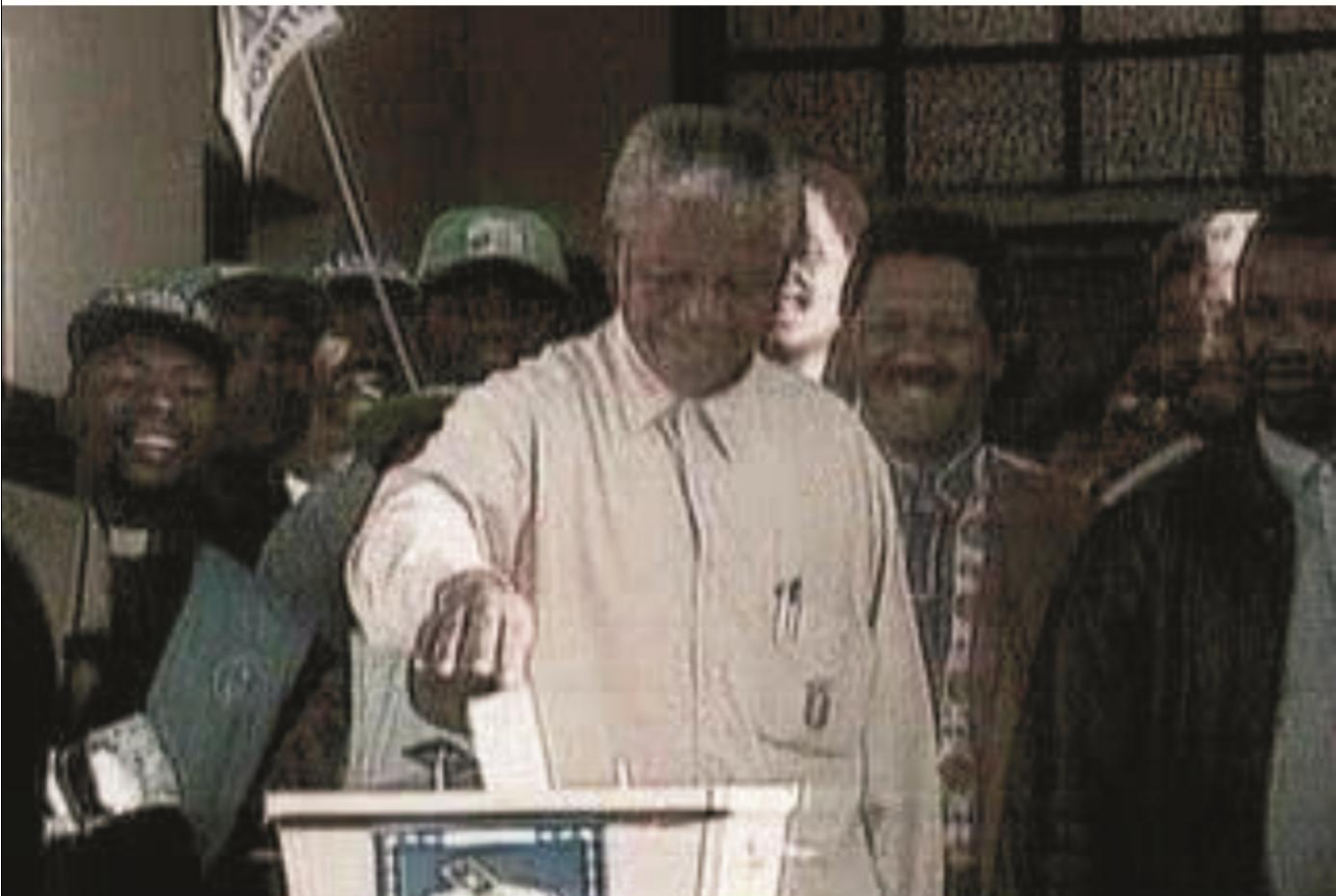


Conference of Young Nigerian Democrats

DEMOCRACY DIGEST



Compilation of E-Books on Democracy

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Fascism

I INTRODUCTION

Fascism, modern political ideology that seeks to regenerate the social, economic, and cultural life of a country by basing it on a heightened sense of national belonging or ethnic identity. Fascism rejects liberal ideas such as freedom and individual rights, and often presses for the destruction of elections, legislatures, and other elements of democracy. Despite the idealistic goals of fascism, attempts to build fascist societies have led to wars and persecutions that caused millions of deaths. As a result, fascism is strongly associated with right-wing fanaticism, racism, totalitarianism, and violence.

The term *fascism* was first used by Italian dictator Benito Mussolini in 1919. The term comes from the Italian word *fascio*, which means “union” or “league.” It also refers to the ancient Roman symbol of power, the *fascies*, a bundle of sticks bound to an ax, which represented civic unity and the authority of Roman officials to punish wrongdoers.

Fascist movements surfaced in most European countries and in some former European colonies in the early 20th century. Fascist political parties and movements capitalized on the intense patriotism that emerged as a response to widespread social and political uncertainty after World War I (1914-1918) and the Russian Revolution of 1917. With the important exceptions of Italy and Germany, however, fascist movements failed in their attempts to seize political power. In Italy and Germany after World War I, fascists managed to win control of the state and attempted to dominate all of Europe, resulting in millions of deaths in the Holocaust and World War II (1939-1945). Because fascism had a decisive impact on European history from the end of World War I until the end of the World War II, the period from 1918 to 1945 is sometimes called the fascist era. Fascism was widely discredited after Italy and Germany lost World War II, but persists today in new forms.

Some scholars view fascism in narrow terms, and some even insist that the ideology was limited to Italy under Mussolini. When the term is capitalized as Fascism, it refers to the Italian movement. But

other writers define fascism more broadly to include many movements, from Italian Fascism to contemporary neo-Nazi movements in the United States. This article relies on a very broad definition of fascism, and includes most movements that aim for total social renewal based on the national community while also pushing for a rejection of liberal democratic institutions.

II MAJOR ELEMENTS

Scholars disagree over how to define the basic elements of fascism. Marxist historians and political scientists (that is, those who base their approach on the writings of German political theorist Karl Marx) view fascism as a form of politics that is cynically adopted by governments to support capitalism and to prevent a socialist revolution. These scholars have applied the label of fascism to many authoritarian regimes that came to power between World War I and World War II, such as those in Portugal, Austria, Poland, and Japan. Marxist scholars also label as fascist some authoritarian governments that emerged after World War II, including regimes in Argentina, Chile, Greece, and South Africa.

Some non-Marxist scholars have dismissed fascism as a form of authoritarianism that is reactionary, responding to political and social developments but without any objective beyond the exercise of power. Some of these scholars view fascism as a crude, barbaric form of nihilism, asserting that it lacks any coherent ideals or ideology. Many other historians and political scientists agree that fascism has a set of basic traits—a fascist minimum—but tend to disagree over what to include in the definition. Scholars disagree, for example, over issues such as whether the concept of fascism includes Nazi Germany and the Vichy regime (the French government set up in south central France in 1940 after the Nazis had occupied the rest of the country).

Beginning in the 1970s, some historians and political scientists began to develop a broader definition of fascism, and by the 1990s many scholars had embraced this approach. This new approach emphasizes the ways in which fascist movements attempt revolutionary change and their central focus on popularizing myths of national or ethnic renewal. Seen from this perspective, all forms of fascism

have three common features: anticonservatism, a myth of ethnic or national renewal, and a conception of a nation in crisis.

A Anticonservatism

Fascist movements usually try to retain some supposedly healthy parts of the nation's existing political and social life, but they place more emphasis on creating a new society. In this way fascism is directly opposed to conservatism—the idea that it is best to avoid dramatic social and political change. Instead, fascist movements set out to create a new type of total culture in which values, politics, art, social norms, and economic activity are all part of a single organic national community. In Nazi Germany, for example, the fascist government in the 1930s tried to create a new *Volksgemeinschaft* (people's community) built around a concept of racial purity. A popular culture of Nazi books, movies, and artwork that celebrated the ideal of the so-called new man and new woman supported this effort. With this idealized people's community in mind, the government created new institutions and policies (partly as propaganda) to build popular support. But the changes were also an attempt to transform German society in order to overcome perceived sources of national weakness. In the same way, in Italy under Mussolini the government built new stadiums and held large sporting events, sponsored filmmakers, and financed the construction of huge buildings as monuments to fascist ideas. Many scholars therefore conclude that fascist movements in Germany and Italy were more than just reactionary political movements. These scholars argue that these fascist movements also represented attempts to create revolutionary new modern states.

B Myth of National or Ethnic Renewal

Even though fascist movements try to bring about revolutionary change, they emphasize the revival of a mythical ethnic, racial, or national past. Fascists revise conventional history to create a vision of an idealized past. These mythical histories claim that former national greatness has been destroyed by such developments as the mixing of races, the rise of powerful business groups, and a loss of a shared sense of the nation. Fascist movements set out to regain the heroic spirit of this lost past through

radical social transformations. In Nazi Germany, for example, the government tried to 'purify' the nation by killing millions of Jews and other minority groups. The Nazis believed they could create a harmonious community whose values were rooted in an imaginary past in which there were no differences of culture, 'deviant' ideologies, or 'undesirable' genetic traits.

Because fascist ideologies place great value on creating a renewed and unified national or ethnic community, they are hostile to most other ideologies. In addition to rejecting conservatism, fascist movements also oppose such doctrines as liberalism, individualism, materialism, and communism. In general, fascists stand against all scientific, economic, religious, academic, cultural, and leisure activities that do not serve their vision of national political life.

C Idea of a Nation in Crisis

A fascist movement almost always asserts that the nation faces a profound crisis. Sometimes fascists define the nation as the same as a nation-state (country and people with the same borders), but in other cases the nation is defined as a unique ethnic group with members in many countries. In either case, the fascists present the national crisis as resolvable only through a radical political transformation. Fascists differ over how the transformation will occur. Some see a widespread change in values as coming before a radical political transformation. Others argue that a radical political transformation will then be followed by a change in values. Fascists claim that the nation has entered a dangerous age of mediocrity, weakness, and decline. They are convinced that through their timely action they can save the nation from itself. Fascists may assert the need to take drastic action against a nation's 'inner' enemies.

Fascists promise that with their help the national crisis will end and a new age will begin that restores the people to a sense of belonging, purpose, and greatness. The end result of the fascist revolution, they believe, will be the emergence of a new man and new woman. This new man and new woman will be fully developed human beings, uncontaminated by selfish desires for individual rights and self-expression and devoted only to an existence as part of the renewed nation's destiny.

III HOW FASCIST MOVEMENTS DIFFER

Because each country's history is unique, each fascist movement creates a particular vision of an idealized past depending on the country's history. Fascist movements sometimes combine quasi-scientific racial and economic theories with these mythical pasts to form a larger justification for the fascist transformation, but also may draw on religious beliefs. Even within one country, separate fascist movements sometimes arise, each creating its own ideological variations based on the movement's particular interpretation of politics and history. In Italy after World War I, for example, the Fascist Party led by Benito Mussolini initially faced competition from another fascist movement led by war hero Gabriele D'Annunzio.

A Intellectual Foundations

The diversity of fascist movements means that each has its own individual intellectual and cultural foundation. Some early fascist movements were inspired in part by early 20th century social and political thought. In this period the French philosopher Georges Sorel built on earlier radical theories to argue that social change should be brought about through violent strikes and acts of sabotage organized by trade unions. Sorel's emphasis on violence seems to have influenced some proponents of fascism. The late 19th and early 20th century also saw an increasing intellectual preoccupation with racial differences. From this development came fascism's tendency toward ethnocentrism—the belief in the superiority of a particular race. The English-born German historian Houston Stewart Chamberlin, for example, proclaimed the superiority of the German race, arguing that Germans descended from genetically superior bloodlines. Some early fascists also interpreted Charles Darwin's theory of evolution to mean that some races of people were inherently superior. They argued that this meant that the "survival of the fittest" required the destruction of supposedly inferior peoples.

But these philosophical influences were not the main inspiration for most fascist movements. Far more important was the example set by the fascist movements in Germany and Italy. Between World War I and World War II fascist movements and parties throughout Europe imitated Italian Fascism and

German Nazism. Since 1945 many racially inclined fascist organizations have been inspired by Nazism. These new Nazi movements are referred to as neo-Nazis because they modify Nazi doctrine and because the original Nazi movement inspires them.

B Views on Race

Though all fascist movements are nationalist, some fascist ideologies regard an existing set of national boundaries as an artificial constraint on an authentic people or ethnic group living within those boundaries. Nazism, for example, sought to extend the frontiers of the German state to include all major concentrations of ethnic Germans. This ethnic concept of Germany was closely linked to an obsession with restoring the biological purity of the race, known as the Aryan race, and the destruction of the allegedly degenerate minorities. The result was not only the mass slaughter of Jews and Gypsies (Roma), but the sterilization or killing of hundreds of thousands of ethnic Germans who were members of religious minorities or mentally or physically disabled, or for some other reason deemed by self-designated race experts not to have lives worth living. The Nazis' emphasis on a purified nation also led to the social exclusion or murder of other alleged deviants, such as Communists, homosexuals, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

The ultranationalism and ethnocentrism of fascist ideologies makes all of them racist. Some forms of fascism are also anti-Semitic (hostile to Jews) or xenophobic (fearful of foreign people). Some fascist movements, such as the Nazis, also favor eugenics—attempts to supposedly improve a race through controlled reproduction. But not all fascist movements have this hostility toward racial and ethnic differences. Some modern forms of fascism, in fact, preach a "love of difference" and emphasize the need to preserve distinct ethnic identities. As a result, these forms of fascism strongly oppose immigration in order to maintain the purity of the nation. Some scholars term this approach *differentialism*, and point to right-wing movements in France during the 1990s as examples of this form of fascism.

Some modern fascist variants have broken with the early fascist movements in another important way. Many early fascist movements sought to expand the territory under their control, but few

modern fascist movements take this position. Instead of attempting to take new territory, most modern fascists seek to racially purify existing nations. Some set as their goal a Europe of ethnically pure nations or a global Aryan solidarity.

C Attitudes Toward Religion

In addition, fascist movements do not share a single approach to religion. Nazism was generally hostile to organized religion, and Hitler's government arrested hundreds of priests in the late 1930s. Some other early fascist movements, however, tried to identify themselves with a national church. In Italy, for example, the Fascists in the 1930s attempted to gain legitimacy by linking themselves to the Catholic Church. In the same way, small fascist groups in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s combined elements of neo-Nazi or Aryan paganism with Christianity. In all these cases, however, the fascist movements have rejected the original spirit of Christianity by celebrating violence and racial purity.

D Emphasis on Militarism

Fascist movements also vary in their reliance on military-style organization. Some movements blend elite paramilitary organizations (military groups staffed by civilians) with a large political party led by a charismatic leader. In most cases, these movements try to rigidly organize the lives of an entire population. Fascism took on this military or paramilitary character partly because World War I produced heightened nationalism and militarism in many countries. Even in these movements, however, there were many purely intellectual fascists who never served in the military. Nazi Germany and Italy under Mussolini stand as the most notable examples of a paramilitary style of organization.

Since the end of World War II, however, the general public revulsion against war and anything resembling Nazism created widespread hostility to paramilitary political organizations. As a result, fascist movements since the end of World War II have usually relied on new nonparamilitary forms of organization. There have been some fascist movements that have paramilitary elements, but these

have been small compared to the fascist movements in Germany and Italy of the 1930s and 1940s. In addition, most of the paramilitary-style fascist movements formed since World War II have lacked a single leader who could serve as a symbol of the movement, or have even intentionally organized themselves into leaderless terrorist cells. Just as most fascist movements in the postwar period downplayed militarism, they have also abandoned some of the more ambitious political programs created in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Specifically, recent movements have rejected the goals of corporatism (government-coordinated economics), the idea that the state symbolizes the people and embodies the national will, and attempts to include all social groups in a single totalitarian movement.

E Use of Political Rituals

Another feature of fascism that has largely disappeared from movements after World War II is the use of quasi-religious rituals, spectacular rallies, and the mass media to generate mass support. Both Nazism and Italian Fascism held rallies attended by hundreds of thousands, created a new calendar of holidays celebrating key events in the regime's history, and conducted major sporting events or exhibitions. All of this was intended to convince people that they lived in a new era in which history itself had been transformed. In contrast to what fascists view as the absurdity and emptiness of life under liberal democracy, life under fascism was meant to be experienced as historical, life-giving, and beautiful. Since 1945, however, fascist movements have lacked the mass support to allow the staging of such theatrical forms of politics. The movements have not, however, abandoned the vision of creating an entirely new historical era.

IV COMPARED TO OTHER RADICAL RIGHT-WING IDEOLOGIES

Although fascism comes in many forms, not all radical right-wing movements are fascist. In France in the 1890s, for example, the Action Française movement started a campaign to overthrow the democratic government of France and restore the king to power. Although this movement embraced the violence and the antidemocratic tendencies of fascism, it did not develop the fascist myth of revolutionary rebirth through popular power. There have also been many movements that were simply

nationalist but with a right-wing political slant. In China, for example, the Kuomintang (The Chinese National People's Party), led by Chiang Kai-shek, fought leftist revolutionaries until Communists won control of China in 1949. Throughout the 20th century this type of right-wing nationalism was common in many military dictatorships in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Fascism should also be distinguished from right-wing separatist movements that set out to create a new nation-state rather than to regenerate an existing one. This would exclude cases such as the Nazi puppet regime in Croatia during World War II. This regime, known as the Ustaše government, relied on paramilitary groups to govern, and hoped that their support for Nazism would enable Croatia to break away from Yugoslavia. This separatist goal distinguishes the Ustaše from genuine fascist movements.

Fascism also stands apart from regimes that are based on racism but do not pursue the goal of creating a revolutionary new order. In the 1990s some national factions in Bosnia and Herzegovina engaged in ethnic cleansing, the violent removal of targeted ethnic groups with the objective of creating an ethnically pure territory. In 1999 the Serbian government's insistence upon pursuing this policy against ethnic Albanians in the province of Kosovo led to military intervention by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). But unlike fascist movements, the national factions in Yugoslavia did not set out to destroy all democratic institutions. Instead these brutal movements hoped to create ethnically pure democracies, even though they used violence and other antidemocratic methods. Another example of a racist, but not fascist, organization was the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s, which became a national mass movement in the United States. Although racial hatred was central to the Klan's philosophy, its goals were still reactionary rather than revolutionary. The Klan hoped to control black people, but it did not seek to build an entirely new society, as a true fascist movement would have. Since 1945, however, the Klan has become increasingly hostile to the United States government and has established links with neo-Nazi groups. In the 1980s and 1990s this loose alliance of antigovernment racists became America's most significant neo-fascist movement.

V

THE ORIGINS OF FASCISM

Despite the many forms that fascism takes, all fascist movements are rooted in two major historical trends. First, in late 19th-century Europe mass political movements developed as a challenge to the control of government and politics by small groups of social elites or ruling classes. For the first time, many countries saw the growth of political organizations with membership numbering in the thousands or even millions. Second, fascism gained popularity because many intellectuals, artists, and political thinkers in the late 19th century began to reject the philosophical emphasis on rationality and progress that had emerged from the 18th-century intellectual movement known as the Enlightenment.

These two trends had many effects. For example, new forms of popular racism and nationalism arose that openly celebrated irrationality and vitalism—the idea that human life is self-directed and not subject to predictable rules and laws. This line of thinking led to calls for a new type of nation that would overcome class divisions and create a sense of historical belonging for its people. For many people, the death and brutality of World War I showed that rationality and progress were not inherent in humanity, and that a radically new direction had to be taken by Western civilization if it was to survive. World War I also aroused intense patriotism that continued after the war. These sentiments became the basis of mass support for national socialist movements that promised to confront the disorder in the world. Popular enthusiasm for such movements was especially strong in Germany and Italy, which had only become nation-states in the 19th century and whose parliamentary traditions were weak. Despite having fought on opposite sides, both countries emerged from the war to face political instability and a widespread feeling that the nation had been humiliated in the war and by the settlement terms of the Treaty of Versailles. In addition, many countries felt threatened by Communism because of the success of the Bolsheviks during the Russian Revolution.

VI THE FIRST FASCIST MOVEMENT: ITALY

A Mussolini's *Fasci*

The first fascist movement developed in Italy after World War I. Journalist and war veteran Benito Mussolini served as the guiding force behind the new movement. Originally a Marxist, by 1909

Mussolini was convinced that a national rather than an international revolution was necessary, but he was unable to find a suitable catalyst or vehicle for the populist revolutionary energies it demanded. At first he looked to the Italian Socialist Party and edited its newspaper *Avanti!* (Forward!). But when war broke out in Europe in 1914, he saw it as an opportunity to galvanize patriotic energies and create the spirit of heroism and self-sacrifice necessary for the country's renewal. He thus joined the interventionist campaign, which urged Italy to enter the war. In 1914, as Italian leaders tried to decide whether to enter the war, Mussolini founded the newspaper *Il Popolo d'Italia* (The People of Italy) to encourage Italy to join the conflict. After Italy declared war against Germany and Austria-Hungary in May 1915, Mussolini used *Il Popolo d'Italia*, to persuade Italians that the war was a turning point for their country. Mussolini argued that when the frontline combat soldiers returned from the war, they would form a new elite and bring about a new type of state and transform Italian society. The new elite would spread community and patriotism, and introduce sweeping changes in every part of society.

Mussolini established the *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento* (Italian Combat Veteran's League) in 1919 to channel the revolutionary energies of the returning soldiers. The group's first meeting assembled a small group of war veterans, revolutionary syndicalists (socialists who worked for a national revolution as the first step toward an international one), and futurists (a group of poets who wanted Italian politics and art to fuse in a celebration of modern technological society's dramatic break with the past). The Fasci di Combattimento, sometimes known simply as the Fasci, initially adopted a leftist agenda, including democratic reform of the government, increased rights for workers, and a redistribution of wealth.

In the elections of 1919 Fascist candidates won few votes. Fascism gained widespread support only in 1920 after the Socialist Party organized militant strikes in Turin and Italy's other northern industrial cities. The Socialist campaign caused chaos through much of the country, leading to concerns that further Socialist victories could damage the Italian economy. Fear of the Socialists spurred the formation of hundreds of new Fascist groups throughout Italy. Members of these groups formed the Black Shirts—paramilitary *squadre* (squads) that violently attacked Socialists and attempted to stifle their political activities.

B Mussolini's Rise to Power

The Fascists gained widespread support as a result of their effective use of violence against the Socialists. Prime Minister Giovanni Giolitti then gave Mussolini's movement respectability by including Fascist candidates in his government coalition bloc that campaigned in the May 1921 elections. The elections gave the newly formed National Fascist Party (PNF) 35 seats in the Italian legislature. The threat from the Socialists weakened, however, and the Fascists seemed to have little chance of winning more power until Mussolini threatened to stage a coup d'état in October 1922. The Fascists showed their militant intentions in the March on Rome, in which about 25,000 black-shirted Fascists staged demonstrations throughout the capital. Although the Italian parliament moved swiftly to crush the protest, King Victor Emmanuel III refused to sign a decree that would have imposed martial law and enabled the military to destroy the Fascists.

Instead the king invited Mussolini to join a coalition government along with Giolitti. Mussolini accepted the bargain, but it was another two years before Fascism became an authoritarian regime. Early in 1925 Mussolini seized dictatorial powers during a national political crisis sparked by the Black Shirts' murder of socialist Giacomo Matteotti, Mussolini's most outspoken parliamentary critic.

C Fascist Consolidation of Power

Between 1925 and 1931, the Fascists consolidated power through a series of new laws that provided a legal basis for Italy's official transformation into a single-party state. The government abolished independent political parties and trade unions and took direct control of regional and local governments. The Fascists sharply curbed freedom of the press and assumed sweeping powers to silence political opposition. The government created a special court and police force to suppress so-called anti-Fascism. In principle Mussolini headed the Fascist Party and as head of state led the government in consultation with the Fascist Grand Council. In reality, however, he increasingly became an autocrat answerable to no one. Mussolini was able to retain power because of his success in presenting himself as an inspired *Duce* (Leader) sent by providence to make Italy great once more.

The Fascist government soon created mass organizations to regiment the nation's youth as well as adult leisure time. The Fascists also established a corporatist economic system, in which the government, business, and labor unions collectively formulated national economic policies. The system was intended to harmonize the interests of workers, managers, and the state. In practice, however, Fascist corporatism retarded technological progress and destroyed workers' rights. Mussolini also pulled off a major diplomatic success when he signed the Lateran Treaty with the Vatican in 1929, which settled a long-simmering dispute over the Catholic Church's role in Italian politics. This marked the first time in Italian history that the Catholic Church and the government agreed over their respective roles. Between 1932 and 1934 millions of Italians attended the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution in Rome, staged by the government to mark Fascism's first ten years in power. By this point the regime could plausibly boast that it had brought the country together through the *Risorgimento* (Italian unification process) and had turned Italy into a nation that enjoyed admiration and respect abroad.

For a time it seemed that Italy had recovered from the national humiliation, political chaos, and social division following World War I and was managing to avoid the global economic and political crises caused by the Great Depression. Mussolini could claim that he had led the country through a true revolution with a minimum of bloodshed and repression, restoring political stability, national pride, and economic growth. All over the country, Mussolini's speeches drew huge crowds, suggesting that most Italians supported the Fascist government. Many countries closely watched the Italian corporatist economic experiment. Some hoped that it would prove to be a Third Way—an alternative economic policy between free-market capitalism and communism. Mussolini won the respect of diplomats all over the world because of his opposition to Bolshevism, and he was especially popular in the United States and Britain. To many, the Fascist rhetoric of Italy's rebirth seemed to be turning into a reality.

D The Fall of Italian Fascism

Two events can be seen as marking the turning point in Fascism's fortunes. First, Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany in January 1933, which meant that Mussolini had the support of a powerful fascist ally. Second, Italy invaded Ethiopia in October 1935 (see Italy: The Ethiopian Campaign). In less than a year the Fascist army crushed the poorly equipped and vastly outnumbered Ethiopians. Mussolini's power peaked at this point, as he seemed to be making good on his promise to create an African empire worthy of the descendants of ancient Rome. The League of Nations condemned the invasion and voted to impose sanctions on Italy, but this only made Mussolini a hero of the Italian people, as he stood defiant against the dozens of countries that opposed his militarism. But the Ethiopian war severely strained Italy's military and economic resources. At the same time, international hostility to Italy's invasion led Mussolini to forge closer ties with Hitler, who had taken Germany out of the League of Nations.

As Hitler and Mussolini worked more closely together, they became both rivals and allies. Hitler seems to have dictated Mussolini's foreign policy. Both Germany and Italy sent military assistance to support General Francisco Franco's quasi-fascist forces during the Spanish Civil War, which broke out in 1936. The Italian troops in Spain suffered several dramatic losses, however, undermining Mussolini's claim that his Fascist army made Italy a military world power. Then in November 1936 Mussolini announced the existence of the Rome-Berlin Axis—a formal military alliance with Nazi Germany. Fascism, once simply associated with Italy's resolution of its domestic problems, had become the declared enemy of Britain, France, and the United States, and of many other democratic and most communist countries. Italian Fascism was fatally linked with Hitler's bold plans to take control of much of Europe and Russia. The formation of the pact with Hitler further isolated Italy internationally, leading Mussolini to move the country closer to a program of *autarky* (economic self-sufficiency without foreign trade). As Italy prepared for war, the government's propaganda became more belligerent, the tone of mass rallies more militaristic, and Mussolini's posturing more vain and delusional. Italian soldiers even started to mimic the goose-step marching style of their Nazi counterparts, though it was called the Roman step.

Although the Italian Fascists had ridiculed Nazi racism and declared that Italy had no "Jewish problem," in 1938 the government suddenly issued Nazi-style anti-Semitic laws. The new laws denied that Jews could be Italian. This policy eventually led the Fascist government of the Italian Social

Republic—the Nazi puppet government in northern Italy—to give active help to the Nazis when they sent 8,000 Italian Jews to their deaths in extermination camps in the fall of 1943. Mussolini knew his country was ill-prepared for a major European war and he tried to use his influence to broker peace in the years before World War II. But he had become a prisoner of his own militaristic rhetoric and myth of infallibility. When Hitler's armies swept through Belgium into France in the spring of 1940, Mussolini abandoned neutrality and declared war against France and Britain. In this way he locked Italy into a hopeless war against a powerful alliance that eventually comprised the British empire, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), and the United States. Italy's armed forces were weak and unprepared for war, despite Mussolini's bold claims of invincibility. Italian forces suffered humiliating defeats in 1940 and 1941, and Mussolini's popularity in Italy plummeted. In July 1943, faced with imminent defeat at the hands of the Allies despite Nazi reinforcements, the Fascist Grand Council passed a vote of no confidence against Mussolini, removing him from control of the Fascist Party. The king ratified this decision, dismissed Mussolini as head of state and had him arrested.

Most Italians were overjoyed at the news that the supposedly infallible Mussolini had been deposed. The popular consensus behind the regime had evaporated, leaving only the fanaticism of *intransigenti* (hard-liners). Nevertheless, Nazi *Schutzstaffel* (SS) commandos rescued Mussolini from his mountain-top prison, and Hitler then put him in control of the Italian Social Republic—the Nazi puppet government in northern Italy. The Nazis kept Mussolini under tight control, however, using him to crush partisans (anti-Fascist resistance fighters) and to delay the defeat of Germany. Partisans finally shot Mussolini as he tried to flee in disguise to Switzerland in April 1945. Meanwhile hundreds of thousands of Italian soldiers endured terrible suffering, either forced to fight alongside the Nazis in Italy or on the Russian front, or to work for the Nazi regime as slave labor.

E Significance

The rise and fall of Fascism in Italy showed several general features of fascism. First, Italian Fascism fed off a profound social crisis that had undermined the legitimacy of the existing system. Many Europeans supported fascism in the 1930s because of a widespread perception that the parliamentary

system of government was fundamentally corrupt and inefficient. Thus it was relatively easy for Italians to support Mussolini's plans to create a new type of state that would transform the country into a world power and restore Italy to the prominence it enjoyed during the Roman Empire and the Renaissance.

Second, Italian Fascism was an uneasy blend of elitism and populism. A revolutionary elite imposed Fascist rule on the people. In order to secure power the movement was forced to collaborate with conservative ruling elites—the bourgeoisie (powerful owners of business), the army, the monarchy, the Church, and state officials. At the same time, however, the Fascist movement made sustained efforts to generate genuine popular enthusiasm and to revolutionize the lives of the Italian people.

Third, Fascism was a charismatic form of politics that asserted the extraordinary capabilities of the party and its leader. The main tool for the Fascistization (conversion to Fascism) of the masses and the creation of the new Fascist man was not propaganda, censorship, education, or terror, or even the large fascist social and military organizations. Instead, the Fascists relied on the extensive use of a ritualized, theatrical style of politics designed create a sense of a new historical era that abolished the politics of the past. In this sense Fascism was an attempt to confront urbanization, class conflict, and other problems of modern society by making the state itself the object of a public cult, creating a sort of civic religion.

Fourth, Italy embraced the fascist myth that national rebirth demanded a permanent revolution—a constant change in social and political life. To sustain a sense of constant renewal, Italian Fascism was forced by its own militarism to pursue increasingly ambitious foreign policy goals and ever more unrealizable territorial claims. This seems to indicate that any fascist movement that identifies rebirth with imperialist expansion and manages to seize power will eventually exhaust the capacity of the nation to win victory after victory. In the case of Italian Fascism, this exhaustion set in quickly.

A fifth feature of Italian Fascism was its attempt to achieve a totalitarian synthesis of politics, art, society, and culture, although this was a conspicuous failure. Italian Fascism never created a true new man. Modern societies have a mixture of people with differing values and experiences. This diversity can be suppressed but not reversed. The vast majority of Italians may have temporarily embraced

Fascist nationalism because of the movement's initial successes, but the people were never truly Fascistized. In short, in its militarized version between World War I and World War II, the fascist vision was bound to lead in practice to a widening gap between rhetoric and reality, goals and achievements.

Finally, the fate of Italian Fascism illustrates how the overall goal of a fascist utopia has always turned to nightmare. Tragically for Italy and the international community, Mussolini embarked on his imperial expansion just as Hitler began his efforts to reverse the Versailles Treaty and reestablish Germany as a major military power. This led to the formation of the Axis alliance, which gave Hitler a false sense of security about the prospects for his imperial schemes. The formation of this alliance helped lead to World War II, and it committed Mussolini to unwinnable military campaigns that resulted in the Allied invasion of Italy in 1943. The death, destruction, and misery of the fighting in Italy was inflicted on a civilian population that had come to reject the Fascist vision of Italian renewal, but whose public displays of enthusiasm for the regime before the war had kept Mussolini in power.

VII FASCISM IN GERMANY: NATIONAL SOCIALISM

The only fascist movement outside Italy that came to power in peacetime was Germany's National Socialist German Workers Party—the Nazis. The core of the National Socialist program was an ideology and a policy of war against Germany's supposed moral and racial decay and a struggle to begin the country's rebirth. This theme of struggle and renewal dominates the many ideological statements of Nazism, including Adolf Hitler's book *Mein Kampf* (1925; *My Struggle*, 1939), speeches by propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, and Leni Riefenstahl's propaganda film *Triumph des Willens* (Triumph of the Will, 1935).

All of the Nazi government's actions served this dual purpose of destroying the supposed sickness of the old Germany and creating a healthy new society. The government abolished democratic freedoms and institutions because they were seen as causing national divisions. In their place the government created an authoritarian state, known as the Third Reich, that would serve as the core of the new society. The Nazis promoted German culture, celebrated athleticism and youth, and tried to ensure

that all Germans conformed physically and mentally to an Aryan ideal. But in order to achieve these goals, the Nazi regime repressed supposedly degenerate books and paintings, sterilized physically and mentally disabled people, and enslaved and murdered millions of people who were considered enemies of the Reich or 'subhuman.' This combination of renewal and destruction was symbolized by the pervasive emblem of Nazism, the swastika—a cross with four arms broken at right angles. German propaganda identified the swastika with the rising sun and with rebirth because the bars of the symbol suggest perpetual rotation. To its countless victims, however, the swastika came to signify cruelty, death, and terror.

A Main Features

There were two features specific to Nazism that combined to make it so extraordinarily destructive and barbaric once in power. The first feature was the Nazi myth of national greatness. This myth suggested that the country was destined to become an imperial and great military power. Underpinning this myth was a concept of the nation that blended romantic notions about national history and character with pseudo-scientific theories of race, genetics, and natural selection. It led naturally to a foreign policy based on the principle of first uniting all ethnic Germans within the German nation, and then creating a vast European empire free of racial enemies. These ideas led to international wars of unprecedented violence and inhumanity.

The second important feature of Nazism was that it developed in the context of a modern economy and society. Even after Germany's defeat in World War I, the country was still one of the most advanced nations in the world in terms of infrastructure, government efficiency, industry, economic potential, and standards of education. Germany also had a deep sense of national pride, belonging, and roots, and a civic consciousness that stressed duty and obedience. In addition, the nation had a long tradition of anti-Semitism and imperialism, and of respect for gifted leaders. The institutions of democracy had only weak roots in Germany, and after World War I democracy was widely rejected as un-German.

B Hitler's Rise to Power

The dangerous combination of Germany's modernity and its racist, imperialist ultranationalism became apparent after the economic and political failure of the Weimar Republic, the parliamentary government established in Germany following World War I. Unlike Mussolini, Hitler took control of a country that had a strong industrial, military, and governmental power base that was merely dormant after World War I. Hitler also became more powerful than Mussolini because the Nazis simply radicalized and articulated widely held prejudices, whereas the Fascists of Italy had to create new ones. Although the Nazi Party won control of the German legislature after a democratic election in 1932, in 1933 Hitler suspended the constitution, abolished the presidency, and declared himself Germany's *Führer* (leader). Once in control, Hitler was able to insert his fascist vision of the new Germany into a highly receptive political culture. The Third Reich quickly created the technical, organizational, militaristic, and social means to implement its far-reaching schemes for the transformation of Germany and large parts of Europe.

The Nazis' attempts to build a new German empire led to the systematic killings of about six million civilians during the 1940s, and the deaths of millions more as the result of Nazi invasion and occupation—a horror rivaled only by Josef Stalin's rule in the Soviet Union during the 1930s. The Nazis primarily killed Jews, but also targeted homosexuals, people with disabilities, and members of religious minorities such as the Jehovah's Witnesses. All of this killing and destruction stemmed from the Nazis' conviction that non-Germans had sapped the strength of the German nation. At the same time, the Nazis attempted to take control of most of Europe in an effort to build a new racial empire. This effort led to World War II and the deaths of millions of soldiers and civilians. After early successes in the war, Germany found itself facing defeat on all sides. German forces were unable to overcome the tenacity and sheer size of the Soviet military in Eastern Europe, while in Western Europe and North Africa they faced thousands of Allied aircraft, tanks, and ships. Facing certain defeat, Hitler killed himself in April 1945, and Germany surrendered to the Allies in the following month.

C Significance

Although scholars generally view Italy under Mussolini as the benchmark for understanding fascism in general, the German case shows that not all fascist movements were exactly alike. German National Socialism differed from Italian Fascism in important ways. The most important differences were Nazism's commitment to a more extreme degree of totalitarian control, and its racist conception of the ideal national community.

Hitler's visionary fanaticism called for the *Gleichschaltung* (coordination) of every possible aspect of life in Germany. The totalitarianism that resulted in Germany went further than that of Italy, although not as far as Nazi propaganda claimed. Italian Fascism lacked the ideological fervor to indulge in systematic ethnic cleansing on the scale seen in Germany. Although the Italian Fascist government did issue flagrantly anti-Semitic laws in 1938, it did not contemplate mass extermination of its Jewish population. In Italy Fascism also was marked by pluralism, compromise, and inefficiency as compared to Nazism. As a result, in Fascist Italy far more areas of personal, social, and cultural life escaped the intrusion of the state than in Nazi Germany. Nevertheless, both Italian Fascism and German National Socialism rested on the same brutal logic of rebirth through what was seen as creative destruction. In Italy this took form in attempts by the Fascist Party to recapture Roman qualities, while in Germany it led the Nazis to attempt to re-Aryanize European civilization.

When Nazism is compared to other forms of fascism, it becomes clear that Nazism was not just a peculiar movement that emerged from Germany's unique history and culture. Instead, Nazism stands as a German variant of a political ideology that was popular to varying degrees throughout Europe between World War I and World War II. As a result of this line of thinking, some historians who study Nazism no longer speculate about what elements of German history led to Nazism. Instead, they try to understand which conditions in the German Weimar Republic allowed fascism to become the country's dominant political force in 1932, and the process by which fascists were able to gain control of the state in 1933. The exceptional nature of the success of fascism in Germany and Italy is especially clear when compared to the fate of fascism in some other countries.

VIII FASCISM IN OTHER COUNTRIES FROM 1919 TO 1945

World War I and the global economic depression of the 1930s destabilized nearly all liberal democracies in Europe, even those that had not fought in the war. Amidst this social and political uncertainty, fascism gained widespread popularity in some countries but consistently failed to overthrow any parliamentary system outside of Italy and Germany. In many countries fascism attracted considerable attention in newspaper and radio reports, but the movement never really threatened to disturb the existing political order. This was the case in countries such as Czechoslovakia, Denmark, England, Holland, Iceland, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland. Fascism failed to take root in these countries because no substantial electoral support existed there for a revolution from the far right. In France, Finland, and Belgium, far-right forces with fascistic elements mounted a more forceful challenge in the 1930s to elected governments, but democracy prevailed in these political conflicts. In the Communist USSR, the government was so determined to crush any forms of anticommunist dissent that it was impossible for a fascist movement to form there.

But fascism did represent a significant movement in a handful of European countries. A review of the countries where fascism saw some success but ultimately failed helps explain the more general failure of fascism. These countries included Spain, Portugal, Austria, France, Hungary, and Romania. In these countries fascism was denied the political space in which to grow and take root. Fascist movements were opposed by powerful coalitions of radical right-wing forces, which either crushed or absorbed them. Some conservative regimes adopted features of fascism to gain popularity.

A Spain

Spain's fascist movement, the *Falange Española* (Spanish Phalanx) was hobbled by the country's historical lack of a coherent nationalist tradition. The strongest nationalist sentiments originated in Basque Country in north central Spain and in Catalonia in the northeast. But in both areas the nationalists favored separation rather than the unification of Spain as a nation. The Falange gained some support in the 1930s, but it was dominated by the much stronger coalition of right-wing groups

led by General Francisco Franco. The Falangists fought alongside Franco's forces against the country's Republican government during the Spanish Civil War in 1936 and 1937. But the Falange was too small to challenge the political supremacy of Franco's coalition of monarchists (supporters of royal authority), Catholics, and conservative military forces.

The Republican government killed the Falangist leader José Antonio Primo de Rivera in November 1936. With the loss of this key leader, Franco managed to absorb fascism into his movement by combining the Falange with the Carlists, a monarchist group that included a militia known as the *Requetés* (Volunteers). The fascism of the Falange retained some influence when Franco became dictator in 1939, but this was primarily limited to putting a radical and youthful face on Franco's repressive regime. Franco's quasi-fascist government controlled Spanish politics until Franco's death in 1975. Franco's reign marked the longest-lived form of fascist political control, but fascist ideology took second place to Franco's more general goal of protecting the interests of Spain's traditional ruling elite.

B Portugal

In Portugal the dictator António de Oliveira Salazar led a right-wing authoritarian government in the 1930s that showed fascist tendencies, but was less restrictive than the regimes of other fascist countries. Salazar sought to create a quasi-fascist *Estado Novo* (New State) based on strict government controls of the economy, but his government was relatively moderate compared to those in Italy, Germany, and Spain. Salazar's conservative authoritarianism was opposed by another movement with fascist tendencies, the National Syndicalists, which hoped to force a more radical fascist transformation of Portugal. But Salazar's government banned the National Syndicalist movement in 1934 and sent its leader, Rolão Preto, into exile in Spain. Salazar continued to rule as the dictator of Portugal until 1968.

C Austria

In the wake of World War I, Marxist forces on the left and quasi-fascist groups on the right increasingly polarized Austrian politics. Some right-wing forces organized the paramilitary *Heimwehr* (Home Defense League) to violently attack members of the Socialist Party. Other right-wing forces created an Austrian Nazi party, but this group rejected many basic elements of fascism. The somewhat less extreme Christian Social Party led by Engelbert Dollfuss won power in 1932 through a parliamentary coalition with the Heimwehr. Once in power, Dollfuss created a quasi-fascist regime that resisted incorporation into Hitler's Germany and emphasized the government's ties with the Catholic Church. Dollfuss was killed when the Austrian Nazis attempted a putsch (takeover) in 1934, but the Nazis failed in this effort to take control of the government. The government then suppressed the Nazi party, eliminating the threat of extreme fascism in Austria until Nazi Germany annexed the country in 1938.

D France

The Vichy regime in France stood as one of the most radical quasi-fascist governments during World War II. The regime took its name from the town of Vichy, which was the seat of the pro-German government controlled by the Nazis from 1940 until 1945. The Vichy government shared many characteristics with Nazism, including an official youth organization, a brutal secret police, a reliance on the political rituals of a 'civic religion,' and vicious anti-Semitic policies that led to the killing of an estimated 65,000 French Jews. The Vichy regime was headed by Henri Philippe Pétain, a fatherly figure who ensured that genuine fascists gained little popular support for their radical plans to rejuvenate France. At the same time, fascists in other parts of the country supported the Nazi occupation, but the Germans never granted real power to these radical forces.

E Hungary

Fascism had a mixed impact on Hungarian politics in the 1920s and 1930s. Some Hungarian leaders hoped that an alliance with Nazi Germany would bring the return of Transylvania, Croatia, and Slovakia—territories that Hungary had lost in World War I. At the same time, however, many

Hungarians feared that Germany would try to regain its historical military dominance of the region. Right-wing nationalist groups who favored close ties to Germany flourished in the 1930s, and by 1939 the fascist Arrow Cross movement was the dominant political party. Under the leadership of the radical army officer Ferenc Szálasi, the Arrow Cross sought to enlarge Hungary and hoped to position the country along with Italy and Germany as one of Europe's great powers. The Hungarian government led by Miklós Horthy de Nagybánya supported Hitler's overall regional ambitions and maintained close ties with the Nazi government, but the regime felt threatened by the Arrow Cross's challenge to its authority. Horthy clamped down on the Arrow Cross, even though his own government had fascist tendencies.

During World War II Hungary sent about 200,000 soldiers to fight alongside the German army on the Russian front, and about two-thirds of the Hungarian force was killed. As the war turned against Germany, Hungary began to curtail its support for the Nazis, leading Hitler to send troops to occupy Hungary in 1944. The Nazis installed Szálasi as the head of a puppet government that cooperated with the SS when it began rounding up the country's Jewish population for deportation to Nazi extermination camps. By the end of World War II, fascist Hungarian forces and the Nazis had killed an estimated 550,000 Hungarian Jews. The Arrow Cross party collapsed after the war, and some of its leaders were tried as war criminals.

F Romania

To the east of Hungary, Romanian fascist forces nearly won control of the government. The Iron Guard, the most violent and anti-Semitic movement in the country, grew rapidly when the Romanian economy was battered by the global depression of the 1930s. As the Iron Guard became more powerful, Romanian ruler King Carol II withdrew his initial support for the movement and in 1938 ordered the execution of its top leaders. Romanian general Ion Antonescu, who was backed by the Iron Guard and by Nazi Germany, demanded that Carol II abdicate his rule. After the king left the country, Antonescu set up a quasi-fascist military dictatorship that included fellow members of the Iron Guard. Intent upon creating their own new order, the Iron Guard assassinated political enemies

and seized Jewish property. But the campaign led to economic and political chaos, which convinced Nazi officials that the Iron Guard should be eliminated. In 1941, amidst rumors that the Iron Guard was planning a coup, Antonescu crushed the movement with Nazi approval. Antonescu's army then cooperated with Nazi soldiers to exterminate Jews in the eastern portion of the country in 1941, and thousands more died when the fascist forces expelled them to a remote eastern region of the country. By the end of the war an estimated 364,000 Jews had died in the Romanian Holocaust as a result of this alliance of conservative and fascist forces.

IX FASCISM AFTER WORLD WAR II

After the world became fully aware of the enormous human suffering that occurred in Nazi concentration camps and extermination centers, many people came to see the defeat of fascism as a historic victory of humanity over barbarism. World War II discredited fascism as an ideology, and after the war most of the world saw levels of sustained economic growth that had eluded most countries in the years after World War I. The economic and political turmoil that had spurred fascist movements in the years after World War I seemed to have disappeared. At the same time fascism could not take root in the conditions of tight social and political control in the USSR. Government controls also prevented fascism from gaining a foothold in Soviet client states in Eastern Europe.

But fascism proved resilient, and new movements adapted the ideology to the changed political environment. Some support for a revival of fascism came from the movement's supporters who were disappointed by the defeat of the Axis powers. In addition, a new generation of ultranationalists and racists who grew up after 1945 hoped to rebuild the fascist movement and were determined to continue the struggle against what they saw as decadent liberalism. During the Cold War, in which the United States and the Soviet Union vied for global dominance, these new fascists focused their efforts on combatting Communism, the archenemy of their movement.

Since 1945 fascism has spread to other countries, notably the United States. In several countries fascist groups have tried to build fascist movements based on historical developments such as fear of immigration, increased concern over ecological problems, and the Cold War. Along with the change in

ideology, fascists have adopted new tools, such as rock music and the Internet, to spread their ideas. Some fascist groups have renounced the use of paramilitary groups in favor of a 'cultural campaign' for Europeans to recover their 'true identity.'

Fundamentally, contemporary fascism remains tightly linked to its origins in the early 20th century. Fascism still sets as its goal the overthrow of liberal democratic institutions, such as legislatures and courts, and keeps absolute political power as its ultimate aim. Fascism also retains its emphasis on violence, sometimes spurring horrific incidents. For instance, fascist beliefs motivated the 1995 bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, that killed 168 people and wounded more than 500 others. In Germany, fascist groups in the early 1990s launched scores of firebomb attacks against the homes of immigrants, sometimes killing residents. In 1999, inspired by Nazi ideals of ethnic cleansing, fascist groups conducted a series of bomb attacks in London. The attacks were directed against ethnic minorities, gays, and lesbians.

After World War II, only South Africa saw the emergence of a significant fascist movement that followed the prewar pattern. In South Africa the white supremacist paramilitary movement *Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging* (Afrikaner Resistance Movement) organized radical white South Africans to create a new hard-line racial state. Most white South Africans supported the system of racial and economic exploitation of the black majority known as apartheid, but only a small fraction went so far as to support the Afrikaner Resistance Movement. The movement carried out repeated acts of violence and sabotage in the 1980s and especially the 1990s, but remained a minor political force. South Africa's political reforms in the 1990s led to the further reduction in support for the Afrikaner Resistance Movement. In other countries, widespread hostility to fascism made it impossible to create a mass movement coordinated by a paramilitary political party, as Nazi Germany's National Socialists or Romania's Iron Guard had been. As a result, fascists have relied on a number of new strategies to keep the prospect of national revolution open.



NEW FASCIST STRATEGIES

Fascist groups have developed many new strategies since World War II, but they have virtually no chance of winning control of the government in any country. Citizens in all countries hope for political stability and economic prosperity, and do not see fascism as a realistic way of achieving these goals. Even in countries where ethnic tensions are strong, such as in some areas that were once part of the USSR or under its control, there is no mass support for visions of a reborn national community based on self-sacrifice, suppression of individualism, and isolation from global culture and trade.

A Reliance on Dispersed Small Groups

One of the most important new fascist strategies is to form small groups of ideologically committed people willing to dedicate their lives to the fascist cause. In some cases these minor groups turn to terrorism. Since 1945, fascists in Western Europe and the United States formed many thousands of small groups, with memberships ranging from a few hundred to less than ten. These small groups can be very fragile. Many of them are dissolved or change names after a few years, and members sometimes restlessly move through a number of groups or even belong to several at once. Although the groups often use bold slogans and claim that their forces will create a severe social crisis, in practice they remain unable to change the status quo. These groups remain ineffective because they fail to attract mass support, failing even to win significant support from their core potential membership of disaffected white males.

Despite their weaknesses, these small fascist groups cannot be dismissed as insignificant. Some of them have been known to carry out acts of violence against individuals. In 1997 in Denmark, for example, a fascist group was accused of sending bombs through the mail to assassinate political opponents. In the United States, fascists have assaulted and killed African Americans, Jews, and other minorities, and set off scores of bombs. Small fascist groups also present a threat because the fliers they distribute and the marches and meetings they hold can create a local climate of racial intolerance. This encourages discrimination ranging from verbal abuse to murder. In addition, the small size and lack of centralized organization that weakens these groups also makes them nearly impossible for governments to control. If a government stops violence by arresting members of a few

groups, the larger fascist network remains intact. This virtually guarantees that the ideology of fascism will survive even if government authorities clamp down on some organizations.

B Shift to Electoral Politics

In addition to organizing through small groups, some fascists have tried to participate in mainstream party-based electoral politics. In contrast to the first fascist movements, these new fascist parties do not rely on a military branch to fight their opponents, and they tend to conceal their larger fascist agenda. To make fascist ideas seem acceptable, some parties water down their revolutionary agenda in order to win voter support even from people who do not want radical change and a fascist regime. Instead of emphasizing their long-term objectives for change, the fascist parties focus on issues such as the threat of Communism, crime, global economic competition, the loss of cultural identity allegedly resulting from mass immigration, and the need for a strong, inspiring leader to give the nation a direction.

Italy, for example, saw this type of quasi-democratic fascism with the 1946 formation of the Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI), which hoped to keep fascist ideals alive. In the mid-1990s the MSI managed to widen its support significantly when it renounced the goals of historic Italian Fascism and changed its name to the National Alliance (Alleanza Nazionale, or AN). Although the AN presents itself as comparable to other right-wing parties, its programs still retain significant elements of their fascist origins. During the 1990s several other extreme-right parties gained significant mass support, including the Republicans (Die Republikaner) in Germany, the National Front (Front National, or FN) in France, the Freedom Movement (Die Freiheitlichen) in Austria, the Flemish Bloc (Vlaams Blok) in Belgium, and the Liberal Democratic Party in Russia. All of these groups have some fascistic elements, but reject the revolutionary radicalism of true fascism.

C Emphasis on Cultural Change

Since World War II, some fascist movements have also shifted their goal from the political overthrow of democratic governments to a general cultural transformation. These movements hope that a cultural transformation will create the necessary conditions to achieve a radical political change. This form of fascism played an important role in the formative phase of the New Right. In the 1960s and 1970s New Right intellectuals criticized both liberal democratic politics and communism, arguing that societies should be organized around ethnic identity. Unlike earlier fascist movements, the New Right agenda did not require paramilitary organizations, uniforms, or a single unifying leader.

As a result of their emphasis on culture and ethnicity, the New Right argues that it is important to maintain a diversity of cultures around the world. But since it favors the preservation of ethnic cultures, the New Right strongly opposes the mixing of cultures that is increasingly common in the United States, Canada, and Europe. As a result, New Right thinkers attack the rise of global culture, the tendencies toward closer ties between countries, and all other trends that encourage the loss of racial identity. These thinkers argue that people who oppose racism in fact want to allow racial identity to be destroyed and are therefore promoting racial hatred. Known as differentialists, these fascists proclaim their love of all cultures, but in practice attack the multiculturalism and tolerance that lies at the heart of liberal democracy. Some political scientists and historians therefore argue that differentialism is really just a thinly disguised form of racism and fascism. Since the 1980s some leading New Right intellectuals have moved away from the fascist vision of a new historical era. However, the ideas that form the basis of the New Right movement continue to exert considerable influence on fascist activists who wish to disguise their true agenda. One example is 'Third Positionists,' who claim to reject capitalism and communism in their search for a 'third way' based on revolutionary nationalism.

D Attempts to Build a Global Movement

Fascists since World War II have also reshaped fascist ideology by attempting to create an international fascist movement. New Rightists and Third Positionists in Europe condemn cultural and ethnic mixing, and strive to unite fascist forces in Britain, Denmark, France, Italy, and other countries

behind a shared vision of a reborn Europe. These fascists thus break with the narrow nationalism that characterized the first fascist movements. At the same time, neo-Nazi groups worldwide have embraced the myth of Aryan superiority, which German fascists used as the basis for war against the rest of humanity. The neo-Nazis hope to build a global movement, and rely on this central element of racism to create a doctrine of white supremacy for all of Europe, Canada, the United States, and other places with substantial populations of white people.

The new international character of fascism can also be seen in the pseudo-scholarly industry that publishes propaganda in an academic style to play down, trivialize, or excuse the horrors of Nazism. This approach is sometimes called historical revisionism, although it is separate from a much more general and mainstream approach to history known as revisionism. Some of these self-styled scholars manufacture or distort documentary evidence to “prove” that the Nazis did not create extermination camps that killed millions of Jews during the Holocaust. All professional historians completely reject any attempt to show that the Holocaust never happened, but there continues to be a loosely knit international community of fascist writers who make such claims. The Internet has made it much easier for these writers to spread their ideas and propaganda in a way that is practically impossible to censor. While fascism has no prospect of returning to its former influence, it is set to be a continuous source of ideological and physical attacks on liberal society for the foreseeable future, and a permanent component of many democracies.

Contributed By:

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