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Mass Dictatorship – A Transnational Formation of Modernity

ABSTRACT

Global history suggests that mass dictatorship is far from a result of deviation or aberration from a purported “normal path” of development, but is in itself a transnational formation of modernity that emerged in response to the global processes that swept through the twentieth century. Global perspectives on the transnational formation of modernity help us to understand why Fascist Italy’s remarkable advance “from a proletarian nation to a bourgeois nation” had appealed to many a colonial Marxist from Asia. The Marxian view twisted from class struggle to national struggle in Fascist ideology was not alien to some colonial Marxists and later dependency theorists who regarded socialism as the means to realise rapid modernisation and national liberation. If the mass dictatorships on European soil have been shaped by the latecomers’ imperial projects, non-European mass dictatorships have been driven by the desire for great power status, the regret of not being colonisers, and the fear of being colonised. These mass dictatorship regimes proclaimed that their historical task was to follow and catch up with the “Western” colonial powers at all costs. That explains why the “follow and catch up” strategy was adopted not only by socialist regimes in “Eastern” Europe but also by post-colonial developmental dictatorships in the “Rest”.

Neither *Sonderweg* nor Diffusionism

The term “mass dictatorship” implies the attempted mobilisation of the masses by dictatorships and puts forth the position that these regimes frequently secured voluntary mass participation and support.¹ The peculiarity of mass dictatorship as a twentieth century phenomenon can be found in its modern socio-political engineering system which aims

1 It is noteworthy too that Francoism is often defined as *despotismo moderno* (modern despotism) because it constitutes an alliance of conservatives and the military without mass involvement. Modern despotism of this kind differs from mass dictatorship in that it does not rely on the mobilisation of the masses or on intervention in their private lives. See Salvador Giner:

at the voluntary enthusiasm and self-mobilisation of the masses for the state project, the same goal shared by mass democracies. Mass dictatorship is dictatorship appropriating modern statecraft and egalitarian ideology and pretending to be a dictatorship from below; the study of which needs to be situated in a broader transnational formation of modernity. However, mass dictatorship as a working hypothesis denies the diffusionist conception of modernity as a movement from the centre to the periphery. Rather it focuses on the transnational formation of modernity through global connections and interactions of the centre and periphery, and of democracy and dictatorship.

Once put in the orbit of global modernity, twentieth century dictatorships cease to be inevitable products of deviation or aberration from a normal path to modernity. Mass dictatorship as a transnational formation of modernity argues against the *Sonderweg* thesis which seeks to set Nazism and other manifestations of fascism apart from the parliamentary democracies of the “West”.² The *Sonderweg* dichotomy of a particular/pre-modern/abnormal dictatorship in the “Rest” – quintessentially represented by Germany – and a universal/modern/normal democracy in the “West” strengthens a Western claim to exceptionalism, according to which democracy, equality, freedom, human rights, rationalism, science and industrialism promulgated by the European Enlightenment are phenomena unique to the “West”. The normative presupposition inherent in the *Sonderweg* thesis implies Eurocentrism, suggesting that the “West” has achieved the maturation of the unique historical conditions necessary for democracy and human rights. In the “Rest”, by contrast, these conditions remained un- or underdeveloped.

In explicating twentieth century dictatorships, this sort of Eurocentrism is profoundly misleading, encouraging us to believe that fascism and the Holocaust can be reduced to manifestations of peculiarities of the pre-modern “Rest”. The argument serves as the historical alibi of the modernist “Rest”, which is thus exempted from association with a barbarism defined *ab initio* as pre-modern.³ Mass dictatorship occupied the position of “East” while democracy remains “Western” in this “imaginative geography”.⁴ A

Political Economy, Legitimacy and the State in Southern Europe, in: Ray Hudson/Jim Lewis (eds.): *Uneven Developments in Southern Europe*, London 1985, pp. 309–350. For the general introduction of mass dictatorship, see Jie-Hyun Lim: *Series Introduction. Mapping Mass Dictatorship: Towards a Transnational History of Twentieth Century Dictatorship*, in Jie-Hyun Lim/Karen Petrone (eds.): *Gender Politics and Mass Dictatorship. Global Perspectives*, Basingstoke 2011, pp. 1–22.

2 See David Blackbourn/Geoff Eley: *The Peculiarities of German History*, Oxford 1984; Ian Kershaw: *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, London 2000, pp. 20–23.

3 Zygmunt Bauman: *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Ithaca 2000, pp. xi-xii, 28, 152 and *passim*.

4 For “East” and “West” as the imaginative geography and the schema of co-figuration of East and West, see Edward Said: *Orientalism*, New York 1979, pp. 49–72; Naoki Sakai: *Translation and Subjectivity*, Minneapolis 1997, pp. 40–71. It should be noted that Germany had to

shift from the “reified geography” of the dichotomy of East and West to the “problem space” of the co-figuration of East and West would make it possible to see both mass dictatorship and mass democracy as transnational formations of modernity.⁵ In fact the East/West or dictatorship/democracy divide does not make any substantial difference, since both dichotomies co-evolved within the same “problem space” of modernity. That is precisely why mass dictatorship should be mapped onto the transnational history of modernity.

It is on this historical topology that the dictatorships of the “East” and the democracies of the “West” converge as transnational formations of modernity. The historical singularity either of a dictatorship or of a democracy can be analysed from global perspectives on the transnational formations of the modern state. Once conscripted to modernity’s project,⁶ each kind of formation of the modern state is a result of negotiations among various draftees of modernity in different regions. Viewed from global perspectives, the sophisticated discourses of “alternative modernity”, “retroactive modernity”, “modernism against modernity”, “capitalism without capitalism”, “anti-Western modernisation”, “anti-modern modernisation” and so on were rampant in the metaphorical language of mass dictatorship. They reflect a consciousness that “oscillated furiously between recognising the peril of being overcome by modernity and the impossible imperative of overcoming it’ in the latecomers” society.⁷ In other words, the desire for colonising power and the fear of being colonised are two locomotives that drive mass dictatorship.

It is in the transnational formation of modernity that transnational perspectives meet post-colonial perspectives and allow for an understanding of mass dictatorship. To say that “the transnational meets the post-colonial” is not to imply a linear continuity in a simplified understanding between German colonialism in South-West Africa and the

refer to France as its own putative “West” because it was situated in the “East” from France’s perspective. The co-figuration of French “civilisation” and German “culture” in Norbert Elias’ analysis shows this succinctly. See Nagao Nishikawa: *Zouho Kokkyou no Koekata*, Tokyo 2001, Ch. 6.

5 Daniel Schönplflug’s attempt to comprehend François Furet’s and Ernst Nolte’s comparative history of totalitarian movements within the framework of *histoire croisée* is suggestive, but its limits are clear. To say nothing of “linear causality” and “potential oversimplifications” in Nolte’s thesis on “Bolshevik’s challenge and Nazi’s response”, Furet seemed to stop at the point of making the analogies between French Jacobins of 1793 and Russian Bolsheviks of 1917. See Daniel Schönplflug: *Histoires croisées: François Furet, Ernst Nolte and a Comparative History of Totalitarian Movements*, in: *European History Quarterly* 37:2 (2007), pp. 265–290.

6 David Scott: *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment*, Durham 2004, pp. 4–9.

7 Harry Harootunian: *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan*, Princeton 2000, p. x.

Holocaust.⁸ The Holocaust should not be reduced to another peculiarity of German colonialism. Global perspectives on the transnational formation of modernity help us to see the Holocaust in the context of the continuity of “Western” colonialism, as Hannah Arendt suggested when she articulated the concept of “administered mass killing” (*Verwaltungsmassenmord*) in respect to the British colonialist experience.⁹ In other words, the Holocaust can be better explained from the transnational perspectives of Euro-colonialism than by recourse to German peculiarities. More broadly, one cannot miss the history of primitive accumulation, full of conquest, enslavement, plunder, murder and all forms of violence in the making of the modern nation-state. The emergence of capitalism and democracy in the “Western” nation-state should be viewed as having taken place, in Marx’s terms, “under circumstances of ruthless terrorism”.¹⁰

If the mass dictatorships on European soil have been shaped by imperial projects, non-European mass dictatorships have been driven by the desire for great power, the regret of not being colonisers and the fear of being colonised. That explains why the “follow and catch up” strategy has been adopted not only by socialist regimes but also by post-colonial developmental dictatorships. These regimes proclaimed their historical task to follow and catch up to the Western colonial powers at all costs. Often their achievements resulted from the conceptions of “little imperialism”, secondary Orientalism, non-European Eurocentrism, and eventually hegemonic regionalism. It is under these circumstances that those victimised by Western colonial genocide can become victimisers and perpetrators of similar genocides. Various post-colonial genocides in the peripheries can be grasped within this broader context.

Indeed, interrogating mass dictatorship as a transnational formation of modernity upends conventional dichotomies of East/West, dictatorship/democracy, particular/universal into a historical convergence of modernity. The criticism of the conventional

8 For the continuities, but not necessarily simplified, between colonial genocide and the Holocaust see Jürgen Zimmerer: *Die Geburt des Ostlandes aus dem Geiste des Kolonialismus: Die nationalsozialistische Eroberungs- und Beherrschungspolitik in (post-)kolonialer Perspektive*, in: *Sozial Geschichte* 19:1 (2004), pp. 10–43; Benjamin Madley: *From Africa to Auschwitz: How German South West Africa Incubated Ideas and Methods Adopted and Developed by the Nazis in Eastern Europe?*, in: *European History Quarterly* 35:3 (2005), pp. 429–464; Sven Lindquist: *Exterminate All the Brutes*, New York 1996; Enzo Traverso: *The Origins of Nazi Violence*, New York 2003. In his recent work Enzo Traverso goes further to put the totalitarian terror in the peculiar context of the European civil war. Enzo Traverso: *Im Bann der Gewalt: der europäische Bürgerkrieg 1914–1945*. Translated by Michael Bayer, München: 2008.

9 Robert Gerwarth/Stephan Malinowski: *Der Holocaust als „kolonialer Genozid“? Europäische Kolonialgewalt und nationalsozialistischer Vernichtungskrieg*, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 33 (2007), pp. 439–466, p. 445.

10 Karl Marx: *Capital*, Vol. I. Translated by Ben Fowkes, London 1990, p. 895.

diffusionist discourse that describes a movement of modernity from Europe to non-Europe does not necessarily justify the counter-diffusionist reaction from non-Europe to Europe. From this perspective, one can overcome the dichotomies of European democracy and non-European dictatorship and diffusionist discourses that posit the existence of a center-periphery relationship. Once liberated from these conventional conceptualisations, mass dictatorship and mass democracy can then appear on the same historical horizon as transnational formations of modernity.

A Colonial Korean Marxist in *Via Nazionale* of Rome, 1933

Yi Sun-t'ak (1897–1950) was a leading Marxist economist in colonial Korea. During the 1920s, he studied economics at Kyoto Imperial University in Japan under Kawakami Hajime, a well known Marxist economist who translated *Das Kapital* into Japanese. After returning home, Yi Sun-t'ak taught economics at Yonhee College in Seoul (Yonsei University today). As a Marxist economist he had engaged wholeheartedly in popularising Marxism among colonial Koreans and published more than 60 articles in various journals and newspapers. In 1938, he was arrested for his leading role in the “red professors’ group” and was sacked. Among his writings, what draws my attention the most is an interesting travelogue. He travelled around the world, visiting seventeen countries in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and North America in the nine months between April 24, 1933 and January 20, 1934. During his travels, Yi sent contributions at regular intervals to a Korean daily newspaper, the *Chosŏn Ilbo* which were published later as a book in 1934.

This travelogue, entitled *A Recent Travel around the World*, was written as a comprehensive report on the contemporary world, touching on geography, history, ethnography, customs, religion, art, politics, economy, and society, etc.¹¹ As a colonial intellectual, he felt deep compassion for independence movements in China, India, Egypt, Poland, Ireland and in other African countries. But Yi's empathy with the national liberation movements of the colonised was followed by his contempt for the savage “natives” who are the supposed subjects of the national movements.¹² He reprimanded the unpatriotic Chinese who were willing to sell out their country for money and admonished the Indians to stop their class struggles and religious conflicts that had been manipulated by the British divide and rule policy. Upon embarking at the port of Aden, Yemen, he deplored how Africa became the prey of the “white people” despite Africa's great historical contribution to world civilisation, along with Asia.

Yi's distress over Africa's predicament ran through a similar line of deep regret for the backwardness of colonial Korea, which “did not open her eyes to the foreign market [...] did not think of great national leadership to overcome the poisonous political partisan-

11 Lee Sun-Tak: Choigŭn Segeilchugi, reprinted edition. Hakminsa 1997, p. 15.

12 Ibid., pp. 40, 43, 54, 76, 77 and passim.

ship.”¹³ His denunciation of colonialism and war could not conceal his envy of the great imperialist civilisations. A deep regret that “we should have been the West” was paired with that envy. It was this ambivalence towards negation and mimicry of Western civilisation, desire and fear of the colonial powers, and oscillation between self-empowerment and self-Orientalism that underlied Yi Sun-t’ak’s travelogue. That ambivalence is not peculiar to Yi; it is rampant among both right-wing and leftist colonial intellectuals, as post-colonial studies have shown.

One peculiar point in this colonial Korean Marxist’s travelogue is Yi’s idiosyncratic view of contemporary Europe, especially his explicit sympathy for Fascist Italy. Except for a couple of reservations about the personality cult of Mussolini and political oppression, Yi could not conceal his unexpected admiration of Italian Fascism. Yi’s direct encounter with Italy betrayed his expectation of gangs of beggars, pickpockets and thieves. According to Yi, that anticipation was a result of past prejudices “because the army and police of Mussolini repress wrongdoings completely, thus social justice and public righteousness is greatly improved over the era of parliamentary democracy.”¹⁴ Yi also recorded his cheerful conversation with a young Italian about Mussolini: when he asked a young Italian passer-by near the Garibaldi monument “if Mussolini can be a second Garibaldi”, Yi received the answer that “Mussolini is better than Garibaldi.”¹⁵

Yi twice visited the exposition that commemorated the tenth anniversary of fascist rule on the *Via Nazionale* in Rome. In a humorous manner, he explained his very pragmatic motivation to receive a seventy-percent discount train ticket voucher as a reward for exposition visitors which had led him there twice. But this propaganda exposition of fascist achievements certainly made a deep impression on him. Yi was quite impressed by the cooperative state which made the Italian economy leap forward: the balanced budget; the recovery of credit; the successful negotiations to reduce foreign debts; the dramatic reduction of unemployment; the shift from dependency to autarky in the agrarian sector; the well-built infrastructure; the steady growth of the population; and a proper migration policy, etc. Yi noted that all this successful restructuring of the economy made Italy a member of the “Gold Bloc” that stood firmly against the USA.¹⁶

Italian colonialism did not lead this leftist colonial intellectual to any critical thoughts about fascism, perhaps because its colonial cruelty had yet to become apparent. But Yi’s ultimate interest was whether or not the Italian fascists’ desire for a Second Roman Empire could be realised. Any leftist value judgment remained suspended in his account of Italian fascism. The leftist value-ridden achievement, if any, was the admiration of the successful building of a self-sustaining economy by the fascist regime. For this Korean

13 *Ibid.*, p. 41.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 125.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 116.

16 *Ibid.*, pp. 128–130.

colonial Marxist, a shift from dependency to autarky might have been the most valuable lesson. It was thought to be a first step towards the independence of colonies against the colonial expansion of the advanced capitalist countries. When he returned home after that travel around the world, Yi visited the headquarters of the newspaper *Chosŭn jung-gang ilbo*, which had financially supported his travel. In an interview, he stated explicitly that “what impressed me the most is the transformation in Italy.” Under the title of *He Saw the Hope for the Korean Nation in the Future*, the *Chosŭn jung-gang ilbo* published an article about Yi’s visit to the newspaper’s editorial board and his interview.¹⁷

Yi discovered a development model for colonial Korea in fascist Italy. It is not difficult to see the strong lust for power and modernity in Yi Sun-t’ak’s account of Italy. But his desire was not so simple as to be reduced to a longing for Western modernity. Yi’s praise for Italian fascism was in stark contrast to his sharp criticism of London. He saw London as a dirty cosmopolitan city tainted with beggars, the unemployed, and pollution. Despite its past glory, it seemed to him that the British Empire was in decline.¹⁸ Certainly, Yi projected his desire for power and greatness onto Fascist Italy rather than the British Empire. This did not mean that he thought Fascist Italy was more developed than Great Britain. Perhaps Fascist Italy’s remarkable advance “from a proletarian nation to a bourgeois nation” might have appealed to him. The Marxian view twisted from class struggle to national struggle in Fascist ideology, and this was not alien to some colonial Marxists who regarded socialism as the means to realise rapid modernisation and national liberation. Polish irredentist socialists, who invented the term “social patriotism” in the late nineteenth century, might be the predecessors of those colonial Marxists.¹⁹

Yi Sun-t’ak was not only a colonial Marxist who discovered a model for the independence and modernisation of a poor and underdeveloped colony. It is intriguing to find that Subhas Chandra Bose, an Indian independence fighter, travelled Soviet Union, Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan in search of an alliance against the British Empire during the Second World War. He founded the Free Indian Centre in Berlin while broadcasting on the German-sponsored Azad Hind Radio. Bose succeeded in creating an Indian Legion of some 4,500 British Indian prisoners of war in North Africa. Disappointed by Hitler’s intention to use his Indian Legion only for a propaganda war, Bose left Germany in February 1943 on board the German U-180 submarine, switching to a Japanese I-29 submarine in the sea between the Cape of Good Hope and Madagascar. In Japan he was engaged in the ideological movement of “Greater East Asian Prosperity Sphere”. For Bose, who had felt increasingly uncomfortable with the Nazi

17 Choson-JungAng Ilbo, 25 January 1934.

18 Ibid., pp. 193–205.

19 For Polish socialist irredentists, see Jie-Hyun Lim: Labour and the National Question in Poland, in: Stefan Berger/Angel Smith (eds.): Nationalism, Labour and Ethnicity 1870–1939, Manchester 1999, pp. 121–144.

regime's extreme racism, Japanese Pan-Asianism might have been an attractive movement. But the highlight of his stay in wartime Japan was the establishment of the provisional government of the "Azad Hind Government" with the Indian National Army and the support of the Japanese imperial regime. Bose's Indian provisional government was recognised by nine Axis states: Nazi Germany, Hirohito's Japan, fascist Italy, the Independent State of Croatia, Wang Jingwei's regime in Nanjing, a provisional government of Burma, Manchukuo and the Japanese-controlled Philippines, and the Soviet Union.

What is at issue is not if Bose was good at international *Realpolitik* to exploit the enemy of enemy. Bose's alliance with the Axis during the war period was more than pragmatic. The case of Yi Sun-t'ak, who had no pragmatic reason at all for the alliance with fascist Italy, a friend of enemy-imperial Japan, gives us some hints to understanding Subhas Chandra Bose. Bose's address delivered to Tokyo University in November 1944 is more revealing than his footprints in the wartime travel to Axis powers:

You cannot have a so-called democratic system, if that system had to put through economic reforms on a socialist basis [...] we have come to the conclusion that with a democratic system we cannot solve the problems of Free India. Therefore, modern progressive thought in India is in favour of a State of an authoritarian character.²⁰

In fact, Bose called himself a socialist and believed that socialism in India owed its origin to Swami Vivekenanda. It is also indicative that another favourite model of Bose's was socialist authoritarianism in Kemal Atatürk's Turkey. When an Indonesian left nationalist dictator Sukarno scared off the "Western" diplomats by admiring Hitler in a public address, he represented an ambiguity of National Socialism dominating the "Beijing-Pyongyang-Hanoi-Phnom Penh-Jakarta Axis." Indeed, in his addresses Sukarno did not hesitate in lining up Hitler, sun Yat-sen, Kemal Atatürk, Gandhi and Ho Chi Minh together as respectable nationalists.²¹ If this were socialism, it is a socialism to turn the Marxian idea upside down from labour emancipation to labour mobilisation. The common thread amongst those (neo-)colonial Marxists of Yi Sun-t'ak, Subhas Chandra Bose, Sukarno and the "Beijing-Pyongyang-Hanoi-Phnom Penh-Jakarta Axis" was a national version of socialism as a means of rapid anti-Western modernisation.

20 Subhas C. Bose: The Fundamental Problems of India, in: Sisir K. Bose/idem (eds.): The Essential Writings of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Delhi 1997, pp. 319–320.

21 Benedict Anderson: Spectres of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeastern Asia and the World, London 1998, pp. 1–2.

“Bourgeois Nation” versus “Proletarian Nation”

As a colonial Marxist economist, Yi advocated a national united front of Marxists and nationalists and the establishment of class collaboration between the national bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The stress on national unity originated in his peculiar analysis of the colonial class structure as entwined within a national divide. Yi categorised all Korean colonial subjects as the “total proletariat”. In his view, the Japanese nation represented the ruling class of capitalists and landlords, while the exploited class of workers and tenant peasants was epitomised by the Korean nation. Thus, he expected that the revolution in colonial Korea would be performed not by the Korean proletariat against the Korean bourgeoisie, but by the total proletariat of the Korean nation against the total bourgeoisie of the Japanese nation. Yi Sun-t’ak characterised colonial Korea’s forthcoming revolution as a national political revolution in which the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat was transformed into a national struggle between the Japanese people and the Korean people.

It is striking to also find the dichotomy of “bourgeois nation” and “proletarian nation” in Italian fascist discourse. As early as 1910, Enrico Corradini declared that “Italy is, materially and morally, a proletarian nation [...] whose living conditions are subject to the way of life of other nations.” In order to compete with the bourgeois nations, Italy demanded “a means of national discipline” and “a pact of family solidarity between all classes of the Italian nation” in the moral domain and “an economic society” to produce wealth and civilisation in the material domain. Only through the production of civilisation would Italy acquire the “strength and the right to expand in the world”. Insofar as “the conception of a wealthy people in a powerful nation is one imposed by the nature of modern civilisation”, the nationalist principle remained an imperative to him and to Italian fascists.²² Mussolini’s radical syndicalism also shared Corradini’s nationalist view that Italy was a proletarian nation, disadvantaged in the competition with “rich” and “plutocratic” nations, which justified Mussolini’s full commitment to modernisation and industrialisation.²³ It is not surprising that Ramiro Ledesman Ramos, a Spanish fascist who regarded Spain as an agrarian dependent nation, shared this dichotomy with Italian fascists.²⁴

In Yi Sun-t’ak’s metaphor, the Italian nation was the total proletariat that should struggle against the total bourgeoisie of the bourgeois nations. I have found no proof so

22 Enrico Corradini: *The Principles of Nationalism, Nationalism and the syndicates*, in: Adryan Lyttleton (ed.): *Italian Fascisms: From Pareto to Gentile*, London 1973, pp. 146–147, 159, 163.

23 A. James Gregor: *A Modernizing Dictatorship*, in: Roger Griffin (ed.): *International Fascism: Theories, Causes and the New Consensus*, London 1998, pp. 130–132.

24 Juan J. Linz: *Political Space and Fascism as a Late-comer*, in: Stein Ugelvik Larsen (ed.): *Who Were the Fascists: Social Roots of European Fascism*, Bergen 1980, pp. 153–189.

far to indicate that Yi Sun-t'ak knew about the fascist dichotomy of "bourgeois nation" and "proletarian nation". It might be a pure coincidence that Yi's idea of "total proletariat" and "total bourgeoisie" co-evolved with the fascist dichotomy of "bourgeois nation" and "proletarian nation". But the co-evolution of these ideas, even if by chance, can be placed within a certain context. The strategic location of colonial Korea and fascist Italy in the discourse of global modernity in the 1930s may give a clue to this inevitable coexistence of the ideas of "total proletariat" and "proletarian nation". A colonial Korean Marxist's encounter with Italian Fascism was not a sort of "East meets West". Italy and Germany's strategic positions in the interwar world system were that of "semi-peripheries", "peripheries in the centre" or "East in the West". When Yi encountered Fascism in Italy, it just so happened that one "East" sympathised with another "East".

That interesting encounter between a colonial Korean Marxist and Italian Fascism poses a challenging question to the dichotomy of rightist fascism and leftist socialism as representative of opposing modernisation/development strategies. From the viewpoint of the transnational formation of modernity, the convergence of fascism and socialism as radical anti-Western modernisation projects was not unusual at all. The Italian futurist Filippo Marinetti, who represented fascist art, was respected by Russian futurists who supported the Bolshevik revolution, and left-wing fascists such as Berto Ricci and Ugo Spirito were pleased to see the Soviet Union incline towards fascism. Left-wing fascists in Italy could see the shift of emphasis from revolutionary internationalism to nationalist strength and development in the Soviet Union.²⁵ Mussolini himself made it explicit that he would prefer "Italy as a Soviet republic" to "Italy as a British colony".²⁶ The cliché that the two extremes always meet explains nothing about this awkward convergence. When Asia or Europe stop being geo-positivistic concepts, fascism and socialism may appear on the same horizon of anti-Western modernisation projects.²⁷

Historical observers of the fascist phenomena have been perplexed by the schizophrenia between modernising practices and anti-modern ideas. According to Henry Turner, Jr. fascists' positive attitude toward the products of modern industry should not necessarily be equated with an approval of modernisation in principle. Italian fascists implemented many modernising policies only as the means to anti-modernist ends.²⁸ Turner's

25 Stanley G. Payne: *Fascism and Communism*, in: *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 1:3 (2000), pp. 1–15, cf. pp. 3, 5.

26 John Lukacs: *The Universality of National Socialism (The Mistaken Category of Fascism)*, in: *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 3:1 (2002), pp. 107–121, cf. p. 113.

27 If the discursive position of the fascist Italy was "East in the West", Russia at the turn of the twentieth century was regarded as a "developing" or "peripheral capitalist" society at best. See Theodor Shanin: *Introduction*, in: idem (ed.): *Late Marx and the Russian Road: Marx and the Peripheries of Capitalism*, London 1983, p. x.

28 Henry A. Turner, Jr.: *Fascism and Modernization*, in: *World Politics* 24:2 (1972), pp. 547–564.

interesting argument about fascism can be summed up in an oxymoron, “anti-modern modernisation”. What was missing in Turner’s argument is a reflection that the anti-modernist ideals traced back to tradition were not a type of natural reality but the construct of the selective interpretation of the past.²⁹ Traditionalism is different from traditional paradigms for the very reason that it constitutes “traditionalistic counter-movements” against the dominating trend of the West.³⁰ If it is “precisely the modern which conjures up prehistory,” traditionalism is a variant of modernist discourse. Fascist discourse represented not a simple nostalgia for ancient glory, but a combination of modernisation and industrialisation with a national mystique.³¹

Once they entered the stage of global modernity, the Fascists’ anti-modernist self-image was confined by either explicit or implicit references to the modernist other-West. Non-Western intellectuals’ attempts to posit an identity of one’s own ethnicity or nationality in terms of the gap between it (proletarian nation) and the putative West (bourgeois nation), through either the dynamics of attraction to or repulsion from the West, can be found broadly in the periphery.³² Once the Fascists’ discourse towards anti-modernist ends is placed in the context of cultural transfer and interaction with modernity, then one can read the anti-Western modernisation project as a transnational agenda; the nineteenth-century German advocacy of “culture” against the Anglo-French “civilisation”; Russian Slavophiles’ assertion that “inner truth” based on religion, culture and moral convictions is much more important than “external truth” expressed by law and state; Indian nationalist discourse of the superiority of the spiritual domain over the material domain; Japanese fascism under the guise of what might be called “*Gemeinschaft* capitalism” against the Western *Gesellschaft* capitalism.³³

29 Ulrich Beck/Anthony Giddens/Scott Lash: *Reflexive Modernization. Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, Cambridge 1994.

30 Dominic Sachsenmaier: *Searching for Alternatives to Western Modernity – Cross-Cultural Approaches in the Aftermath of the Great War*, Unpublished Paper.

31 George L. Mosse: *The Fascist Revolution: Towards a General Theory of Fascism*, New York 1999, p. 28.

32 Naoki Sakai: *Translation and Subjectivity*, Minneapolis 1997, p. 50.

33 See Norbert Elias: *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation*, Korean trans. H.S. Yoo, Seoul 1996, pp. 33–75; Andrzej Walicki: *A History of Russian Thought*, Oxford 1979, pp. 93–106; Partha Chatterjee: *The Nation and Its Fragements*, Princeton 1993, pp. 3–13; Harry Harootunian: *Overcome By Modernity*, Princeton 2000, p. xxx.

An Anti-Western Convergence of Fascism and Socialism

An anti-Western modernisation project as a transnational agenda frequently associated with “traditionalism” was also prominent among contemporary left-wing intellectuals in the peripheries. “Dependency” as a transnational agenda is an uneasy blend of traditional Marxism and economic nationalism. The dichotomy of the centre and periphery, the metropolis and the satellite in dependency theory is resonant with the fascist dichotomy of “bourgeois nation” and “proletarian nation”. The desired socialist state was „an independent and industrialised nation-state”. Corradini’s advocacy of a national economy was reiterated in dependency theory’s advocacy of autarky. With a twist of the Marxian idea transmuted from class struggle to national struggle in the capitalist world system, the emphasis became national exploitation rather than class exploitation. The dichotomy of centre and periphery instead of capital and labour, inherent to dependency theory, often led to the logical conclusion that proletarian nations have been exploited by bourgeois nations, combining an entire nation into a homogeneous class. Thus dependency theory justified the accumulation of capital by the states of the periphery with reference to the nationalist cause of proletarian nations.³⁴

Once class struggle was remoulded into the national struggle between rich nations and poor nations, socialism in this epistemological shift from class emancipation to national liberation became a development strategy for catching up and overtaking the advanced capitalist nations at all costs. In spelling out the connection between the First Five-Year Plan and the strategic concerns of the Soviet regime, Stalin proclaimed that his main goal was to catch up to and overtake the economies of the advanced countries. The goal of socialism became transmuted into a desire for the wealth and power of the core states of the capitalist world economy. When the Bolsheviks found themselves in a very poor and backward country after the October Revolution, lacking the material base for socialism, they made rapid industrialisation the top priority. To quote Eric Hobsbawm, “Bolshevism turned itself into an ideology for the rapid economic development for countries in which the condition of capitalist development doesn’t exist”.³⁵ As dependency theory justified the accumulation of capital by states of the periphery due to the nationalist causes of proletarian nations, it was Preobrazhensky’s theory of “primitive socialist accumulation” that justified state capitalism as “the anti-Western modernisation project”.

34 For the persuasive Marxist’s criticism of the national economy and Third Worldism, see Nigel Harris: *The End of the Third World*, Harmondsworth 1987. Perhaps it would be a too far-fetched argument that National Socialism was the interwar Germany’s version of the Third Worldism. But the widespread revengism against West among ordinary Germans implied their frustration and fear of relative “under-development” and “backwardness”.

35 Eric J. Hobsbawm: *Out of the Ashes*, in: Robin Blackburn (ed.): *After Fall: The Failure of Communism and the Future of Socialism*, London 1991, pp. 315–315, cf. p. 318.

The remarkable economic growth during the Soviet Union's Five-Year Plans must have been impressive to leaders of Third World countries, who established modern nation-building as the primary goal after independence. Jawaharlal Nehru expressed clearly the unacceptability of capitalism for India on the grounds that India had no time to achieve progress by the same methods and at the same rates as the Western countries. Nehru asked and answered for himself: "Should we follow the British, French or American way? Do we really have as much time as 100 to 150 years to achieve our goal? This is absolutely unacceptable. In such an event we shall simply perish."³⁶ Julius Nyerere, the leader of Tanzanian agrarian socialism, coined the slogan, "we must run while they walk." Mao Tse-tung and Kim Il-Sung were not lacking in their ardent advocacy of rapid industrialisation. The slogan of the Great Leap Forward Movement in 1958 was "Let's overtake Britain and catch up to the USA in 15 years." In the same year Kim Il-Sung stressed that "we can achieve in the period of two Five-Year Plans what other socialist countries achieved in the period of three Five-Year Plans."³⁷

It is in this context that "it was Lenin who first opened the door wide to the implantation of Marxism in Asia".³⁸ The Indian reformer, Swami Vivekananda, expressed an aphorism that demonstrates how socialism became the third alternative of anti-Western modernisation when he noted, "socialism is neither traditionalism nor Westernisation". This is the historical and ideological conjunction where Vivekananda inspired the Indian colonial Marxist Subhas Chandra Bose. Socialist ideas, Western in their origin, could be perceived both as non-Western and even anti-Western in this way, challenging and negating the European civilisation that imperialism imposes on the peripheries. Socialism shifted its stress from class emancipation to national liberation, and thus labour emancipation was replaced by labour mobilisation for the rapid modernisation of the national economy. In short, revolutionary nationalists in the Third World regarded socialism as a project of "anti-Western modernisation". It was an exit for those who were caught between Scylla and Charybdis—Modernisation and National Identity. In a situation where the capitalist way of development was to accept the Western coloniser's standard of values, socialism as a way of non-capitalist development was an ideological exit for the nationalist intelligentsia in the peripheries. It solved the historical dilemma of "colonial modernisation" at one stroke with a vision of both national liberation and socialist modernisation.

36 Jawaharlal Nehru: *Towards a Socialist Order*, New Delhi 1956, p. 4.

37 See Jie-Hyun Lim: *Befreiung oder Modernisierung? Sozialismus als ein Weg der anti-westlichen Modernisierung in unterentwickelten Ländern*, in: *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 43:2 (2001), pp. 5–23.

38 Helene Carrere d'Encausse/Stuart R. Schram: *Marxism and Asia. An Introduction with Readings*, London 1969, p. 4.

Although socialists in underdeveloped countries admired the achievements of socialism and its advantage over capitalism, they often placed socialism on a par with capitalism because both are allegedly concerned with man's worldly and material interests and ignore his higher spiritual needs. Therefore they proclaimed, "Western socialism" was unacceptable due to the materialist bias of Western civilisation, and insisted that the spiritualistic peoples of the East should attempt to evolve their own national variants of Socialism.³⁹ This reflected a development strategy of using their traditional heritage to provide the ideological foundations for non-capitalist development. Following the pattern of Russian populists who connected the future of socialism with the traditional collectivism of the peasant commune (*Mir*), revolutionary nationalists in the peripheries were keen to find collectivist traditions in their national heritages and sought the seeds of a socialist future in them.

Freed from strict right-left ideological divisions, one can witness the convergence of fascism and socialism in the project of anti-Western modernisation in the transnational formations of modernity. Ernst Nolte's argument that Nazism was the reaction and counterpoint to Soviet communism in the European civil war might look like a pioneer version of *histoire croisée* of the transnational formations of modernity, since he sees the fates of the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany as historically intertwined through the "European civil war". Apart from the *Historikerstreit* sort of moral criticism that Nolte sublimed the Nazis' own justification for war into his scholarly interpretation, Nolte's model of "challenge and response" has an intrinsic weak point and a limited scope. The scale of comparison in his argument was narrowed down to the interaction between Germany and Russia.

As soon as the scale of comparison extends to the interaction between the West and the Rest, Nolte's seemingly solid story of Bolshevik challenge and Nazi response melts into the air. An analogy of "the West and the Rest" with "Germany and Russia" might be possible, but Germany and Russia both belong to the Rest if one posits Britain and France as the West. A closer look at transnational formations of modernity on a global scale would reveal the successive chains of "challenges and responses" that constitute the *histoire croisée* of mass dictatorship and democracy. The transnational formation of modernity is much more complex and multiplex than what Nolte had assumed. Thus, in words the anti-Western modernisation project aimed at overcoming (Western) modernity, but in deeds it was overcome by modernity. The strong anti-Western modernisation drive was pregnant with the regret that "we" should have been the West and the desire to reverse the order of East and West within the orbit of modernity.

39 Rostislav Ulyanovsky: *National Liberation*, Moscow 1978, pp. 271–272.

Colonialism and Mass Dictatorship

While George Mosse argued that “Robespierre might have felt at home in Nazi mass meetings” and “fascist style was in reality the climax of ‘new politics’ based upon the emerging eighteenth century idea of popular sovereignty”,⁴⁰ François Furet worked on the ideology and discourses of Jacobinism as a model for far-reaching comparisons among totalitarian movements. Compared to Nolte’s mono-causal thesis of “Bolshevik challenge and Nazi response,” Furet’s analysis of the cultural transfer of Jacobinism seems to be much more productive for understanding mass dictatorship as a transnational formation. To this end, as Daniel Schönplflug suggests, “the reception and conception of French and other revolutionary cultures by the Bolsheviks, the Italian fascists, and the National Socialists” should be explored.⁴¹ Seen from this perspective, the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* was not a bizarre pre-modern political concept but a meta-modern political order, in which people regarded themselves as the actual political sovereign. In Eugene Weber’s expression, Nazism looked “much like the Jacobinism of our time”.⁴² It is intriguing that George Mosse took the title of his book, *Nationalization of the Masses* intentionally from Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*.⁴³

The historical association of Jacobinism and mass dictatorship hints at the interconnectedness of non-Western mass dictatorship and Western colonialism. If Robert Paxton saw a remarkable precedent for fascism in the Ku Klux Klan in the American South, Simon Wiesenthal found a symptom of the “final solution” in the white settlers’ genocide of native Indians. Indeed, homicide could develop into genocide only after the anti-Semitic tradition met the massacre of natives by European colonialism. From the viewpoint of intellectual history, it is remarkable that “race” and “space” remained two key concepts underlying both German colonialism in South West Africa and the Nazi conquest of Eastern Slavic Europe. A biological interpretation of world history based on a racial hierarchy in connection with the idea that the superior race/nation must have the necessary living space contributed to the justification of German colonialism and Nazi rule over Eastern Europe. In fact it was Friedrich Ratzel, a predecessor of Nazi ideologues, who coined the term *Lebensraum* in his 1897 book on political geography: *Politische Geographie oder die Geographie der Staaten, des Verkehrs und des Krieges*.

Prior to Ratzel, however, Robert Knox insisted as early as 1850 that Celts deserve a significant amount of space for their civilisation, energies and valor. But Ratzel’s claim for *Lebensraum* was much more pressing than Knox’s demand for living space for the Celts,

40 Mosse: *Fascist Revolution*, p. 76; idem: *The Nationalization of the Masses*, New York 1975, p. 1.

41 Schönplflug, p. 285.

42 Eugene Weber: *Varieties of Fascism*, New York 1964, p. 139.

43 See Mosse: *Nationalization*.

because Wilhelmian Germany was the last arrival on the colonial scene. The colonial partition of the non-European world was almost complete and there was little living space left when Germany plunged into the colonial competition. This explains why “Nazi Germany embarked upon a gigantic plan to colonise Europe.”⁴⁴ There was no outlet for Germans except for intra-European colonialism. In a way, it was much simpler for them to colonise the European continent. The Nazis’ intra-European colonialism was backed by “Carl Schmitt’s version of the Monroe doctrine” that Germany had an exclusive right to decide continental Europe’s destiny under the slogan of “Europe for Europeans”.⁴⁵ *Mein Kampf* tells us that the German dream of *Lebensraum* could be realised not in Cameroon, but in Europe.

In fact, the Nazi utopia of a racially purified German empire was mimicry of Western colonialism, “turning imperialism on its head and treating Europeans as Africans”.⁴⁶ Nazi Germans may have felt a kind of “white man’s burden” inside Europe as they regarded the Slavic people as “white negroes” and Slavic lands as “Asia”. Hitler did not attach himself to a reified geography. His colonial imagination was more flexible than the geo-positivistic conception of Europe and Asia. Hitler stated explicitly that “the border between Europe and Asia is not the Urals but the place where the settlements of the Germanic type of people stop and pure Slavdom begins.” And “the Slavs would provide the German equivalent of the conquered native populations of India and Africa in the British Empire”.⁴⁷ In other words, “the Eastern territory will be for us what India was for England.” The Eastern territory would provide Germany with the material resources necessary for autarky. Hitler’s model for domination and exploitation remained the British Empire. Upon the conquest of Eastern Europe, Hitler planned to build a Great Wall in the Urals to protect Europe against the “dangerous Asian human reservoir.”⁴⁸

Hitler’s cohorts thought along the same lines. Hans Frank, the Governor-General of occupied Poland, avowed that “Poland shall be treated like a colony” while Erich Koch, the Nazi commissioner in Ukraine, called Ukrainians “white niggers”. The Hitlerites’ idea of Asia represents the typical way of Orientalist thinking about the Orient as an imagined geography. In the context of German intellectual history, their Orientalist ideas were in line with Hegel’s concept of “*geschichtlose Völker*”, or peoples without history. These Slavic nations were not state-building nations, but were destined to be subjected to the superior German nation. Among ordinary German civilians and soldiers in the

44 A. Dirk Moses: *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Keywords and the Philosophy*, in: idem (ed.): *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History*, New York 2008, pp. 3–54, cf. p. 18.

45 Michael Burleigh: *The Third Reich: A New History*, New York 2000, pp. 428–29.

46 Mark Mazower: *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century*, New York 1998, p. xiii.

47 Ian Kershaw: *Hitler, 1936–45: Nemesis*, New York 2001, pp. 400, 405.

48 *Ibid.*, pp. 400–405.

occupied “East”, it was not difficult to find a sense of cultural superiority similar to the Orientalist thought associated with a colonial mission. According to one German soldier’s war diary, stationed in Poland, “the soul of an Eastern man (Pole) is mysterious.”⁴⁹ In this schematic Orientalist thought, Russians were more Asiatic than Poles. Many German soldiers were committed to the historical mission to defend European culture against Moscovite-Asiatic inundation by crushing the Asiatic soldiers of the Red Army.

This intra-European Orientalism provided an ideological justification for Nazi Germany’s occupation policy to treat their Slavic neighbours as colonial natives. In the “Wild East”, the Nazis’ racial imagination became unbridled.⁵⁰ Slavic people under occupation were subject to discrimination and segregation policies based on a racial hierarchy with the Reich Germans on top. Colonial subjects in Eastern Slavic occupied lands were not allowed to enter the cinema, music concerts, exhibitions, libraries, museums, theatres, etc. The possession of bicycles, cameras, radios, leather briefcases, musical instruments, telephones, and phonographs was forbidden to Poles. The civilising mission co-evolved with the idea of deporting Poles to either Brazil or western Siberia. What gained final approval among various occupation plans was a sort of ethnic cleansing to work Poles to death through slave labour and exterminate the Jews. These options were not imaginable *vis-à-vis* the French, Dutch, Belgians, Danes, Norwegians and others under occupation in Occidental Europe.

Indeed, the Nazis’ brutal rule over the Slavic peoples can be interpreted as colonialist violence directed against Oriental Europe. A post-colonial approach to the Nazi occupation policy in Eastern Europe argues for the continuity between Wilhelmian Germany’s colonial rule over the South-West Africa and Nazi rule over Eastern Europe in the domain of discourses, institutions, laws, and human resources, etc.⁵¹ The list of examples that show this historical continuity appears quite rich: the genocidal rhetoric of “*Vernichtungskrieg*” and “*Konzentrationslager*”, legally institutionalised racism to prohibit interracial marriage, the racist geography and anthropology of “*Lebensraum*” by Friedrich

49 See Bronisław Łagowski: *Ideologia Polska. Zachodnie aspiracje i wschodnie skłonności* (Polish Ideology: Western Aspirations and Eastern Inclinations), in: Jie-Hyun Lim/Michał Śliwa (eds.): *Polska i Korea: Proces modernizacji w perspektywie historycznej*, Cracow 1997, 88–97.

50 In the 1960s some of Karl May’s novels were made into films, usually with the scenery of the then Yugoslavia playing the Wild West.

51 See Jürgen Zimmerer: *Die Geburt des Ostlandes aus dem Geiste des Kolonialismus: Die nationalsozialistische Eroberungs- und Beherrschungspolitik in (post-)kolonialer Perspektive*, in: *Sozial Geschichte* 19:1 (2004), pp. 10–43; idem: *Holocaust und Kolonialismus*, in: *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 51:12 (2003), pp. 1098–1119; Benjamin Madley: *From Africa to Auschwitz. How German South West Africa Included Ideas and Methods Adopted and Developed by the Nazis in Eastern Europe*, in: *European History Quarterly* 35:3 (2005), S. 429–464.

Ratzel, the scientific racism discourse of ethnic physiognomy by Eugen Fischer, direct personal connections between Franz Ritter von Epp and the Nazi combatant leaders such as Georg Strasser and Ernst Röhm and the Göring family's history in Africa, etc. The historical links between Wilhelmian Germany's colonialism in South-West Africa and the Nazis' rule over Eastern Europe and the Holocaust are to some extent undeniable.

However, historical links between German colonialism in what is now Namibia and the Nazis' paroxysmal racism should not give way to another peculiarity of German colonialism, which represented the newest version of the German *Sonderweg*. A transnational history of colonialism would reveal the connectedness of violence on a global scale. For instance, the term "concentration camp" was originally invented by the Spanish colonialists in Cuba in 1896. It was translated into English by Americans and reintroduced institutionally by the British "pacification" policy to round up and isolate Boer civilians during the bloody Anglo-Boer war at the turn of the twentieth century. Ratzel's concept of "*Lebensraum*" was presented earlier by Robert Knox and, as Paul Rohrbach points out, the Nazis' racist discourses were German expressions translated from Anglo-American-French discourses that justified their colonial mass killings.⁵² Viewed from the transnational formations of modernity, these colonial regimes articulated different historical conditions despite a common colonialist code.

If Anglo-American-French colonialism saw their own civilising missions as lying chiefly outside Europe, Nazi Germany's colonial impulses treated their Slavic neighbours in a similar fashion as colonial subjects in non-European countries. Italian fascists regarded southern Slavs in Yugoslavia as an enemy to be annihilated too, but they could only build the racist prerogative state in Libya and Ethiopia, and justified their mass killings in Africa by manipulating racist ideology. Apart from the Nazi singularity of intra-European colonialism, certain historical connections between colonial genocide and Nazi crimes are undeniable. "Western" colonialism provided an important historical precedent for the Nazis' genocidal thinking. Genocide of the native Americans on the frontiers, British colonial genocide in India and Africa, Stalinist mass murder of the Kulaks and the Holocaust all belong in the same category of "categorical murder" spurred by the essentialist tendency to categorise others on the basis of race, ethnicity, class and so on.⁵³

Contemporary ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Sudan and other places should also be seen in continuity not with pre-modern barbarity, but with colonial violence in the transnational formations of modernity. This colonial legacy was bequeathed to colonial subjects who were reborn as the modern subjects of independent nation-states in the post-colonial era, just as European mass dictatorships in the interwar period were shaped by their colonial experiences and imperial projects. The reason why

52 See Lindquist.

53 Bauman: *Modernity and the Holocaust*, pp. 227–228.

non-European postcolonial mass dictatorships, often manifested as development dictatorships, resemble their European predecessors can be explicated from the vantage point of the transnational formation of modernity in the global colonial era. Interrogating this process of the transnational formation of modernity may provide a key for understanding mass dictatorship and mass democracy in the post-colonial era.

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