

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نباشد تن من مباد
بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم
از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

AUGUST 24, 2018

by KENN ORPHAN
25.08.2018

The New Fascism, Same as the Old One



Photograph Source Konstantin Malanchev | [CC BY 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/)

“One can have Fascism come in any form at all, through the Church, through sex, through social welfare, through state conservatism, through organized medicine, the FBI, the Pentagon. Fascism is not a philosophy but a murderous mode of deadening reality by smothering it with lies.”

– Norman Mailer

“The ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the convinced Communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction and the distinction between true and false no longer exist.”

– Hannah Arendt, [The Origins of Totalitarianism](#)

Fascism can be a difficult concept to understand. The word often conjures up images of Hitler and Mussolini, but this narrow understanding can be deceptive since fascist thinking can occur and rise within any society or among the ranks of practically any ideological following. This is because fascism is not really an ideology in and of itself but more a collection of reactionary and misanthropic beliefs. It has become a popular pejorative hurled from many corners of society today; but the true danger is that its shadows haunts the precincts of every human heart.

Fascism in any given country will not look exactly like the German or Italian fascism of the 1930s. Swastikas and salutes are lightening rods for scorn. In truth, it is a subtle mindset which arises within a society as a seemingly familiar creature. It uses a nation’s symbols, songs and institutions, and it generally targets the young and those who see their privilege or status imperiled. It envelops itself in a skin of familiarity, and that’s what makes it so insidiously dangerous.

Many of the identifiers of fascism might be familiar to some because historians and those who have survived its horrors have analyzed its character for decades. These include aggressive xenophobia and chauvinism, racial, ethnic or religious supremacism, support for state violence and brutality, rigid belief in traditional (see subservient) roles for women, support for censorship or suppression of dissent, denial of historical atrocities committed by one’s own government, admiration of dictators (foreign and domestic), a general disdain for or open hostility toward diversity, belief in mythic tales that underpin notions of supremacy and a glorious past and scapegoating and dehumanization of other groups of people for society’s ills.

It is often thought of as a rightwing phenomenon, but it should be understood that there are many elements of the “*left leaning*” Western *liberal establishment* which are vulnerable to the fascist mindset. We see this happening today among those who fecklessly support the surveillance state apparatus in the form of the FBI and other nefarious governmental agencies because of their justified loathing of Donald Trump.

This is no more apparent than in the Russophobia we’ve seen this past year. Of course it is undeniable, based upon the above criteria, that Trump has fascist characteristics; and his unhinged tweets, cabinet appointments and policies reflect this. But liberals may be

especially susceptible to propaganda handed down to them from the establishment elite who protect the fragile bubble of privilege in which they are ensconced. It may also be why there aren't many protests when it comes to America's imperial war machine or global capitalism in general because it simply does not affect most of them directly. Liberals need to grapple with the idea that if Trump is deposed, and it is appearing more and more likely by the day, then a Pence presidency might give us a more terrifying glimpse into an establishment approved fascism.

But there are some on the so-called "*far left*" in the West who, in their justified hatred of American imperialism, show admiration for various authoritarians who happen to buck the imperialist system, or at least the American version of it. And this is done often while absolving or ignoring the documented crimes these regimes commit, from Myanmar to Syria to the Philippines. The far right (now labeled in the en vogue parlance as "*alt-right*") has seized on these weaknesses, attempting to bamboozle some into joining their ranks. But this isn't anything new. From Hitler's brown shirts to today's neo-Nazis, the tactic has always been to focus on the easiest targets for influence, those prone to accept information that confirms their prejudices, bias and base fears. Today is only different in the optics.

This is certainly not an argument in defense of imperialism or for violent militias who commit atrocities or acts of terror against civilians for a "*just cause.*" But it is incongruous with leftist values to have admiration for any totalitarian leader or despotic regime however charismatic or "*anti-imperialist*" they might appear. In other words, just because a leader stands up to American imperialism does not automatically make them a "*hero of the people.*"

This has come up in regard to Russian president Vladimir Putin who is sometimes painted as a leftist, an assertion which defies reality. Of course the liberal conspiracies involving Russiagate are mostly ridiculous, but that segment of the "*left*" which idolizes foreign authoritarians to near sainthood status is equally injudicious and ignores historical facts.

Indeed, today's Russia is far from the leftist utopia some would like us to believe. The political landscape of post-Soviet Russia, which was viciously taken advantage of by American capitalists who sought to infuse the nation with neoliberal policies in the first years, gave rise to an oligarchic system not much different than the current one ruling Washington. By installing Boris Yeltsin, a much loathed dolt with a drinking problem, the Americans created the conditions for the current geopolitical quagmire. Yeltsin, echoing

his neocon supporters in the West, opted on whipping up ethnic animosities and invaded impoverished but oil drenched Chechnya, appointing former KGB Lieutenant Colonel Vladimir Putin to conduct the brutal and bloody affair.

In the meantime, [a robust fascist strain](#) had arisen within Russian society bolstered by the atmosphere of political confusion, foreign subterfuge, economic disempowerment and geopolitical humiliation following the collapse of the USSR. It asserts itself to this day within a climate of [state repression](#) where the [LGBT community continues to be persecuted](#) by reactionary elements. But this phenomenon is happening around the world in some of the West's staunchest allies, from India, to the Middle-East and to Europe and beyond. And it manifests in a variety of ways.

In India, the rise of Narendra Modi attests to the universality of fascism. The biggest democracy on earth has also seen the terrifying rise of [Hindutva nationalism](#), a supremacist ideology akin to white nationalism in Europe and the US. It should be of no surprise, then, that violence against non-Hindus, women, *lowercastes* and transgender people has exploded. Fascistic regimes routinely employ violence or tacitly encourage it from armed militias and vigilantes. And the occupation of other regions often plays a role by bolstering ideas of militaristic prowess. The brutal occupation of [Kashmir](#) is a testament to this.

In Israel, the far right has become emboldened by a decades long military occupation aided by the US and Europe. The ideology of Zionism has led to an [apartheid-like system](#) which is undeniably fascist in its character. And the Palestinians are not the only victims of this. Anti-immigrant sentiment and policies of expulsion have gained popularity. But antisemitism plays a part in this as well. Fascist thought at once loves the idea of the state of Israel while simultaneously loathing Jews, and one can see that play out in [rightwing Christian media](#). Even white supremacist [Richard Spencer](#) has jumped on this. On the "*far left*" there have been troubling instances of antisemitism which only serve to derail Palestinian solidarity by alienating Jewish peace activists.

All around the world fascism is seeing a terrifying resurgence. Indeed, the neoliberal capitalist policies of the late 20th century helped to create conditions favourable to its rise; but abrupt climate change, imperialistic wars of exploitation, religious or sectarian extremism and the long legacy of racist colonialism has fueled its ascendancy as well. In the 21st century we, as a species, are faced with its looming specter, a phantom composed of the billions of corpses from mass graves, gulags and internment camps throughout

human history. There is no doubt that it must be fought at every turn, but to do so it must first be seen for what it is and where it lurks.

Fascism is a disease of the mind. It is that plain where internal fears meet the external realities of the world we live in. These fears are projected onto that world and react in such a way as to attempt to shut them down; and this is why those with such a mindset find authoritarian figures so appealing. The comfort offered by a black and white world, albeit a false one, replaces the seemingly chaotic randomness of life. Under the rubric of fascistic thought, all ambiguities, context and nuances are conveniently sponged away. The “*other*,” whether they be foreign, indigenous or simply different, is scapegoated, then dehumanized, then incarcerated, then exterminated. Empathy is slayed. To the organized fascist, confusion is a supreme virtue. Truth is an enemy met with ridicule, then suppression, then death.

As human beings we all hold within us both light and dark and all shades in between. It is true that there are many who commit unconscionable acts of cruelty or wickedness. In fact, most of them hold great power. It is also true that the current global order is predicated upon the ruthless exploitation of billions of people primarily in the global south and countless species, and the systematic rape of the planet for coin. It is a despotism driven by cupidity and violent domination. Each of us, however, has an agency within that can enable us to step outside of these factors and engage with the world. We possess the power to see beyond our fear. But if we allow fascism to flourish, if we do not push back, it will undoubtedly rob us of that agency and, in turn, rob the world of its very future.