

# DECOLONIAL INTERNATIONAL NETWORK

## Fascism, neo-fascism and similar expressions

Sandew Hira  
The Hague September 16, 2024

### Introduction

From 10-11 September 2024, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela organized an international conference on fascism, neo-fascism and similar expressions. The addition "similar expression" is a clever articulation of the complexity of dealing with fascism in the 21st century. It is an acknowledgement that political movements on the extreme right are sometimes not easily captured with the classical term of fascism. In this article I will deal with the different form of fascism and extreme right.

### Fascism of Hitler

These are the basic characteristics of the fascism of Hitler. The first is the strategy to crush the anti-fascist movement with the most brutal and violent means. Whether in government or in opposition, their main goal is to physically and organizationally demolish the anti-fascist movement. They built an infrastructure of paramilitary units to achieve this end. And when they are in government they use the military apparatus. The second is the explicit use of racism to justify their policy. Hitler used the concept of *Übermensch* and *Untermensch*. The *Übermensch* is a person of a biologically superior Aryan or Germanic master race. The *Untermensch* is the inferior non-Aryan person. The Jews and Roma are part of the *Untermensch*, but the majority are the Slavs of Eastern Europe (ethnic Poles, Belarusians, Czechs, Ukrainians, Serbs, Russians etc.).

The third is the conservative Christian foundation. Hitler placed his hatred for Jews in the context of his Christian beliefs. In a speech in 1922 he says: *"My feeling as a Christian points me to my lord and savior as a fighter... In boundless love as a Christian and as a man I read through the passage which tells us how the Lord at last rose in His might and seized the scourge to drive out of the Temple the brood of vipers and of adders. How terrific was His fight for the world against the Jewish poison."*<sup>1</sup> When the Nazis took power in 1933, Hitler declared that his national government *"regards Christianity as the foundation of our national morality."*<sup>2</sup>

The fourth is the virulent sexism and anti-LGTB policy. Women's role were confined to motherhood and the household and were excluded from public life. Homosexuals were persecuted, imprisoned and killed.

The fifth is the probably the most important: waging war to colonize Eastern Europe. The main project of Hitler's fascism was to colonize Eastern Europe. Fascism was not mainly about Jews. *"What India was for England, the territories of Russia will be for us,"* said Adolf Hitler.<sup>3</sup> Hitler did not start World War II to exterminate the Jews. He started a war to colonize Eastern Europe after the model of the British colonization of India. The first act of war was not against Western Europe, but against the East. On September 1, 1939, Hitler's army invaded Poland as the first step in colonizing Eastern Europe.

Hitler: *"It should be possible for us to control this region to the East with two hundred and fifty thousand men plus a cadre of good administrators. Let's learn from the English, who, with two hundred and fifty thousand men in all, including fifty thousand soldiers, govern four hundred million Indians. This space in Russia must always be dominated by*

*Germans... The Russian space is our India. Like the English, we shall rule this empire with a handful of men.*"<sup>4</sup>

Hitler took important lessons from the British. The most important lesson is that colonization is a major source of wealth for the empire. Referring to the resistance in India during World War II he argued: *"There's not a single Englishman, at this moment, who isn't thinking constantly of India. If one were to offer the English this alternative, to keep India whilst abandoning Europe to Germany, or to lose India whilst retaining the control of Europe, I'm sure that 99 per cent of them would choose to keep India. For them, India has likewise become a symbol, for it's on India that she built the Empire... The wealth of Great Britain is the result less of a perfect commercial organisation than of the capitalist exploitation of the three hundred and fifty million Indian slaves."*<sup>5</sup>

Another lesson is that you should not expect gratitude from the people you exploit: *"There are Englishmen who reproach themselves with having governed the country badly. Why? Because the Indians show no enthusiasm for their rule. I claim that the English have governed India very well, but their error is to expect enthusiasm from the people they administer."*<sup>6</sup>

Hitler wanted to use the British experience with the practice of plantations in the British colonies in the projected German colony of Russia: *"The German colonist ought to live on handsome, spacious farms. The German services will be lodged in marvellous buildings, the governors in palaces. Beneath the shelter of the administrative services, we shall gradually organise all that is indispensable to the maintenance of a certain standard of living. Around the city, to a depth of thirty to forty kilometres, we shall have a belt of handsome villages connected by the best roads. What exists beyond that will be another world, in which we mean to let the Russians live as they like. It is merely necessary that we should rule them. In the event of a revolution, we shall only have to drop a few bombs on their cities, and the affair will be liquidated."*<sup>7</sup>

This fits the description of British life during colonialism in India given by Shashi Tharoor. *"The British in India created little islands of Englishness, planting ferns and roses and giving their cottages nostalgia-suffused names like Grasmere Lodge (in Ooty) and Willowdale (in Darjeeling)."*<sup>8</sup>

Maybe the most important lesson from the British and 'the rest of the civilized world' is about the colonization of the mind. Hitler states: *"When one treats a people as the English have continually treated the Indians, the unpardonable folly is to send the youth of the country to the universities, where it learns things that it would be better for it not to know."*<sup>9</sup> Keep them ignorant. But the British were caught in a contradiction. On the one hand they needed Indians to administer the colony below the top level of the colonial government. On the other hand training them in British universities might lead to them breaking away from their masters because they could develop other skills not intended by the colonizer.

Hitler regarded the white British, French, Dutch and other European people as representatives of the Aryan race, a race of masters ('Herrenvolk') and praised their act of colonialism: *"We ought to remember that during the first period of American colonization numerous Aryans earned their daily livelihood as trappers and hunters, etc., frequently wandering about in large groups with their women and children, their mode of existence very much resembling that of ordinary nomads. The moment, however, that they grew more numerous and were able to accumulate larger resources, they cleared the land and drove out the aborigines, at the same time establishing settlements which rapidly increased all over the country."*<sup>10</sup>

Hitler's idea of colonizing was based on the concept of a superior race that had a natural right to colonize inferior races. The exploitation of the inferior race is necessary in order for the superior race to develop. He writes: *"Had it not been possible for them to employ members of the inferior race which they conquered, the Aryans would never have been in a position to take the first steps on the road which led them to a later type of culture; just as, without the help of certain suitable animals which they were able to tame, they*

would never have come to the invention of mechanical power which has subsequently enabled them to do without these beasts."<sup>11</sup>

He regarded the Slav people from Eastern Europe like the British and 'the rest of the civilized world' regarded the colonized people: "*When one contemplates this primitive world, one is convinced that nothing will drag it out of its indolence unless one compels the people to work. The Slavs are a mass of born slaves, who feel the need of a master.*"<sup>12</sup> Churchill had similar views on the Indians: "*I hate Indians. They are a beastly people with a beastly religion.*"<sup>13</sup>

The idea of the Holocaust, the systematic extermination of Jews by the Nazis, came about at the end of 1941. Before 1941, Nazi policy towards the Jews was based on forcing them to emigrate from the Third Reich and not on killing them in an industrial way. This policy entailed the expropriation of Jewish property, the introduction of laws to ban marriages between Jews and non-Jews and occasionally the organization of violence as in the case of Kristallnacht on 9-10 November 1938 when a pogrom was organized during which windows of Jewish stores, buildings and synagogues were destroyed.

"*The 'basic decisions' and 'total clarity' ... in implementing the genocide of European Jews—emerged between mid-September and late October 1941,*" writes C. Browning.<sup>14</sup>

The decision to start the Holocaust was made after Hitler's army had managed to cut off Leningrad on the northern front and capture Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, in September 1941. The prospect of a final victory looked bright. The problem of what to do with the millions of Jews living in Eastern Europe – soon to be part of the Third Reich - was now on the agenda. Migration was not an option, so the idea of annihilation became a reality. Once the decision was taken, it was a matter of technicalities. The technical solution that was ultimately implemented was the gas chamber. The horrors of the Holocaust lasted for four years.

## **Fascism and colonialism**

The Marxist and the socialist movement were the major targets of the fascist movement in Germany during the period of Hitler. It is understandable that they regard the fascism movement as the most reactionary and dangerous movement in world history. They regard fascism as fundamental crisis of capitalism.

Thinkers from the Global South have a different view of fascism. The link fascism to colonialism, as in fact Hitler himself did. Writing in 1955 Aimé Césaire reminded the Europeans that "*he has a Hitler inside him, that Hitler inhabits him, that Hitler is his demon, that if he rails against him, he is being inconsistent and that, at bottom, what he cannot forgive Hitler for is not crime in itself, the crime against man, it is not the humiliation of man as such, it is the crime against the white man, the humiliation of the white man, and the fact that he applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the coolies of India, and the blacks of Africa.*"<sup>15</sup>

Three years earlier Frantz Fanon had echoed the same sentiment: "*When I turn on my radio, when I hear that Negroes have been lynched in America, I say that we have been lied to: Hitler is not dead; when I turn on my radio, when I learn that Jews have been insulted, mistreated, persecuted, I say that we have been lied to: Hitler is not dead; when, finally, I turn on my radio and hear that in Africa forced labor has been inaugurated and legalized, I say that we have certainly been lied to: Hitler is not dead.*"<sup>16</sup>

Césaire and Fanon refer to the crimes that Spain, Portugal, Britain, France and other European nations committed with the genocide of the indigenous people of Abya Yala, the European enslavement and the genocides committed in Africa and Asia by these powers. By delinking this history of genocides from the genocide of the Jewish people, Eurocentric world history is able to present World War II and the Jewish Holocaust as a struggle of good people against bad people.

In fact, the whole system of segregation that was set up by the Nazis for oppressing the Jews was in place and fully functioning both before and after World War II in the European colonies, in South Africa and the USA. In Germany there were signs *No dogs, No Jews* allowed. These signs were put up by European colonizers in all the other places with their own variants (No dogs, No Asians, 'Niggers', Africans, etc). Across Britain, in the 1950s and 1960s, private landlords often posted signs – "*No Irish, no blacks no dogs*".

Interestingly enough, the means and methods used during the Holocaust were derived from an earlier genocide that the Germans committed against the Herero and Nama people in West Africa in the early 20th century. In the process of colonization of West Africa, the German came against resistance of the indigenous population. The German Emperor issued an extermination order ("Vernichtungsbefehl") - similar to what the Nazis would use in World War II - to annihilate a whole ethnic group. Some 100.000 Herero and 10.000 Nama perished in a systematic campaign to hunt them down and kill them. Many also ended up in concentration camps similar to those used in World War II but without the gas chambers. German doctors even conducted medical experiments on the prisoners. This genocide with a method (industrialization) and aim (murder) that resembled the Holocaust.

## Neo-fascism

Neo-fascism is the resurgence of fascism, but the in many different forms. You cannot just equate these forms with the fascist movement of Hitler.

In Latin Abya Yala There are two type of neo-fascism. One type is based on the reactionary military establishment with ties to the old ruling class and especially strong ties with the American empire. The US trains, funds and support these groups in any way possible. Their immediate goals is to take state power through a coup d'état and then crush the social movements. They use paramilitary organizations to intimidate social movement and break their leadership. The history of Latin America shows many examples of this type of fascism.

The second type is the resurgence of extreme right movements that contest elections on the basis of popular support. Javier Milei in Argentina and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil are examples of these movements. They thrive on ideological attacks on the program of the left and claim to do a better job in restructuring the economy and society with harsh measures. The peculiar thing about them is that they have mass support, not just from the old ruling classes and Western imperialism, but they have been able to build a social base among poor people. The send an important message to the progressive social movements in Latin Abya Yala. Why have they not been able to erode this social base of the neo-fascist? The strength of the neo-fascists is also derived from the weakness of the progressive social movements.

In Europe the neo-fascist deviate in many aspect from the classical Hitler fascism. The main resemblance is the racist narrative. It is not about Jews, but about Islam. It brings the discussion on neo-fascism to the level of civilization: Western civilization versus Islamic civilization. Jews and LGTB are part of the Western civilization. Western civilization is about progress and rationalism. Women's liberation and LGTB emancipation are high on their agenda. The support the Jewish state of Israel unconditionally. They are against perpetual wars of the NATO alliance. They have an agenda for social reforms in favor of the working class.

Far-right French presidential Marine Le Pen had a message for the country's gay community: Cast a vote for her because she and her party will protect them from Islamist violence. The same goes for Geert Wilders in The Netherlands, who won the parliamentary elections and now is part of the government.

The social program of Wilders includes:

- Lower VAT on groceries from 9% to 0
- Lower energy bill (lower tax and VAT)
- Lower social rent

- Increase statutory minimum wage
- Increase rent allowance
- Abolish deductible in healthcare
- Lower fuel excise duties
- Increase senior citizen discount
- Lower state pension age to 65
- Dentist in basic package of health care
- Lower social rent
- Increase rent allowance
- 20 percent salary reduction for ministers, members of parliament and members of the European Parliament
- Royal family liable for tax and reduction of contribution to the Royal family by 20%
- Billions are going to a war that is not ours.

These could be part of a socialist program.

Europe is different from the USA. The USA is the leading military, political and economic force of Western imperialism. With 800 military bases across the world they have power to engage in devastating wars, as they are now doing in Ukraine and Palestine. But if we look at the political forces that are engaged in fomenting war, we see that neo-fascists like Trump (who promote a racist narrative) are against endless war and Democrats and Republicans supported by the Military Industrial Complex are in favor of these wars. If you take the criterion of engaging in war, who is the fascist: Trump or Biden?

In India the Hindutva Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People Party) led by Narendra Modi is regarded as a neo-fascist party because of its Islamophobic policies and violent campaigns against Muslim. The ideological founder of Hindutva, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883-1966), connects the religion of Hinduism with the biological category of race. Savarkar: *"The Hindus are not merely the citizens of the Indian state because they are united not only by the bonds of the love they bear to a common motherland but also by the bonds of a common blood. They are not only a Nation but also a race-jati. The word jati derived from the root Jan to produce, means a brotherhood, a race determined by a common origin, -possessing a common blood. All Hindus claim to have in their veins the blood of the mighty race incorporated with and descended from the Vedic fathers, the Sindhus. We are well aware of the not unoften interested objection that carpingly questions 'but are you really a race? Can you be said to possess a common blood?' We can only answer by questioning in return, 'Are the English a race? Is there anything as English blood, the French blood, the German blood, or the Chinese blood in this world? Do they, who have been freely infusing foreign blood into their race by contracting marriages with other races and peoples possess a common blood and claim to be a race by themselves?' If they do, Hindus also can emphatically do so."*<sup>17</sup>

This resembles Hitler Blood and Soil theory (Blut und Boden). But if you study the BJP movement more closely you will find many intellectuals, journalists and political leader who are very anti-colonial. If you watch videos by India's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, you will find a sharp critique of Western colonialism. J. Sai Deepak is an author, who claims to work from a decolonial theoretical framework in his book *India that is Bharat - Coloniality, Civilisation, Constitution* and offers a Hindutva narrative of Indian history. According to Sai Deepak *"(a) Bharat's indigenous identity must be traced to a period before the Islamic invasions (Middle Eastern colonialism) and European colonisation, and (b) 'the Hindu religion' was the glue that bound this civilisation."*<sup>18</sup>

If you link fascism only to capitalism, you are not able to understand the complexities of neo-fascism. There is a civilizational dimension in neo-fascism that is embedded in colonialism.

## References

- Browning, C. (2011): The Origins of the Final Solution. in: Friedman, J. (ed.) (2011): The Routledge History of the Holocaust, pp. 156-167.
- Césaire, A. (1972): Discourse on Colonialism. Monthly Review Press. Original 1955. New York.
- Fanon, F. (2008): Black Skin, White Masks. Pluto Press. Original 1952. London.
- Hitler, A. (1939): Mein Kampf. English translation. Original 1924.
- Hitler, A. (2000): Hitler's Table Talk 1941-1944. His Private conversations. Translated by Norman Cameron and R.H. Stevens. Enigma Books. New York.
- Hitler, A. (n.d.): The Speeches of Adolf Hitler. 1921-1941.
- Sai Deepak, J. (2021): India that is Bharat. Coloniality, Civilisation, Constitution. Bloomsbury. New Delhi.
- Savarkar, V. (1922): Essentials of Hindutva.
- Tharoor, S. (2016): An Era of Darkness. The British Empire in India. Aleph Book. New Delhi.

---

<sup>1</sup> Hitler, A. (n.d.), p. 7-8.

<sup>2</sup> Idem, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Hitler, A. (2000), p. 24

<sup>4</sup> Idem, p. 15 and 33.

<sup>5</sup> Idem, p. 198-199.

<sup>6</sup> Idem, p. 354.

<sup>7</sup> Idem, p. 24.

<sup>8</sup> Tharoor, S. (2016), p. 53.

<sup>9</sup> Hitler, A. (2000), p. 203.

<sup>10</sup> Hitler, A. (1939), p. 280-281.

<sup>11</sup> Idem, p. 272.

<sup>12</sup> Hitler, A. (2000), p. 33.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Tharoor, S. (2016), p. 98.

<sup>14</sup> Browning, C. (2011), p. 160.

<sup>15</sup> Césaire, A. (1972), p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Fanon, F. (2008), p. 66.

<sup>17</sup> Savarkar, V. (1922), p. 30-31.

<sup>18</sup> Sai Deepak, J. (2021), p. 210.