

# American Friendly Fascism: Not So Friendly Anymore

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Region: [Europe, USA](#)

Theme: [History](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

*"It is the leaders of the country who determine policy, and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy, or a fascist dictatorship, or a parliament, or a communist dictatorship...Voice or no voice the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is to tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country." — Hermann Goering, head of the Nazi army's equivalent of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Head of the Luftwaffe (April 18, 1946).*

*"Today Christians stand at the head of our country. We want to fill our culture again with the Christian spirit. We want to burn out all the recent immoral developments in literature, in the theatre, and in the press- in short, we want to burn out the poison of immorality which has entered into our whole life and culture as a result of LIBERAL excess during the past years." — Adolf Hitler*

*"'The Jewish people are to be exterminated' says every party member. That's clear, it's part of our program, elimination of the Jews, extermination, right, we'll do it. The wealth that they had, we have taken from them. I have issued a strict command...that this wealth is as a matter of course to be delivered in its entirety to the Reich." — Heinrich Himmler (1943)*

*"If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it. The lie can be maintained only for such time as the State can shield the people from the political, economic and/or military consequences of the lie. It thus becomes vitally important for the State to use all of its powers to repress dissent, for the truth is the mortal enemy of the lie, and thus by extension, the truth is the greatest enemy of the State." — Joseph Goebbels, German Nazi "Minister of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment"*

*"The rank and file is usually much more primitive than we imagine. Propaganda must therefore always be essentially simple and repetitious. The most brilliant propagandist technique will yield no success unless one fundamental principle is borne in mind constantly... it must confine itself to a few points and repeat them over and over." — Joseph Goebbels*

*"This so-called ill treatment and torture in detention centers, stories of which were spread everywhere among the people, and later by the prisoners who were freed, were not, as some assumed, inflicted methodically, but were excesses committed by individual prison guards, their deputies, and men who laid violent hands on the detainees." — Rudolf Hoess, SS commandant at Auschwitz*

*"The people want wholesome dread. They want to fear something. They want someone to*

*frighten them and make them shudderingly submissive.” — Ernst Rohm, chief of the SA, later murdered on Hitler’s orders during the Night of the Long Knives, 1934*

*“The more we do to you, the less you seem to believe we are doing it.” — Joseph Mengele, MD, Nazi “Angel of Death” at Auschwitz*

*“Fascism should rightly be called corporatism as it is a merger of state and corporate power.” — Benito Mussolini, Fascist dictator of Italy (1922 - 1945)*

*“We had the moral right, we had the duty to our own people, to kill this people that wanted to kill us...And we have suffered no harm from it in our inner self, in our soul, in our character.” — Heinrich Himmler (1943)*

*“It also gives us a very special, secret pleasure to see how unaware the people around us are of what is really happening to them...What good fortune for those in power that the people do not think.” — Adolf Hitler*

*“Through clever and constant application of propaganda people can be made to see paradise as hell, and also the other way around, to consider the most wretched sort of life as paradise.” — Adolf Hitler*

*“The fascist state must not forget that all means must serve the ends; it must not let itself be confused by the drivel about so-called ‘freedom of the press’...it must make sure that (the media) is placed in the service of the state.” — Adolf Hitler*

*“An evil exists that threatens every man, woman, and child of this great nation. We must take steps to ensure our domestic security and protect our homeland.” — Adolf Hitler, proposing the creation of his homeland security group, the Gestapo*

*“I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator; by defending myself against the Jews, I am fighting for the Lord.” — Adolf Hitler*

*“The streets of our country are in turmoil! The universities are filled with students rebelling and rioting! Communists are seeking to destroy our country! Russia is threatening us with her might! Our republic is in danger, yes, danger from within and without! WE NEED LAW AND ORDER!” — Original quote from Adolf Hitler (indistinguishable from the rhetoric of Ronald Reagan two generations later)*

*“Fascism does not, generally speaking, believe in the possibility or utility of perpetual peace. It therefore discards pacifism as a cloak for cowardly supine renunciation in contradistinction to self-sacrifice.” - Benito Mussolini*

*“Those who cast the votes decide nothing. Those who COUNT the votes decide everything.” — Joseph Stalin*

*“First we will kill all the subversives, then we will kill their collaborators, then...their sympathizers, then...those who remain indifferent, and finally, we will kill the timid.” — Iberico Saint Jean (1977), right wing fascist governor of the Province of Buenos Aires, threatening those who failed to show the necessary enthusiasm for Argentina’s newly formed but un-elected military government, that gained power by coup d’etat.*

*“The conflict is for us a holy war against Communist aggression to free the peoples of Asia*

*from the Red peril and assure peace in the Far East...Our struggle aims to find peace in new order and in a great and just spirit...New and strong foundations are being laid for world peace and the welfare of humanity.” —Matsuzo Nagai, Japanese Minister of Transport, November 25, 1936, in a message to Joseph Goebbels*

*“It is not necessary to bury the truth. It is sufficient merely to delay it until nobody cares.”  
— Napoleon Bonaparte*

*“Altruism is a great evil...while selfishness is a virtue.” — Ayn Rand, atheist author of Atlas Shrugged, Fountainhead and The Virtue of Selfishness. Rand is the hero of the American Libertarian Party, Tea Party, and many members in the Republican Party, as well as several ex-presidential candidates such as David H. Koch, Bob Barr, ex-US House member Ron Paul, current Senator Rand Paul, and recent GOP Speaker of the House Paul Ryan.*

*“The individual is handicapped by coming face to face with a conspiracy so monstrous he cannot believe it exists.” — J. Edgar Hoover, former head of the FBI and probable co-conspirator in the JFK and MLK assassinations, as well as other acts of extra-judicial violence.*

*“The Plan is for the United States to rule the world. The overt theme is unilateralism, but it is ultimately a story of domination. It calls for the United States to maintain its overwhelming superiority and prevent new rivals from rising up to challenge it on the world stage. It calls for dominion over friends and enemies alike. It says not that the United States must be more powerful, or most powerful, but that it must be absolutely powerful.” — Dick Cheney, Vice-President during both George W. Bush administrations - West Point lecture, June 2002*

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I have lived through the authoritarian-lite, law and order, pro-militarist, pro-corporate administrations of Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush and now Donald Trump, I have been acutely aware of the existence of characteristics of classical fascism because of my own reading of the history of fascism. I have a couple of shelves full of books about the history of militarist/fascist states like Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, Fascist Spain, Fascist Japan. I also have biographies about characters like Adolf Hitler, Joseph Goebbels, Heinrich Himmler, Hermann Goering, Benito Mussolini and any number of studies of fascism.

The following four paragraphs come from one of the articles that I have written about fascism:

Fascism is a form of radical authoritarian nationalism that came to prominence in early 20th-century Europe. The first fascist movements emerged in Italy during World War I before it spread to other European countries. Violently opposed to **liberalism**, Marxism and anarchism, fascism is usually placed on the far-right within the traditional left-right spectrum.

Fascists regarded World War I as a revolution that brought massive changes to the nature of war, society, the state, and technology. The advent of **total war** and the total mass mobilization of society had broken down the distinction between civilians and combatants. All citizens were involved with the military in some manner during the war. The war had resulted in the rise of a powerful state capable of mobilizing millions of people to serve on the front lines and provide economic production and logistics to support them, as well as

having unprecedented authority to intervene in the lives of citizens.

Fascists believe that **liberal democracy** is obsolete, and they regard the complete mobilization of society under a **totalitarian one-party** state as necessary to prepare a nation for armed conflict and to respond effectively to economic difficulties. Such a state is led by a strong leader—such as a **dictator and a martial government** composed of the members of the governing fascist party—to forge national unity and maintain a stable and orderly society.

Fascism rejects assertions that violence is automatically negative in nature, and **views political violence, war and imperialism** as means that can achieve national rejuvenation. Fascist-leaning movements urge large budgetary outlays for war-making and “defense”.

The 10 Characteristics of Fascist Politics (from an interview with Jason Stanley, PhD author of [\*\*\*How Fascism Works: The Politics of Us and Them\*\*\*](#))

“All fascist movements are based on hyper-nationalism,” Stanley said.

He said that hyper-nationalism may be racially, ethnically, or religiously based, and that it is always patriarchal and always anti-gay. The end goal of fascist politics, he said, is for an authoritarian leader or party to seize power and maintain power for as long as possible by altering reality to fit their warped vision of the world.

Stanley identified ten characteristics that define fascist political movements.

“I observe all ten pillars in the United States today,” he said.

1. A mythic past. “Fascism always promises to return us to a mythic past” Stanley said. For Hitler, that meant returning to the past of the Holy Roman Empire, when Germans ruled over non-Germans; for Mussolini, that meant the Roman Empire itself.

This past is a place where the patriarchy rules supreme, where in-group men are warriors and in-group women are mothers and wives. This past is mythic, Stanley said: it is fake. It never really was, except in the words of fascist politicians.

2. **Propaganda.** Stanley said fascist politicians always revert to anti-corruption campaigns, even when they themselves are transparently corrupt. He said the Nazis were among the most corrupt regimes in history, plundering the wealth and property of European Jews, and yet still waged a merciless propaganda campaign that promised to rid the continent of corruption supposedly introduced by Jews.

Trump branded Clinton as “Crooked Hillary” and promised to “drain the swamp,” despite his long history of underhanded business and political dealings. Vladimir Putin, the same time that he is reviving mid-20th century Russian fascist thinker Ivan Ilyin, consistently lambasts the European Union as fascist.

3. Anti-intellectualism. “The enemy of fascism is equality,” Stanley said. He said universities are continually attacked by fascist politicians as hotbeds of cultural and political Marxism.

He said these politicians uphold a mythical “common man” as always knowing what is right and deride women and racial and sexual minorities who seek basic equality as in fact seeking political and cultural domination.

4. Hierarchy. As opposed to liberal democracies, which are based on freedom and equality, fascism enshrines a dominant group’s traditions as the unequivocal rule.

5. Victimhood. Throughout fascist politics, the dominant group always portrays itself as victims. Stanley said the Nazis said they were the victims of the minority Jews. He said that Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán held an international conference on the persecution of Jews in October 2017, during which he declared that Christians are the most persecuted group in the world.

6. **Unreality.** Fascist politicians rely on conspiracy theories instead of facts to justify their calls for power. “When ‘Birtherism’ came,” Stanley said, “everyone should have been terrified.”

7. Law and order. The fascist politician promises a regime of law and order not to punish actual criminals, but to criminalize “out groups” like racial, ethnic, religious and sexual minorities. “Right now,” Stanley said, “we’re seeing criminality being written into immigration status” in the United States. He said fascist politicians thrive on launching purportedly specific attacks against certain segments of a population, like “criminal” immigrants or Jews, and then broadening that definition to include the entire group.

8. Sexual anxiety. Stanley said the fascist politician always foments panic around the threat of rape perpetrated by out-group men against in-group women. “The particular threat is rape,” he said, “and then you create fear among people by talking about rape, and then you try to attack people’s diminished sense of traditional manliness by fomenting fear about sexuality.”

9. Sodom and Gomorrah. Fascist politicians always locate virtue in the countryside and in small towns, and never in cities with their mixtures of people, races, “decadence” and permissiveness.

10. Arbeit macht frei. (“Work Makes You Free”) Fascist politicians identify out groups as lazy, attack welfare systems and labor organizers, and promote the idea that the group on top is hard working, the groups on the bottom are lazy and drains on the state and should be forced to work, ideally for free.

Here is a 5-minute version (Great Summary with video clips):

Here is a 12-minute interview (no video clips) with Thom Hartmann:

And here is the October 11, 2018 DemocracyNow! interview with Dr Stanley:

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Fascism Anyone?

By Laurence W. Britt

Free Inquiry readers may pause to read the “Affirmations of Humanism: A Statement of Principles” on the inside cover of the magazine. To a secular humanist, these principles seem so logical, so right, so crucial. Yet, there is one archetypal political philosophy that is anathema to almost all of these principles. It is fascism. And fascism’s principles are wafting in the air today, surreptitiously masquerading as something else, challenging everything we stand for. The cliché that people and nations learn from history is not only overused, but also overestimated; often we fail to learn from history or draw the wrong conclusions. Sadly, historical amnesia is the norm.

We are two-and-a-half generations removed from the horrors of Nazi Germany, although constant reminders jog the consciousness. German and Italian fascism form the historical models that define this twisted political worldview. Although they no longer exist, this worldview and the characteristics of these models have been imitated by proto-fascist regimes at various times in the twentieth century. Both the original German and Italian models and the later proto-fascist regimes show remarkably similar characteristics. Although many scholars question any direct connection among these regimes, few can dispute their visual similarities.

Beyond the visual, even a cursory study of these fascist and proto-fascist regimes reveals the absolutely striking convergence of their *modus operandi*. This, of course, is not a revelation to the informed political observer, but it is sometimes useful in the interests of perspective to restate obvious facts and in so doing shed needed light on current circumstances.

For the purpose of this perspective, I will consider the following regimes: Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, Franco’s Spain, Salazar’s Portugal, Papadopoulos’s Greece, Pinochet’s Chile, and Suharto’s Indonesia. To be sure, they constitute a mixed bag of national identities, cultures, developmental levels, and history. But they all followed the fascist or proto-fascist model in obtaining, expanding, and maintaining power. Further, all these regimes have been overthrown, so a more or less complete picture of their basic characteristics and abuses is possible.

Analysis of these seven regimes reveals fourteen common threads that link them in recognizable patterns of national behavior and abuse of power. These basic characteristics are more prevalent and intense in some regimes than in others, but they all share at least some level of similarity.

1. Powerful and continuing expressions of nationalism. From the prominent displays of flags and bunting to the ubiquitous lapel pins, the fervor to show patriotic nationalism, both on the part of the regime itself and of citizens caught up in its frenzy, was always obvious. Catchy slogans, pride in the military, and demands for unity were common themes in expressing this nationalism. It was usually coupled with a suspicion of things foreign that often bordered on xenophobia.
2. Disdain for the importance of human rights. The regimes themselves viewed human rights as of little value and a hindrance to realizing the objectives of the ruling elite. Through clever use of propaganda, the population was brought to accept these human rights abuses by marginalizing, even demonizing, those being targeted. When abuse was egregious, the tactic was to use secrecy, denial, and disinformation.
3. Identification of enemies/scapegoats as a unifying cause. The most



significant common thread among these regimes was the use of scapegoating as a means to divert the people's attention from other problems, to shift blame for failures, and to channel frustration in controlled directions. The methods of choice—relentless propaganda and disinformation—were usually effective. Often the regimes would incite “spontaneous” acts against the target scapegoats, usually communists, socialists, liberals, Jews, ethnic and racial minorities, traditional national enemies, members of other religions, secularists, homosexuals, and “terrorists.” Active opponents of these regimes were inevitably labeled as terrorists and dealt with accordingly.

4. The supremacy of the military/avid militarism. Ruling elites always identified closely with the military and the industrial infrastructure that supported it. A disproportionate share of national resources was allocated to the military, even when domestic needs were acute. The military was seen as an expression of nationalism, and was used whenever possible to assert national goals, intimidate other nations, and increase the power and prestige of the ruling elite.

5. Rampant sexism. Beyond the simple fact that the political elite and the national culture were male-dominated, these regimes inevitably viewed women as second-class citizens. They were adamantly anti-abortion and also homophobic. These attitudes were usually codified in Draconian laws that enjoyed strong support by the orthodox religion of the country, thus lending the regime cover for its abuses.

6. A controlled mass media. Under some of the regimes, the mass media were under strict direct control and could be relied upon never to stray from the party line. Other regimes exercised more subtle power to ensure media orthodoxy. Methods included the control of licensing and access to resources, economic pressure, appeals to patriotism, and implied threats. The leaders of the mass media were often politically compatible with the power elite. The result was usually success in keeping the general public unaware of the regimes' excesses.

7. Obsession with national security. Inevitably, a national security apparatus was under direct control of the ruling elite. It was usually an instrument of oppression, operating in secret and beyond any constraints. Its actions were justified under the rubric of protecting “national security,” and questioning its activities was portrayed as unpatriotic or even treasonous.

8. Religion and ruling elite tied together. Unlike communist regimes, the fascist and proto-fascist regimes were never proclaimed as godless by their opponents. In fact, most of the regimes attached themselves to the predominant religion of the country and chose to portray themselves as militant defenders of that religion. The fact that the ruling elite's behavior was incompatible with the precepts of the religion was generally swept under the rug. Propaganda kept up the illusion that the ruling elites were defenders of the faith and opponents of the “godless.” A perception was manufactured that opposing the power elite was tantamount to an attack on religion.

9. Power of corporations protected. Although the personal life of ordinary citizens was under strict control, the ability of large corporations to operate in relative freedom was not compromised. The ruling elite saw the corporate structure as a way to not only ensure military production (in developed states), but also as an additional means of social control. Members of the economic elite were often pampered by the political elite to ensure a continued mutuality of interests, especially in the repression of “have-not” citizens.

10. Power of labor suppressed or eliminated. Since organized labor was seen

as the one power center that could challenge the political hegemony of the ruling elite and its corporate allies, it was inevitably crushed or made powerless. The poor formed an underclass, viewed with suspicion or outright contempt. Under some regimes, being poor was considered akin to a vice.

11. Disdain and suppression of intellectuals and the arts. Intellectuals and the inherent freedom of ideas and expression associated with them were anathema to these regimes. Intellectual and academic freedom were considered subversive to national security and the patriotic ideal. Universities were tightly controlled; politically unreliable faculty harassed or eliminated. Unorthodox ideas or expressions of dissent were strongly attacked, silenced, or crushed. To these regimes, art and literature should serve the national interest or they had no right to exist.

12. Obsession with crime and punishment. Most of these regimes maintained Draconian systems of criminal justice with huge prison populations. The police were often glorified and had almost unchecked power, leading to rampant abuse. "Normal" and political crime were often merged into trumped-up criminal charges and sometimes used against political opponents of the regime. Fear, and hatred, of criminals or "traitors" was often promoted among the population as an excuse for more police power.

13. Rampant cronyism and corruption. Those in business circles and close to the power elite often used their position to enrich themselves. This corruption worked both ways; the power elite would receive financial gifts and property from the economic elite, who in turn would gain the benefit of government favoritism. Members of the power elite were in a position to obtain vast wealth from other sources as well: for example, by stealing national resources. With the national security apparatus under control and the media muzzled, this corruption was largely unconstrained and not well understood by the general population.

14. Fraudulent elections. Elections in the form of plebiscites or public opinion polls were usually bogus. When actual elections with candidates were held, they would usually be perverted by the power elite to get the desired result. Common methods included maintaining control of the election machinery, intimidating and disenfranchising opposition voters, destroying or disallowing legal votes, and, as a last resort, turning to a judiciary beholden to the power elite.

Does any of this ring alarm bells? Of course not. After all, this is America, officially a democracy with the rule of law, a constitution, a free press, honest elections, and a well-informed public constantly being put on guard against evils. Historical comparisons like these are just exercises in verbal gymnastics. Maybe, maybe not.

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Laurence Britt's novel *June 2004* depicts a future America dominated by right-wing extremists.

*Dr. Lawrence Britt, a writer on subjects related to political, historical and economic issues, wrote the article above about fascism. It appeared in Free Inquiry magazine, a journal of humanist thought. Dr. Britt studied the fascist regimes of Hitler (Germany), Mussolini (Italy), Franco (Spain), Suharto (Indonesia), and Pinochet (Chile). He found the regimes all had 14 things in common, and he calls these the identifying characteristics of fascism.*

*Dr. Kohls is a retired family physician from Duluth, MN, USA. Since his retirement from his holistic mental health practice he has been writing his weekly Duty to Warn column for the Duluth Reader, northeast Minnesota's alternative newsweekly magazine. His columns, which are re-published around the world, deal with the dangers of American fascism, corporatism, militarism, racism, malnutrition, Big Pharma's over-drugging and Big Vaccine's over-vaccination agendas, as well as other movements that threaten human health, the environment, democracy, civility and the sustainability of all life on earth. Many of his columns have been archived at a number of websites, including*

[http://duluthreader.com/search?search\\_term=Duty+to+Warn&p=2;](http://duluthreader.com/search?search_term=Duty+to+Warn&p=2;)

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