acts as a moment and stage of development of liberalism. Neo-fascism and liberalism are organically conditioned and semantically close in the idea of anthropological (racial), and therefore, country inequality. The study traces two contours of the formation and implementation of neo-fascism in the modern West. Internal — these are the crisis processes of liberal democracy, which is increasingly transformed into blatant manipulation of society. The external aspect of neo-fascist tendencies is manifested in the practice of neo-colonialism, the imposition of the will of Western countries on the non-Western world. The author identifies the key factors in the genesis of neo-fascism: the progressive growth of social inequality, the degradation of institutions of political democracy. The study examines the historical prerequisites for fascism that developed in the 1930s in the United States.

Keywords: capitalism, neoliberalism, globalism, postmodernism, anthropological inequality

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Либерализм и фашизм в оценках политологов: проблема генезиса неофашизма

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Аннотация. Проанализированы концепции современных политологов и экономистов о феномене генезиса современного неофашизма. Один из аспектов — проблема либерального транзита. Современный глобализм и либерализм порождают новые формы неофашизма, выступающие в качестве этапа развития либерализма. Неофашизм и либерализм органически обусловлены и семантически близки в идее антропологического (расового) и, следовательно, странового неравенства. Прослежены два контура становления и осуществления неофашизма на современном западе. Внутренний — это кризисные процессы либеральной демократии, которая все более трансформируется в неприкрытое манипулирование обществом. Внешний аспект неофашистских тенденций проявляется в практике неоколониализма, навязывании воли западных стран незападному миру. Рассмотрены исторические предпосылки фашизма, сложившиеся в 1930-е гг. в США. Обозначены ключевые факторы генезиса неофашизма: прогрессирующий рост социального неравенства, деградация институтов политической демократии.

Ключевые слова: капитализм, неолиберализм, глобализм, постмодернизм, антропологическое неравенство

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Introduction

The first quarter of the 21st century was marked by increased confrontation between Russia and Western countries. American political scientists present this tension as a struggle of Western liberal democracies against revanchist authoritarian regimes that dream of reformatting the world order “for themselves”. This opposition of “liberal democracy” to authoritarianism, however, has a distinct propagandistic character, characterized by a deliberate simplification of the problem. The modern political reality of the West is much more complicated — the trends of transformation of Western democracy are obvious, which is becoming more and more clearly its opposite. The very

concept of “political”, the very mechanisms of political life as a struggle for social interests, are giving way to the skillful manipulation of the masses, and the elites are so divorced from the basic social groups that the question of political representation of their interests is not worth it at all. In the context of the information society, political and ideological control is becoming more sophisticated. It is no coincidence that well-known political scientists are addressing the topic of the genesis of neo-fascism today. Thus, Immanuel Wallerstein predicts the emergence of “democratic fascism”, a new modification of fascism, a caste-like world, “the upper stratum of which would include perhaps a fifth of the world’s population” [1. P. 297].

Results

The modern French sociologist Eric Fassin states the onset of neo-fascism. “Today we are faced with familiar features of historical fascism — such as racism and xenophobia, of course, but also with blurring the boundaries between right and left, fascination with charismatic leaders and glorification of the nation, rejection of elites and glorification of the masses, contempt for the rule of law and a desire for violence, to name just a few.... I argue that it makes sense to talk about the ‘neo-fascist moment’ of neoliberalism” [2].

For this reason, discussing the topic of liberal transit from democracy to fascism is of fundamental importance for determining the trends that we observe in the West. For quite a long time, Russian political science believed that fascism was a kind of dead-end line of development, a deviation from social progress, and a manifestation of social pathology. An unbiased analysis of this socio-political and cultural phenomenon proves the fallacy of this view. “Fascism is not at all a dead-end branch of the development of modern society. In the 20th century, it was one of the leading political doctrines of world-historical significance... Fascism is a distinctive feature of modernity” [3. P. 11], states M. Mann.

The classification of signs proposed by him, in fact, follows the traditional Soviet formulations of fascism with only minor differences. For Mann, the basic features are nationalism, consisting of “devotion to the idea of an integral nation”; statism, manifested in worship of state power; transcendence, based on the idea of transforming society beyond leftist or right-wing ideologies; purges based on the destruction of political opponents; paramilitarism, acting as a universal tool of politics, intimidation of enemies and unification of the nation [3. Pp. 28–33].

Mann’s characterization of fascism is justified in many ways and covers what is typical in fascist regimes, but it turns out to be limited in its application to modern times. Today we are witnessing the phenomena of global globalism, which is semantically close to fascism. Here, the same idea of the exclusivity of the nation, racism, and militarism manifest themselves on a completely different scale and rely on other instruments of personality control. There is no doubt

that today many parameters of the fascist regime have been transformed, hiding behind liberal ideologies. In this regard, the desire of political scientists to give an expanded interpretation of fascism, to supplement the parameters describing fascism, is understandable.

From this point of view, the extensive work of V.E. Baghdasaryan is indicative, in which an expanded systematization of the varieties of modern fascism is undertaken. The author identifies three ideological modifications of fascism. “The first fascism is postmodern. Ideologically extemporized, liberalism transformed into neoliberalism. Neoliberal ideology is not so much a liberal ideology as a fascist one. It asserts the harsh rule of the minority. The second fascism is religious fundamentalist. It is largely caused by postmodern fascism and is a reaction to it from traditional society. This reaction, as can be seen from recent events, is being purposefully provoked. The flow of refugees and migrants heading from the Middle East to Europe makes conflict almost inevitable. The third fascism is classic Nazi. Just as postmodern fascism programs the reaction of jihadist fascism, so it, in turn, provokes the reaction of Nazi fascism. The Islamization of Europe and terrorist attacks are becoming a catalyst for neo-Nazism. He is united by the idea of defending Europe from outsiders and the growing sentiments of migrant phobia among the population of European countries. But neo-Nazism is also conflictual in relation to postmodern fascism. He is accused of undermining national traditions and the inability and unwillingness to face migration challenges” [4. P. 101].

According to V. Baghdasaryan, a systemic feature of modern postmodern fascism is the anthropological inequality common to both liberalism and neo-fascism. This systemic characteristic is not only reproduced historically, but also explains to a large extent the transit from liberalism to fascism.

In connection with our research topic, we are interested in the discourse on postmodern fascism, since it, initiated by the modern United States as the vanguard of the West, is politically mainstream in the current conditions. Without globalism and its political consequences, authoritarian, racially Russian-oriented, semi-fascist regimes in the Baltic States, Ukraine, and the resuscitation of fascism in Western Europe could hardly have manifested themselves.

The worldview of globalism and the emerging “brave new world” is based on a postmodern worldview and practice. Postmodernism is already significantly devaluing democracy and its institutions. “The modern era, on the one hand, opens up new prospects for development, but on the other, prerequisites are being created for the elite-informational and corporatist alienation of man from politics. Given the persistence of poverty, growing inequality, and instability in global markets and financial flows, many doubt that the ‘bright opportunities’ of globalization will be realized. Others are concerned that open markets will endanger both the integrity of cultures and the sovereignty of states” [5. P. 154], notes Irkhin.

Modern democracy increasingly resembles a synthesis of democratic procedures, the power of oligarchy and authoritarianism [5. P. 154].

Like any social phenomenon, fascism is a consequence of accumulated social deformations and contradictions generated by changing reality. The capitalism of the 21st century, despite the conviction of many in the harmony and creativity of progress, not only did not escape the inherent inequality, but rather exacerbated it to its limits. “Liberalization and globalization have enriched very few, while the rest have brought stagnation, insecurity and instability, and there has been skepticism about the elites and knowledge institutions from which they were believed to draw information” [6. P. 51].

A special depth of decline in the social standard of living is characteristic of the United States, which has always been a kind of vanguard of modern capitalism. “America has not succeeded in economic growth, but it has succeeded in increasing inequality” [6. P. 68]. Stiglitz, relying on statistics, highlights the depth of inequality in the United States. “From the point of view of inequality of opportunities, we are also almost at the very bottom” [6. P. 68], the economist notes. The quantitative parameters in the differences in living standards are impressive. “In America, wealth inequality is even greater than income inequality — the top 1% of the population owns more than 40% of the US wealth, almost twice the share of income received” [6. P. 74]. Economic elitism, in which all benefits go to the ruling minority, is thus a prerequisite for social inequality. The very image of a just society is fading in modern reality, destroying the myth of universal prosperity.

It is significant that this degradation of the social system is not a national feature of the United States, but of the entire global economy. Klaus Schwab, one of the ideologists of globalism, is forced to state that “slow growth is the norm today, since labor productivity does not increase, which serves as an engine for economic recovery. Many in the West are employed in low-paying jobs without any guarantees or prospects” [7. P. 36].

Capitalist prosperity for all, wrapped in a liberal shell, is undoubtedly illusory. Modern capitalism in this sense is a factor in the generation of modern fascism and right-wing radical movements. “Right-wing populism is the result of the disintegration of democracy. His modern fascist image, which takes on different forms in different countries, can only exist in situations dominated by social injustice” [8. P. 38].

An undoubted factor in the genesis of fascism is the “organic nationalism” preserved in the cultural and psychological memory of European peoples. “Some prerequisites for the revival of fascism are still alive today. Organic nationalism and paramilitary movements, as well as adherence to ethnic and political cleansing, are still attracting thousands of people around the world, pushing them to allegedly ‘idealistic’, but in fact bloody and inhumane actions against neighbors and political opponents, called ‘enemies’” [3. P. 15]. At the same time, for us, the fundamental methodological issue is the problem of the relationship between liberalism and fascism, considered in modern political science as a very real one. Liberalism predates fascism both genetically and semantically. “Liberalism is the oldest and most widespread version

of Eurocentric racism today... Liberalism is a racist political trend precisely in its ideological roots, in its theoretical matrix, and in its basic theory, because it takes as an axiom the thesis that (European = universal) civilization is better than barbarism, and barbarism is better than savagery, and further applies the racist scheme to the analysis of various socio-political systems and the construction of a historical narrative” [9. P. 282].

The ideal of endless progressivism will unite both fascism and liberalism. “Modern liberalism, partly due to its dogmatic intellectual amnesia, retains its proximity to fascist ideas due to the significant role of progressivism in its formation” [10. P. 436].

From this point of view, it is not surprising that the basic meanings of fascism were born in the most developed liberal democratic country of capitalism. The facts of the Nazis borrowing American models are obvious, especially in the racial issue. “The Nazis showed constant, significant, and sometimes even excessive interest in the American example of racial legislation. They were definitely interested in learning from America... Paradoxically, the Nazis sometimes rejected the American example because they considered American practices too cruel; for the Nazis of the early 1930s, even the most radical ones, the American racial law sometimes looked too racist [11. P. 17–18]”.

The direct “roll calls” of the racial theory of the German Nazis and the American liberals are manifested in the concept of “living space”. “The Nazis were consumed by the desire to expand the ‘living space’ for Germany by seizing territories in the East, and for generations of German imperialists, as well as for Hitler himself, the United States of America was an example to follow”. From the point of view of the Nazis, the United States stood on a par with Britain as ‘representatives of the white race and builders of a great empire’: both were ‘Nordic’ states that undertook an “epic program of conquest” [11. P. 22].

The racial view of peoples in the United States is a practice not only of the past, but also of the present. “The United States was also at the forefront of creating de jure and de facto second-class citizenship for blacks, Filipinos, Chinese, and others, which was also of considerable interest to the Nazis, who were engaged in creating second-class citizenship for German Jews” [11. P. 26].

There are enough examples of mutual sympathies between American liberals and fascists. The United States was a model of social order for the Nazis, and was seen as a “powerful, wealthy, and creative society”. “It has become especially difficult to resist the fascination of America during the century that began in 1918. As noted by German racists of the interwar period, the United States emerged from the First World War as the main world power” [11. P. 19], notes J. Whitman.

Hitler’s Nazis were attracted by American advances in eugenics, in an effort to improve human nature. “In his 1994 book, ‘The Nazi

Community: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism', historian Stefan Kuhl sensationally demonstrated the existence of active communication between American and Nazi eugenicists until the late 1930s, and the Nazis even considered the United States as 'an example'" [11. P. 23].

Racism, elevated to the level of state policy in the United States, was also attractive to the German Nazis. "Back in 1928, Hitler talked admiringly about how the Americans 'shot millions of Redskins, reducing their number to several hundred thousand, and now they keep these modest remnants under surveillance in a cage'" [11. P. 23].

"It was the race-based American immigration law that Hitler praised in his works, which, oddly enough, is denied by American jurists" [11. P. 26].

"In his book 'Peoples in World History' in 1934, Wirth described America for his readers on the first pages: 'The most important event in the world history of the states of the second millennium — right up to the war — was the founding of the United States of America, which gave the strongest impetus to the struggle of the Aryans for world domination'" [11. P. 41].

"African Americans are systematically discriminated against, receive inadequate education and housing, and are completely deprived of economic opportunities — the American dream is beyond their reach". This is based on "the racial attitude of white Americans towards black Americans," Stiglitz notes [6. P. 71].

It is significant that the phenomenon of "black racism" or racism on the contrary proves once again the prevalence and universality of the racist spiritual matrix, making it a universal language of political communication.

Racism is generated by globalism, the global economic system of capitalism. "The modern world is a single system with a center and its own periphery. The disparity in the quality of life between the center and the periphery is enormous and tends to increase. The Center systematically conducts military operations in the countries of the periphery, as a result of which, as the experience of recent years shows, the quality of life in the peripheral part of the world is falling to a critical state. On a global scale, this model is fascist" [4. P. 327], V. Baghdasaryan notes.

The reincarnation of fascism is also facilitated by the geopolitical context of the confrontation between the West and the East, the West and Russia. In the context of the geopolitical confrontation, fascism proved to be in high demand.

"The survival of fascism was ensured by the harsh demands of the confrontation between East and West. This situation became a life raft for tens of thousands of Nazi criminals who got a chance to escape punishment, allowing themselves to become useful tools in the fight against communism.

Ironically, some former fascists who joined the CIA later played a leading role in neo-fascist organizations that hated the United States. One of the consequences of the CIA's vile alliance with Nazi spy service veterans was the resurgence of the far-right extremist movement in Europe, which we are witnessing today. His ideas are rooted in the Third Reich, and his

transmission link was the fascist collaborators who worked for American intelligence” [8. P. 27].

“A combination of ignorance, unconsciousness, and in some cases political sympathy allowed American and European collaborators of the Third Reich to occupy a prominent and honorable place in the Republican Party. In many cases, these fascists do not repent of their past as enemies of the United States and supporters of the Nazi genocide. The irony of fate lies in the fact that it was our victory over Germany that forced SS-affiliated groups to flee from their Eastern European countries, in some cases to the United States, and subsequently allowed former enemies of the United States to influence American politics at the highest level” [12. P. 185].

Conclusion

Summing up the consideration of the topic, it can be stated that modern fascism is a product of globalism and liberal civilization, a phase of its existence. The semantic feature of neo-fascism (or liberal fascism) is the idea of anthropological inequality, which manifests itself both in the social aspect and in international relations, defined along the “center-periphery” axis. Liberal (democratic) fascism is a consequence of the transformation of the capitalist system, stimulated by the geopolitical confrontation between the West and the “non-West”, in particular with Russia. The inner contour of liberal fascism is generated by the “birthmarks” of capitalism — growing social inequality, the strengthening of oligarchic structures, the devaluation of democratic procedures and the devaluation of the very nature of the political phenomenon. Manipulation of consciousness by the power elite, rather than real political competition, is becoming the defining trend in the development of political systems. It is still difficult to judge how fascization will become a stable trend. The coming years will be decisive in the political evolution of the Western world.

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