



*To combat the totalitarian threat of our day*

**Reverse the Iranian theocracy!**

1. How public opinion missed the point in the 1930s

Ian Kershaw is rightly considered as the most important reference on the history of Hitler and his rising. He was particularly brilliant in portraying the general environment that allowed this to have happened, which he did in his masterpiece 'Making friends with Hitler, Lord Londonderry and Britain's Road to War'.

As the title implies, the book centres on 'Lord Londonderry'. Perhaps more crucial in shaping 'Britain's Road to War' was public opinion – as he analyses in section I of Chapter I (pp.27 – 36). I vividly recommend its reading for all those who seek to understand how Western people and most in particular the political establishment were led into truly idiotic beliefs on Hitler (and which ultimately made war inevitable):

'The Times, the most important newspaper among the British political class, agreed that Hitler was a 'moderate' [this was the British press' consensus at the time - 1932] compared with some of the more radical figures in the Nazi Party, and thought that he was gradually gaining a sense of responsibility. It even suggested that Hitler should constitutionally be made President of the German Reich, imagining that the Nazi movement might break apart if its leader were to be elevated 'above politics'.' (pp. 29-30)

'The Times, for instance, had already indicated on 29 January [1933], the day following the fall of the government of General von Schleicher, that a government headed by Hitler commanding majority support in the Reichstag was 'held to be the least dangerous solution of a problem bristling with dangers'. (p.30)'

As we know, William Churchill was quite isolated and was called to power only in a last resource scenario - when the situation seemed to be truly desperate.



The public opinion makers of the era, however, never made a critical self-assessment on their role leading both popular beliefs and the political establishment into disastrous paths, and thus never thought of avoiding to repeat the same mistakes.

Public opinion has been rightly concerned with fundamental issues such as the safeguard of humanitarian values and democracy; nuclear proliferation and peace or the protection of the environment and the fight against drug traffic.

The question, however, is whether we are sensibly looking clearly at the source of our problems, or whether we are confusing issues and priorities as we did in the 1930s.

## 2. The misperception of present threats as ‘populism and nationalism’

Several works recently published reflect about the danger of coming back to the 1930s. However, they fail to understand where this danger is coming from and often turn the World upside down - an example would be Madeleine’s Albright recent book ‘Fascism: A warning’

The introduction of Madeleine’s Albright book starts with her escaping with her parents after the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, proceeds up to the fall of the Iron Curtain – understandably for her better symbolised in Prague – and finally lead us towards the present erosion of democracy - whose ‘first reason’ she quite predictably sees as being Donald Trump.

The discussion on the essence of fascism has been endless among Western societies and, as Ms Albright confirms, also within her class rooms. She rightly perceives the ‘popular’ character of fascism as a distinct feature from traditional forms of despotic regimes, but she fails to establish a distinction between ‘fascism’ and ‘communism’, actually even using these concepts interchangeably as in the expression ‘Soviet-style fascism’ (p. 4; Chapter 7).

Ms Albright flits across such diverse leaders as Viktor Orban, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, Hugo Chavez, Vladimir Putin, Recep Erdogan or the Korean Kim dynasty – none of whom she calls fascist, but all of whom she characterizes with some diverse fascist

tones – apparently only in order to attack Donald Trump and indirectly suggest his link to a present fascist danger.

Ms Albright's book sheds no light on what was intrinsically distinctive in 'fascism' during the 1930s and, most in particular, what are the distinct signs of a re-born fascism today. What is most striking in Ms Albright's approach is the complete silence she keeps on the contemporary regime that most resembles old-era fascism – the Iranian theocracy – or on the most performing and significant type of authoritarian regime today, the Chinese communist system.

Ms Albright's book's silence on Iran, Pakistan or China is easily understandable if we consider her own failures to confront these regimes while at the top of the US administration. Otherwise, the twisting of concepts and arguments so as to target Donald Trump is typical of the unfortunate partisanship dominating her and most contemporary political analysis.

Ms Albright's book is important mainly as it represents a good summary of the distorted view of political reality we are offered by our 'mainstream media' and how it serves to cover-up the real threats to democracy – which are seen as emanating from 'populism' and 'nationalism'.

If we are to understand present-day challenges to democracy, we certainly have to look at fascism and communism in the last century as the closest examples, but keeping in mind political science's general and abstract criteria.

What we call democracy is a complex structure based on the rule of law and containing both democratic and aristocratic features. Strong democratic structures can be found within the United States, which couples traditional representative structures for both executive and legislative with a varied weight of direct rule through referenda, some democratic control on the judiciary level and a restrained bureaucratic power.

The European Union is on the other side of the 'liberal-democratic' spectrum - where aristocratic features are more salient, with little to no referenda, executive bodies made



of multiple gatherings of representatives and representatives of representatives; no democratic control on the judiciary and a wide power for an unelected bureaucracy.

Otherwise, in both sides of the Atlantic, there are strong features of plutocracy - stemming among other factors from the great power attributed to central banks that have little to no democratic control. This might be seen as the main reason for the oligarchic perversion of the aristocratic elements of the system, causing the so-called 'anti-elitist' rebellion.

So-called 'populist' rebellions against the 'aristocratic' or 'elitist' features of the political system have often happened in the US - Andrew Jackson, president from 1830 to 1838, being the best historic example and Donald Trump being a present phenomenon.

In the US such developments did not transform democracy in demagoguery and therefore did not facilitate the degradation of the system into a tyranny - a well-known danger already well characterised by Aristotle. We believe this has to do with the robustness of the rule of law and in particular the separation of powers in the US.

The same democratic 'populist' manifestations might have different results elsewhere, where separation of powers and the rule of law are weaker. Such popular revolts in less robust political systems can cause demagogic derivations leading towards tyranny. In my view, this was exactly what happened in Venezuela, perhaps the clearest example of such a political decay.

The same phenomenon is even more likely and dangerous when 'populist' revolts are done in autocratic countries, as it was the case of the Arab Spring. There, the most well-organised totalitarian forces rapidly took control over the movement and transformed it from a democratic revolution into an attempt to impose an even more dangerous dictatorship than the one that existed before.

To see 'populism' as the problem is to see reality upside down. That the people want to take control of their own destinies is on its own a good thing. The problem lies with the fragility or even inexistence of institutions and forces safeguarding the rule of law as



well as the oligarchic, incompetent or authoritarian forms of rule which provoked a populist reaction in the first place.

**The criticism of ‘populism’ tends therefore to become the criticism of ‘democracy’ or even the corporatist protection of an institutionalised oligarchy.**

The criticism of ‘nationalism’ is also misguided. Democracy developed in the context of nations, and national pride is by itself a positive thing. It becomes dangerous when it becomes obsessive and totalitarian, when it ceases to be the love of the fatherland and becomes the downplaying of others, thus often becoming Imperialism.

The key to the British successful resistance to Nazi expansionism was its patriotism - that is, British nationalism. It was certainly not a negative thing, quite the contrary. Nazi nationalism was xenophobic, imperial and hateful; it cannot be confused with the United Kingdom’s nationalism during the Second World War.

Therefore, when we repeatedly read what is offered by the mainstream media (and the politicians echoing it) saying that we are facing the danger of ‘populism’ and ‘nationalism’ we are being misdirected from the issues that really matter - sometimes only for a partisan spirit concentrated with the objective of denigrating the political opponent (Donald Trump) at any cost and hiding her own grave political errors, as is the case of Madeleine Albright.

Imperial expansionism by despotic powers – such as a theocracy – rather than populism or nationalism should be our common concern. And the imperial expansionism’s level of threat has to be assessed based on its disregard for other nations; for human rights both within and out of its borders; for the aggressive threat in the use of arms; for its disregard for nature and for the evil of its guiding ideology.

### 3. Confronting the theocracy’s devastating human record

Europe has rightly reacted against the hidden invasion of Eastern Ukraine by Putin’s agents through sanctions; yet it stands still on the face of the hidden invasion of



Lebanon, Iraq, Syria or Yemen by armed militias which are financed, armed and masterminded by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards.

Iran is rightly pointed out by the US administration as the number one international destabiliser - through international terrorism, including in Europe and through a fanatic indoctrination and disinformation war both within its region and across the world. Iran's relentless efforts to become a nuclear power, its missile production and export towards its militias in Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, Syria or Yemen is already a direct threat to European security.

Iran is the world champion of per capita use of capital punishment; it imprisons thousands of its citizens for peacefully opposing its dictatorship; it mercilessly persecutes environmentalists who denounce the regime's crimes against nature.

Yet, for the likes of Madeleine Albright and the vast legion of European appeasers, Iran does not even appear in the horizon of the worldwide fascist threat. Quite the opposite: it is those who rightly understand the unique danger posed by the Iranian theocracy who are called 'populist' and 'nationalist' and therefore close to 'fascists'.

And when these contemporary appeasers do pay attention to the theocracy, it is unfortunately often so as to work as its press agents. The 'Guardian' is a case in point; it started by publishing articles on the promotion of tourism in Iran, continued by discovering the theocracy's exemplary care for the environment and finished by covering-up its terrorist activities in Europe - and tarnishing its opposition.

The appeasement blindness knows no limits and repeats the steps taken during the 1930's.

Iran is not only a dictatorial country disrespectful of the rights of both its citizens and its neighbours. It is a fanatic revolutionary regime whose theocratic Constitution mandates the country to pursue a global Jihad. It does not recognise any human law, national or international, as limit to its ambitions. The parallel could not be clearer with the Imperial expansionist ideologies that brought war and destruction to humanity.



Iran is a country of ancient culture and civilisation, and notwithstanding the long period of rule by the mullah, it does have a vibrant society that is rebelling against the dictatorship. During the last year, the world saw discontent being spread from the middle classes, professors and students to the bazars and to the working class, to the factories, professional drivers and farmers.

More to the point, the demonstrations showed an ever clearer political character. The clerics publicly denounced the underground organisation of the People's Mojahedin of Iran as the responsible body for directing strikes and demonstrations, and mandated its disinformation machine to resume attack against it.

The world is now facing a unique window of opportunity to destroy the organic centre of the Islamic fanatic threat, through the combination of a confrontational US administration with the will of the Iranian people and organised opposition.

Future generations will not forgive us if we fail to use it.

Olhão, 2018-11-19

(Paulo Casaca)