

Gender Ideologies of Past and Present: The Christian Civilization Mission

Puja Kaur Matta

1. Introduction

The current rise of anti-gender discourse across Europe is a central feature of far-right movements. These movements aggressively promote a return to so-called 'Christian family values' and 'traditional gender roles,' wherein cisgender men are positioned as the rightful actors in public, political, and economic spheres, while cisgender women are relegated to the private, domestic realm of caregiving and household management. This rigid gender binary is enforced through narratives that claim to protect 'morality' and the 'innocence of children,'¹ casting these groups as self-appointed 'defenders of society' (DVCK e. V., 2025, *my translation*). However, this seemingly protective language obscures the violent dimensions underpinning their agendas.

Far from being a recent cultural reaction to liberal policies, the notions of Christian 'family values' and 'Western Christian Civilization' have historically served as a tool of social control, deployed to justify the domination of colonized peoples and enforce racial and gender hierarchies.² Therefore, it is not surprising that the current organizers of anti-gender campaigns are also involved in campaigns against migration. Recognizing this continuity reveals that today's far-right narratives are

-
- 1 A concrete example is the online platform *Aktion Kinder in Gefahr!* ("Campaign: Children at Risk!"), operated by the *Deutsche Vereinigung für christliche Kultur* (German Union for Christian Culture, DVCK), chaired by Benno Hofschulte. Founded in 1983, the organization claims to defend the "cultural values of Christian Western culture and civilization." Benno Hofschulte is directly linked to the fundamentalist Catholic organization *Tradition, Familie, Privateigentum* (Tradition, Family, Property). In 2009, Hofschulte released a publication that names the "TFP Committee on American Issues" as the co-author (Amazon, 2025).
 - 2 Gendered hierarchies in Europe were as well justified by a similar narrative. For an historical analysis on the violence against women in Europe, Silvia Federici provides perspective in which it becomes apparent how Christian churches operated to create the gendered hierarchy (2004).

not simply nostalgic but part of a broader imperial legacy that continues to shape European societies.³ In this, I argue that the current critical debate on far-right movements would benefit from Aimé Césaire's work, and by extension from Frantz Fanon (1986), to understand the current situation. Aimé Césaire argued that the violence once exercised in the colonies does not vanish but returns to the metropole. Through exercising violence against humanity, the colonizer lost their humanity, thus creating a racist society that is 'sick' (Césaire, 1972, pp.14ff.; Jokic, 2025, pp. 01ff.).

The case of the German 'Rhenish Missionary Society' ("Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft") in 'Southwest Africa,' today's Namibia, which was active in colonization in the 19th and 20th centuries, exemplifies how the European Christian ideology of family values and traditional gender roles was implemented through violent means. The missionaries were far from bystanders of the colonization of Namibia; rather, they were deeply involved in establishing the German colony to spread their gospel and their Eurocentric ideal of gender roles. This makes it apparent how historically loaded the term 'Christian family values' is and how it is inherently a materialistic approach to controlling territory, space, and bodies.

The Catholic transnational organization 'Tradition, Family, Property' (TFP) illustrates the return of Christian family values to the metropole in the 21st century. From 2015 to 2023, the Polish branch partner organization of the transnational network of Tradition, Family, Property, under the name of 'Ordo Iuris,' was actively involved in the legislation of the 'Law and Justice' (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość – PiS) government in Poland. It implemented 'LGBT-Free Zones' in over 100 municipalities in Poland, advocated against abortions, and demanded a 'return' to Christian values (Datta & Paternotte, 2023, p. 48; Keinz & Lewicki, 2023, p. 14).

This essay does not propose a comparison⁴ between the genocide in Namibia and the political activities of the TFP. Instead, it traces how the seemingly benign discourse of 'Christian family values' has been historically a project of domination, specifically the control over territories and bodies. Through analyzing two distinct contexts – German colonialism in Namibia and contemporary far-right movements in Europe – this essay highlights how 'Christian family values' function not as neutral ideals but as instruments of structural violence and control rooted in colonialism.

3 Similarly, Lewicki argues to consider the call for Christianity in Eastern Europe as an attempt to achieve *whiteness* and thus, overcoming the century-old racialization of Western Europe in regards of Eastern Europe. This analysis is a contribution of Lewicki in conversation with Keinz on the topic of understanding Polish policies (Keinz & Lewicki, 2023, pp. 13ff.).

4 Comparisons, particularly historical ones, are problematic due to the nature of obscuring cultural contexts, political particularities, economic circumstances, etc.; however, colonial agents across the colonizing nations exchanged their ideas and approaches, discussed vividly, for example, the issues of sexual morality (Stoler, 2010, pp. xiv-xv)

The inherent violence of 'Christian family values' and 'Western Christian Civilization' has not only had deadly consequences for the colonized but also transformed the colonizer and the racist society into 'savagery,' according to Césaire, because the exercised violence requires the loss of humanity for the colonizer (1972, p. 13). In this, I argue that to understand current anti-gender ideology, which is inherently anti-human, the return of violence in Europe is a direct cause of the psychological boomerang effect described by Césaire (Jokic, 2025, p. 04). Thus, it leads me to the only conclusion: as long as the colonial world order persists and Europe continues to deny fundamental human rights to all people, far-right movements will persist and continue to be a threat to society.

2. Colonization is not philanthropy: the missionary-military complex

"I am talking about societies drained of their essence, cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary *possibilities* wiped out."

Césaire, 1972, p. 21 (italics in original)

In German debates on colonization, the case of the genocide in Namibia is quite remarkable. Until 2021, the German government denied an official apology to Namibia for the genocide of the Nama and Herero in 1904 and 1905 during the German colonial rule (Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany, 2021). Although the Namibian Parliament already requested in 2005⁵ an official acknowledgment of the genocide by the German government, it was denied on the claim that there was no explicit intent of annihilation on the part of the German military in Namibia (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2024); however, reviewing the German colonial literature of the 19th and early 20th centuries reveals an explicit desire to annihilate at least the culture of the local African population. As Aimé Césaire already explained European colonization destroyed cultures and 'sacrificed' millions for the so-called 'progress' that colonialism brought the world (1972, pp. 21f.). The intention of annihilation was far from hidden from the public; on the contrary, it was celebrated as a civilization mission. In 1879, Friedrich Fabri, the director of the German Protestant 'Rhenish Missionary Society' (RMS), published a pamphlet that demanded the German colonization of Africa and framed it as a duty of the Germans to bring civilization and Christianity to the 'underdeveloped world.' His pamphlet

5 Namibia became an independent nation only in 1990.

gained popularity among the political elite, thus pressuring the German Reich to sponsor colonial expansion (Gründer, 1982, p. 25).

In 1907,⁶ Paul Rohrbach published his monograph on ‘Southwest Africa,’ today’s Namibia. In it, he describes the land and infuses commentaries on the local population. He presents the reader with photographs of the desert and provides information about the differing climates in Namibia, constructing an image of a ‘vast land.’ Typical for his times, such geographic descriptions reflect the ideals of the Enlightenment, in which land measurements, weather conditions, and land fertility are the main features (Gottschalk, 2013, p. 55). The information on the indigenous population is limited to their usefulness for the colonial enterprise, as Rohrbach (1907) points out:

“With the Herero, however, the situation is now different after the complete defeat of the natives,⁷ in that it must henceforth be our task to deprive⁸ this tribe – just like the other native tribes of Southwest Africa – as far as possible of its distinct nationality and ethnic identity, and to gradually merge it with other natives into a single colored working race.” (p. 21, *my translation*)

The ‘defeat’ to which Rohrbach refers here is the genocide of the Nama and Herero of 1904/1905. It further becomes apparent that Rohrbach seeks to annihilate the culture of the population and reduce them to a ‘working race,’ as opposed to directly naming it as enslavement.⁹ The next step for Rohrbach was to seize the land for the German

6 The shift from human trafficking of African people to the colonies to direct colonization of the African continent in the 19th century is what Walter Rodney (1981) describes as a transition from European colonialism to European imperialism. The consequences of human trafficking had devastating consequences on the whole continent. Areas not directly affected by raids and abductions became more isolated, and any efforts at economic development were destroyed by European traders. Due to the USA becoming an independent imperialist state, the European nations focused on the exploitation of other colonies. They speculated exorbitant profits gained from mineral, gold, and possibly diamond extraction from African soil. In this, Africa became a space that needed civilization to employ the local population for resource extraction (Rodney, 1981, p. 100 f., 104 & 109).

7 The German word ‘Eingeborne’ reflects a rather racist ideology; here it is translated as ‘native.’

8 The German original quote uses ‘entleiden’ which could be translated as taking away the suffering of having their own culture.

9 As Eric Williams (2021 [1944]) explains, the main reason behind abolishing formal abduction of Africans in 1803 and later the enslavement in 1833 relied primarily on economic calculations. By the 19th century, the demand for sugar, once a key driver of plantation economies in the Caribbean, had begun to decline relative to earlier periods, reducing the economic centrality of sugarcane production and prompting European powers to seek new sources of wealth and raw materials, particularly in Africa, and provide the global market with cheaper sugar imported from South Asia (Williams, 2021 [1944], p. 108 & 121).

colonists (Gründer, 1982, p. 126). In this, the genocide is not a culmination of German military violence but rather the starting point of the colonizing process.

Paul Rohrbach's description of the genocide and the ideology to colonize the 'vast land' not only reflects the general narratives of German colonialism but also specifically that of the German Christians who were active in missionary work in Namibia. Fabri and Rohrbach, a theologian who became a colonial official during the colonization of Namibia, are personifying the missionary-military complex (Ryland, 2013, pp. 21–24).

The aforementioned culture of the Herero, which Rohrbach sought to eliminate, necessitated a complete reconfiguration of gender roles in accordance with German Christian moral frameworks. Colonization was, therefore, not only the exploitation of human labor and natural resources but a force that alienated the colonized from their culture to reconfigure it for the economic needs of the colonial 'motherland' (Bhabha, 1986, pp. x-xii; Césaire, 1972, p. 5; Fabri, 1879, p. 16).

What appears to be a juxtaposition, namely, the Christian civilization mission vs. the exploitation of the land and people, was, in fact, an interwoven project wherein salvation and economic profits created synergies, and the German Protestant RMS was a driving force in this.¹⁰

When the German Reich officially acquired 'Southwest Africa' after the so-called 'Berlin Conference,'¹¹ the RMS had been present in the region for over forty years. With the help of the German troops, the RMS saw it as a chance to spread the gospel, civilize the locals, and establish their 'Protestant work ethic'¹²: repetitive wage labor should discipline the spirit and the body, especially sexuality, which was considered only as a means for reproduction (Rempfer, 2022, p. 154). To spread the Christian ideal, the missionaries needed control over the Hereros' territories and, by this, to eliminate any form of living independently from the settlers (Olusoga & Erichsen,

10 The missionaries were actively involved in the dispossession of the land for the German military. By 1896, the missionaries were the leading force for the colonization of Namibia (Gründer, 1982, pp. 118ff.)

11 In this context, the so-called 'Berlin Conference,' held from November 1884 to February 1885, divided the continent among the Imperial powers and regulated the competition for speculated resources. Africans were deemed unable to run states and hence needed European political intervention to fulfill the needs of the European-controlled global market (Rodney, 1981, p. 140; Olusoga & Erichsen, 2010, p. 34). For in-depth analysis of Germany's role during colonization and Bismarck's position in establishing 'Southwest Africa,' see Olusoga & Erichsen, 2010, pp. 33–45.

12 Max Weber's concept of the 'Protestant Work Ethic' was forwarded in retrospect to explain the capitalistic advancements of Protestant Europe while obscuring European Colonialism and Imperialism and ignoring economic developments in Catholic Europe (Amin, 2010, pp.163f.).

2010, p. 102). The Rhenish Missionary Society thus depended on the presence of German colonial authorities and military forces¹³ to sustain their operations (Gründer, 1982, p. 117; Olusoga & Erichsen, 2010, pp. 84 & 100ff.).¹⁴

The ongoing resistance of the population against the colonization, spearheaded by Hendrik Witboois, was considered by the missionaries as 'unchristian' and undermining the 'God-given' hierarchy (Gründer, 1982, p. 124), and thus, the cooperation of missionaries and the German military culminated in the genocide of 1904/1905.¹⁵ In the following years, the Germans created labor camps for the survivors, where they preached the gospel to an incapacitated audience.¹⁶ The prisoners were further 'rented' to settlers by the missionary administration (Olusoga & Erichsen, 2012, p. 164).

The Eurocentric Ideology of Gender

Founded in 1828, the Protestant Rhenish Missionary Society had already sent missionaries to South Africa in 1839, Borneo in 1835, China in 1847, and Sumatra in 1861, making it the largest missionary society in Germany (Gründer, 1982, p. 27). The objective was to spread the gospel through a 'civilization mission.' This becomes particularly apparent in the rules of clothing imposed by the missionaries on the local African population. The clothing of the local women served as a tool to discipline

13 Thus, the German settlers started to secure the territory from the local population for their benefit which meant dispossessing the local population of land while their livestock was destroyed by a pandemic affecting their cattle and leaving them with no means to survive (Olusoga & Erichsen, 2010, p. 100ff.). Various treaties were signed between the German colonizers and the local population; however, it is necessary to point out that the Germans regularly broke the treaties to further their expansion and establish control over the territory (Olusoga & Erichsen, 2010, p. 84). By 1903, the Germans owned over half the cattle of the Herero people.

14 Like other missionary groups, such as the 'London Missionary Society,' the RMS also pursued economic and infrastructural development, employing German traders and setting up wood workshops, blacksmith forges, butcheries, and even facilities for producing arms and ammunition. The Missionary Societies functioned as trading unions on the European continent. For an in-depth analysis, Horst Gründer (1982) and Thomas Braun (1991), among others, have reviewed the archives of the RMS and recounted the political and economic context by analyzing the letter exchange, the missionary's books, and other encounters (Braun, 1991, p. 45).

15 By reviewing letters and archives, Olusogan and Erichsen provided an accurate account of the events leading up to the genocide, the genocide itself, and its aftermath, such as how the concentration camps were run and the renting of prisoners to the settlers. Their findings were published in 2010 as 'The Kaiser's Holocaust.'

16 In 1905, the missionary Heinrich Vedder reported to the headquarters of the RMS in Germany about the dire conditions of the work and military concentration camps; however, no consequences or significant changes in the policy followed (Olusoga & Erichsen, 2010, p. 167ff.).

sexual morality, in which sexuality is reduced to a means for reproduction. Therefore, long dresses for women signaled their 'virtue' and 'virginity' and marked them as faithful Christians. Based on the European narrative that women are, per se, sinful, the long dresses served as a reminder of self-discipline and suppressing other gender and sexual expressions (Rempfer, 2022, pp. 153ff.).

This vision of European Christian civilization for the colonized required an implementation of Eurocentric concepts of temporal and spatial relations: the introduction of working hours in a specific space and resting hours at home, the division of days with Sunday reserved for the church only, and a clear division of public and private spheres, which were gendered. While the Herero men were expected to occupy the public spaces, the Herero women, by contrast, were confined to the private realm and expected to serve their husbands, care for the children, and take over all reproductive labor in the houses of the colonialists. Additionally, the Herero women were also prohibited from selling goods at the market, maintaining social and trading networks, and significantly disrupting their prior economic roles. In religious life, this gendered (and simultaneously also racial) separation continued. Herero men were permitted to preach the gospel but only in the absence of German missionaries and were denied the status of ordained ministers. Herero women, meanwhile, were expected to be passive listeners during church services (Rempfer, 2022, p. 225).

In this regard, colonialism profoundly disrupted the roles and status of African women who were previously active in trading and maintaining social networks. For the ideals of Christian gender roles, the Herero women were stripped of their social, political, and cultural rights. At the same time, they were expected to sustain the household and serve in colonial settlers' homes. Walter Rodney (1981) argues that this process contributed to the breakdown of traditional social structures by fostering a worldview in which each individual labored for their own spiritual and material gain (p. 254).

The case of the RMS highlights how colonization was inherently a project to assert control over territories, spaces, and bodies. By imposing clothing rules, control over bodies was claimed, and the control over territory and the dispossession of the land allowed the missionaries to establish their Eurocentric world order that was deeply racialized and gendered. Framing the resistance of the local population as 'un-Christian' or as defiance against 'God' reveals how those in power monopolized biblical interpretation. This historical analysis shows that the notion of Christian civilization, 'christliches Abendland,' was not neutral or benevolent but entangled with structures of domination and violence.

3. Coloniality persists: Christian fundamentalism and anti-gender campaigns

“[...] we must study how colonization works to *decivilize* the colonizer, to *brutalize* him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism [...]”

Césaire, 1972, p. 13 (*italics in original*)

Aimé Césaire describes in his analysis how the brute violence directed at the colonized also transforms the colonizer psychologically (Jokic, 2024, p. 04). In the act of asserting violence against the colonized, the claimed virtues of ‘European civilization,’ namely, humanity, have to be morally relativized, turning the colonizer into someone who operates on the grounds of ‘race hatred’ at all times and in all spaces. In this, the colonizer lost all sense of humanity and thus denies it in Europe as well.

While colonialism is over, the nostalgic view of European imperialism is not a fringe phenomenon. The following citation presents a revisionist account of the Portuguese colonization of Brazil: “The Jesuits infused a soul into what up to then had been a land rich in potential but shapeless,” and the sentence continues, “the missionaries carried out the task (...) of Christianizing and, at the same time, civilizing the lands of Brazil,” states Roberto de Mattei in his publication of 1998 (p. 06). In this, de Mattei connects Euro-Christianity, personified by the Portuguese Jesuits, with the ‘civilizing mission’ that ‘reshaped the land’ and further ‘gathered’ the indigenous population into ‘special villages.’ The Christian civilization mission is combined with control over the territory of Brazil, control over the space by introducing infrastructure, and control over the bodies of the indigenous people.

Roberto De Mattei is a self-ascribed disciple of the founder of ‘Tradition, Family, Property’ (TFP), Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira. De Mattei’s publication might appear as another example of apologetic settler colonialism that retells a romanticized and revisionist version of European imperialism; however, de Mattei is a professor emeritus of modern history at the European University of Rome, a private university accepted by the state. More importantly, he was a counselor for foreign politics for the Italian government from 2002 to 2006, directly linking him to Silvio Berlusconi, former prime minister and leader of the conservative alliance ‘Casa della Libertà’ in Italy (Garbagnoli, 2017, p. 159).

De Mattei is not the only ‘interesting person’ connected to the TFP and European governments. Aleksander Stępkowski, the founder and former president of the Polish TFP branch *Ordus Iuris*, served as an undersecretary of the state Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the first PiS legislation and is currently a judge at the Polish Supreme Court (Henning, 2023, p. 87). In 2021, the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Péter Szijjártó, held a keynote speech at an event by the ‘Slovakia Christiana’ Foundation that shares similar goals to the TFP. Present at the

summit was also Boris Kollár, Speaker of the Slovak Parliament, among other politicians (Sekerák & Rosúlek, 2023, p. 188).

In 2019,¹⁷ nearly 100 municipalities, provinces, and local governments in Poland adopted legally non-binding resolutions that became known in the media as 'LGBT-Free Zones.' Although most of these declarations were eventually withdrawn or invalidated by Polish courts by 2025 (Knight, 2025), their symbolic power endures. One of the key forces is *Ordo Iuris*, a Catholic think tank closely linked to the transnational network Tradition, Family, Property, which mobilizes aggressively against gender equality and LGBTQIA+ rights (Datta & Paternotte, 2023, p. 48; Ciobanu, 2021). The 'LGBT-Free Zones' were not merely symbolic gestures; they marked an attempt to reassert control over territory and a return of 'family values' in which queer people are not part of. Similarly, *Ordo Iuris* requested that the right to asylum be restricted to Christians in 2015 (Hennig, 2023, p. 88). Since then, the organization has published numerous reports on the EU's asylum system and demanded reform while strategically not mentioning religion (Ignaszczka, 2023; *Ordoiuris*, n.d.). In Germany, Beatrix von Storch, the former deputy of the far-right party AfD ('Alternative für Deutschland' – Alternative for Germany), is the cousin of Paul von Oldenburg, who represents the European umbrella organization of the TFP (Norris, 2025). Although the AfD is not part of the governing coalition, it currently holds the position of the largest opposition party in the German Bundestag. The party has repeatedly doubted the historical consensus regarding the genocide committed by German colonial forces in Namibia (AfD Bundestagsfraktion, 2019), echoing revisionist narratives such as those advanced by Roberto de Mattei. In 2024, AfD Member of Parliament Sven Tritschler underscored this position during an official visit by the German delegation, where he paid tribute to German colonial soldiers. This act symbolically reaffirmed the party's refusal to acknowledge the genocide (Rust, 2024).

While there is no clear link between the AfD and the TFP in personal regards, both organizations share an ideological agenda that is informed by a revisionist view on European colonization, the so-called anti-gender ideology, and upholding the concept of 'Western Christian civilization,' which usually features a narrative to control territories, spaces, and bodies within Europe.

However, the nostalgia for European colonialism is not a marginalized position in Germany, although the TFP's supporters, the AfD, remain in opposition and are not part of the governing coalition. In 2025, the German Chancellor, Friedrich Merz, appointed Wolfram Weimer Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media. Weimer has authored publications that have repeatedly emphasized his conservative positions. Particular 'Land Unter,' published in 2012, reveals a revisionist

17 For an in-depth analysis of the Christian Right movement and the political context in Poland, Anja Henning (2023) provides insight in her article.

history of European colonialism. The second chapter begins with the sentence: “We Europeans live with the confidence of cultural and economic dominance since centuries. We are the world leaders” (Chapter 2, *my translation*)¹⁸. Weimer further regrets that Europe is losing its position to “think, define, cultivate, and change” (Chapter 2, *my translation*) the world. From this rhetorical starting point, Weimer constructs the low child-birth rate in Europe, the loss of colonial territories, European Christianity, and loss of cultural influence, and the economic stagnation as indicators of the decline of civilization.¹⁹ In this rhetorical move, Weimer classifies gender mainstreaming and quotas for women as another strategy of an overcontrolling state, which in consequence would lead to the loss of European hegemony (Chapter 5 & 6).

While the revisionist perspective on European colonialism, the perceived decline of European Christianity, and the critique of gender mainstreaming appear as separate thematic chapters in Weimer’s publication, they serve together as interlocking rhetorical tools in his broader call for restoring ‘European supremacy’ and a return to ‘morals’ and hierarchical structures. Given Weimer’s position now in the German government, it reveals how the political elite endorses colonial nostalgia and continues to frame European colonialism as a positive ‘civilization mission.’

This rhetoric, despite in differences of style and approach, echoes the position of Roberto de Mattei. Both authors anchor their arguments in a nostalgic narrative that regards European colonialism as a Christian civilizing mission, while instrumentalizing the language of ‘cultural survival’ to advocate for deeply conservative and exclusionary political projects.

In this rhetorical act of asserting dominance over the world, the claimed virtues of ‘Christian European civilization’ are relativized in favor of exclusionary politics that are rooted in denying the humanity of anyone who does not and cannot adhere to the ideals. The obscuring of the genocidal violence of European colonialism is a crucial feature of glorifying and rewriting the past. By negating the lived experiences of colonized, the process of ‘decivilizing,’ as described by Césaire, continues to dominate European politics. While the TFP and the AfD in Germany remain fringe actors of the far right movements, their positions on colonial revisionism and gender politics are aligned with politician’s that are currently in office, such as Wolfram Weimer.

18 This notion of maintaining the ‘European supremacy’ reflects Oswald Spengler’s rhetoric, author of “The Decline of the West” (1926 [1918]), and remains a crucial positive reference in Weimer’s publication. Spengler’s second volume features antisemitic rhetorics that also include anti-democratic positions (Wyrwa, 2009, pp. 784f.)

19 His notion of European supremacy is further upheld by the claim that ‘others’ would not have a concept of temporality and thus Weimar claims that only the ‘European civilization’ invented calendars, years and the clock to measure the ‘European invention’ of hours, and seconds (Chapter 3).

In this, the former colonizer not only rejects the humanity of the former colonized but further spreads the 'poison' of anti-humanity on the continent by funding anti-gender campaigns (Datta, 2021, p.12). The violence that once raged in the colonies, through atrocities and genocides, continues in the metropole and articulates itself through envisioning a European supremacy informed by Eurocentric ideals of Christian civilization.

The holy trinity: Tradition, Family, Property

The Catholic network Tradition, Family, Property, founded in Brazil in 1960, is clear in its ideological orientation: a commitment to traditional 'Catholic values,' patriarchal family structures, and the protection of private property. TFP's explicit emphasis on 'property' differentiates it from other Christian organizations. This materialist stance has translated into resistance to land reforms in Latin America, aligning the organization with the interests of the wealthy, land-owning elite. Since its founding, TFP has expanded across Europe, where it mobilizes against movements for social justice, consistently opposing gender equality and LGBTQIA*+ rights (Datta, 2020, p. 09ff.).

In order to understand the triplet of abstract, seemingly arbitrary choices of words, the historical analysis by Samir Amin (2010) provides an insight into the meaning. While the American Revolution triumphed liberty, equality, and property as its slogan and declared them as a basis of its newly founded nation, far-right ideology dropped liberty and equality in exchange for tradition and family, while property remained a crucial feature of their ideology of a 'free market' (p. 15). The exchange of words is not simply a rhetorical strategy to stress the necessity of 'family' or 'traditions;' rather, it is a symbolic move to emphasize hierarchical power structures informed by an Eurocentric worldview that evokes the ideals of a 'Western Christian Civilization.' Regarding property, the TFP mentions that "the possibility to create inheritance (...) that will be left for wife and children, is the best natural source of human creativity" (TFP Deutschland, 2025, *my translation*). In this, Samin (2010) asks:

"So one is asked to go back in history to the mythical day of the original social contract made between equals, who later became unequal because they really desired it, as evidenced by inequality of the sacrifices to which they consented." (p. 16)

Amin alludes that property, even in this logic, is not the result of a just trade but is instead rooted in violence. To justify the unequal distribution of property and wealth, far-right ideology invokes 'tradition' as a historical fact that justifies inequality. In a rather romanticized version, the TFP mentions on their homepage: "And inheritance

is an institution that unites family and tradition (...) that is given to the next generation" (TFP Deutschland, 2025, *my translation*). By framing inheritance or property as 'natural,' the TFP omits the question of how property was obtained in the first place.

In terms of property, the TFP opened its building in 2008 in Brussels, which serves as its headquarters for Europe. The TFP owns numerous real estate properties in France and Belgium (Datta, 2022, p. 14). This brings in the question about the wealth the TFP supposedly generates through its fundraising networks and who donates to an organization known for its aggressive approach against gender equality in Europe. According to a report by Neil Datta (2021), the European TFP spent alone in Europe over a decade 113 million Euros on anti-gender campaigning, thus making it only the second biggest spender, after the European 'Foundation Jérôme Lejeune' (p. 97). Among the donors, Datta lists Paul von Oldenburg, Beatrix von Storch, and the Imperial Family of Brazil, Orléans-Bragança.

Recalling the TFP's revisionist interpretation of European colonial history, these financial flows symbolize not only a sustained commitment to opposing gender equality but also a broader ideological project aimed at denying and rewriting Europe's colonial past that seeks to subjugate anyone that does not fulfil their ideology of 'Christian family values' combined with owning property and wealth.

4. Conclusion

"(...) unless Europe galvanizes the dying cultures or raises up to new ones, unless it becomes the awakener of countries and civilizations (...) Europe will have deprived itself of its last chance and, with its own hands, drawn up over itself the pall of mortal darkness."

Césaire, 1972, p. 61

Europe has a final chance to redeem itself before the 'pall' of the far-right movements covers the whole continent. By acknowledging the colonial past as an act of annihilation and destruction and by implementing human rights for all, Europe can be transformed and prevent the rise of far-right politics that are deeply rooted in anti-humanity politics. Césaire's words cannot be translated to a symbolic opposition against the far-right movements in the present; rather, he asks us to critically review the language of the colonizer, the rhetorics that aim to dehumanize the colonized but in return 'decivilize' Europe itself. Thus, as long as a critical assessment of the colonial past remains in the shadows, the 'poison' will further spread.

In this, I have highlighted how the language of German colonizers, such as Friedrich Fabri and Paul Rohrbach, advocated for an annihilation of African culture in the 19th and 20th centuries by utilizing the metaphor of a 'Christian civilization mission.' German missionaries imposed their Eurocentric Christian gender

ideology together with the German military. Their aim was to confine women to the household while positioning men in the public sphere and, hence, supersede indigenous social structures. By being complicit in the German colonization, the missionaries gained power over territory to assert control over the indigenous bodies.

This entanglement of religious rhetoric and political domination returns to the metropole, as Césaire describes, in the form of anti-gender campaigning that is accompanied by a longing for 'Christian European hegemony' in the world. Roberto de Mattei, former counselor of the Berlusconi government and representative of the Catholic organization Tradition, Family, Property, articulates such views through his publications. The TFP gained influence in Poland through its close collaboration with the Polish think tank *Ordo Iuris*, whose members held government positions during the administration of *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (Law and Justice Party). By supporting and legitimizing the symbolic establishment of so-called 'LGBT-Free Zones,' *Ordo Iuris* asserted ideological control over bodies and identities that fall outside its conservative moral framework.

While the colonial past appears to be distant on the spatial-temporal axis, the echoes of longing for a 'Christian civilization' underpinned by Eurocentric ideals of the gender binary are articulated through the far-right movements; however, far from being a sudden newfound longing, dominant conservatives have cultivated such visions for centuries. Wolfram Weimer, the newly appointed German Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, called in his publication of 2012 for 'European supremacy.' As long as such positions dominate in political offices, the threat of the far right will remain an integral part of Europe.

Bibliography

- AfD Bundestagsfraktion. (2019). Die deutsche Kolonialzeit kulturpolitisch differenziert aufarbeiten. *Deutscher Bundestag*, No. 19/15784.
- Amazon (2025). *Zur Verteidigung eines höheren Rechts. Taschenbuch – 15. August 2009*. <https://www.amazon.de/Zur-Verteidigung-eines-h%C3%B6heren-Recht/s/dp/3950184627#>
- Amin, S. (2010). *Eurocentrism*. NYU Press.
- Bhabha, H. (1986). Foreword: Remembering Fanon. In F. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (pp. vii–xxvi). Pluto Press.
- Braun, T. (1992). *Die Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft und der Missionshandel im 19. Jahrhundert*. Verlag der Ev.-Luth. Mission.
- Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung. (2024, April 5). *Völkermord an Herero und Nama: Abkommen zwischen Deutschland und Namibia*. <https://www.bpb.de/kurzknapp/hintergrund-aktuell/335257/voelkermord-an-herero-und-nama-abkom>

- men-zwischen-deutschland-und-namibia/#:%7e:text=Die%20deutsche%20und%20die%20namibische,1%20Milliarden%20Euro%20Wiederaufbauhilfe%20oleisten.
- Césaire, A. (1972 [1955]). *Discourse on Colonialism*. Translated by Joan Pinkham. Monthly Review Press.
- Ciobanu, C. (2021, 21. June). *Ordo Iuris: The Ultra-Conservative Organisation Transforming Poland*. Balkaninsight. <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/06/22/ordo-iuris-the-ultra-conservative-organisation-transforming-poland/>.
- Datta, N. (2020). Modern-day Crusaders in Europe. *Political Perspectives: Journal for Policy Research*, EPF.
- Datta, N. (2021). *Tip of the iceberg: Report on religious extremist funders against human rights for sexuality and Reproductive Health in Europe 2009 – 2018*. EPF. <https://www.epfweb.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/Tip%20of%20the%20Iceberg%20June%202021%20Final.pdf>
- Datta, N., & Paternotte, D. (2023). “Gender Ideology” Battles in the European Bubble. In G. Lo Mascolo (Ed.), *The Christian right in Europe: Movements, Networks, and Denominations* (pp.43-59). transcript Verlag.
- de Mattei, R. (1998). *The crusader of the 20th century: Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira*. Gracewing Publishing.
- DVCK e.V. (2025). *Deutsche Vereinigung Für Christliche Kultur*. <https://www.dvck.de/>.
- Fabri, F. (1879). *Bedarf Deutschland der Colonien?* Friedrich Andreas Perthes.
- Fanon, F. (1986 [1952]). *Black skin, white masks*. Pluto Press.
- Federici, S. (2004). *Caliban and the Witch*. Autonomedia.
- Garbagnoli, S. (2017). Italy as a lighthouse: Anti-gender protests between the “anthropological question” and national identity. In R. Kuhar, & D. Paternotte (Eds.), *Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe – Mobilizing against Equality* (pp. 151–174). Rowman & Littlefield International Ltd.
- Gottschalk, P. (2013). *Religion, Science, and Empire: Classifying Hinduism and Islam in British India*. Oxford University Press.
- Gründer, H. (1982). *Christliche Mission und deutscher Imperialismus: eine politische Geschichte ihrer Beziehungen während der deutschen Kolonialzeit (1884–1914) unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Afrikas und Chinas*. Schöningh.
- Henning, A. (2023). The Diverse Catholic Right in Poland. In G. Lo Mascolo (Ed.), *The Christian Far Right in Europe* (pp. 75–104). transcript Verlag.
- Hofschulte, B. (2009). Vorwort. In TFP Committee on American Issues, *Zur Verteidigung eines höheren Rechts*. Österreichische Gesellschaft zum Schutz von Familie, Tradition, Privateigentum.
- Ignaszczka, P. (2023). *The Asylum and Immigration System of the European Union: De Lege Lata and de Lege Ferenda – From the Dublin III Regulation to Enforced Solidarity*. Ordo Iuris. https://ordoiuris.hr/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Asylum-migration_Pact.pdf.

- Jokic, D. (2025). Césaire and Fanon on Fascism: The “Boomerang Effect” Beyond the Metropole. *Constellations*.
- Keinz, A., & Lewicki, P. (2023). Discussing Europeanization and East-West dynamics of race, gender, and sexuality. *Berliner Blätter*, 88.
- Knight, K. (2025, 16. May). *Poland ends ‘LGBT free’ zones*. Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/05/16/poland-ends-lgbt-free-zones>.
- Kuhar, R., & Paternotte, D. (2017). *Anti-Gender campaigns in Europe: Mobilizing against Equality*. Bloomsbury Publishing PLC.
- Norris, S. (2025, 6. January). *The Trump supporters, Russian oligarchs and aristocrats funding Anti-Gender actors in Europe*. Byline Times. <https://bylinetimes.com/2021/06/16/the-trump-supporters-russian-oligarchs-and-aristocrats-funding-anti-gender-actors-in-europe/>.
- Olusoga, D., & Erichsen, C. W. (2011). *The Kaiser’s Holocaust: Germany’s Forgotten Genocide and the Colonial Roots of Nazism*. Faber And Faber Ltd.
- Ordoiuris (n. d.). *The Migration Pact and the protection of the EU’s external borders in 26 questions and answers*. <https://en.ordoiuris.pl/international-activity/migration-pact-and-protection-eu-external-borders-26-questions-and-answers>.
- Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany. (n.d.). *Note No.: 159/2023. Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Office of the United Nations and to the other International Organisations in Geneva*. <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadFile?gId=37551>.
- Rempfer, D. (2022). *Gender und christliche Mission: Interkulturelle Aushandlungsprozesse in Namibia und Indonesien*. transcript Verlag.
- Rodney, W. (1981 [1972]). *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*. Howard University Press.
- Rohrbach, P. (1907). *Deutsche Kolonialwirtschaft: Südwest-Afrika*. Buchverlag der “Hilfe.”
- Rust, J. (2024, 2. August). *AfD-Provokation in Namibia bleibt ohne Folgen*. dw.com. <https://www.dw.com/de/afd-provokation-in-namibia-genozidverhandlungen-gehen-weiter/a-69842210>.
- Ryland, G. (2013). *Translating Africa For Germans: The Rhenish Mission in Soutwest Africa, 1829–1936*. Doc. Dissertation University of Notre Dame. Ryland.
- Sekerák, M., & Rosůlek, P. (2023). The conservative (Catholic) Christian right in central Europe and the illiberal backlash: The Czech Republic and Slovakia in comparative perspective. In G. Lo Mascolo (Ed.), *The Christian Far Right in Europe* (pp. 171–198). transcript Verlag.
- Spengler, O. (1926 [1918]). *The Decline of the West. Vol. 1: Form and Actuality*. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.
- Stoler, A. L. (2010). *Carnal knowledge and imperial power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*. University of California Press.
- TFP Deutschland (2025). *Website*. <https://tfp-deutschland.de>.

- Weimer, W. (2012). *Land unter: Ein Pamphlet zur Lage der Nation*. Gütersloher Verlagshaus.
- Williams, E. (2021 [1944]). *Capitalism & slavery*. 3rd ed.. The University of North Carolina Press.
- Wyrwa, U. (2009). Spengler, Oswald. In W. Benz (Ed.), *Handbuch des Antisemitismus: Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Band 2* (pp. 784–785). De Gruyter.