

# If Fascism Is Not Really On the March, Then Why the Constant 'Brown Scares'?

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**Abstract:** Today «Brown Scares» are the order of the day in many countries in Europe and the Americas. Why is this the case in anti-fascist age when fascism is not really on the march? I want to advance the argument that there are few fascists remaining today in Euro-American societies, but that «Brown Scares» have been revived in various decades since the 1950s. These «Brown Scares» are used by the establishment to undermine political opponents and to engage in more authoritarian mechanisms against enemies of the current pro-liberal and pro-capitalist establishment.

**Keywords:** Fascism; Neo-fascism; Liberal Democracy; Extremism; «Brown Scares».

## ¿Una nueva Marcha del Fascismo sobre Occidente?

**Resumen:** El «pánico marrón» está a la orden del día en muchos países de Europa y América. ¿Por qué ocurre esto en la era antifascista, cuando el fascismo no está realmente en marcha? El argumento principal de este artículo es que actualmente quedan pocos fascistas en las sociedades euroamericanas, a pesar de ello, los «miedos pardos» se han reavivado en diversas épocas históricas desde la década de 1950. Estos «Brown Scares», sin embargo, son utilizados por el *establishment* para socavar a los oponentes políticos y para emprender mecanismos más autoritarios contra los enemigos del actual sistema pro-liberal y pro-capitalista.

**Palabras clave:** Fascismo; Neofascismo; Democracia Liberal; Extremismo; «Brown Scares».

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2007, I penned a monograph about the French *nouvelle droite* (ND – New Right) entitled *Where Have All The Fascists Gone?* (Bar-On, 2007) in which I argued that in an anti-imperial and anti-fascist age (Brzezinski, 2007), fascism was largely defeated as an ideological force in 1945. Benito Mussolini, the former socialist, fascist trailblazer, and later fascist dictator of Italy, was unceremoniously voted out of power by his own Grand Council in 1943 and then arrested after leaving a meeting with King Vittorio Emanuele, who informed Mussolini that the war was being lost. Over twenty years of fascist rule ended and Mussolini was placed under house arrest. Two years later Nazi Germany, a fascist regime for many scholars (Payne, 1996; Griffin, 2018) with some exceptions because of its obsessive racialism (Sternhell, 1996), was definitively defeated by the Allies.

Yet, I also suggested that fascism might rise again in the post-war era as an ideology, movement or political party, but that it was less likely that fascism would be revived in its regime form. I also focused on the way fascist ideals might evolve through the ideological pull of civil society – a type of «right-wing Gramscianism» that sought to conquer hearts and minds as a prelude to creating a revolutionary post-liberal social order. Fascism might return, but perhaps with other names and other characteristics – free of totalitarianism, the cult of the leader, imperialism, or the penchant for violence (Bardèche, 1961).

All this begs the question: What exactly is fascism? Fascists saw themselves as creating unity between capital and labor and fascism is a revolutionary anti-liberal, anti-communist, and anti-conservative ideology, which co-mingles illiberal ultra-nationalist and revisionist Marxist ideals, and it was born during the multiple crises of the inter-war years (Sternhell, 1996). Fascism thus combines ideals borrowed from both the right and left. That is, fascism unites «illiberal nationalism + non-Marxist socialism» (Bale and Bar-On, 2022, p. 292). It is a type of «socialism» on behalf of the nation, which is allegedly reborn after a period of decadence and decline. Or, put another way, fascism embodies an «anti-plutocratic capitalist stance combined with attempts to forge a harmonious, class collaborationist organic national community» (Bale and Bar-On, 2022, p. 292). Fascists are thus anti-capitalists (and anti-communists) and by extension «anti-materialists». They aim to create a unified national community, which is not torn asunder by the divisions of capitalist inequalities or communist confrontation between the bourgeoisie and proletariat. Fascist's view liberalism, the parliamentary system, and the egalitarian and rights-bearing legacies of the American and French revolutions as indi-

vidualistic and thus antithetical to serving and sacrificing on behalf of the primordial cause of the nation.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the American political scientist Francis Fukuyama (1989) insisted that we had reached the «the end of history» – an epoch marked by liberalism's victory against its two main ideological enemies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, namely, fascism and socialism: «The triumph of the West, of the Western idea, is evident first of all in the total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism» (Fukuyama, 1989). When the Marxist-Leninist Soviet Union fell in 1991 and the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) further expanded in 1999 and 2004 with the integration of former countries of the Warsaw Pact or Soviet Republics (e.g., Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia), Fukuyama's thesis was further reinforced. Democratic regimes also proliferated in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Liberal democracy would be the wave of the future.

While Fukuyama could acknowledge that religious fundamentalism and nationalism would challenge the notion of the «end of history», he suggested that the post-ideological era «will be a very sad time» (Fukuyama, 1989). It represented the end of the ideological ferocity of the Cold War, or the fierce ideological struggles between fascists and anti-fascists during the Spanish Civil War. The ideological epoch was marked by «the willingness to risk one's life a purely abstract goal, the worldwide ideological struggle that called forth daring, courage, imagination, and idealism» (Fukuyama, 1989). The post-ideological era would give way to the pragmatism of «economic calculation, the endless solving of technical problems, environmental concerns, and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands.» (Fukuyama, 1989) With the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia between 1992 and 1995, the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, and later the rise of al-Qaeda in the 1990s and in particular with the unprecedented terrorist attack of 9-11 in 2001, the supposed «peace» of the «end of history» came to an abrupt halt. Fukuyama could declare that the «end of history» had re-started (Fukuyama, 2002). With the Brexit referendum in 2016 and the rise to power of US President Trump on a nationalist and populist ticket in 2017, as well as Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, we could be tempted to support the view of leading realist thinker John Mearsheimer (2019), namely, that nationalism is the most potent ideology in the world.

Given the «end of history» thesis and the powerful pull of nationalism even in the age of homogenizing capitalist globalization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, what are the prospects for the return of fascism?

The 1960s and 1970s saw the global explosion of a wave of «radical left» or «New Left» terrorism (Rapoport, 2022), whereas the «radical right» and fascists or neo-fascists remained marginal in terms of influence on civil society, electoral gains, or terrorist attacks. In reality, since the end of World War Two genuine fascist, neo-fascist and neo-Nazi groups have remained small, lacking in popularity, and largely stigmatized fringe groups on the social and political margins of every Western society. At no time between 1945 and the present have genuine fascists, Nazis, or radical right extremists ever managed to mobilize a mass base of support, seriously threaten Western democratic regimes, or more importantly, come to power themselves through subversive, violent, or electoral means. The only instances in which neo-fascist and other right-wing paramilitary groups exerted a minor influence on political affairs, or constituted a serious security threat to democracy, was in the context of the Cold War as they were recruited, trained, equipped, «covered,» financially supported, and/or secretly manipulated by elements of Western secret services (Bale, 2017). An example is the Italian «strategy of tension» from 1966 to 1980 and the participation of neo-fascist groups such as *Ordine Nuovo* (ON, New Order) and *Avanguardia Nazionale* (AN, National Vanguard). In addition, neo-fascist groups were used by Western and Latin American secret services during the Cold War, including the US government and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), to help the latter wage a «dirty war» against communist and other mostly left-wing «subversives» (Bale, 2017).

In the postwar era, fascism perhaps had more legs outside of Europe or North America. The leading historian of fascism Stanley Payne (1996) could declare that Peronism in Argentina and Ba'athism in Iraq under Saddam Hussein, could perhaps qualify as fascist regimes in the post-war era. Payne has advanced this telling assessment of Saddam Hussein's regime: «There will probably never again be a reproduction of the Third Reich, but Saddam Hussein has come closer than any other dictator since 1945» (Payne, 1996, p. 517). Fascism was relegated to a minor force in post-war Euro-American societies. If this is the case, then why we are constantly told by political and cultural elites that «fascism is back»; that non-fascists from Trump to Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán are «fascists»; that the Republicans are semi-fascists (e.g., US President Joe Biden's claim in reference to «MAGA Republicans» in 2022); or that fascism is the greatest domestic threat in Euro-American societies today – a far greater threat compared to black nationalist, leftist, or Islamist (jihadist) terrorism? (Payne, 2022a)

«Brown Scares» were «campaigns against domestic fascists» (whether real or imagined) in the United States, including under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, in the prewar and World War II eras (Ribuffo, 1983, p. 175). The «Brown»

is not a reference to one's skin colour. Rather it is a reference to the brown uniforms of the Nazi stormtroopers or paramilitary wing of the Nazi Party (SA, *Sturmabteilung*), which played a key role in Hitler's rise to power in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s. These «Brown Scares» led to harsh legislation and trials against real and alleged fascists, the incarceration of Japanese, Italian, and German Americans as «enemy aliens», censorship, and the systematic violation of civil liberties of ordinary Americans. Leo P. Ribuffo, the intellectual who created the term «Brown Scare», was alarmed about how the original «Brown Scares» in the 1940s represented excessive governmental overreach. He noted how «fear of the far right undermined the left's commitment to civil liberties» (Hartman, 2018). He also showed how «Brown Scares» laid the groundwork for the infamous «Red Scares» (related to fears of communism and socialism as a result of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and later the creation of the Marxist-Leninist Soviet Union) of the 1950s. Yet, few academics were concerned with the trials against «domestic fascists» because they were supposedly on the right or «fascists» and thus deserved the state repression. Partisan academics and media figures merely sought to defend leftists from governmental restrictions, but little did they realize that the repression would turn against the left.

Today «Brown Scares» are the order of the day in many countries in Europe and the Americas. Why is this the case in anti-fascist age when fascism is not really on the march? I want to advance the argument that there are few fascists remaining today in Euro-American societies, but that «Brown Scares» have been revived in various decades since the 1950s. These «Brown Scares» are used by the establishment to undermine political opponents and to engage in more authoritarian mechanisms against enemies of the current pro-liberal and pro-capitalist establishment. In short, the supposed anti-fascists of a liberal and leftist persuasion claim to fight fascists, but in reality they accentuate the slide of liberal societies towards censorship and creeping authoritarianism. In short, alleged liberal democrats represent a key threat to democracy today and they use «Brown Scares» in order to weaken opposition to their rule.

The paper begins with examples of «Brown Scares» amongst political and cultural elites in various European and American societies. Second, the paper demonstrates how «Brown Scares» have been revived in various historical epochs since the 1950s. Third, the paper shows how «Brown Scares» have various functions, including cementing one, woke credentials and policing acceptable political boundaries and limiting political dissent. These «Brown Scares», like the infamous «Red Scares» of the 1950s, ultimately limit the scope of opposition to the system and also act as a disservice to historical memory and the liberal democratic system (Fine, 2007).

### Contemporary «Brown Scares»

If we believe the existing political and cultural elites of Euro-American societies, we might come to the conclusion that: 1) Fascism is imminent; 2) Fascism is already here; 3) Fascism is on the rise; or 4) Fascist forces today pose a clear and present danger to democracy and thus we must use the lenses of the inter-war years (a period when fascists were able to come to power due to multiple crises) to think about contemporary politics. All these aforementioned claims are false. Few of the political commentators that hype the return of fascism bother to define fascism; do not clarify the distinctions between fascists on the revolutionary right, the radical right, the dissident right, and the conservative right (Bale and Bar-On, 2022, p. 280); fail to distinguish between fascists, neo-fascists, and Nazis; and include many non-fascist «right-wing» conservative and nationalist movements and regimes as «fascist» (Gregor, 2006). Enzo Traverso (2021) warned of the arbitrary use of the term «fascist» today. Emilio Gentile, an acclaimed fascist expert, noted those that are hunting the real or presumed «fascists» might pose the «real danger» to democracy because they are partisans that care little about the protection of democratic ideals (Gentile, 2019).

It is thus no accident, then, that numerous politicians, academics and press outlets have exaggerated the revival of fascism or mischaracterized non-fascist movements or regimes as «fascist». Various nationalist and populist politicians throughout Europe have been tarred with the brush of «fascism», including Boris Johnson, Nigel Farage, Marine Le Pen, Eric Zemmour, Geert Wilders, Viktor Orbán, and Matteo Salvini (Hussey, *New Statesman*, September 29, 2021). In France, the rise of the *Front National* (FN, National Front) and later *Rassemblement National* (RN – National Rally) under Jean-Marie Le Pen and later his daughter Marine Le Pen led to the use of labels such as «extreme right», «radical right», «neo-fascism» and «fascism» by press outlets or academics (Copsey, 2018). The French courts could declare that it was permissible to call Marine Le Pen a «fascist» in 2015 (Taylor, 2015) French leftist leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon has also called Marine Le Pen a «fascist». Here are a few more recent typical examples of «Brown Scares» from famous academics writing in the press:

1. Robert Reich, «The modern Republican party is hurtling towards fascism» (*The Guardian*, April 15, 2023). Robert Reich is a former US secretary of labor, as well as professor of public policy at the University of California, Berkeley. He notes that «Donald Trump is not singularly responsible for this dangerous trend,» which is leading the US towards «fascism», but argues that «he has legitimized and encouraged the ends-justify-the-means viciousness now pushing the GOP toward

becoming the American fascist party» (Reich, 2023). At the same time, Reich insists that only the Democratic Party is today committed to democracy. No evidence is provided for why the Democratic Party is a paragon of democracy and why the Republican Party is «hurtling towards fascism.» Fascism is never adequately defined.

2. Ruth Ben-Ghiat, «The Return of Fascism in Italy,» (*The Atlantic*, September 23, 2022). When in September 2022, Giorgia Meloni, the leader of the nationalist Brothers of Italy (*Fratelli d'Italia*), became Italy's Prime Minister, the New York University historian Ruth Ben-Ghiat spoke without a hint of irony about «the return of fascism in Italy». Similarly, Sean O'Grady (2019), writing in the *Independent*, wildly claimed that because of the anti-immigration politics of Italian Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini, «Italy is becoming a fascist state.» It should be obvious that anti-immigration measures are a far cry from fascism. Also, while the bulk of Meloni's party came from the «post-fascist» National Alliance (*Alleanza Nazionale*, AN), it was the successor of the Italian Social Movement (*Movimento Sociale Italiani*, MSI), a neo-fascist party founded in 1946 by former followers of Benito Mussolini. At a party congress in Fiuggi in 1995 the MSI moderated its policies and distanced itself from neo-fascism and became the «post-fascist» AN. Some academics classify the party as neo-fascist (Mammone, 2015), but most see it as a social conservative, nationalist, populist, and anti-immigrant party (Pirro, 2022).
3. The Holocaust historian Deborah Lipstadt insisted that it was «fair» to compare Nazi propagandist Goebbels with President Trump (Milevsky, *National Post*, October 12, 2020). Little evidence was provided for such histrionic claims, although it is clear that Lipstadt is not a Trump supporter. In comparing Trump with Goebbels, Lipstadt thus made the mistake of focusing on Trump's supposed dishonesty rather than centuries of hatred or the Nazi drive for totalitarianism. Today Lipstadt is the US's Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism.
4. The historian of fascism Robert Paxton noted after the Alternative Right's United the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017: «Trump gets closer to having his own SA [the Nazi paramilitary stormtroopers].» (*Vox*, Matthews, October 23, 2020) While we could criticize Trump's clumsy response to the death of a counter-protestor at the rally, Trump condemned violence, white supremacy, white nationalism, and the alt-right. He was not a supporter of the use of violence to overthrow the parliamentary system. He rejected fascism and Nazism. He also reject-

ed imperialism and valorized peace, as shown by his decision to pull US troops out of Afghanistan and his ability to negotiate the Abraham Accords between Israel and numerous Arab states.

Various academics have also written important books or held conferences in which they have in effect participated in «Brown Scares»:

1. The former secretary of state under Bill Clinton, Madeleine Albright, said she was writing a book about fascism (*Fascism: A Warning*) because Donald Trump came to power and stated, «today the herd is moving in a Fascist direction.» (Albright and Woodward, 2018, p. 246) In an epoch wedded to more than 100 liberal democracies, the rise of the supranational European Union, and an anti-fascist consensus in Euro-American societies, such claims baffle the mind.
2. Federico Finchelstein (2020), the author of *A Brief History of Fascist Lies*, like Lipstadt, could compare Trump with the upper elites of the Nazi leadership: «Goebbels and Hitler would have been proud of Donald Trump» (Tharoor, *Washington Post*, June 3, 2020). Finchelstein tried to unsuccessfully show that there is a fine line between populism and fascism.
3. An «American Fascism» conference was held by the Society of Cultural Anthropology (April 15, 2021) after the Capitol riots, or the events of January 6, 2021, to label former US president Trump and his followers «fascists» (Nelson, Paxson, and Weiss, 2021). The vast majority of the Americans that participated in the Capitol riots did not belong to «fascist» organizations. Moreover, Western chauvinists, white supremacists, and white nationalists, as well as ordinary Republicans and Trump supporters, are often lumped together in the «fascist» category.

Finally, diverse politicians have participated in «Brown Scares»: Canadian Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau invoked emergency legislation against those challenging COVID mandates and called them «fascists». The Russian President Vladimir Putin, as well as other Russian officials, claimed that Ukrainians were «fascists» during Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 (BBC, 2023). Here I should note that the Azov Battalion comprises actual neo-Nazis, but the Ukrainian President is Jewish and the radical right performed poorly in Ukrainian elections in 2019. As mentioned earlier, US President Joe Biden called «MAGA Republicans» «semi-fascists» after the Capitol riots (Di Caro, 2022). Finally, Brazilian President Lula da Silva called supporters of Jair Bolsonaro «fascists» due to riots after the 2023 presidential elections (De la Cuadra, 2021).



Even centrist, wholly mainstream Republicans like George W. Bush and Canadian conservative politicians like the anti-immigration People's Party of Canada Maxime Bernier were labeled by some as «fascists» and Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau disingenuously stated the following in relation to the main opposition party: «Conservative Party members can stand with people who wave swastikas; they can stand with people who wave the Confederate flag» (Tasker, 2022).

There is a long history of abuse of the «fascist» label. Opponents of US President Obama falsely called him a «fascist», in the same way that opponents of Trump denounce him as a «fascist» today. Back in the 1920s and 1930s, Communists labelled their Social Democratic opponents «fascists». Or, conservative pundits like Tucker Carlson call Establishment figures «fascists». Given such a state of affairs, fascism is becoming increasingly an epithet rather than a rigorous conceptual category. Or, the «fascist» label is a way to silence your political opponents; advance one's anti-fascist and anti-racist woke credentials; and allow liberal and left-wing activists and intellectuals to build a supposed anti-fascist consensus in an age when fascists have little substantive power (Shellenberger and Boghossian, 2021).

### «Brown Scares» Are Not New

The creation of fictitious «Brown Scares» has been a tactic by the establishment since fascism was defeated in 1945. Numerous campaigns have been waged against real and presumed fascists, both in North America and Europe.

We might trace several «Brown Scare» campaigns in different historical epochs (Churchill, 2009; Ribuffo, 1983). These include the following:

1. The original «Brown Scare» during World War Two in the 1940s, which played off fears of a «fascist fifth column» amongst German-Americans, Japanese-Americans, anti-interventionists, anti-Semitic pro-Christian rightists, and assorted radical right and fascist sympathisers (Lavine, 1940). Harold Lavine, the author of *Fifth Column in America*, was affiliated with Columbia University's Institute for Propaganda Analysis and his mission was to «hunt» fascists throughout the United States.
2. The second «Brown Scare» represented post-war campaigns against «white supremacists» with support from left-wing activists, influential anti-racist and Jewish organizations such as the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the Democrat Party, the mainstream media, and even influential think-tanks.

3. Another «Brown Scare» was linked to exaggerated fears of a «Fascist International» during the Cold War, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s. Here real neo-fascists played a more significant role in countries as diverse as Italy, France, Chile, and Argentina in the context of the anti-communist fervour of the Cold War (Bale, 2017; McSherry, 2005; Ganser, 2005).
4. A later «Brown scare» was connected to the hyping of neo-Nazis, fascist, Christian Identity, and militia groups in the 1980s and 1990s. It is important to note that some of these groups could commit mass casualty terrorist attacks, but they had virtually no support within the state. The US government raid on the Branch Davidian cult in Waco, Texas in 1993 led to 86 deaths, but here federal authorities were as much to blame as the cult. The radical right terrorist attack committed by Timothy McVeigh against a federal government building in Oklahoma City cited government overreach in Waco as a reason for his terrorist attack, which killed a whopping 168 people and ultimately led to the death penalty for McVeigh.
5. More recent «Brown Scares» have been linked to the exaggerated threats posed by populist and nationalist movements and political parties. The Brexit referendum and the election of Donald Trump Jr. as US President in 2016 led British and US academics and press outlets to confuse populist and nationalist forces with fascists. They used these «Brown Scares» to discredit opponents of the European Union and President Trump by branding them «racists» or «fascists».
6. A very recent «Brown Scare» saw President Biden's allegations of «semi-fascism» against MAGA supporters during the Capitol riots in 2021. Such an allegation effectively linked all Trump supporters and the Republican Party to «fascism», but Biden made no effort to define fascism or unpack what constitutes «semi-fascism».

### **The Various Purposes of «Brown Scares»**

Given that «Brown Scares» have been a recurrent feature of political life in Euro-American societies, it is clear that these «Brown Scares» play various political, social, and psychological functions:

1. «Brown Scares» fulfill the needs of political life, which creates the distinction between friends and enemies (Schmitt, 2007). Anti-fascism has united Eastern and Western Europe, as well as North America after the end of World War Two and the defeat of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germa-

ny. The rise of the latest wave of anti-fascism has coincided with the fall of the Communist Soviet Union. All regimes define themselves against what they are not and this helps to cement social identities against perceived enemies. Anti-fascists (which are generally on the liberal-left) today define themselves against fascists (which are generally labelled on the right), whereas in the Cold War era the friend-enemy division was between capitalists and communists and liberals and socialists. The reality is that the fascist-anti-fascist division has less relevance in the political climate of contemporary Euro-American societies, but for some liberals and many on the radical left in the press, academia or activist circles, the struggle against fascists is as vital as the inter-war years when fascism saw its rise and apogee.

2. They serve the interests of the establishment, or people in power (Gottfried, 2021). They are politically advantageous to contemporary pro-globalization elites since they can demonize all resistance to globalization, capitalism, multiculturalism, immigration, or the European Union, no matter how legitimate. «Brown Scares» use the ideological and repressive capacities of the state to demonize an opponent (Payne, 2022b; Gottfried, 2021, pp. 1-2). These elites include political and cultural elites, as well as heads of large corporations that have used electronic media to «de-platform dissenting voices on the Right» (Gottfried, 2021, p. 27).
3. «Brown Scares» indiscriminately attack extremists and non-extremists alike (Bale and Bar-On, 2022). They thus undermine the civil liberties of all citizens. They fail to make a crucial distinction between extremism of thought and extremism of means. That is, when «Brown Scares» are unleashed the state is harsh and repressive towards violent and non-violent individuals, movements, and political parties, whereas in reality for security purposes it should merely target the former. These «Brown Scares» are akin to witch-hunts, which attack alleged «fascists» amongst dissident intellectuals and sympathisers or supporters, with equal ferocity to potential or actual «fascist» or neo-fascist terrorists.
4. «Brown Scares» are partisan and ideologically-driven and gain public sympathy because those targeted are supposedly the embodiment of absolute evil: «fascists», «neo-fascists», «Nazis» or «white supremacists» (Wievorka, 2019). Contemporary anti-fascists such as Antifa fail to the traditional Marxist suspicion of the state as an instrument of the ruling class and thus saw few problems «with using the power of the democratic state to suppress allegedly fascist ideas» (Gottfried, 2021, p. 27).

5. «Brown Scares» are ultimately like smoke and mirrors. In short, these campaigns divert attention away from more serious issues and problems in society. Anti-fascism is embraced today because it signals to others that anyone (fascist or not) who questions democracy and equality is «beyond the parameters of polite discussion» (Gottfried, 2021, p. 150). It ignores the reality that one can question democracy without necessarily embracing fascism.
6. «Brown Scares» hide the dangers of numerous extremist threats, whether fascist, left-wing, anarchist, black nationalist, ecological, and Islamist (jihadist) threats. If threats to the system mostly emanate from the radical right, then why bother investigating and later going after other political actors? Or, if one is an ideological partisan, even more problematic is the potential toleration of violence on the left and the exaggeration of violent threats from the right. Some critics have suggested that the Democratic Party disproportionately targeted alleged «fascists» and failed to prosecute left-wing activists during the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 that ransacked various US cities (Dinan, 2020).
7. As shown earlier, these «Brown Scares» have been a recurrent feature of Euro-American societies and they can be revived in opportunistic moments by political elites. «Brown Scares» have been a constant feature of Western societies before and after World War Two. They are ultimately «awesome mechanisms of social control» (Chermak, 2022, p. 10). Those in power require extremists in order to police acceptable boundaries of political debate; potentially demonstrate how far one can challenge existing institutions; and reaffirm and stabilize core beliefs of a society. Ordinary people and elites that challenge the status quo are made to pay if they do not obey the dominant anti-fascist «faith» and its «commandments».

### **Conclusion**

It is extremely important to underscore that this paper does not suggest that the radical right has never posed a threat in Euro-American societies in the post-World War Two period. In the Cold War period, especially in the period from 1966 to 1980, the radical right caused numerous mass casualty terrorist violence since neo-fascist groups were infiltrated, «covered», and used by factions within several Western and Latin American secret service to help the latter wage a «dirty war» against communists and other «subversives». Radical right movements and groups committed numerous terrorist attacks in Italy in the period, including the infamous Bologna bombing in 1980 when 85 people

died. In more recent years, radical right terrorist attacks in Quebec City, Oslo, Christchurch, El Paso, Pittsburgh, or Buffalo (e.g., individuals such as Timothy McVeigh, Anders Behring Breivik, Brenton Tarrant and Patrick Crusius), as well as the Atomwaffen Division (National Social Order since July 2020), highlight real dangers for individuals, societies, and states. These individuals and movements are capable of mass casualty terrorist attacks, and they should be placed under surveillance, arrested, and aggressively prosecuted for stockpiling weapons or planning terrorist attacks.

Yet, such attacks are often a sign of marginalization and political desperation today. In short, witch-hunts and «Brown Scares» should be avoided against those with extremist views that are law-abiding, but even democratic political leaders from Trudeau to Biden have not been able to make that distinction and targeted both legitimate (non-violent) and illegitimate (violent) protestors on the right and tarred them all with the «fascist» brush. Authoritarian leaders like Putin have no qualms about fictitious «Brown Scares» in order to cement their rule. Ukraine today is light years from the collaborationist epoch of Bandera.

This paper sought to ask the following question: Why do we have «Brown Scares» in an age when real fascists have little power? It is important to note a little known historical moment that showed how the original «Brown Scares» in the pre-war and World War Two periods prepared the groundwork for «Red Scares» in the 1950s. The US government was already monitoring alleged «fascists» in 1935, well before the war began in. The paper showed how cultural and political (and even corporate) elites have participated in «Brown Scares» in North America Europe, and Latin America. Moreover, the paper showed how «Brown Scares» have various functions, including the creation of a «secular religion» that uses anti-fascism as the reigning ideology in order to police political boundaries and limit political dissent.

The exaggeration of the fascist threat today occurs precisely because fascism is a dying and largely marginalized force in most Euro-American societies. «Brown Scares» are like new «crusades» with all the hallmarks of a «woke religion» used to de-legitimize and discredit opposition to contemporary pro-globalist, pro-capitalist, and pro-multicultural elites. The historical tragedy is that liberals, leftists, and even conservatives once denounced abuses of civil liberties by the state and now largely act as cheerleaders of arbitrary use of power, the politicization of state intelligence agencies, and «cancelling», repressing, and abusing their allegedly fascist and neo-fascist political opponents. Given the vicissitudes of history, it will not be long before the political repression is turned against liberals and leftists. This is precisely what oc-

curred with the infamous «Red Scares» after the Bolshevik Revolution and in the context of the Cold War. The original Brown Scare became the basis for the second «Red Scare». Numerous «Brown Scares» have taken place since World War Two. Such «Brown Scares» find few fascists because they are in short supply in an anti-fascist age. Ultimately these «Brown Scares» reveal more about those doing the witch-hunting (i.e., liberals, radicals leftists, anti-fascist activists, etc.) than the alleged «fascists».

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