

By Bob Avakian

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“Go search where you may, roam through all the monarchies and despotisms of the Old World, travel through South America, search out every abuse, and when you have found the last, lay your facts by the side of the everyday practices of this nation, and you will say with me, that, for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival.”

—Frederick Douglass, former slave and determined abolitionist, 1852.

In recent years, there has been lot of talk, and a lot written, about the growing danger of “authoritarianism” in the U.S., as represented by Donald Trump and the Republican Party. Now, in the context of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and U.S. moves in response to this, there is the spectacle of a number of supposed “experts” on “authoritarianism” rallying around the flag of U.S. imperialism in the face of the challenge to its dominance posed by Russia, with China lurking as perhaps an even more serious challenge. (Russia and China have not been “communist” for a long time—and instead have, for decades, been capitalist-imperialist countries and, as such, represent a significant challenge to the imperialist interests of the U.S.)

If we listen to these “experts,” the powerful force with imperial ambitions that we should be most concerned about now is Russia and its “authoritarian” leader, Vladimir Putin. Suddenly, the expression of high-minded principle about how wrong and dangerous it is for one country to invade another, on the basis of flimsy pretexts and outright lies, applies only to Putin (and, of course, to other “authoritarians” that “we” do not like), and most certainly not to “us.”

Certainly, the big power bullying and aggression by Russia, with its invasion of Ukraine a clear example, is something that all decent people should oppose. But no decent person should be joining in with the U.S. imperialists in their rivalry with Russian imperialism. For reasons I will get into here, it is utter, disgusting hypocrisy for the U.S. imperialists, and their media mouthpieces and other representatives, to be self-righteously condemning this Russian

invasion, when *the U.S. is the country which has, by far, carried out the most invasions and other acts of violent interference in other countries*

Somehow, these “learned people” have “forgotten” about the U.S. invasion and occupation of another “sovereign country,” Iraq, in 2003—on the basis of flagrant lies about Iraq supposedly possessing “weapons of mass destruction” and being closely linked with Islamic fundamentalist terrorists like Al Qaeda

This U.S. invasion was a blatant
international war crime

, which set in motion events which have cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of people, created millions of refugees, and unleashed a maelstrom of death and destruction in that part of the world. (One of the most disgusting spectacles on the “mainstream” media these days, such as CNN, is the presence of government officials who are “veterans” of this U.S. war crime in Iraq, and who arrogantly denounce the Russian invasion of Ukraine as the illegal act of a powerful country aggressing against a weaker country! Somehow, the outrageous irony of these American war criminals denouncing the war crimes of
others

is “lost” on, or deliberately ignored by, these media.)

Somehow, these “experts” are ignorant of (or they are deliberately ignoring) the fact that the U.S. by far holds the record for violently interfering in the affairs of other countries: In addition to the continuing crimes against humanity carried out by the U.S., just since World War 2, including the U.S. slaughter of millions of civilians in Vietnam, and before that in Korea, and the bloody coups it has engineered in Indonesia, Iran and elsewhere, in the period from 1846 to the present the U.S. has intervened in South and Central American countries—militarily, through CIA coups, or in other ways—at least 100 times, at the cost of literally hundreds of thousands of deaths and endless misery for the people of those countries.

Somehow, these “enlightened historians” have lost sight of the fact that the country they are living in (the “good old USA”) established, and repeatedly expanded, its territory on the basis of predatory violence on a massive scale, including genocidal “military campaigns” against the indigenous peoples of this continent (repeatedly breaking treaties in the process), and an expansionist war of aggression which resulted in ripping off a huge part of the territory of Mexico, in the middle of the 19th century, largely for the purpose of expanding slavery. And, after all, this is a country where a “manifest destiny” was declared—to conquer territory “from sea to shining sea” (and beyond).

American Chauvinism and the Uses and Misuses of “Authoritarianism”

The notion of “authoritarianism,” as wielded by these “scholars,” “pundits,” and others, is a misleading concept, which serves American imperialist interests and promotes American chauvinism (the sickening belief in the superiority of Americans and “the American way of life”). “Authoritarianism,” in itself, has no particular ideological, political or social content, and in fact serves to cover over or obscure actual social, political and ideological content. For example, to refer to Donald Trump and the Republican Party as “authoritarians” makes it seem as if what defines them is simply the urge to ill-gotten and tyrannical power. It tells you nothing about what they are seeking to do with that power—what ideology and what political and social program they are upholding and seeking to implement and enforce. The fact is that they are *fascists*

—which has

a very definite content

: hatred and violent suppression of Black people and other people of color, immigrants, women and LGBT people, unrestrained plunder of the environment, grotesque American chauvinism, crude anti-intellectualism and anti-scientific lunacy.

Refusing to call these fascists what they actually are—and instead just referring to them as “authoritarians”—serves a number of objectives, all in line with American chauvinism.

First, it covers over the fact that these fascists *have been bred by the system that has ruled in this country, from the days of slavery to the present*
, with blatant inequality and blood-soaked oppression poured into its foundation and its ongoing functioning

. This has been nurtured by the putrid and poisonous soil of this country—a country that, from the start, has regarded and treated Black people as sub-human beings created by “god” to be beasts of burden, or destined by their “nature” to become dangerous criminals; women as lesser beings, fit only to be subordinate servants of men, objects of their sexual domination and mere breeders of their children; and LGBT people as essentially non-human “deviants.” Forcefully imposing a situation where that is the unchallenged state of things is the fanatical passion and goal of the fascists. And, since these fascists have indeed sprung forth out of the soil of this country, what does that say about this country: how is it then possible to maintain the farcical notion of “American exceptionalism,” the idea that there is something “exceptionally good” about this country?—a notion that the actual history, and present reality, of this country shatters to pieces and reveals as vile mockery—which is why so many “historians” and “scholars” do not want to really, scientifically examine this history and reality.

Second, speaking of “authoritarianism,” without reference to the actual ideology and political and social content of the “authoritarians,” allows for the pretense that “extremists” of the “right”

and the “left” are essentially the same. Thus, with the label of “authoritarianism,” communists can be thrown into the same camp of “very bad people” with fascists—when, in reality, *communists are the exact opposite of, and the force most fundamentally opposed to, fascism*. This can be readily seen through any objective, scientific analysis of the ideological outlook and aims of genuine communists, who, on a scientific basis, stand for and are fighting for the abolition of all exploitative and oppressive relations, while the fascists are fanatically determined to impose the most horrific expressions of these very relations, and seek to justify this with all kinds of lunatic conspiracy theories and anti-scientific distortions of reality.

[1](#)

And this notion of “authoritarianism of the left and right” serves to propagate and perpetuate American chauvinism in this way: If the problem and danger is “authoritarianism,” of the left, as well as the right, then of course, according to this perverted logic, it is “American democracy” that is the “center”—the center of all that is good and righteous—in opposition to the evils of “authoritarianism.”

Here we are back to what I have referred to previously as the GTF, the Great Tautological Fallacy, the “round and round in a circle argument” that America is a force for good in the world—and whatever it does is good, or at least done with “good intentions,” because America is... a force for good. [2](#) This GTF is a “great escape mechanism” for all these anti-authoritarian “historians” and other American chauvinists, allowing them to explain away (or neglect as irrelevant or insignificant) the horrific crimes committed by this country throughout its history, and down to today, to which I have referred in this article.

“We may have founded a country on slavery and genocide,” some might admit; but, they insist (while ignoring or discounting the life-stealing, soul-crushing oppression to which masses of people are subjected day after day) “we have been continually moving toward a more perfect union.”

“We may carry out wars of conquest, invasions, coups, and other acts of violent interference in the affairs of other countries”; but, they claim, “We do this for some greater purpose, or at least in opposition to some greater evil.”

“We may live in the only country that has actually used nuclear weapons”—the atomic bombs that were dropped on two Japanese cities, instantly incinerating hundreds of thousands of civilians, at the end of World War 2—but, the argument goes, “We did this to save lives,

especially the lives of *American* soldiers.”

Such are the ridiculous, and outrageous, rationalizations.

And now, with Russian, and Chinese, challenges of various kinds to U.S. dominance in the world, the argument of the U.S. ruling class, and those who parrot its American chauvinist rationalizations, amounts to essentially nothing more than this: “We have established, through massive force and violence, an ‘order’ in the world that is favorable to our ‘national’ (that is, *imperialist*) interests, and no one has the right to use force to change this in a way that threatens those interests.”

In short, “we” are the “good guys” in the world, so things “we” do that would be “evil” if others did them are after all “good”... because “we” are the “good guys.” And now especially, a particular variation of this is the claim that, in the rivalry and confrontation between the imperialists of this country, on the one hand, and those of Russia, or China, on the other hand, “we” must stand with “our own” (U.S.) imperialists because the governments of “those” countries are “authoritarian,” while “our” government is not (yet) “authoritarian.”

That all this is completely bankrupt, both logically and morally, should be obvious to anyone who is not blinded by the American chauvinist GTF.

For those of us who are *not* willing to be blinded by this, we can and must confront and analyze reality as it actually is, and draw the necessary conclusions. Besides the fact that the U.S. is today, and has historically been, allied with many “authoritarian” governments throughout the world (and, in fact, has forcibly installed such governments in many countries), the even more fundamental fact is that the essence of the conflict between the U.S. and countries like Russia and China is not one between “democracy” and “authoritarianism,” but is a matter of *rivalry among imperialist powers*

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all
of which are monstrous oppressors of masses of people, and none of which represent or act in the interests of humanity. What is called for, and urgently now, is to oppose all imperialist marauders and mass murderers, and all systems and relations of oppression and exploitation, while giving particular emphasis to opposing “our own” imperialist oppressors who commit their monstrous crimes “in our name” and seek to rally us to support them on the basis of a

grotesque American chauvinism, which we must firmly reject and fiercely struggle against.

FOOTNOTES:

1. For a concentrated discussion of the profound difference between communism and fascism, see the article “ [Fascists and Communists: Completely Opposed and Worlds Apart](#) ” by Bob Avakian, which is available at revcom.us.

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2. Bob Avakian speaks more fully to the GTF in the speech *THE TRUMP/PENCE REGIME MUST GO! In the Name of Humanity, We REFUSE To Accept a Fascist America, A Better World* *IS Possible, a film of a talk* by Bob Avakian in 2017. F

or more on this film, and to view the film, Q&A sessions, and clips, go to [BA's Collected Works](#) at revcom.us.

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