

# Global fascism: geography, timing, support, and strategy

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## Abstract

*This article considers four aspects for understanding the greatly over-used term ‘fascism’: its place in space and also in time, the basis of its social support, and its modus operandi. While agreement exists on where and when fascism reached its apogee, there is little concurrence of opinion over the extent to which the world wars were determinative in its birth and death, and how far beyond European boundaries it has ventured. There are also wide-ranging discussions concerning the identity and extent of its backers, with some writers pointing to the formative role of the lumpen body politic, or various class fractions, and others to that of an elite vanguard, or even individual alienation. A similar spectrum of opinion over the basis of fascism’s appeal extends from studies emphasizing, and elucidating, its ideational content to those that focus on the pragmatic value of action. Such a great diversity of analyses brings both considerable empirical richness and the challenge of fragmentation. This article responds by reflecting on fascism as both a social phenomenon and a field of study, in the hope of bringing some analytical structure to what remains a vast, and continuously developing, literature.*

**Keywords** fascism, historiography, nationalism, Nazism, rightism

## Introduction

Forty-five years ago, Stuart Woolf suggested that the term ‘fascism’ should be withdrawn from our vocabulary, on the grounds that it has become ‘so overlaid with newer and broader connotations that the narrower, historical sense almost seems to require apologetic inverted commas’.<sup>1</sup> Today, it is frequently applied to conservative (particularly reactionary) political tendencies, to imperialistic and repressive governmental characteristics, or to a wide range of communitarian sentiments. Given the great number of contexts in which it appears, its precise meaning remains far from evident. Attempting to develop some clarity has expended a vast amount of ink over nearly a century of discussion and it remains a major concern for historians, sociologists, political theorists, and others today. A key ongoing question within this vast literature (Renzo de Felice listed more than 12,000 sources on Italian fascism alone

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1 Stuart Woolf, ‘Introduction’, in Stuart Woolf, ed., *Fascism in Europe*, London: Methuen, 1968, p. 1.

before his death in 1996) is the extent to which fascism has reached out beyond the national boundaries of its European exemplars to become a global phenomenon.

As such, this article will firstly, consider *where* fascism emerged. Here, views range from the idea that it is really only Italy which can be considered the true exemplar to accounts that emphasize its highly exportable – or even global – qualities. Second, and closely linked to the issue of place, is the controversy over *when* fascism developed. A number of writers see the considerable cultural and economic changes of the mid and late nineteenth century as fundamental, while a different view emphasizes the uniqueness of the Great War's social impact. Equally divisive are questions over fascism's contemporaneity. Opinion is split on the extent to which the Second World War irreparably destroyed its potential as both a meaningful political ideology and a viable mass-mobilizing force. For some, all subsequent forms of fascism are pale imitators of something that could only ever have thrived within the inimitable context of the 1920s and 1930s. For others, substantial continuities exist between interwar and post-war Europe which may suggest that fascism is not a facet of history, but adaptable, pernicious, and alive.

*Who* drives fascist movements forwards represents a third key question concerning its overall extensiveness. Some writers – many influenced by the works of Seymour Martin Lipset – point to the role of the political centre and its tendency to shift rightwards during periods (perceived or real) of social crisis. Others from a Marxian tradition have frequently focused more on the usefulness of such movements for big business. Rather than emanating from the precarious position of the petty bourgeoisie within the relations of production, fascism may thus be supported by the most powerful economic forces as a means of increasing inward investment, capitalizing overseas markets, and coercively reducing the costs of materials and labour. Conversely, other analysts have argued that the bureaucratization of such industrializing processes have tended to produce anomie, mass alienation, and moral relativism, leading to the emergence of authoritarian personalities who are especially appealing to rightists.

These issues intersect with a fourth core question regarding *how* fascist movements emerge – or the extent to which support is principally mobilized by the global spread of ideas or by the actions of small vanguards. In terms of the former, these are typically thought to circulate around notions of perceived national decline, followed by a process of rebirth through a sacralization of the political sphere. Without, however, the extensive doctrinal basis of its two principal antitheses – socialism and liberalism – fascism's claim to universal validity is heavily circumscribed, leading many writers to argue that fascism is better understood not as a coherent ideological force but as a pragmatic charismatization of collective anger resulting from the innate psychology of humanity.

## Geography: where?

The extent to which fascist ideologies and movements reached out beyond Europe to become global phenomena remains subject to extensive debate. At the narrower pole of this spectrum of opinion is the idea that each interwar regime is a *sui generis* manifestation of that country's unique sociohistorical trajectory. As Gilbert Allardyce put it, 'there is no such *thing* as fascism. There are only the men and movements we call by that name.'<sup>2</sup> Of these, Mussolini's mass

2 Gilbert Allardyce, 'What fascism is not: thoughts on the deflation of a concept', *American Historical Review*, 84, 2, 1979, p. 365. For some context to Allardyce's seminal piece, see Alex Lichtenstein's recent review of

following of the 1920s is frequently seen as the foremost example. Indeed, the word ‘fascism’ is derived from the plural Italian term *fasci* (meaning leagues or political unions) and evokes symbols of authority during Roman antiquity. With the exceptions of the British Union of Fascists and Georges Valois’s short-lived political French party, the Faisceau, there was little contemporary interest in adopting the term elsewhere in Europe. So, while it may be an overstatement to assert, as Allardyce did, that ‘the word *fascismo* has no meaning beyond Italy’, other authoritarian governments of the interwar period did not appear to conform very closely to the social characteristics of Mussolini’s regime.<sup>3</sup>

Germany, home to what many see as the second key exemplar of fascism, certainly lacked both the diversity of the Italian version’s political roots and its less industrialized economic setting (although both Hitler and Mussolini rapidly gained support in the countryside). Moreover, at least until the Axis alliance of 1936, the two leaders maintained partially conflicting foreign policy objectives (most notably over Austrian sovereignty) and substantially different visions of race, culture, and the corporate/ethical state.<sup>4</sup> Franco’s Spain, a third regime commonly regarded as definitively fascist, similarly seems to be quite different from its contemporaries. Unlike the mass movements of Italy and Germany, the Falange enjoyed only 0.7 per cent of the popular vote on the eve of the civil war, compared to a mandate of 37 per cent for Hitler’s chancellorship.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, its leader, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, was said to be unimpressed by the Nazi regime during a visit in 1934 and ‘made a conscious effort in the succeeding months to distinguish his movement from fascism’.<sup>6</sup> He thus rejected Mussolini’s invitation to attend an international congress in Montreux, declaring that ‘the truly national character of the movement he leads is inconsistent with even the semblance of international governance’.<sup>7</sup> Once in power, the Falange shared power in a way quite different from their counterparts in Italy and Germany. It was, in fact, a minority partner in ‘an amorphous conglomeration of traditionalists, monarchists, militant Catholics, right-wingers and conservatives’.<sup>8</sup> The result was, arguably, a less radical, more introspective administration that lacked the highly reformist domestic policies and grandiose geopolitical ambitions of Berlin and Rome. Like António de Oliveira Salazar’s Portugal (which he governed from 1932 until 1968), Spain thus ‘lacked fascism’s mass-mobilising party, and w[as] devoid of any significant challenge to traditional elites and their independent power structures’.<sup>9</sup>

Overemphasizing fascism’s various antagonisms, however, may not only confuse style with content, but could also obstruct the establishment of explanatory frameworks – a point recently noted in Pinto and Kallis’ collection of essays on hybridized forms of ‘parafascism’.<sup>10</sup> In other words, resisting the development of a deductive theoretical model in favour of a more

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writing on fascism in the *American Historical Review*: ‘In back issues’, *American Historical Review*, 121, 2, 2016, pp. xvi–xix.

3 Allardyce, ‘What fascism is not’, p. 370.

4 Roger Eatwell, ‘New styles of dictatorship and leadership in interwar Europe’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 7, 2, 2006, p. 127.

5 Stanley Payne, ‘Spanish fascism in comparative perspective’, *Iberian Studies*, 2, 1973, p. 4.

6 Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish civil war*, Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1973, p. 101.

7 Bernadette Archer, ‘Revolutionary charlatanism’, in Roger Griffin, ed., *International fascism: theories, causes and the new consensus*, London: Arnold, 1998, p. 282.

8 Francis Carsten, *The rise of fascism*, London: Methuen, 1967, p. 203.

9 Roger Eatwell, ‘Universal fascism? Approaches and definitions’, in Stein Ugelvik Larsen, ed., *Fascism outside Europe: the European impulse against domestic conditions in the diffusion of global fascism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2001, p. 19.

10 António Costa Pinto and Aristotle Kallis, eds., *Rethinking fascism and dictatorship in Europe*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

inductive method based on historical data contains the danger of uncritically accepting fascists' view of themselves. At one level, this might result in overlooking important, but generally under-researched, elements of fascist thought and action, such as the racialized social Darwinism behind the Italian occupations of Libya and Abyssinia.<sup>11</sup> At another level, it might lead to a kind of relativism in which, for instance, Mussolini's race laws (despite pre-dating the Rome–Berlin Axis and being stricter than similar legislation elsewhere in Europe) are seen as motivated by sentiments different from those in Germany because they did not result in a genocide of Europeans.<sup>12</sup> In reality, they may have been less about the practical need to impress Hitler and more a shared expression of what Meir Michaelis, after Ernst Nolte, called *Allfeindschaft* (universal hostility). Michaelis continues by arguing that, as a 'common denominator of the two variants of fascism', its application was moderated not by sentiment, but by the 'accidental non-existence of a Jewish problem in Italy'.<sup>13</sup>

More generally, since the political right tends to emphasize its own unique national character, a reliance on fascists to define fascism has tended to limit comparison to countries sharing similar sociohistorical experiences (even though other political ideologies have appeared in a very wide variety of settings). The notion of international fascism has thus mostly been applied to Europe's particular political development and the class structures, relations of production, ideological discourses, and geopolitical competition which it produced. The uniqueness of these – identified by Payne as antagonisms between newly formed states, poorly rooted liberal democracy, potential for mass mobilization, and a new cultural orientation stemming from the intellectual upheavals around the turn of the twentieth century – means, for some, that 'the full characteristics of European fascism could not be reproduced on a significant scale outside Europe'.<sup>14</sup> As Roger Eatwell observes, however, seeing fascism as quintessentially European overlooks the fact that its ideological development was subject to a wide range of influences from outside the continent. These include the social dynamics behind the rise of Japanese military power (demonstrated by its victory over Russia in 1905) and the mythical communitarianism of Indian Aryanism. Moreover, even if the predominantly European character of fascism is accepted, this does not, Eatwell maintains, necessarily mean that other countries 'could not experience relatively similar socio-economic strains'.<sup>15</sup> Given that rightists tend to vary greatly, that no movement or regime could be said to be fully fascist, and that considerable differences existed *within* such organizations, parties, and states, it is not surprising (nor a reason to suspend analysis) to find that these strains have given rise to a penumbra of political forms that are not identical to their European counterparts. Like liberalism and socialism, then, fascism may be said to exist 'in multiple variations ... [to evolve] dynamically to address new historical conditions', and to appeal to further audiences in a wide breadth of ways.<sup>16</sup>

In Latin America, for instance, a number of social movements emerged during the 1930s with more than a passing resemblance to contemporary equivalents in Europe. Plínio Salgado founded one such organization in Brazil in 1932 – the *Ação Integralista Brasileira*. Named after

11 Roger Eatwell, 'Explaining fascism and ethnic cleansing: the three dimensions of charisma and the four dark sides of nationalism', *Political Studies Review*, 4, 2, 2006, p. 266.

12 Carl Levy, 'Fascism, National Socialism and conservatives in Europe, 1914–1945: issues for comparativists', *Contemporary European History*, 8, 1, 1999, p. 119.

13 Meir Michaelis, 'Fascism, totalitarianism and the holocaust: reflections on current interpretations of National Socialist anti-Semitism', *European History Quarterly*, 19, 1, 1989, p. 94.

14 Stanley Payne, *A history of fascism, 1914–1945*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995, p. 353.

15 Eatwell, 'Universal fascism?', p. 21.

16 Matthew Lyons, 'Two ways of looking at fascism', *Socialism and Democracy*, 22, 2, 2008, p. 123.

a forerunner to Portugal's Movimento Nacional-Sindicalista (an important mobilizing force in the early years of Salazar's administration), it was modelled on Mussolini's Blackshirts. Under the covert patronage of President Getúlio Vargas, Salgado's units became a large, anti-communist, and partially anti-Semitic paramilitary force during the 1930s. However, alarmed by their connections with the Italian embassy (as well as their independent power base within the armed forces), Vargas (like Salazar, who co-opted and intermittently repressed Portugal's Integralistas from 1934 onwards) established a Portuguese-style Estado Novo in 1937. This exiled or imprisoned some of the Integralistas' leaders, while incorporating many others within a newly formed department of the militia.<sup>17</sup>

Argentine fascism was similarly inspired by the Italian model. In 1930, a number of groups propounding variants of Mussolini's corporatism, xenophobia, neighbourhood violence, and militarism gained differing amounts of political power through the coup d'état of General Félix de Uriburu and his successor, General Agustín Justo. Some, such as the Liga Patriótica Argentina and the Frente de Fuerzas Fascistas, maintained political or ideological links to the church and the armed forces, while others, including the Liga Republicana, concentrated on a less traditionalist, more pro-Nazi anti-constitutionalism.<sup>18</sup> Following the coup, the government incorporated many of these groups within a state-led mobilizing network (the Legión Cívica) and an associated syndicalist labour union (the Federación Obrera Nacionalista). Together, the two helped to monitor the left, intimidate or close critical newspapers, and organize street confrontations.<sup>19</sup>

Parts of South and East Asia were also heavily influenced by what were seen as the economic and military successes of Europe's fascist states. Japan's *kukushin* rightists, for example, considered these to be a vindication of both their derivative approach to political development (pursued since the Meiji restoration of 1867) and the moral basis of their modernizing New Order for Asia.<sup>20</sup> Chiang Kai-shek's Whampoa Clique and its Blue Shirt Society also repeatedly cited the German example from the early 1930s onwards in order to buttress their commitment to a mass-party state, Chinese cultural nationalism, and the civil war against the political left.<sup>21</sup> In Thailand, such approbation was extended to introduce a greater ethnic basis for notions of national identity, following Field Marshall Plaek Phibunsongkhram's takeover of the premiership in 1938. There, and elsewhere, a significant reason for courting the Axis Powers was conflict with other European colonial states.<sup>22</sup> For Bangkok, this centred on acquiring weapons with which to wrest territory from French Indochina, but the Indian anti-colonial leaders Subhas Chandra Bose and Muhammad Iqbal Shedai went as far as establishing military units under respective German and Italian command during the early 1940s. While the latter founded the small Battaglione Azad Hindoustan from exile in Rome, the former extended his command of the Wehrmacht's Königsbrück-based Indische Legion to include the 40,000-strong Indian National Army, which operated out of

17 Jens R. Hentschke, ed., *Vargas and Brazil: new perspectives*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

18 David Aliano, *Mussolini's national project in Argentina*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012.

19 Frederico Finchelstein, *Transatlantic fascism: ideology, violence, and the sacred in Argentina and Italy, 1919–1945*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.

20 Miles Fletcher, *The search for a new order: intellectuals and fascism in prewar Japan*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982.

21 Maria Hsia Chan, *The Chinese Blue Shirt Society: fascism and developmental nationalism*, China Research Monograph 30, Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, 1985.

22 Federico Ferrara, *The political development of modern Thailand*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Japanese-controlled territory from April 1942 onwards.<sup>23</sup> Hindu nationalists, such as the Marathi thinkers K. B. Hedgewar and M. S. Golwalkar, and the leader of the direct-action Mahasabha organization, B. S. Moonje, also maintained extensive contact with the Axis Powers throughout this period – an influence which, for historians such as Marzia Casolari, can be seen in the former’s establishment (and subsequent development) of the right-wing volunteer organization, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), in 1925.<sup>24</sup>

Elsewhere, fascist influence outside Europe typically involved the establishment of Italian- or German-inspired – or occasionally directly sponsored – organizations within major cities. Advanced by the social effects of the 1929 economic crash, these tended to develop links with the populace at large, but mostly failed to secure any lasting political influence. The exception, of course, was South Africa, where groups such as the South African Fascists, the South African Gentile National Socialist Movement, and the South African National Democratic Party were able to exert a profound influence over the development of mainstream Afrikaner nationalism. In some instances, this took the form of affiliations with leading politicians such as the Justice minister Hans van Rensburg (who went on to lead the notorious Ossewa-Brandwag) and Eric Louw (a future minister of Foreign Affairs whose strongly anti-Semitic bill was defeated in 1939). Other prominent figures, President Nicolaas Diederichs and the future broadcasting chief P. J. Meyer, maintained direct contact with the Nazis.<sup>25</sup> For Roger Griffin, these manifestations of fascism outside Europe are, nonetheless, fundamentally European. He suggests that their familiar blend of populism and nationalist mythology emerged from incomplete modernizing processes that had failed to secure a transition from conservative hegemony to secular liberalism and thus became vulnerable to what he calls a ‘generalised “sense-making crisis”’.<sup>26</sup> It is thus unsurprising to find the more successful fascist movements within those former colonies that destroyed or repressed their indigenous populations through the actions of poorly institutionalized state elites.

This does not mean, however, that the exportation of fascism was unmodified by its recipients. Most made use of its intrinsically contingent character and adapted its facets to suit local political expediencies. In Palestine, for instance, the Brit HaBironim (which, between 1930 and 1933, was among the largest factions in the revisionist Zionist movement) was particularly impressed by Mussolini’s brutalization of Libya, and promulgated a comparable brand of integralist militarism following the civil unrest of 1929.<sup>27</sup> By contrast, the Duce’s vigorous promotion of Islam in Abyssinia (as a means of weakening cross-confessional opposition), coupled with a relentlessly anti-Zionist discourse disseminated by an Arabic state radio station in Bari, proved to be an important influence in the creation of the Egyptian Wafd’s blue-shirt brigades during the mid 1930s.<sup>28</sup> Far from a simple transposition, these partial and semi-autonomous incorporations of fascist rhetoric were not always welcomed by the Europeans.

23 Romain Hayes, *Subhas Chandra Bose in Nazi Germany: politics, intelligence and propaganda 1941–1943*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

24 Marzia Casolari, ‘Hindutva’s foreign tie-up in the 1930s: archival evidence’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 22 January 2000, pp. 218–28.

25 Christoph Marx, *Oxwagon sentinel: radical Afrikaner nationalism and the history of the Ossewabrandwag*, Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2011.

26 Roger Griffin, ‘The holy storm: “clerical fascism” through the lens of modernism’, in Mathew Feldman, Marius Turda, and Tudor Georgescu, eds., *Clerical fascism in interwar Europe*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2014, p. 11.

27 Ami Pedahzur, *The triumph of Israel’s radical right*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

28 Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, *Confronting fascism in Egypt: dictatorship versus democracy in the 1930s*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010.



The seditious activities of the German American Bund were, for example, often an embarrassment to Nazi diplomats attempting to curry support in Washington.<sup>29</sup> It is therefore important to note that fascism outside Europe was not generally led from Europe. Rather, apart from instances of direct control through military occupation, its formation and ideology were subject to the competitive tendencies of the major fascist powers, the inherent contradictions provoked by working with foreigners, and its frequently profound internal conflicts.

## Timing: when?

For some, fascism is a peculiarly interwar phenomenon. This view (approximations of which are apparent in the work of Renzo de Felice, Ernst Nolte, Stanley Payne, and Stuart Woolf) holds that fascism was an epochal movement grounded in the unique contours of the First World War's social and geopolitical outcomes. As Hugh Trevor-Roper puts it, fascism began 'in 1922–3 with the emergence of the Italian fascist party ... came of age in the 1930s when "fascist" parties sprang up throughout Europe and ... ended in 1945 with the defeat and death of the two dictators'.<sup>30</sup> Gilbert Allardyce concurs, arguing that fascism constituted 'a force so cataclysmic and unforeseen' that it could have only 'been generated from the catastrophes of ... the First World War, Bolshevism and the Great Depression'. He goes on to conclude that 'placing it within historical boundaries at least provides a measure of control, restricting the proliferation of the word in all directions, past and present'.<sup>31</sup> In this way, Mark Neocleous observes, 'whatever "precursors" of fascism there were before 1922, especially of the intellectual kind, are treated as largely parochial, and any difficulties in specifying the nature of fascism, its ideological essence and its continued existence, are side-tracked'.<sup>32</sup>

Limiting analytical scope in such a way is perhaps difficult to justify given the obvious facts that fascist manifestos, activities, and support bases were neither without precedent nor fully separable from broader social currents. While it is important to be wary of looking back into the past and ascribing motives and intentions on the basis of subsequent actions, ideas, and events, it may also be useful to see fascism as part of what Roger Eatwell calls 'a mercurial matrix rather than a static ideal type'.<sup>33</sup> In this sense, 'fascism did not belong only to the interwar era but to that whole period of history which began with the modernization of the European continent at the end of the nineteenth century'.<sup>34</sup> After all, it is beyond question that 'fascists reached back into the anti-parliamentary and anti-pluralistic traditions of the nineteenth century in order to face the collapse of the social, economic, and political structures in their nations during and after the First World War'.<sup>35</sup> As such, it may be seen as both 'a product of philosophico-political struggles within European intellectual, cultural and political history' and an important constitutive element in the West's post-Enlightenment developmental trajectory.<sup>36</sup>

29 Michaela Hönicke Moore, *Know your enemy: the American debate on Nazism, 1933–1945*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

30 Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'The phenomenon of fascism', in Woolf, *Fascism in Europe*, p. 19.

31 Allardyce, 'What fascism is not', pp. 378, 388.

32 Mark Neocleous, *Fascism*, Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997, p. ix.

33 Eatwell, 'Explaining fascism', p. 265.

34 Zeev Sternhell, with Mario Snaijder and Maia Asheri, *The birth of fascist ideology: from cultural rebellion to political revolution*, trans. David Maisel, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994, p. 32.

35 George Mosse, *The fascist revolution: toward a general theory of fascism*, New York: Howard Fertig, 2000, p. 4.

36 Neocleous, *Fascism*, p. ix.

Rather than being an irrational oddity, fascism thus offers a more innate challenge to the progressive narrative of modernization that underpins Europe's vision of itself. As Neocleous writes, 'far from being some kind of political aberration arising from the inability of small but active groups of people to grasp the essentials of "civilized" bourgeois life, fascism is in fact a problem of the "normal" organization of our lived relations.'<sup>37</sup> In terms of the history of ideas, then, 'the First World War was not the watershed it appears to have been in so many other areas'.<sup>38</sup> Instead, fascism's constitutive components are much older. Racism, anti-Semitism, and homophobia, for instance, have their modern roots in the incorporation of classical aesthetics within eighteenth-century physiognomy and its subsequent fusing with emergent national-statism, elements of Darwinist thought, and the legitimization of colonial rule.<sup>39</sup> Once 'the extension of universal suffrage throughout the second half of the nineteenth threatened to put political power in the hands of the disenfranchised', these ideas found collective expression in a plethora of organizations committed to maintaining elite authority.<sup>40</sup>

In Austria, for instance, Georg Ritter von Schönerer's pan-German Los-von-Rom-Bewegung combined a form of extreme Lutheran Protestantism with chauvinism and xenophobic violence in an attempt to import an exaggerated form of Bismarck's *Kulturkampf*. Although this failed, Schönerer did secure the election of twenty-one of his party's deputies to the Reichsrat in 1901, exerting a profound influence over Adolf Hitler, who was born in Austria in 1889 and intermittently resided there until 1913.<sup>41</sup> In France, racism and pro-Catholic atavism found expression in Action Française, which was founded during the Dreyfus Affair in 1898. It was characterized by its integralist nationalism, monarchism, and rejection of Jacobin reforms, which were blamed on an international conspiracy of Jewish financiers, freemasons, and Huguenots. In Italy, similar sentiments over the Austrian-controlled status of Trieste and the South Tyrol, coupled with an embarrassing military defeat to the Abyssinians at Adowa in 1896, contributed to the formation of the virulently militaristic Associazione Nazionale Italiana in 1910. While it only succeeded in returning three parliamentary representatives, its violently racist campaign for overseas expansion, led by Mussolini's future colonies minister, Luigi Federzoni, contributed to Rome's decision to attack Ottoman possessions in North Africa and the Dodecanese in 1911. Domestically, its adoption of Alfredo Rocco's theories of corporatism subsequently proved to be a highly influential part of interwar fascism's ideological make-up – particularly following its merger with the Partito Nazionale Fascista in 1923.<sup>42</sup>

Within the United States, the pre-First World War era gave rise to a number of proto-fascist groups. Most infamous was the Ku Klux Klan network, which, Robert Paxton argues, represents 'a remarkable preview of the way fascist movements were to function in interwar Europe'.<sup>43</sup> The Klan emerged in Tennessee in the aftermath of the Civil War. Its objective was to restore white rule by intimating and murdering freedmen (the four million or so slaves emancipated by the Thirteenth Amendment) and southern Republicans. Once criminalized in

37 *Ibid.*, p. x.

38 Sternhell, *Birth of fascist ideology*, p. 32.

39 George Mosse, *Toward the final solution: a history of European racism*, New York: Howard Fertig, 1997.

40 Anson G. Rabinbach, 'Toward a Marxist theory of fascism: a report on developments in West Germany', *New German Critique*, 3, 1974, p. 131.

41 Andrew Whiteside, *The socialism of fools: Georg Ritter von Schönerer and Austrian Pan-Germanism*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1975.

42 Richard Drake, 'The theory and practice of Italian nationalism, 1900–1906', *Journal of Modern History*, 53, 2, 1981, pp. 213–41.

43 Robert Paxton, 'The five stages of fascism', *Journal of Modern History*, 70, 1, 1998, p. 12.



1871, the Klan continued clandestinely, helping to establish Bourbon governorships aimed at reversing reconstruction reforms and devising 'Jim Crow' laws that largely perpetuated the inferior status of African Americans.<sup>44</sup> Although the Klan disintegrated during the 1890s, it was re-launched in 1915 and quickly developed a growing emphasis on anti-communism, anti-immigration, prohibitionism, anti-Semitism, and anti-Catholicism. Seeking to benefit from the social pressures created by the great emigration of African Americans from the South, it is thought to have reached a membership of around four million during the 1920s (mostly in Midwestern states).<sup>45</sup>

Despite the defeat of fascism in Europe, the Klan continued to attack upwardly mobile black families and unionized labour after the Second World War. It was also able to establish a network of links with many of the great number of neo-Nazi organizations and gangs that were emerging to resist what they perceived to be a deepening of Jewish economic and political influence, expanding Hispanic immigration, and a rise in African American self-confidence following the repeal of *de jure* segregation in the Southern states during the 1950s and 60s.<sup>46</sup> Of these, perhaps the most significant was the American Nazi Party. Founded in 1959, it joined with the United Kingdom's National Socialist Movement led by a former member of the British Union of Fascists, Colin Jordan, and the future leader of the British National Party, John Tyndall. Together, the organizations established the World Union of National Socialists in 1962, initially made up of movements from Belgium, the Netherlands, France, West Germany, and Austria.<sup>47</sup> Although their most important activists, such as Harold Covington and David Duke, failed to realize their political aspirations fully, they did succeed in attracting comparatively large numbers of votes.<sup>48</sup> This, coupled with the ascendancy of the right within the Republican Party more broadly in recent years, raises the possibility of a 'confluence between former Klansmen, neo-Nazis and the more powerful ultra-conservatives' and thus the danger that 'neo-Nazi ideas on the unnaturalness and inviability of the multi-racial society can be absorbed from the ultra-right into mainstream American society through ideological osmosis'.<sup>49</sup>

The post-Second World War era has seen similar attempts to bring fascist ideas into mass politics in a number of other non-European states. Arguing that Leninism, Maoism, and most forms of command-economy socialism are variants on this theme, A. James Gregor sees facsimiles of Europe's interwar regimes in what he calls the 'developmental dictatorships' of East Asia and much of decolonizing Africa.<sup>50</sup> Oddly, though, he omits mention of South Africa's Nasionale Party (in power – in various forms – from 1948 to 1994), which, long influenced by Nazism, introduced a series of segregationist laws during the 1950s and enforced them with a vehemence and sophistication worthy of any interwar dictatorship. Resistance to the apartheid structure was further repressed through the covert support (or at least tacit toleration) of as many as forty ultra-nationalist organizations, ranging from large political parties (such as the Conservative Party, which regularly polled over 30 per cent of the white vote) to smaller

44 Wyn Wade, *The fiery cross: the Ku Klux Klan in America*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987, pp. 109–10.

45 John Franklin, *Race and history: selected essays 1938–1988*, Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1992.

46 Diane McWhorter, *Carry me home: Birmingham, Alabama, the climactic battle of the civil rights revolution*, New York: Touchstone Book, 2002, p. 75.

47 Jeffrey Kaplan, *Encyclopedia of white power: a sourcebook on the radical racist right*, Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira, 2000.

48 See Tyler Bridges, *The rise of David Duke*, Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 1995.

49 Leonard Zeskind, quoted in Roger Griffin, 'Caught in its own net: post-war fascism outside Europe', in Larsen, *Fascism outside Europe*, p. 57.

50 A. James Gregor, *The ideology of fascism: the rationale of totalitarianism*, New York: The Free Press, 1969.

direct-action units. Of these latter groups, the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging of Eugène Terre'Blanche successfully used philanthropic programmes among poorer Afrikaners to develop a mass membership of as many as 70,000 and to become, in Roger Griffin's view, 'the world's most important single fascist movement of the post-war era'.<sup>51</sup>

Similarly violent neo-Nazi groups arose in Latin America during the post-war period. Some, such as the Movimiento Nacional Socialista de Chile, merged with larger right-wing political organizations to maintain an indirect influence on state policy. Others, like Bolivia's Los Novios de la Muerte (led by the former Hauptsturmführer Klaus Barbie), used links with crime syndicates to exert more direct pressures – in this case, helping to stage the Cocaine Coup of 1980.<sup>52</sup> It was Argentina, however, that became home to the greatest numbers of Nazis. There, Juan Perón's violently repressive and highly corporatist regime of 1946 to 1955 used its 'special ties' with Franco to institutionalize the ODESSA network that allowed Barbie and others (such as Hauptsturmführer Erich Priebke and Joseph Mengele and Obersturmbannführer Adolf Eichmann) to escape Europe.<sup>53</sup> Many began to exert some political influence. The son of Joachim von Ribbentrop's former agent, Ludwig Freude, for example, became the director of the country's national intelligence agency in 1946, while the co-founder of the Croatian Ustaše, Ante Pavelić, is thought to have been active in the Alianza Libertadora Nacionalista – 'an armed Fascist organization openly maintained by the Peron government ... [and] consist[ing] for the most part of European Quislings'.<sup>54</sup> This, coupled with Perón's intermittent backing of the Movimiento Nacionalista Tacuara (far-right urban guerrillas known for contributing a number of agents to the Alianza Anticomunista Argentina death squad that was active during the 1970s and 80s), has led some historians to conclude that Perónism was, in many ways, 'a local variant of fascism and Nazism'.<sup>55</sup>

Similar continuities also existed elsewhere. Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram resumed his dictatorship over Thailand in 1948 and spent the next decade extending restrictions over its Chinese minority. Chiang Kai-shek retained control of the Republic of China until his death in 1975. Governing through a system of martial law known as the White Terror, his (and his son's) single-party state suppressed local Taiwanese culture with an unrelenting vehemence.<sup>56</sup> In India, the RSS was able to exert an increasing influence on the state through its connections with the 110 million-strong Bharatiya Janata Party, despite one of its former members being convicted of the murder of Mohandas Gandhi in 1948. Today, it is one of the world's largest voluntary NGOs (with between five and six million members), and factions such as the Vishva Hindu Parishad (founded by M. S. Golwalkar in 1964) and its youth wing, the Bajrang Dal, continue to be involved in outbreaks of anti-Muslim violence.<sup>57</sup>

The Lebanese Kataeb (or Phalanges) Party, formed in 1936 by the prominent Maronite Pierre Gemayel and modelled on the Spanish Falange, shares a similar interwar legacy.

51 Griffin, 'Caught in its own net', p. 52.

52 Alfredo Schulte-Bockholt, 'A neo-Marxist explanation of organized crime', *Critical Criminology*, 10, 3, 2001, p. 233.

53 Raanan Rein, 'Francoist Spain and Latin America, 1936–1953', in Larsen, *Fascism outside Europe*, p. 148.

54 Marguerite Feitlowitz, *A lexicon of terror: Argentina and the legacies of torture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002; Michele Bernstein, 'Argentina', *American Jewish Yearbook*, 57, 1956, p. 522.

55 Mariano Plotkin, 'The changing perceptions of Peronism: a review essay', in James P. Brennan, ed., *Peronism and Argentina*, Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1998, p. 31.

56 Jonathan Fenby, *Chiang Kai-shek: China's Generalissimo and the nation he lost*, New York: Carroll & Graf, 2005.

57 Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi, *Pogrom in Gujarat: Hindu nationalism and anti-Muslim violence in India*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012.

It initially pursued independence from France before going on to develop a Phoenician ideology emphasizing Lebanon's non-Arab heritage. During the 1960s it became the principal Christian component of the country's multi-confessional legislature and, by the mid 1980s it had succeeded in securing the presidency for two of Gemayel's sons. Its initially brown-shirted militia played a key role in the civil war and were implicated in the infamous massacres at Sabra and Shatilla in 1982. Today, it continues to campaign vigorously against permanent residency for Lebanon's 500,000 Palestinian residents.<sup>58</sup>

Interwar supporters of fascism also retained positions of power in Europe. The United States' Directive JCS 1779, for instance, which instructed Allied forces to undertake 'measures which will bring about the establishment of stable political and economic conditions in Germany', was interpreted in the light of growing concerns over the power of international communism.<sup>59</sup> It was thus used to facilitate the reinstatement of over 90 per cent of those officials previously purged under de-Nazification measures – including Barbie (before he fled to Argentina in 1951) and one of the Nazis' most senior intelligence officers, *Generalmajor* Reinhard Gehlen.<sup>60</sup> In Italy, similar concerns over the strength of the indigenous Communist Party (one of the largest in the world) led the Allies to regard the 'sorting out of fascists [as] too much of a headache' in the immediate aftermath of the war.<sup>61</sup> Instead, the Christian Democrats, who 'were riddled with collaborators, monarchists and plain unreconstructed fascists', were, along with other rightist parties, heavily funded by the Central Intelligence Agency (some reports put the figure at over US\$10 million).<sup>62</sup> Concurrently, a communist insurgency in neighbouring Greece was defeated in 1949 by United States officers working with a large contingent of former Nazi operatives.<sup>63</sup> The success of these so-called 'stay-behind' deployments encouraged a policy of supporting robustly anti-communist administrations throughout the world (despite them frequently displaying fascistic characteristics). Along with the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, this contributed to Washington's decision to extend Marshall Plan aid to Salazar's Portugal and to normalize relations with the Franco regime, which reportedly viewed the resultant 1953 Pact of Madrid as proof that 'it had been right all along'.<sup>64</sup>

As historians have consistently pointed out, many contemporary fascist groups are directly descended from organizations founded by former Nazis who continued to be resident in Europe after 1945. Despite being the successor to the Deutsche Reichspartei (founded by General der Flieger Alexander Andrae and other senior Nazi officials in 1946), Germany's Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands, for instance, received between 500,000 and 750,000 votes in the general elections of 2005–13 and returned representatives to the Saxony and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern *Landtags*.<sup>65</sup> In Spain, the Democracia Nacional party emerged from the *Círculo Español de Amigos de Europa*, which included

58 Mordechai Nisan, *Politics and war in Lebanon: unraveling the enigma*, New York: Transaction, 2015.

59 Cited in Andreas R. Wesseler, 'Yalta: fact or fate? A brief characterization', *Journal of Historical Review*, 3, 4, 1982, p. 369.

60 Daniele Ganser, *NATO's secret armies: Operation Gladio and terrorism in western Europe*, London: Frank Cass, 2005, p. 190.

61 Max Ascoli, 'Political reconstruction in Italy', *Journal of Politics*, 8, 3, 1946, p. 320.

62 Stephen Goode, *The CIA*, New York: Franklin Watts, 1982, p. 45.

63 Christopher Simpson, *Blowback: America's recruitment of Nazis and its effects on the Cold War*, New York: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988, pp. 81–2.

64 Rein, 'Francoist Spain', p. 151.

65 Uwe Backes, 'The electoral victory of the NPD in Saxony and the prospects for future extreme-right success in German elections', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 40, 2, 2006, pp. 129–41.

Obersturmbannführer Otto Skorzeny, who went on to work for Perón and the South African special forces.<sup>66</sup> It also contained the former commander of the Walloon Schutzstaffel (SS), Standartenführer Léon Degrelle, for whom Franco provided asylum and obstructed Belgian extradition attempts thenceforth. Degrelle's close associate, Jean-Marie Le Pen, who attracted five million votes in the 2002 French presidential elections, formed the Front National in 1972 by amalgamating it with a number of smaller groups founded by ex-members of the French SS, Pierre Bousquet and André Dufraisse, as well as the collaborationists François Brigneau and Roland Gaucher.

Gaucher, who had spent the war running the newspaper of the pro-Nazi Rassemblement National Populaire, was also instrumental in persuading fascist organizations to seek election to the European Union (where he represented the Front National from 1986 to 1989).<sup>67</sup> Following a meeting convened by Gaucher in 1979, the EU's first formal far-right bloc emerged from 1984 onwards. This included five members of Italy's Movimento Sociale Italiano, which, having renamed itself the Alleanza Nazionale, was also able to gain a number of ministerial positions as part of coalitions with Silvio Berlusconi during the 1990s.<sup>68</sup> In 2009, its 'most extremist and avowedly fascist wing', the Fiamma Tricolore, signed an agreement with the British National Party to create the Alliance of European National Movements, following the latter's receipt of nearly one million British votes the same year.<sup>69</sup> Since the European elections of 2014, this alliance has been dominated by the Hungarian Jobbik party, following the decision of the Front National's twenty-three MEPs to join Geert Wilders' Party for Freedom, the Lega Nord, and others at the European Alliance for Freedom (initially led by the UK Independence Party).

These organizations have adopted the dual policy of dissociating themselves from the political parties of the interwar years while seeking to rehabilitate and rebrand much of their ideological content. As Wodak and Richardson put it, contemporary fascism tends to both '*orientate towards* and *simultaneously deny* any continuity with the arguments and policies of previous movements'.<sup>70</sup> This duplicity renders highly problematic the assumption of many cultural historians that fascism's primary contours are 'inferable from the claims made by its own protagonists'.<sup>71</sup> The desire, for Roger Griffin and others, to 'treat fascism like any other ideology' may, in other words, 'fail to generate a non-fascist understanding of fascism'.<sup>72</sup> Instead, Wodak and Richardson conclude that it is necessary to proceed from the premise that 'the text/talk of (assumedly/potentially fascist) political protagonists ... must be interpreted critically'.<sup>73</sup>

## Support: who?

Similarly wide-ranging – and overlapping – debates continue over the global extensiveness of fascist support. In the middle ground are what Paul Whiteley calls 'extremism of the

66 Martin Lee, *The beast reawakens: fascism's resurgence from Hitler's spymasters to today's neo-Nazi groups and right-wing extremists*, London: Routledge, 2000.

67 Jonathan Marcus, *The National Front and French politics*, New York: New York University Press, 1995.

68 Dave Renton, *Fascism: theory and practice*, London: Pluto, 1999, pp. 7–8.

69 Roberto di Quirico, *Italy, Europe and the European presidency of 2003*, Brussels: Notre Europe, 2003, p. 19.

70 Ruth Wodak and John E. Richardson, 'European fascism in talk and text', in Ruth Wodak and John E. Richardson, eds., *Analysing fascist discourse: European fascism in talk and text*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2015, p. 3, emphasis in original.

71 Griffin, *International fascism*, p. 25.

72 Cited in Renton, *Fascism*, p. 25.

73 Wodak and Richardson, 'European fascism', pp. 6–7.

centre theories'.<sup>74</sup> These, he notes, are particularly associated with the work of Seymour Lipset and his contention that there is an intrinsic contradiction between the middle classes' liberal resistance to throne and altar and the rise of an industrializing, bureaucratic, revenue-seeking state.<sup>75</sup> Here, there is said to be a tension between the populist ideology of generally small property-owning merchants and farmers and the rationalist perspective of capitalist big business. As the latter vied with a growing urban proletariat for control of the state following the First World War, the former became, in Lipset's view, increasingly anti-democratic. This is especially apparent during times of rapid social change. As Martin Trow notes, 'the tendencies which small businessmen fear – of concentration and centralization – proceed without interruption in depression, war, and prosperity'.<sup>76</sup> Extreme right-wing ideologies thus succeed by promising to take 'over the state and [run] it in a way which will restore the old middle classes' economic security and high standing in society, and at the same time reduce the power and status of big capital and big labor'.<sup>77</sup>

Lipset suggests that in this the middle classes may be joined by hitherto centrist elements of the working classes and the old regime. In the former case, periods of rapid or incomplete industrialization – similar, perhaps, to Griffin's 'sense-making crisis' discussed earlier – may move proletariat organizations away from the political centre and towards anti-democratic ideologies derived from revolutionary communism, anarchism, or fascism. Originating in 'low education, low participation in political or voluntary organizations of any type, little reading, isolated occupations, economic insecurity, and authoritarian family patterns', these rapid social changes help to explain blue-collar support for the radical right (a phenomenon many fascist movements sought to nurture with concerted recruitment efforts among the urban proletariat).<sup>78</sup> Politically, such authoritarian tendencies can be channelled in either a left-wing or a right-wing direction, but, as Lipset and Raab note of the United States, they are more likely to follow the latter trend when the status anxiety of the majority is combined with the challenge of an aspirant minority.<sup>79</sup>

In politics where the working classes are large, and committed not to the limited objectives of democratic socialism but to more fundamental programmes of reform, the old regime forces of throne and altar may also move away from conservatism and towards the growing extremism of the middle classes. Lipset concludes that in countries where all three types of social pattern are apparent – large-scale capitalism combined with powerful labour movements, uncontrolled and/or partial industrialization, and a considerable presence of old regime power – middle-class extremism will be able to attract cross-cutting support and become a threat to the regime.<sup>80</sup> This helps to explain why fascist movements typically include

74 Paul Whiteley, 'The National Front vote in the 1977 GLC Elections: an aggregative data analysis', *British Journal of Political Science*, 9, 3, 1979, p. 371.

75 Seymour Lipset, *Political man*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981.

76 Martin Trow, 'Small businessmen, political tolerance, and support for McCarthy', *American Journal of Sociology*, 64, 3, 1958, p. 279.

77 Lipset, *Political man*, p. 103. A similar point is made by J. Salwyn Schapiro, who concluded his monograph *Liberalism and the challenge of fascism*, London: McGraw Hill, 1949, with the assertion that fascism 'is a revolutionary movement of the middle class, directed, on the one hand, against the great banks and the consolidations of big business and, on the other hand, against the socialist demands of the working class' (p. 733).

78 Lipset, *Political man*, p. 109. The anti-capitalism of Strasserist Nazism was, for instance, an important element in national socialism's appeal within the industrial sector (see Ernst Nolte, *Three faces of fascism: Action Française, Italian fascism, national socialism*, New York: Mentor, 1969, pp. 425–6).

79 Seymour Lipset and Earl Raab, *The politics of unreason: right-wing extremism in America 1790–1970*, London: Heinemann, 1971.

80 Lipset, *Political man*.

a diverse and often contradictory range of component forces that may give rise to amorphous and pragmatic administrations (such as Mussolini's Italy), governments based on mass mobilization that must manage the conflicting demands of aristocratic support (as in Hitler's Germany), or elitist systems that attempt to realize conservative interests through the limited incorporation of emergent social forces (like Franco's Spain).

Secondly, fascism may be seen not primarily as a middle-class reaction against the capitalizing pressures of industrialization but rather as an instrument of big business and its much smaller network of elite power. This was certainly a commonplace understanding during the 1930s. The Comintern, for instance, described fascism as 'the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist element of finance capital'.<sup>81</sup> In this sense, fascism emerged from the general features of the twentieth century as what Hobsbawm called 'the age of extremes', rather than from individual action and contingent events.<sup>82</sup> 'The germ of the Holocaust is', Mandel argues, thus 'to be found in colonialism's and imperialism's extreme racism ... [and] the peculiar – and increasingly destructive – suicidal combination of "perfect" local rationality and extreme global irrationality which characterizes international capitalism.'<sup>83</sup> This rather determinist approach has been moderated in two ways. The first, which overlaps with accounts based on the extremism of the centre, holds that, in contradiction of the Comintern's view, fascism is not simply a natural outcome of bourgeois parliamentarianism and thus fascist elites tend not to be entirely beholden to capital. Instead, Callinicos suggests that they may be initially critical of the power of big business, in order to use the lower middle classes as 'a battering ram against the organizations of the working class and the institutions of democracy'. Ultimately, though, 'the Hitler regime's success in setting the parameters for private capital was no mere act of ideological levitation, but was', Callinicos continues, 'rather closely associated with its success into entrenching itself in control of a large and expanding state capital'.<sup>84</sup> Consequently, Trotsky concludes, that 'fascism in power is least of all the rule of the petty bourgeoisie. On the contrary ... it is the most ruthless dictatorship of monopoly capital'.<sup>85</sup>

A second response to the Comintern's determinism accepts that fascism is generally supported by big business (which tends to favour its emphasis on heavy industry, inward investment, overseas expansion, and social order) but suggests that, as their power grows, fascist political elites will become increasingly autonomous and may act against the interests of capital. Adler, for instance, points to Mussolini's ability to force industrialists to accept an over-valued currency and a cumbersome corporatist bureaucracy – an observation made at the time by Antonio Gramsci, who argued that fascism was principally a manifestation of the Italian middle classes' inability to drive through the political components of the *Risorgimento*.<sup>86</sup> Mason takes a similar view of the Nazis' decision to murder many thousands of highly skilled Polish metal workers despite an acute labour shortage.<sup>87</sup> He remarks elsewhere that large firms

81 Georgi Dimitrov, *Report to the Seventh Congress Communist International: for the unity of the working class against fascism*, London: Red Star Press, 1935, p. 40.

82 Eric Hobsbawm, *The age of extremes*, London: Michael Joseph, 1994.

83 Ernest Mandel, *The meaning of the Second World War*, London: Verso, 1986, pp. 50–2.

84 Alex Callinicos, 'Plumbing the depths: Marxism and the holocaust', *Yale Journal of Criticism*, 14, 2, 2001, p. 398.

85 Leon Trotsky, *The struggle against fascism in Germany*, New York: Pathfinder, 1971, p. 405.

86 Franklin H. Adler, *Italian industrialists from liberalism to fascism: the political development of the industrial bourgeoisie, 1906–1934*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 347.

87 Timothy Mason, 'The primacy of politics: politics and economics in national socialist Germany', in Stuart Woolf, ed., *The nature of fascism*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968, p. 191.



identified themselves with National Socialism for the sake of their own further economic development. Their desire for profit and expansion, which was fully met by the political system, together with the stubborn nationalism of their leaders, did, however, bind them to a government on whose aims, in as much as they were subject to control at all, they had virtually no influence.<sup>88</sup>

This is also a view associated with August Thalheimer and his development of Marx's explanation of the French bourgeoisie's willingness to support an opportunistic despot in order to crush the workers' uprisings of 1848–49 (as set out in *The eighteenth brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* of 1852). Thalheimer concludes that such a surrender of political power leads to the 'subjugation of all the masses, including the bourgeoisie itself, beneath the fascist state'.<sup>89</sup>

The third, and widest, set of approaches to the social extensiveness of fascist support focuses less on elite power or middle-class status insecurity and more on what Whiteley calls 'mass society explanations'. Statistical data on the social bases of Nazi appeal, for example, have increasingly pointed historians to the conclusion that, far from representing any particular class or interest group, Hitler presided over a true *Volkspartei*.<sup>90</sup> As Detlef Mühlberger concludes, 'the party clearly articulated ideas which many Germans of all occupational and social backgrounds found attractive'.<sup>91</sup> Whiteley notes that explanations for such generic support have tended to look to 'psychological theories, locating support for fascism in [the] individual anomie' that results from the advance of modernity.<sup>92</sup> As states have expanded their role, the argument proceeds, large bureaucracies have deprived citizens of their sense of community, autonomy, and social responsibility. The consequences of such changes may be felt at many levels. Some writers (particularly those from, and influenced by, the Frankfurt School), have focused on the emergence of new pressures on the individual. For instance, a team of researchers from Berkeley (which included the Frankfurt émigré Theodor Adorno) put forward the idea that childhood influences derived from aspects of European culture may result in the development of an 'authoritarian personality'. They defined this in terms of nine traits (paraphrased below) which, using survey data, were plotted on what they called an F, or fascism, scale:

1. conventionalism – a rigid adherence to the perceived values of the in-group
2. authoritarian submission – an uncritical and submissive attitude to in-group authorities
3. authoritarian aggression – a tendency to search for and condemn, reject, or punish people perceived to have violated conventional values
4. anti-intraception – a rejection of subjectivity, imaginative introspection, and self-criticism
5. superstition and stereotypy – a belief in the mystical determinants of the individual's fate and a disposition to think in rigid categories

88 Timothy Mason, *Nazism, fascism and the working class*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 71–2.

89 August Thalheimer, 'On fascism', *What Next Journal*, 1928, p. 6.

90 Formative examples of these studies include Thomas Childers, 'The social bases of the national socialist vote', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 11, 4, 1976, pp. 17–42; Jürgen Falter, 'Radicalization of the middle classes or mobilization of the unpolitical?', *Social Science Information*, 20, 2, 1981, pp. 389–430; Paul Madden, 'The social class origins of Nazi Party members as determined by occupations, 1919–1933', *Social Science Quarterly*, 68, 1987, pp. 263–80.

91 Detlef Mühlberger, *The social bases of Nazism, 1919–1933*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 79–80.

92 Whiteley, 'National Front vote', p. 371.

6. power and toughness – an exaggerated assertion of strength, the ego, and domination
7. destructiveness and cynicism – a generalized hostility and a vilification of the humane
8. projectivity – a tendency to project unconscious emotional impulses onto an outside world that is defined in terms of evil, chaos, and danger
9. sexuality – an exaggerated concern with sex and sexual orientation<sup>93</sup>

For Erich Fromm, another member of the Frankfurt School, such personality types were an outcome of a generalized decay in the moral and familial structures of European society. Having trained initially as a Talmudic scholar, he put forward the idea that the advent of modernity prompted not liberation but new forms of restriction. In *Escape from freedom*, he wrote,

What characterizes medieval in contrast to modern society is its lack of individual freedom ... But altogether a person was not free in the modern sense, neither was he alone and isolated. In having a distinct, unchangeable, and unquestionable place in the social world from the moment of birth, man was rooted in a structuralized whole, and thus life had a meaning which left no place, and no need for, doubt.<sup>94</sup>

This uncertainty may become more widespread as rising national cultures (frequently perceived to be distant and unresponsive) begin to override what were previously more significant regional differences. In such a society, civil engagement is, for C. Wright Mills, characterized by four key features:

- (1) far fewer people express opinions than receive them; for the community of publics becomes an abstract collection of individuals who receive impressions from the mass media.
- (2) The communications that prevail are so organized that it is difficult or impossible for the individual to answer back immediately or with any effect.
- (3) The realization of opinion in action is controlled by authorities who organize and control the channels of such action.
- (4) The mass has no autonomy from institutions; on the contrary, agents of authorized institutions penetrate this mass, reducing any autonomy it may have in the formation of opinion by discussion.<sup>95</sup>

Since the feelings of isolation, impotence, anomie, and frustration that result are felt throughout the masses, resistance to the highly rationalist corporate and political centre is more likely to be grounded upon what Max Horkheimer (the Director of the Frankfurt School from 1930 until its closure in 1933) called the self-destructive anti-intellectualism of ‘perverse reason’ than on clear guiding principles.<sup>96</sup> Amorphous notions of identity are thus more probable outcomes of dissent than an adherence to the more reasoned promise of class struggle. William Kornhauser argues that, in the absence of generalized norms and beliefs, these can, when organized around an emphasis on nationality, race, and strong authority, generate a visceral appeal that has the potential to transcend previous social divides. Cross-class associational networks are, as Dylan Riley has noted of interwar Spain and Italy, therefore a common source of fascist support – particularly,

93 Theodor Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel Levinson, and Nevitt Sanford, *The authoritarian personality*, New York: Harper and Row, 1950. See also Robert Altemeyer, *The authoritarians*, Manitoba: University of Manitoba, 2006, p. 15, who develops the F scale into measures of ‘right-wing authoritarianism’.

94 Erich Fromm, *Escape from freedom*, New York: Rinehart & Co, 1941, pp. 41–2.

95 Charles Wright Mills, *The power elite*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 304.

96 Max Horkheimer, *The eclipse of reason*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947.

Kornhauser concludes, if made up of ‘unattached intellectuals, marginal members of the middle class, isolated industrial and farm workers’.<sup>97</sup>

## Strategy: how?

Accounts of how fascists gain support and, in some cases, come to power largely coalesce around two fundamental themes: mobilization/action and ideology/ideas. At one level, this is a debate between accounts that focus on elite manipulation, paramilitarism, reactionary opportunism, and rational efforts to conceal fascism’s economic base on the one hand and those that emphasize its regenerative, radical, and affective modernism on the other. The latter position contains a number of different elements. For some, fascists simply succeeded in appealing to a self-interested polity more successfully than their competitors and little additional explanation is required.<sup>98</sup>

Mostly, however, scholars have tended to emphasize the dissemination of a foundational discourse on social dissolution and national degeneration which contradicts the idea of a progressive Western developmental trajectory based on liberal notions of advance and modernization. In Douglas Greene’s words, ‘the first fascists rejected the Enlightenment principles of rationality and equality, in particular its democratic theory in support of universal suffrage’.<sup>99</sup> As Mussolini put it, ‘fascism denies that the majority, through the mere fact of being a majority, can rule human societies’.<sup>100</sup> To surrender sovereignty to the masses would, accordingly, offer the (variously defined) internal enemy an opportunity to corrode national unity, state power, and the moral authority of a yesteryear now lost.

So, in place of an apodictic rationalization of society, fascism frequently relies upon what Hitler called a ‘big lie’ based on what he identified as ‘the primitive simplicity’ of the people who are ‘always more easily corrupted in the deeper strata of their emotional nature than consciously or voluntarily’.<sup>101</sup> This was partly promulgated by a romantic or *magic* realism in which art was to be rescued from its debauched self-indulgence and the pre-modern past was to be lionized. A *natural* style and aesthetic were sentimentalized as the embodiment of the national essence and, in Germany, ‘the mystical and the occult were taken both as an explanation and as a solution to man’s alienation from modern society, culture, and politics’.<sup>102</sup>

In this sense, fascism may be viewed as a kind of sacralization of politics. For some, such as J. S. Barnes (the leading writer at the pro-fascist Centre International d’Études sur le Fascisme in Lausanne), this represented a return to the philosophical values of the Catholic Middle Ages and its ‘spiritual, dualistic and transcendental outlook on life’.<sup>103</sup> The potential of the Partito

97 Dylan Riley, ‘Civic associations and authoritarian regimes in interwar Europe: Italy and Spain in comparative perspective’, *American Sociological Review*, 70, 2, 2005, p. 290; William Kornhauser, *The politics of mass society*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960, p. 182. For an example of contemporary rightist civil society organizations, see Tim Jacoby, ‘Fascism, civility and the crisis of the Turkish state’, *Third World Quarterly*, 32, 5, 2011, pp. 905–24.

98 For instance, William Brustein, *The logic of evil: the social origins of the Nazi Party, 1925–1933*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996, p. 181, concludes that, before 1933, ‘the Nazi Party alone crafted economic policies that in the perception of many Germans could redress their grievances or provide the means to greater social mobility’.

99 Douglas Greene, ‘The bourgeois origins of fascist repression: on Robert Paxton’s *The anatomy of fascism*’, *Socialism and Democracy*, 22, 2, 2008, p. 110.

100 Quoted in William Ebenstein, *Great political thinkers*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965, p. 617.

101 Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. J. Murphy, London: Hurst and Blackett, 1939, p. 197.

102 Mosse, *Fascist revolution*, p. 117.

103 Quoted in Thomas Linehan, *British fascism 1918–1939: parties, ideology and culture*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, p. 129.

Nazionale Fascista – of which Barnes was a member – was thus realized when the Italian people, ‘among whom the old *renaissance* and pre-*renaissance* traditions had never withered, acquired a consciousness of their spiritual needs’.<sup>104</sup> It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that the term ‘clerical fascism’ emerged (firstly in connection with the decision of the staunchly Catholic Partito Popolare Italiano to take part in Mussolini’s first government in 1922) to describe theologians’ support for, or integration of, the ideas/policies of regimes as varied as the Croatian Ustaše, Belgium’s Rexists, and the *nacionalcatolicismo* of Francoist Spain.<sup>105</sup> Others have observed ‘the rudiments of a new religion’, or in Payne’s words, a ‘civic religion [that] would displace preceding structures of belief and relegate supernatural religion to a secondary role, or to none at all’.<sup>106</sup>

What is certainly the case is that the articulation of a transcendent faith broadly conceived is vital to fascism’s immanent claim to be a third force between the material concerns of Marxism and liberal capitalism.<sup>107</sup> Its liturgical content served both to acculturate the masses and to legitimize the notion (and the moralizing role) of an ethical state – defined by Barnes as the arbiter of the ‘eternal law of God’ and ‘the most perfect example ... [of the] differentiated human group’.<sup>108</sup> It is thus the corporatist state which, by subsuming individual rights and purging contagion, represents the collective conscience of the nation, harmonizes the conflicting interests of labour and capital, inculcates a militarized civic duty, and realizes the citizenry’s shared destiny through overseas conquest.

Such objectives are, however, unlikely to be met through reactionary rhetoric and nostalgia. As part of what Ralf Dahrendorf identifies as ‘a strong push towards modernity’, fascism also contains a love of technological development and a sense of the avant-garde – both of which are apparent in its discourses on individual creativity, the pursuit of the authentic self, and the triumph of the will over the stifling constraints of liberal mediocrity.<sup>109</sup> Both Hitler and Mussolini enjoyed sports cars and flying and each presided over large increases in their country’s industrial output (by 1938, this was more than 50 per cent greater than 1913 levels).<sup>110</sup> Such an emphasis on what the Italian fascist Nazareno Mezzetti called the ‘defense and development of production’ has led some to conclude that, with the exception of the staunchly Christian Iron Guard, European fascism had few organic connections to the Church and is much more productively understood as ‘a scientific belief system ... [that] could only have happened in the secular twentieth century’.<sup>111</sup>

In attempting to reconcile its apparently contradictory blend of contemporaneity and atavism, fascism turns to ‘a crude social Darwinism ... [and] a direct and unmediated application of biological and pseudo-biological categories to the social realm’.<sup>112</sup> This serves the purpose of both legitimizing the core beliefs that humankind was neither born equal nor intrinsically rational, and that the innate human condition is a martial struggle over fitness maximization, for which racial engineering is an obvious and effective means of ensuring

104 James Strachey Barnes, *Fascism*, London: Thornton Butterworth, 1931, p. 45, emphases in original.

105 Griffin, ‘Holy storm’, p. 5.

106 Herbert Schneider and Shepard Clough, *Making fascists*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1929, p. 73; Stanley Payne, ‘A form of revolutionary ultra-nationalism’, in Griffin, *International fascism*, p. 150.

107 Emilio Gentile, ‘Fascism as a political religion’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 25, 2/3, 1990, p. 229.

108 Barnes, *Fascism*, p. 81.

109 Ralf Dahrendorf, *Society and democracy in Germany*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967, p. 418.

110 A. James Gregor, ‘A modernizing dictatorship’, in Griffin, *International fascism*, p. 133.

111 *Ibid.*, p. 133; Levy, ‘Fascism’, pp. 104–5.

112 Neocleous, *Fascism*, p. 114.

individual and collective health.<sup>113</sup> Here, fascist ideologies draw upon the close connection between nationalism and historiography and the role of anthropology and aesthetics in the establishment of the new sciences of the eighteenth century. Neoclassical influences led to the Greek ideal type of morphology and masculinity being compared to what was thought of as the lesser European or native races, and the widespread acceptance of phrenology and physiognomy as means ‘to judge the inward by the outward man’.<sup>114</sup> Mussolini, for instance, from the early years of his administration onwards, built commentaries on ‘racial solidarity’ and the ‘inundation of the entire white race, the race of the Occident, by the races of colour’ (as well as extensive diatribes on Jews’ apparent ‘revenge against the Aryan race that condemned them to dispersion’) into his vision of a *new man*.<sup>115</sup> This pursuit of a pristine racial purity is an important example of fascism’s commitment to rebirth. Matthew Lyons suggests that its focus on paligenetic myth, ‘clarifies fascism’s apparent contradiction between forward- and backward-looking tendencies. ... The glories of an earlier age ... [are an] inspiration for creating a “new order”, not restoring an old one’.<sup>116</sup> It may therefore be this ‘commitment to *both* modernity *and* a mythicized past’ which gives fascism its coherence, ideological allure, and salient role in what Neocleous calls ‘the culmination of the conservative revolution’.<sup>117</sup>

Alternatively, fascism’s appeal might be less driven by its lucidity and more by the apolitical pragmatics of securing power for, and maintaining the power of, its small cabal of leaders. In other words, approaching its *modus operandi* principally through an analysis of its ideology could overlook the more significant fact that, rather than seeking to apply a cogent body of doctrine, it utilizes whichever national themes – however self-contradictory – are most likely to mobilize support.<sup>118</sup> In this sense, the role of ideas is subsidiary to the efficacy of action. As Robert Paxton notes, a fascist movement draws its legitimacy ‘not from some universal scripture but from what it considers the most authentic elements of its own community identity’. Unlike other political *isms*, he continues, ‘fascism does not rest on formal philosophical positions with claims to universal validity’.<sup>119</sup> Instead, its most influential advocates were generally at pains to stress the value of mass emotion, intuitive insight, and the power of the human will. The ‘intellectual father of fascism’, Georges Sorel, for instance, recast socialism in non-scientific terms by stressing the importance of social myths.<sup>120</sup> These are seen not as carriers of sacred ideas but as a means of tapping ‘into the collective and irrational forces that bind collective agents ... [and thus] foster action and engage the will’.<sup>121</sup> Once what the Belgian collaborationist and social theorist Henrik de Man identified as ‘the eternally revolutionary forces of the spirit’ are captured, the need for a plausible ideology may lessen or even be eliminated altogether.<sup>122</sup> Here, Gustave Le Bon’s work on the ways in which ‘man can be harnessed to a political mass movement’ not through dogma but through a psychological

113 Roger Eatwell, ‘Towards a new model of generic fascism’, *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 4, 2, 1992, pp. 176–7.

114 Mosse, *Fascist revolution*, p. 60.

115 Quoted in Gregor, *Ideology of fascism*, pp. 246, 249, 150.

116 Lyons, ‘Two ways’, p. 142.

117 Neocleous, *Fascism*, p. 60, emphases in original.

118 Robert Paxton, *The anatomy of fascism*, New York: Vintage Books, 2005, p. 40.

119 Paxton, ‘Five stages of fascism’, pp. 3–4.

120 Valois, quoted in Zeev Sternhell, *Neither right nor left: fascist ideology in France*, trans. David Maisel, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986, p. 9.

121 Neocleous, *Fascism*, p. 8.

122 Quoted in Sternhell, *Neither right nor left*, p. 22.

understanding of the innate conservatism of crowds has been particularly important – not least to the thinking of both Hitler and Mussolini, who studied his work closely.<sup>123</sup>

These writers' depiction of a lumpen body politic that 'would easily be swayed by a manipulative great leader', helped to inform what Eatwell describes as the 'charimatization' of ideas.<sup>124</sup> Questioning the role of mass affective support, he argues that fascist leaders (as well as a 'crucial intermediate group of activists') were decisive in ironing out or concealing ideological inconsistencies within the movement and across different localities.<sup>125</sup> Even among elites who, according to Eatwell, 'lacked characteristics such [as] great speaking ability, a magnetic personal presence, or a clear utopian vision, there developed around them a cult of the exemplary, missionary leader, destined to re-forged national unity and lead the people into a new era'.<sup>126</sup> Given the problems of penetrating society (and especially the working classes), many fascist movements thus remained sceptical about the efficacy of mass politicization (favouring the garnering of external support over the development of internal resources). Nazism adhered to a *putschist* approach for much of the 1920s, and the March on Rome was more about intra-elite divisions than the successful dissemination of a unifying ideology. Elsewhere, Action Française abandoned the search for a national platform in 1912, Salazar lacked any significant party orientation, and Latin American fascism has largely relied on coups and street violence organized by small, disciplined, and well-connected vanguards.<sup>127</sup>

Indeed, as Paxton has pointed out, plebeian action and variations of the *Führerprinzip* have frequently taken the place of agenda and principles. 'Early fascist programs are', he notes, 'poor guides to later fascist policy'.<sup>128</sup> Mussolini's 1919 manifesto (which promised to enfranchise women, limit working hours, promote labour rights, and confiscate church property) was, for instance, later set aside in favour of paramilitarism, compromises with conservatives, and a growing personality cult around the infallibility of Il Duce. 'Similarly, the hostility of the Nazi Twenty-Five Points of 1920 toward all capitalism except that of artisan producers bears little relation to the sometimes strained though powerfully effective collaboration for rearmament between German business and the Nazi regime.'<sup>129</sup> Political opportunism may also have led it to 'downplay its anti-Semitism, racism, xenophobia, and hypernationalism before 1933'.<sup>130</sup> In all, it might be possible to conclude, as Jim Wolfreys does, that 'action, not doctrine or philosophy, is what drove the major fascist movements of the inter-war period'.<sup>131</sup>

## Conclusion

As Roger Griffin observes, efforts to set out fascism's global extensiveness have produced a wide range of analyses. He identifies a broad spectrum of views between what he calls 'minimalist' and 'maximalist' positions.<sup>132</sup> At one pole is a fundamental resistance to the idea that meaningful historiographic narratives can be based on synchronic and

123 George Mosse quoted in Karel Plessini, *The perils of normalcy: George L. Mosse and the remaking of cultural history*, Maddison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014, p. 66.

124 Eatwell, 'New styles of dictatorship', p. 134.

125 Eatwell, 'Explaining fascism', p. 267.

126 Eatwell, 'New styles of dictatorship', p. 134.

127 Eatwell, 'Towards a new model', pp. 186–7.

128 Paxton 'Five stages of fascism', p. 5.

129 *Ibid.*

130 Brustein, *Logic of evil*, pp. 181–2.

131 Jim Wolfreys, 'What is fascism?', *International Socialism*, 112, 2006, p. 5.

132 Griffin, 'Caught in its own net', p. 47.



diachronic comparison. Chastened by the legacy of Ranke, historians from a more nominalist tradition have tended to see political ideologies as fragmented by necessarily unique national contexts. Alongside this position, there are those who recommend a limited acceptance of the comparative method (normally within tightly specified confines), but who consider fascism too woolly a term to be amenable to such an approach. After all, unlike its more intellectually developed competitors – liberalism, socialism, conservatism, and so on – fascism lacks a sophisticated set of doctrinal components that could constitute a basis for immediately productive cross-national analyses.

Towards the other pole are approaches that are less concerned with a search for fascism's ideological attributes, and more interested in its functional characteristics. Largely produced by social scientists influenced by the return to the grand narratives and big questions of the nineteenth century following the Second World War, maximalist studies frequently look for commonalities at a greater level of abstraction. Sacrificing the insights that minutiae can bring, case material is principally used in order to enhance the way in which fascism is understood generally.

It is, however, clear that 'that the bulk of fascist studies operate on premises which occupy a safe middle ground between minimalists and maximalists'.<sup>133</sup> In this intermediate ground, where it is possible to see the influence of both Ranke and Linz, the peculiarities of national development are noted, but not viewed as grounds, per se, to obstruct comparison. The results of these analyses tend, though, to be cautious and circumspect, with the consequence that much of the vast literature on fascism as a global phenomenon is reiterative and atheoretical.

While it is true that, 'during the past several years, studies have become more theoretically and methodologically sophisticated and increasingly comparative in scope', a key problem remains that, without a conceptual framework that objectifies fascism, it is difficult to get beyond merely describing what fascists say about themselves.<sup>134</sup> Observers may therefore be tempted to conclude that it is static, uniform, and quintessentially European. Indeed, fascism's intrinsic xenophobia may mean that its exportable, or even global, qualities are overlooked, or seen simply as the results of coercion. Relative scale may also obfuscate the significance of comprador movements in the global South. While these infrequently rose to power, did not attempt to effect large-scale geopolitical change, and did not engage in violence proportionate to that in Europe, historians have demonstrated that many had their roots in the dynamics of the nineteenth century, and all exerted an important national influence over subsequent political developments.

In this sense, then, ideological currents during the nineteenth century and since the Second World War have tended to undermine the premise, so pronounced within what Roger Griffin calls 'the intermediate camp', that the unprecedented violence of the First World War was determinative.<sup>135</sup> While the destruction wrought upon Germany might help to explain Nazism, the impact of the conflict may equally be used to account for Bolshevism, female enfranchisement, laissez-faire trade, multilateralism, and many other highly varied outcomes. Indeed, given the fact that France, Britain, and the Ottomans all suffered more casualties than Italy, actual war losses would appear to have been only a limited causal element in the rise of Mussolini, whose political orientation, like many other interwar fascists the world over, was significantly affected by events that occurred before 1914. Similar continuities can be said to persist over the course of the Second World War. Historians have traced how numerous

133 *Ibid.*

134 Jens Rydgren, 'The sociology of the radical right', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 33, 2007, p. 257.

135 Griffin, 'Caught in its own net', p. 47.

eminent fascists and neo-Nazi movements have had an important, if variable, bearing on the mass politics of Western democracies, Latin American juntas, and the so-called developmental dictatorships of the global South.

Popular support for these has come from a variety of sources. Psychologists have pointed to emergent pressures on the individual resulting from the globalized development of the mass society. Uncertainty, moral ambiguity, atomization, and bureaucratization merge to form personality types that may be especially attracted to the idealism and personalization that fascism frequently offers. As Stanley Payne has noted, however, psychological approaches have tended to ‘obfuscate the extent to which practical ideological content and cogent appeals to tangible interests figured in the programs and practices of fascist movements, as well as the extent to which many of their supporters were still identified and definable as members of structured social or institutional sectors’.<sup>136</sup> The petty bourgeoisie, so often the favoured culprits here, have tended to move away from the political centre and offer such backing during times of prolonged crisis. These crises may have a wide range of causes: the dual economic pressures of rising big business coupled with the boom and bust of market capitalism, collapses in political authority, military defeat or demobilization, and ideological threats to the existing order from the revolutionary left.<sup>137</sup> In such circumstances, a radicalizing middle class might be joined by elements of the old regime or, in situations in which the relations of production are imperilled, monopoly capital.

These cross-cutting coalitions presented a melange of ideas and discourses that transcend contemporary crises both by pointing to an immanent cause – foreign or domestic enemies – and by setting out an effective course of potentially remedial measures. Commonly central here has been the need for a process of rebirth, the profundity of which tends to render it amenable to management only by a perspicacious elite. The ideological content of such renaissance has varied greatly, with some movements connecting the determinants of national health much more closely to the efficacy of faith, race, and industry than others. This has led some to conclude that fascism is globally adaptable: ‘in constant motion, showing a new face to fit any particular set of problems that arise to threaten the predominance of the traditionalist, capitalist ruling class’.<sup>138</sup> Perhaps more illuminating than values, then, is the ongoing usefulness of action. Fascism’s power to intimidate has certainly remained fundamental to its success. Michael Mann suggests that it has, after all, clearly ‘had a great impact on the world *only* because of its collective actions and its organizational forms’. It is thus vital not to exaggerate the mobilizing potential of its ideological content, especially once the state has been captured. As Mann concludes, ‘If fascism had been only extreme nationalism, it would have been only unpleasantly xenophobic. But by embracing paramilitarism, fascists coerced each other into extreme action, they destroyed their opponents, and they convinced many bystanders that they could finally bring “order” to modern society.’<sup>139</sup>

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136 Payne, *History of fascism*, p. 455.

137 Michael Mann, *Fascists*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

138 George Jackson, *Blood in my eye*, Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 1990, p. 118.

139 Mann, *Fascists*, pp. 12–13.