

N°02

CENSORSHIP PROPAGANDA FAKE-NEWS POPULISM
HOMOPHOBIA ZIONISM IMPERIALISM NATIONALISM
FAR-RIGHT PALINGENESIS TERRORISM CONSPIRACY
SEXISM GENOCIDE
NAZISM EUGENICS
ETHNIC-CLEANSING RACISM APARTHEID GESTAPO
COLONIALISM DEPORTATION HIERARCHY MILITARISM
VOLKSGEMEINSCHAFT INDOCTRINATION REVULSIONISM

FASCISM



UTPOST

Umeå Association of International Affairs

2025/2026

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Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

There is a common, comforting fallacy that fascism is a relic of the 20th century. That fascism is a horror of history that was permanently defeated in 1945. In this view, invoking the term today is more often than not seen and disregarded as hyperbole, an "alarmist" distraction, or name-calling in today's political climate.

However, this issue of UTPOST proceeds from a different premise: that is, the study of fascism is not simply a study of the past, but a fundamental requirement for the preservation of our now and future.

This issue is an invitation to move past the discomfort that the word "fascism" evokes. It is an invitation to look at our current institutions with a critical, historical eye. Because, we believe that an informed public is the only force capable of preventing the spread of authoritarianism. And in a world of populist rhetoric and administrative anonymity, clarity is a form of resistance. And as we move further into 2026, the necessity of this study has never been more acute.

We hope this issue provides you with the tools to recognize fascism wherever it might turn its ugly head, and to see the world as it is, rather than as it is politically marketed to be. If you find the respective topics interesting, and might want to know more about fascism and its mechanisms, I encourage you to keep reading and supplying yourself with the knowledge and tools necessary to combat fascism.

I want to dedicate a huge thank you to our writers, my board colleagues and members, without them this magazine wouldn't be possible.

Sincerely,
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An Overview of Fascism

Fascism is notoriously difficult to describe and even more so to define. A good definition alone is not always useful to discern a fascist movement. Furthermore, there are certain qualities that may or may not be inherent to fascism depending on the definition. Here, we will provide a brief summary of fascism based on authoritative academic sources and the general consensus among researchers on the topic.

Fascism: “a populist political philosophy, movement, or regime (such as that of the Fascisti) that exalts nation and often race above the individual, that is associated with a centralized autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, and that is characterized by severe economic and social regimentation and by forcible suppression of opposition” (Merriam-Webster)

The Origin of Fascism

The popular origins of fascism derive from Benito Mussolini’s political movement *Fasci di combattimento*. Rooted in the Italian word *fascio*, meaning a bundle of sticks or a guild, historically carried by lictors to represent magisterial power, this symbol was adopted by Mussolini to emphasize strength through national unity.

By exploiting social chaos in the aftermath of the first world war, Mussolini positioned the Fascist movement as the sole guarantor of national order. Fascism was presented as a “third way” between failed liberal democracy and the perceived threat of a Bolshevik revolution, the movement gained the backing of Italy’s industrial elites and landowning classes.

After poor electoral results, the Fascists came into power after the March on Rome, where the armed Blackshirts descended upon the capital. Out of fear of civil war, Mussolini faced no resistance, and was instead invited to form a government. Once entrenched within the state apparatus, the Fascisti moved systematically to dismantle the parliamentary system. Through the Acerbo Law, they centralized the government into a one-party dictatorship, and the subsequent suppression of all political opposition. (Britannica)

The Fascist Framework — Stanley G. Payne

In his works *Fascism: Comparison and Definition* and *A History of Fascism, 1914–1945*, historian Stanley G. Payne provides a framework for understanding how fascism may function.

A. According to Payne, fascist ideology is defined by an idealistic extreme nationalism, and espouses not merely an improvement of the state but a total transformation of the nation’s destiny. This new nation operates on a new authoritarian state to which the people must submit to. Fascism views violence positively, a necessary to ensure national vitality and its continuance. The nation is viewed as superior to other nations,

and may take imperialistic and expansionist expression.

B. Fascism is fundamentally antithetical, it exists only in opposition to what it claims to negate: anti-liberalism, anti-democratic, anti-marxist, anti-individualist, and a tactical approach to anti-conservitism (which clears the path for a revolutionary nationalist rebirth). Fascist ideology is rarely specific about what it supports.

C. The “how” of fascism is as critical as the “what”. Payne emphasizes the aesthetic structure of the movement, the political choreography, symbols, and “liturgy”. Through myths, Fascism aims to replace and create a secular “civic religion” around the state, designed to unify and elicit intense emotional responses from the masses. The movement relies on the mass mobilization through party/state militias, blurring the lines between civilian life and military service, a constant state of war. There is an extreme stress on male dominance, disregarding women and their rights. Due to the promise of national rebirth, youth is elevated and viewed as the engine of this coming. All these elements culminate in an elitist authoritarian command where the charismatic leader demands absolute sub-ordination.

Table 1.1. Typological Description of Fascism

A. Ideology and Goals: Espousal of an idealist, vitalist, and voluntaristic philosophy, normally involving the attempt to realize a new modern, self-determined, and secular culture Creation of a new nationalist authoritarian state not based on traditional principles or models Organization of a new highly regulated, multiclass, integrated national economic structure, whether called national corporatist, national socialist, or national syndicalist Positive evaluation and use of, or willingness to use, violence and war The goal of empire, expansion, or radical change in the nation’s relationship with other powers
B. The Fascist Negations: Antiliberalism Anticommunism Anticonservatism (though with the understanding that fascist groups were willing to undertake temporary alliances with groups from any other sector, most commonly with the right)
C. Style and Organization: Attempted mass mobilization with militarization of political relationships and style and with the goal of a mass party militia Emphasis on esthetic structure of meetings, symbols, and political liturgy, stressing emotional and mystical aspects Extreme stress on the masculine principle and male dominance, while espousing a strongly organic view of society Exaltation of youth above other phases of life, emphasizing the conflict of generations, at least in effecting the initial political transformation Specific tendency toward an authoritarian, charismatic, personal style of command, whether or not the command is to some degree initially elective

Payne, S. G. (1995). *A History of Fascism, 1914–1945*.

Fascism in Motion — Robert O. Paxton

Political scientist Robert Paxton argues that fascism has no consistent doctrine or core principles. Fascist movements ignore or contradict its politics and adopt many forms, in different cultures, times, and political circumstances, to justify itself for power. Instead, to understand fascism we should look at how it acts rather than what it is. In *The Anatomy of Fascism* Paxton sets out five stages of fascism.

1. Creation of Movements (‘Protofascism’):

According to Paxton, fascism arises as the result of the perceived failures of liberal democracy. It arises when constitutional government, which promises individuals the democratic capacity to enact change, appear to fail. When political and material inequality rises, people do not feel like they have the power to change things, and that democracy mainly serves the political elite and the rich, creating a sense of disillusionment among the people toward the political system. Fueled by this disillusionment of democracy, however real, small groups begin to form proto-fascist movements.

2. Rooting in the Political System:

If a nation's institutions are weak, fascist movements can gain a foothold in the political systems. This stage occurs once the fascist movement gains momentum by attracting those discontent with the existing establishment, which then has to recognize and deal with the fascist in an attempt to protect their own interests, granting fascists the legitimacy they need to enter the formal political arena. Fascists exploit this opportunity by forming a populist political platform suitable to the existing political system, often promising to look out for the common man, thus gaining a foothold in the political system.

3. Acquisition of Power:

Contrary to popular belief, Paxton argues that fascism never successfully comes to power through coup's, which either fail or result in standard military dictatorships. Instead, successful fascist movements use the mechanisms of democracy to gain foothold, then, once in power, fascists subvert and dismantle democracy under the guise of the will of the people. Crucially, fascists often make common cause with the right, incentivizing conservative elites by arguing that together they can beat back the left or restore the nation. This alignment may happen gradually or quickly, as in Germany when President von Hindenburg appointed Hitler as Chancellor in 1933 due to pressure from conservative advisors who thought they could control and limit Hitler's influence.

4. Exercise of Power:

Once in control, the political platform found in early fascist movements is discarded for political expediency. To maintain power, the movement's leaders have to manage the existing power structure, either working with or against established elites, including the military, state bureaucracy, industrialists, and the church. Paxton highlights that fascists have no core principles other than the wielding of power. For instance, Mussolini, a former atheist, flipped and brokered a deal with the Catholic Church when he realized its cultural authority was too great to ignore. Fascist movements thus betray their promise of radical social change by building coalitions with conservative elites to maintain social and political control. As not to be reminded of this betrayal, the regime focuses on reinforcing national unity by terror and coercion, accusing dissenters of contributing to national decline.

5. Long Term: Radicalization or Entropy:

The final stage is where the regime must either maintain its momentum or risk collapse. This is because fascism promises glory, conquest, and social change, it requires constant "victories" to stay relevant. After nearly two decades in power, Mussolini's regime slowly failed to deliver "victories", and had settled into "entropy" or what Paxton calls "routine authoritarianism", that eventually falls apart. Conversely, a regime may "radicalize" by doubling down on its most extreme elements. Hitler's Germany is the primary example of this, where the state was stretching its military to the breaking point and pursuing total destruction rather than admitting defeat — "Better an end with horror than a horror without end". Whether through the ignoble end of entropy or the catastrophic end of radicalization the cycle concludes in failure, as the movement's inherent need for conflict eventually consumes itself.

Characteristics of Fascism — Umberto Eco

In his essay "Ur-Fascism", author, historian, and Professor of Semiotics Umberto Eco sets out 14 features of fascism:

1. **The Cult of Tradition** – A syncretic obsession with ancient traditions, rejecting modern interpretations and to conserve idealized truths of traditions .
2. **The Rejection of Modernism** – Rationalism and the Enlightenment are viewed as the root of moral decline. Ur-Fascism refuses to engage with reason and defines itself through irrationalism.
3. **Cult of Action for Action's Sake** – Reflection (and therefore non-action) is a form of emasculation. Valuing action in of itself over reflection, fueling anti-intellectualism.
4. **Disagreement as Treason** – Syncretistic beliefs and practices cannot survive critical examination. Disagreement is viewed as threats to unity and a betrayal of the nation.
5. **The Fear of Difference** – Unity is formed by exploiting xenophobia and racism, by "othering" in-groups against outsiders.
6. **The Appeal to a Frustrated Middle Class** – Mobilizing those feeling economically or socially displaced.
7. **Obsession with Plot** – Promoting conspiracy theories, the follower must feel constantly besieged to justify aggression against perceived enemies.
8. **The Paradox of the Enemy** – Enemies are both too strong and too weak, adversaries are sufficiently formidable to pose a threat and sufficiently feeble to overcome.
9. **Pacifism is Trafficking with the Enemy** – Viewing life as permanent warfare and struggle, peace efforts are discarded as treason.
10. **Contempt for the Weak** – A reactionary elitism that glorifies strength and dismisses compassion as societal weakness. Hierarchy of the right of might and the weakness of the masses.
11. **The Cult of Martyrdom** – Promoting a societal norm of heroism, death and martyrdom, where dying for the cause is presented as the ultimate fulfillment.
12. **Machismo and Misogyny** – This encompasses a disdain for women, elevating aggressive masculinity, and a violent intolerance for non-conformist sexual identities.
13. **Selective Populism** – Individuals as individuals have no rights, the leader claims to represent the unified Voice of the people.
14. **Newspeak** – From George Orwell's 1984: Employing an impoverished vocabulary with elementary syntax to limit citizens ability to engage in complex and critical thought.

To categorize Fascism is difficult, and all symptoms may not apply, Eco acknowledges this and provide us with an important lesson and insight: "These features cannot be organized into a system; many of them contradict each other, and are also typical of other kinds of despotism or fanaticism. But it is enough that one of them be present to allow fascism to coagulate around it."



The Necessity of the Fascist Label: Finding the Will to Defend Democracy

William Lundberg

Modern authoritarian regimes do not function like that of 1930s Italy or Germany. The Italian Blackshirts, Mosley's thugs, and the NSDAP were proudly fascist. The major fascist movements spoke of their ideology coherently: preaching national rebirth (palingenesis), violence, cleansing, hierarchy, and autarky. It was never a mystery to those that lived through it.

Today, a key component of fascism is strategically obscuring fascism's presence within the democratic system. This obscuration is fueled by a bizarre conception propagated by academics, media, and politicians – not only right-wing – suggesting that people simply don't know what fascism is, and should refrain from using the term in modern context. Much like the term democracy, referred to the direct democracy of the ancient Greeks, Fascism is eradicant. However, this line of thinking

ignores the ever-evolving reality of political definitions. So, while experts may rightfully differ on the technicalities of modern Fascism, there are ideological throughlines that reappear: ultranationalism, populist rhetoric, the Strongman, and the myth of national rebirth.

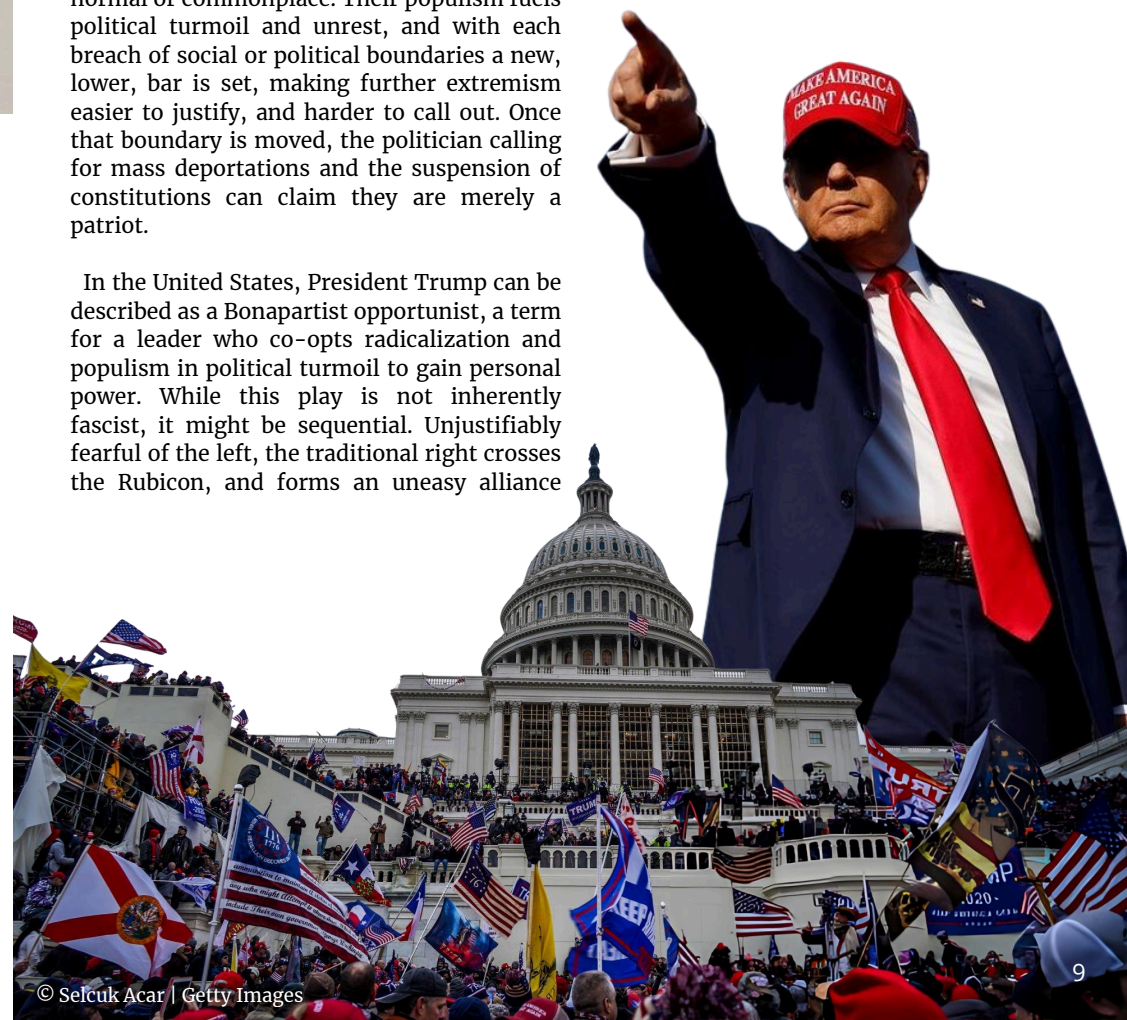
Yet, in current discourse, fascism is often treated like this historical horror that can only be identified after the bodies are already in the ground. By disregarding the dangers of fascism, by pretending fascism is impossible to define, or by arguing that a movement isn't truly fascist because it lacks some 30's aesthetic (like brown shirts or a particular salute), apologists create a shield against political exclusion, and Fascism is allowed to protrude into the political landscape. In this text, we will explore why calling fascism for what it is, is an essential step in the defense of democracy.

The danger of refusing to, or not being able to, define the monster is that it allows the monster to negotiate the terms of its own existence.

This negotiation is the main mechanism in the 'normalization of the extreme'. Without calling out these political horrors, far-right and fascist can negotiate their views and are allowed to gradually become accepted as normal or commonplace. Their populism fuels political turmoil and unrest, and with each breach of social or political boundaries a new, lower, bar is set, making further extremism easier to justify, and harder to call out. Once that boundary is moved, the politician calling for mass deportations and the suspension of constitutions can claim they are merely a patriot.

In the United States, President Trump can be described as a Bonapartist opportunist, a term for a leader who co-opts radicalization and populism in political turmoil to gain personal power. While this play is not inherently fascist, it might be sequential. Unjustifiably fearful of the left, the traditional right crosses the Rubicon, and forms an uneasy alliance

with fascists. The fascists then exploit their weakness to dominate their politics. By the time the right realizes they've been fooled, they are too invested in the fascist project to oppose it. From this perspective, it may be a mistake to look at Trump's bigotry, his antics, or any single policy in isolation and cry fascism. Rather, if we look at it collectively – the MAGA movement's obsession with the idealised nation, the justification of extreme violence, the demonization of the 'other', the call for mass deportation, the dismantling of the rule of law, and the total rejection of objective truth – that is what makes Trump and his lackeys fascists.



Simona Mohamsson, leader of the Swedish Liberals (L), embracing Jimmy Åkesson, leader of the far-right Sweden Democrats (SD), after coalition announcement (Mars 13, 2026).



With this said, we should be careful about redefining or diluting political concepts that society has deemed unacceptable in order to fit contemporary political contexts just because of disagreements. We must be concise and concrete! Otherwise, the common critique of the establishment is that calling a movement fascist is alarmist, divisive, or simply inappropriate. However, there is real concerted effort to moderate these terms so that the actions of governments or certain in-groups don't fall foul of them: be it racism, Apartheid, zionism, corruption, tax evasion, international law, fascism.

This is the tactic of the obscurers and those woefully unaffected by the resurgence of fascism. And while this is not helped by the polemical, bordering on opportunistic, usage of the term – which might itself create vagueness and prove an ineffective response to actual fascism – it should be clear that just because something isn't completely fascist, it doesn't make it okay. So when we moderate, refrain from using, or allow these terms to be dismissed, we allow horrific political behavior to proliferate again, obscured and unchecked.



Oswald Mosley knocked to the pavement by anti-fascist protesters, Ridley Road, London, 1962. Mosley's attempt to re-enter politics after WWII was met with hostility and public rejection of fascism in post-war Britain.

To combat the normalization of the far-right and the expansion of neo-fascism in the US and democracies of Europe we must set firm political and social boundaries to be able to call out fascists. Therefore, we must act to set minimum, non-negotiable boundaries for politics in democracy, something we only can do once we've established the shape of modern fascism – this is precisely the ability we gradually lose when fascism is treated as an unknowable or subjective term. These boundaries should not be interpreted as restrictions of what politics can be; rather, they should serve as guardrails to keep free politics alive. In other words, our democratic institutions, that is, *the prescriptive norms for how people relate to politics*, should concretely outline acceptable political behaviour. And while these boundaries are restrictive of certain absolute rights, no one has ever claimed we live in a pure democracy. We must acknowledge that we have made conscious trade-offs, enshrining certain moral values and human rights as untouchable, even in the face of a popular vote.

This defense is not a novel concept, many European countries following WWII traditionally maintained a Cordon Sanitaire, a political norm not to cooperate with parties deemed dangerous to the democratic system. We've seen this red line in France's long

resistance to the *National Rally*, Germany's *Brandmauer* against *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD), and the long-held red line in Sweden against the *Sweden Democrats*. However, the *Cordon Sanitaire* is increasingly failing as a reliable mechanism for isolating far-right parties as center and right parties have chosen to make these uneasy alliances in exchange for short-term gain. They are able to do this because of the normalization of extremist views, the vulnerable political landscape, and the populist pushback against 'the establishment'. But I would also argue that the Cordon fell because of the lack of a political will to call out extremism, to call Fascism for what it is, and distance our politics from it. This erosion of the Cordon is the final stage of the normalization process, and Fascist parties once again come into power. Moreover, it is vital to recognize that the Weimar Republic did not fall to fascism because its citizens were caught off guard; it fell because the Nazis gradually and continuously pushed the norm of what was considered acceptable.

To summarize, two important things needed to halt this progression is:

1. Identify and highlight fascism and other political horrors that are pushing democratic limits.
2. Once identified, it is necessary to find the political will to push back.

To then remain silent, or to search for "softer", less uncomfortable synonyms is to be complicit, and fascism can spread. Former Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme understood this moral imperative when he insisted in his 1972 Christmas Speech that we must "call things by their proper names", as a refusal to submit to force. We must insist on the same clarity today. For it is only when dragged into the light that Fascist movements lose their power to hide. Only then can boundaries be set, and effective coalitions to defend them built.



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The Familiar Ideology of ICE: The Modern Secret Police

Veronika Polášková

On May 17, 2025, during a commencement address at the University of Minnesota Law School, Governor Tim Walz characterized the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) as a “modern-day Gestapo.” The statement was met with immediate backlash and critics, led by the Trump administration, denounced the comparison as a gross trivialization of Nazi Germany. However, as the events of the following year would demonstrate, Walz’s comparison proved less hyperbole than one would wish it to be. To understand the gravity of this comparison, it is necessary to examine ICE’s procedures, the legal framework that have recently expanded its reach, its historical parallels, and the many instances of state-sanctioned violence that have defined its current trajectory.

Established in 2003 under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), ICE was a response to the post-September 11 sentiment on homeland security. Unlike municipal police departments which, despite their flaws, are subject to local oversight and some Fourth Amendment requirements (probable cause, warrants, etc.), the agency operates as a paramilitary arm of the executive with a level of autonomy that is functionally extra-constitutional.

Agents are permitted to withhold identification during encounters and routinely operate in tactical masks and gear stripped of nameplates or badge numbers, both practices to prevent immediate legal or public recourse. According to legal experts, there is no law explicitly forbidding federal officers from masking their faces, a legal

"We're not Nazis. We're just following orders."



ICE

novelty the Trump Administration is exploiting. When this anonymity is paired with the use of unmarked SUVs and facilities, the state creates a dangerous vacuum of accountability. As noted in a leaked FBI memo from late 2025, without the traditional markers of a legal arrest, for the person being detained, it is often impossible to distinguish between a federal arrest and a kidnapping.

ICE and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has the power to interrogate any person they believe may be an immigrant about their right to be in the United States. They possess the authority to conduct warrantless stops and searches within a “reasonable distance” from any U.S. border. This distance, defined in 1953 by the Department of Justice as 100 air miles, encompasses nearly two-thirds of the American population, including almost every major city. While this “border zone” expands certain search and stop powers, ICE already have nationwide authority to enforce immigration laws and is not confined to near border areas. This is why we see CBP and ICE operate in Minneapolis

and other interior cities, with seemingly the same authority. While the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution should protect individuals against unreasonable searches and seizures, and require reasonable suspicion, its practical application was severely eroded by the Supreme Court ruling of 25A169 *Noem v. Vasquez Perdomo* (September 8, 2025).



Noem v. Vasquez would have prohibited ICE agents’ over reliance on an individual’s skin color, Spanish language use, and proximity to construction or agricultural sites as justifications for detention. However, the Supreme Court stayed this injunction. In a concurring opinion, Justice Brett Kavanaugh argued that federal immigration agents possess more discretion than local police, suggesting that “apparent race or ethnicity” is a valid component of “reasonable suspicion”. In practice, the now called “Kavanaugh stop” provides legal sanction for racial profiling, creating a geographic and ethnic exception to the Bill of Rights for millions.

If not Gestapo, why Gestapo-shaped?

Is the comparison historically accurate and, more importantly, is it helpful? To answer this, we must recognize that both ICE and the Gestapo function as political police forces led by an ideology from a democratically elected government. The Gestapo was initially tasked



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with investigating treason or sabotage. It took time for it to fill with Nazis and loyalists, and eventually took part in the Night of Long Knives where dozens of political opponents were rounded up and killed. By 1939, its Office of Resettlement and Office of Jewish Affairs headed by Adolf Eichmann, were established to manage detention and deportation to concentration camps across Europe.

Both agencies, without due process, possess the authority to detain and deport. The Gestapo utilized Schutzhaft (protective custody), an administrative decree to incarcerate individuals indefinitely without trial. ICE operates on a similar logic. By relying on administrative warrants signed by supervisors, ICE is bypassing the requirement for actual court ordered judicial warrants. This allows for the detention of individuals in “black site” facilities like the Whipple Building in Minnesota or even their deportation to facilities outside the U.S., such as in El Salvador, without an appearance before a judge or access to legal counsel — effectively nullifying the right of habeas corpus (the right of due process and trial).

Furthermore, both agencies rely on terror, surveillance, and intimidation to enforce the will of the state. Much of the Gestapo’s power relied on the denunciation of fellow citizens by the public. By encouraging citizens to report potential “illegals” and using the Kavanaugh stop to justify the harassment of anyone who looks foreign, the current Administration is cultivating a similar social climate. This can be observed in the various viral documentations of homeowners reporting construction workers to ICE, without evidence, simply to potentially avoid paying for the work. These tactics create a climate of pervasive fear in the targeted communities that serves the ideological shift of ICE in recent years. The rhetoric of “retribution” against a class of people deemed “illegal” by their very existence serves that same ideological purpose.

The human cost of this violent ideological shift has been tragically illustrated by the shooting of Alex Pretti, Renée Good, Keith Porter, and Silverio Villegas González. Since the start of the second Trump Administration, over 46 people have died in ICE detention,

several hundreds of people have been transferred to prisons abroad without judicial approval, and more than 100,000 have been indiscriminately detained. Following the shooting of Pretti, the Administration, without evidence, immediately labeled Pretti a “terrorist”. The Trump Administration responded by again using the language of fascism: dehumanize and criminalize the victim, invent a threat, justify the violence, so that no one dares to ask for justice.

There is, however, a hopeful difference. After 1936, the Gestapo had no federal accountability or judicial review; ICE, theoretically, still does. Federal courts are actively reviewing ICE’s conduct, and states such as Minnesota and Illinois are filing lawsuits against the Trump Administration over the deployment of federal against in their cities. Providing these institutions hold firm, they can prove to be the friction needed against ICE’s encroachments.



Killing of Alex Pretti, Minneapolis



U.S. Border Patrol McAllen Station, TX



© Madison Thorn | Getty Images



ANOTHER KLANSMAN—Chase
New Journal and Guide (1916-); Apr 8, 1933; ProQuest
Pg. 6

(Drawn by William C. Chase for Cooperative Publishers)

Final Thoughts

The United States is increasingly viewed as a militarised state where dissent is crushed and federal agents roam cities with military gear. The transition from a border enforcement agency to a tool of domestic repression is complete and Walz’s comparison is no longer hyperbole. Regardless of the historical accuracy of the comparison, it does reveal a national anxiety about the spiral towards fascism and authoritarianism from the Trump Administration. However, the biggest issue with the comparison is really that it frames ICE as a foreign import of fascism, suggesting that this could only have come from the Nazi’s, not from the US. In reality, the deployment and aggression of ICE is a logical conclusion to the Trump Administrations, the maga movement, the republicans, and their hatred of immigrants, compounded with american’s own history of slavery, ethnic cleansing of native americans, Jim Crow, McCarthyism, and legacies of fascism.

Non-Violence



'Bloody Sunday', March 7, 1965, Selma, AL | © AP Photo

Simone E

Violence is never the answer, and I suppose you, the reader, subscribe to the idea of non-violence. However, before reading this text, ask yourself what you think of the question of the use of violence. Again, violence is never the answer, but how you answer this question may say a lot about what you really think of violence.

We often treat non-violence as a virtuous goal, but in the realm of politics, it is primarily a tactic. From the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S to the anti-Apartheid struggles in South Africa, non-violence has been used not because it is inherently morally superior to armed resistance, but because they believe it will be more effective. By remaining non-violent, the oppressed thus force the state and ruling class to show its hand. When a peaceful crowd is met with fire hoses, dogs, batons, or rubber bullets, the credibility of the state's action weakens in the eyes of its citizens and the international community. This asymmetric cruelty causes the legitimacy of the state to falter and the power structure destabilizes. In this sense, non-violence can be the effort needed for the oppressed to gain sympathy and the necessary political power to coerce change.

However, what happens when it doesn't work? What happens when decades of peaceful petitioning are met only with persistent, systemic slaughter, and never with change to the power structure? The states and ruling classes of the world are well aware that non-violence is a potent political tool, that is precisely why they respond to it with violence, leaving the oppressed no choice but to perpetrate violence in defense. Tactics are, by definition, tools used to achieve a result. If that result remains unattainable through peaceful means, oppressed people are eventually forced to change tactic and play the hand they've been dealt. While most of us would prefer to live in a world where the exchange of ideas is the only currency of change, to expect people to remain passive while their lives are actively and systematically exploited by oppressive forces is to demand their submission, not to appeal to their morality.

This shift in tactics of the oppressed is more often than not met with condemnation by the political ruling class, media, and those comfortable within the status quo. However, we must be honest: to condemn this violence does not make us non-violent. We simply

reveal our preference for a structural and beneficial kind of violence, such as police and armies, that uphold an exploitative system. In condemning this violence, we are also re-framing the appropriate limits of resistance to the oppressive forces of colonialism, racism and capitalism, effectively demanding their victims accept this existence.

This dynamic of the moral framing of violence is perhaps best illustrated by the way history is re-written to suit a more palatable narrative of change, to ensure that future efforts are held to this fictional standard. For example, the world now sanitizes Nelson Mandela and his more than 50-year-long fight for equal rights, conveniently forgetting that he was once branded a terrorist. After the Sharpeville Massacre and the barring of the African National Congress from politics, Mandela went underground and became the head of the ANC's armed wing, *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, concluding that "the armed struggle was forced on us by the government." Mandela was convicted of sabotage and treason; he spent 27 years, 6 months, and 6 days imprisoned for refusing to remain a victim.

"I and some colleagues came to the conclusion that as violence in this country was inevitable, it would be wrong and unrealistic for African leaders to continue preaching peace and non-violence at a time when the government met our peaceful demands with force. It was only when all else had failed, when all channels of peaceful protest had been barred to us, that the decision was made to embark on violent forms of political struggle."

- Nelson Mandela, *No Easy Walk to Freedom*



Mandela welcomed home after his release from prison, February 13, 1990. © Udo Weitz | AP Photo

Who is allowed to violently resist?

You would most certainly agree that Mandela was unjustly labeled a terrorist in an attempt to delegitimize a struggle for basic human rights. This brings into question of who is allowed to resist.

As I progressed with this text, news came of a shooting at the annual White House Correspondents' Dinner. Within minutes, long before the identity or motive of the shooter could possibly be known, the political establishment, both Republicans and Democrats, were quick to condemn the shooting as an act of "political violence". This is a natural response, but like political historian Ted Stoermer asks: why the haste to solidify the narrative as such? The answer: the political establishment does this to set the terms of what constitutes legitimate resistance.

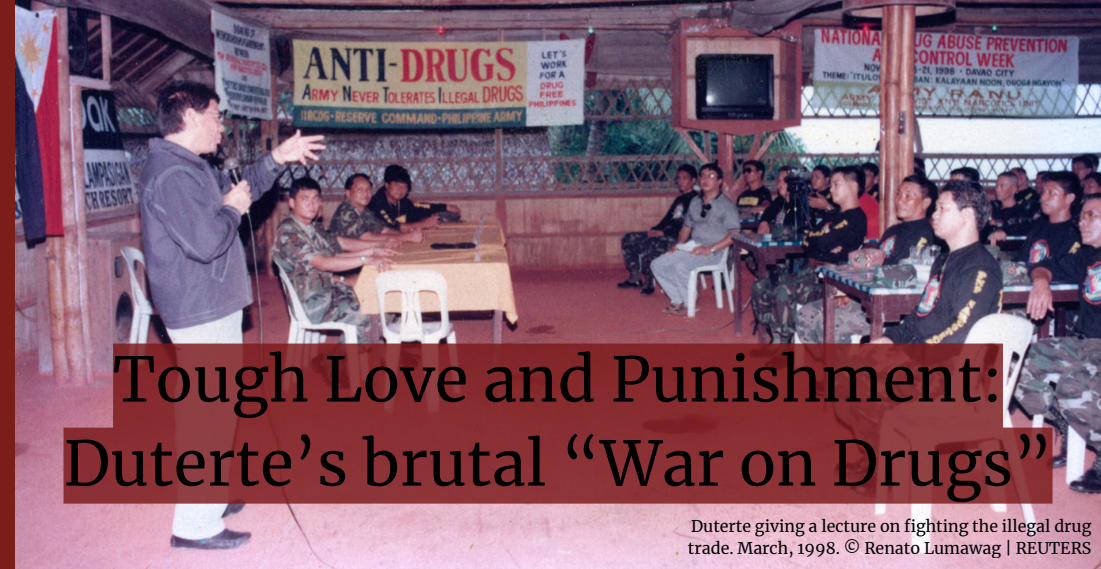
As with the ANC, the Civil Rights Movement, the IRA, and many more resistance fighters, organized resistance understands that their oppression is structural. They understand that their resistance must aim to alter or abolish the structure itself. Removing a single cog—even a president—simply produces a replacement and, more often than not, also a harsher response. In contrast, the violence of a single individual happens when they stop believing in resistance. While the Hilton attack may have been a desperate attempt to seek change, it falls for the narrative that actors such as Trump, Putin, or Netanyahu are the sole perpetrators of their troubles, which masks broader systemic abuse.

Ultimately, we must recognize that the peaceful and democratic political order we are

told to protect is itself a landscape of violence, one that is comfortable, legal, and profitable for those in power. When the establishment asks (demands) that we condemn all disruption to the system, remember that we are not asked to be moral. If we truly wish to move beyond violence, we cannot do so by policing the desperation of the marginalized while ignoring the sanctioned brutality of the state.

When the Palestine Liberation Organization was eventually forced to shift from armed struggle to a diplomatic framework, they did so under the pressure of a global community that demanded the PLO act as a "legitimate" partner, all the while the structural violence of the Israeli occupation continued without change. The question, then, is not whether we condone violence, but whether we have the courage to support real paths to justice that actually demands structural change.

However, the establishment has no interest in this nuance. By reaching for the label of political violence, they flatten the entire spectrum of opposition. According to Stoermer, this serves two masters: For Trump and the right, it justifies the expansion of the security state; For the Democrats and liberals, it discredits any opposition that isn't their own, thereby positioning themselves as the sole defenders of "Democracy" while branding those who advocate for structural change as complicit in bloodshed.



Tough Love and Punishment: Duterte's brutal "War on Drugs"

Duterte giving a lecture on fighting the illegal drug trade. March, 1998. © Renato Lumawag | REUTERS

David Elias Reyes

If you've ever heard of Rodrigo Duterte, you've most likely heard him described as a villain, as "The Punisher". "When I become president," Rodrigo Duterte told one rally, "I will order the police to find those people [involved in drugs] and kill them. The funeral parlours will be packed," "I'll dump all of you [criminals] into Manila Bay". Despite his many heinous vows and threats, in the Philippines, Duterte's approval ratings were sky-high. This may sound highly dangerous, however, to understand why Duterte became one of the most popular leaders in Philippine history, we have to look past international headlines of shock-and-awe to realize that his rise is a reaction to a broken promise that democracy failed to deliver.

For thirty years, the Philippines operated under a liberal democracy born from the 1986 uprising that toppled the dictator Ferdinand Marcos. But while politicians of this era talked a lot about human rights and the rule of law, the reality for the average person was suffocating poverty, corruption, and elite control. By 2016, many Filipinos felt that the system didn't protect them and that it only protected the rich and the corrupt political elite.

For his 2015 presidential campaign, Duterte

presented himself as a "counterrevolutionary" who promised to tear the old system down and put in favor an autocratic regime that would once and for all put an end to the legacies of Marcos kleptocratic rule. He used a political style locally known as *cariño brutal*, literally caring-brutality or 'though love'. To many of his supporters, Duterte was a foul-mouthed, authentic father figure who spoke their language and shared their anger with the system. He wasn't interested in being "presidential" and declared himself to be a strongman who could finally end national chaos created by rampant organized crime that liberal democracy had failed to do. This made his followers feel like they finally had their champion.

Duterte has had a long political career, becoming mayor of his home city of Davao City in 1988, elected on a platform to restore peace and stability to the city. However, already, the extrajudicial killings had begun. An armed vigilante group known as the Davao Death Squad began killing petty criminals, homeless people, communists, and political opponents of Duterte, reaching a staggering 14,000 killings. Despite this, he was re-elected for seven consecutive terms with escalating violence, while Davao became the murder and rape capital of the Philippines.



© Lisa Marie David/NurPhoto | Getty Images

The appeal of this ‘though love’ has deep historical roots in the Philippines, dating back to the U.S. colonial era (1898–1946). Back then, the police were taught to view any form of disorder as enemies to be crushed, whether it was a political rebellion, a moral vice like drugs, or petty crime. This punitive logic was perfected under Ferdinand Marcos, who used the police to carry out “salvagings” (Translated Filipino slang, meaning extrajudicial killings against critics of the Marcos regime), or the public display of mutilated bodies, to keep the population in line. Duterte tapped into this memory, reviving the idea that violence is a necessary tool for national discipline and used it to much success, having a favourability between 60- and 90% throughout his presidential term.



© Renato Lumawag | REUTERS

The primary concern of his critics is the disregard for rule of law and issues of extrajudicial killings, illegal both in the Philippines and international law. While his “War on Drugs” campaign was officially aimed at eliminating drug-related crime, reports indicate that it led to the deaths of thousands, including innocent individuals who were mistakenly targeted. The youngest known victim was a 3-year-old child, which truly highlights the indiscriminate nature of the violence. According to Human Rights Watch, Duterte's War on Drugs has led to the deaths of over 12,000 Filipinos to date, mostly urban poor. At least 2,555 of the killings have been attributed to the Philippine National Police. There are claims from former police officers that law enforcers were compensated per kill, with a quota and reward system, which Duterte himself confirmed, creating a dangerous system where officers were incentivized to execute suspects rather than apprehend them. And by framing his politics as the ‘people’ versus ‘criminals’ he created a powerful sense of unity for his supporters and invited them to be a part of a sacred duty to save the country from perdition by the cleansing of criminals.

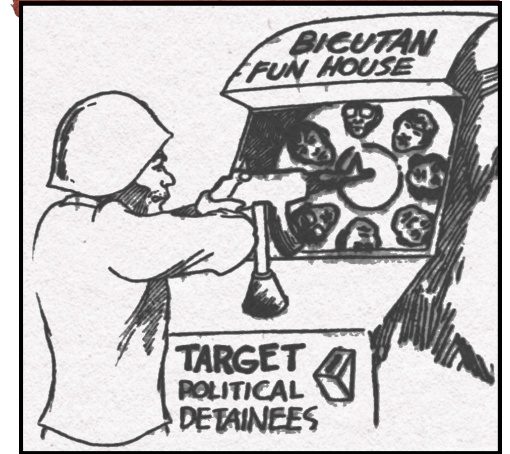
Another one of Duterte’s most powerful tools was his ability to lump all his enemies into one category. In his War on Drugs, he targeted

addiction and organized crime, but, like Marcos, he targeted anyone who opposed him or his version of order. His government used “red-tagging”, labeling critics, activists, and journalists as communists, to turn them into legitimate targets for the state.

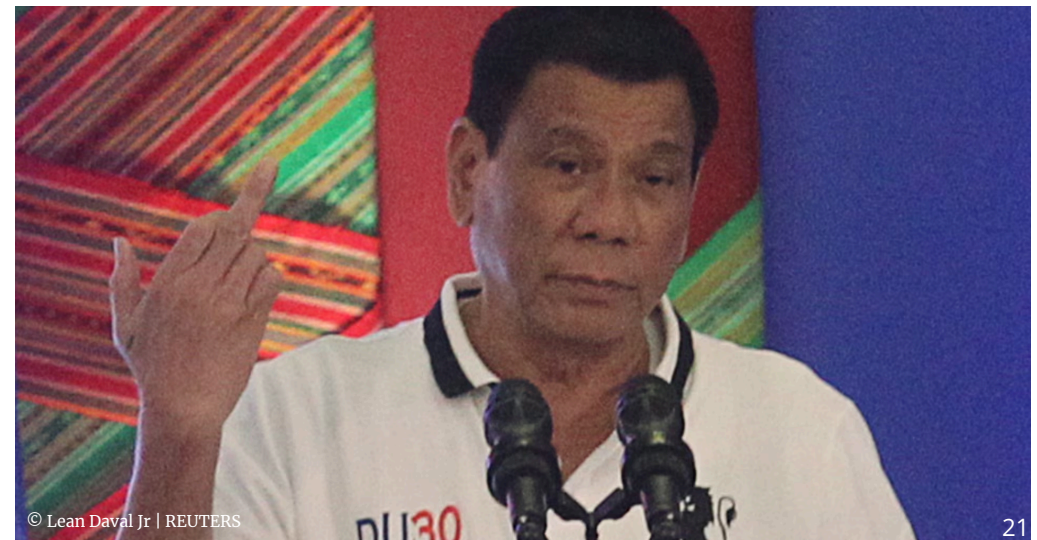
Surprisingly, this bloody approach during his presidential term didn’t hurt the country’s standing with global powers, and despite the body count, the Philippines remained a profitable place for international business. The U.S. continued to provide military aid, and foreign lenders continued to fund the government’s massive infrastructure projects. And, for the people living under his rule, the safety of a high police presence outweighed the moral cost of the extrajudicial killings, as long as you or your family did not become targets. Many Filipinos were relieved to see the law being enforced, reflected in the polling, even if that enforcement was brutal.

On March 11, 2025 former President of the Philippines Rodrigo Duterte was arrested by Interpol and taken to The Hague. Duterte is being charged for Crimes against humanity of murder and is currently being held in ICC custody. Despite this, he remains popular, especially in his home town Davao, where he won the 2025 mayoral race by a landslide.

Cartoon published in 1978 for “The Campaign to Free All Political Prisoners”. Camp Bicutan Bagong Diwa was an infamous camp for “political detainees” during the Marcos regime



Since Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr., son of dictator Ferdinand Marcos, took office from Duterte on July 1, 2022, over 1000 people have died in drug-related killings and the brutality has continued, showing that the appeal of strongmen with cariño brutal is still present in the Philippines. The new Marcos Jr. administration has refused to cooperate with ICC investigators in the case against former President Duterte. Human Rights Watch reports that domestic accountability for the War on Drugs has seen no improvement, with virtually no charges brought against officials or officers involved in the atrocities.



© Lean Daval Jr | REUTERS

WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Dear readers and members of Umeå Association of International Affairs,

When we think of facism or authoritarianism, we might think of the Axis powers during WW2, dictatorships or as an ideology of the past. However, our generation bears witness to the rise of polarization, authoritarian movements and political extremism. We are witnessing democratic backsliding first hand; through attacks on the free media, disinformation, propaganda and extremism rising. Ideas once thought of as belonging in history books are once again visible on our social media algorithms, in our political institutions and in the public debate.

Being politically unaffiliated doesn't mean being unpolitical. UAIA is built on the United Nations' principles of human rights and freedom, but is a politically unaffiliated organization. However, our Association deals with political topics, sometimes controversial, in almost all parts of our operations. Discussing political topics, especially those who touch upon issues regarding our democracy, is important.

The development and rise of fascism and authoritarianism can serve as a reminder of how fragile democratic societies get when we allow fear, distrust and division to grow unchecked. Therefore, I am proud that our Editor has chosen to explore this important issue. Our association strives to educate, engage, and inform students and others interested in politics about our contemporary world. By examining this topic during these times, I believe that we contribute to increased knowledge, enable informed discussions, and foster critical thinking.

As the board of 2025/2026's operational year is slowly approaching its end, I would like to take this opportunity and thank all of you for your active participation in our associations events, lectures and activities. This past year has marked our 30 year anniversary, and I am proud to say that we continue to grow both in numbers and in active members. It is all of you who make it possible for us to continue on our mission to educate, encourage and engage students to understand the politics of the world around us. I also want to thank the whole board for their hard work during this operational year and for providing our members with events and lectures.

I want to give a special thank you to our Editor William Lundberg for coordinating and planning this issue of Utpost - a truly important and educational one!

Last but not least, I want to thank you all for your support and for your trust. It has been a truly magical experience to lead UAIA during this operational year. And to upcoming boards and members: Please continue to make this association better, let it continue growing and never stop educating yourselves and each other in these questions. I hope you all enjoy a calm summer with a break from studying. Welcome back next autumn to a new, and hopefully even better, operational year of 2026/2027!

Mila Lamminsari
President of UAIA 2025/2026



Questi scritti, quando verranno bruciati, daranno finalmente un po' di luce

These writings, when burned, will finally cast a little light

When travelling to Almaty, Kazakhstan, I had the opportunity to visit the Almaty Museum of Arts. There, I viewed the installation [titled above] by Anselm Kiefer (1945), created for an exhibition at the Palazzo Ducale in Venice 2022, that stuck with me.



Drawing its title from Venetian philosopher Andrea Emo, this installation embodies the forces of creation and negation that lie at the heart of Emo's philosophy and speaks to the universal themes of ruin and renewal that have long captivated Kiefer. Kiefer's use of unconventional materials like lead and straw, and his creation of large-scale installations, challenges the boundaries of painting and sculpture, evoking not only the weight of history but also creates a transformative space for reflection and renewal.

Scattered over the field and protruding from the canvas are books, crumpled and charred. These burnt writings bring Emo's words to life. They are sacrificial offerings, the talismans of Emo's imagination, which reveal how art is made precisely through its destruction. They are the residue of memory and a warning against the brutal cycle of history, cursed to repeat itself.



Future Reading and Recs.

In the introduction pages to this issue, you have already gotten a taste for what reading and the study of fascism entails. However, for readers who wish to explore the topic of fascism further, we at UPF have gathered a selection of readings and media, all approved by your editor. Some engage directly with the role of fascism in politics, while others offer broader perspectives on power, politics, and the world we live in.

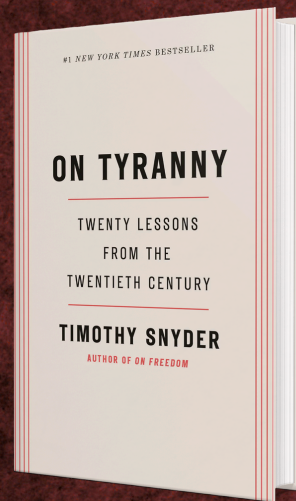
Books:

On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century
Timothy Snyder

Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil
Hannah Arendt

The Handmaid's Tale
Margaret Atwood

Brave New World
Aldous Huxley



Movies/Documentaries:

The Great Dictator (1940)
Charlie Chaplin

Starship Troopers (1997)
Paul Verhoeven

Z (1969)
Costa-Gavras

The Act of Killing (2012)
Joshua Oppenheimer



Check out N.01 of UTPOST 25/26 Private Actors in International Affairs



This edition of UTPOST explores private actors in international affairs, where power isn't conventionally exercised through parliaments or international organisations. Rather, it is embedded in algorithms, patronage politics, and private decision making that operates beyond traditional democratic oversight.

A huge thanks to our amazing writers.

- William Lundberg UAIA Editor

Previous Issues:



Explore our previous issues of UTPOST!

Visit the UTPOST webpage at <https://upfu.org/utpost/> or scan the QR code:



UTPOST
MAGAZINE NO.2
Year 2021

Umeå Association of International Affairs (UAIA)

About UPF Umeå

Since 1995 *The Umeå Association of International Affairs* (abbreviated to UPF from its Swedish name, *Utrikespolitiska Föreningen*) is a non-profit, politically and religiously independent association operating out of Umeå, with the purpose to evoke interest and debates on international and global issues.

We host and provide lectures, debates and themed activities for all of our members and each semester we arrange at least one study trip. In addition, we publish two media outlets, our magazine *Utpost* and our podcast.

Our Values

§3 The association is politically and religiously independent and runs its activities based on the conviction of equality of all human beings.

Equality is a central principle within the association and should guide the choice of the board, speakers and the political topics. UAIA is based upon a firm belief in the United Nation's (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Council of Europe's Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

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