

Now that we understand Fascism, do we see signs of it?

1:00PM Welcome - Intro

Short Review of historical context of Fascism and definition

What is Fascism?

By [Matthew N. Lyons](#), on [March 9, 1997](#)

Author's Note: I am skeptical of efforts to produce a "definition" of fascism. As a dynamic historical current, fascism has taken many different forms, and has evolved dramatically in some ways. To understand what fascism has encompassed as a movement and a system of rule, we have to look at its historical context and development—as a form of counter-revolutionary politics that first arose in early twentieth-century Europe in response to rapid social upheaval, the devastation of World War I, and the Bolshevik Revolution. The following paragraphs are intended as an initial, open-ended sketch.

Fascism is a form of extreme right-wing ideology that celebrates the nation or the race as an organic community transcending all other loyalties. It emphasizes a myth of national or racial rebirth after a period of decline or destruction. To this end, fascism calls for a "spiritual revolution" against signs of moral decay such as individualism and materialism, and seeks to purge "alien" forces and groups that threaten the organic community. Fascism tends to celebrate masculinity, youth, mystical unity, and the regenerative power of violence. Often, but not always, it promotes racial superiority doctrines, ethnic persecution, imperialist expansion, and genocide. At the same time, fascists may embrace a form of internationalism based on either racial or ideological solidarity across national boundaries. Usually fascism espouses open male supremacy, though sometimes it may also promote female solidarity and new opportunities for women of the privileged nation or race.

Fascism's approach to politics is both populist—in that it seeks to activate "the people" as a whole against perceived oppressors or enemies—and elitist—in that it treats the people's will as embodied in a select group, or often one supreme leader, from whom authority proceeds downward. Fascism seeks to organize a cadre-led mass movement in a drive to seize state power. It seeks to forcibly subordinate all spheres of society to its ideological vision of organic community, usually through a totalitarian state. Both as a movement and a regime, fascism uses mass organizations as a system of integration and control, and uses organized violence to suppress opposition, although the scale of violence varies widely.

Fascism is hostile to Marxism, liberalism, and conservatism, yet it borrows concepts and practices from all three. Fascism rejects the principles of class struggle and workers' internationalism as threats to national or racial unity, yet it often exploits real grievances against capitalists and landowners through ethnic scapegoating or radical-sounding conspiracy theories. Fascism rejects the liberal doctrines of individual autonomy and rights, political pluralism, and representative government, yet it advocates broad popular participation in politics and may use parliamentary channels in its drive to power. Its vision of a "new order" clashes with the conservative attachment to tradition-based institutions and hierarchies, yet fascism often romanticizes the past as inspiration for national rebirth.

Fascism has a complex relationship with established elites and the non-fascist right. It is never a mere puppet of the ruling class, but an autonomous movement with its own social base. In practice, fascism defends capitalism against instability and the left, but also pursues an agenda that sometimes clashes with capitalist interests in significant ways. There has been much cooperation, competition, and interaction between fascism and other sections of the right, producing various hybrid movements and regimes.

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- See more at: <http://www.politicalresearch.org/1997/03/09/what-is-fascism-2/#sthash.2wjzEr53.dpuf>

- What historical elements do you remember about Fascism?

Notes:

1:30PM Group exercise: 14 warning signs of Fascism - Laurence Brutt

Fascism Anyone?

By Laurence W. Britt, *Free Inquiry Magazine*, Vol 22 no 2, [15 July 2003]

...For the purpose of this perspective, I will consider the following regimes: Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, Franco's Spain, Salazar's Portugal, Papadopoulos's Greece, Pinochet's Chile, and Suharto's Indonesia. Analysis of these seven regimes reveals fourteen common threads that link them in recognizable patterns of national behavior and abuse of power. These basic characteristics are more prevalent and intense in some regimes than in others, but they all share at least some level of similarity.

The complete article is available at <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/27/076.html>

2:15PM Discussion time and snack

- Are we seeing signs of fascism? Anti-democratic? Totalitarian
- On Sun. October 23rd, 2016 1-2:30pm, Nucleus CoShare, 411 E. Fifth St., Downtown Dayton we take on Part Three, How do we build an effective resistance? Ideas to incorporate for the next session?

Team A: Put a story or example on the 3x5 card for each of the warning signs you see now. Note those absent. Report your findings to the group.

1. Powerful and continuing expressions of nationalism.

From the prominent displays of flags and bunting to the ubiquitous lapel pins, the fervor to show patriotic nationalism, both on the part of the regime itself and of citizens caught up in its frenzy, was always obvious. Catchy slogans, pride in the military, and demands for unity were common themes in expressing this nationalism. It was usually coupled with a suspicion of things foreign that often bordered on xenophobia.

2. Disdain for the importance of human rights.

The regimes themselves viewed human rights as of little value and a hindrance to realizing the objectives of the ruling elite. Through clever use of propaganda, the population was brought to accept these human rights abuses by marginalizing, even demonizing, those being targeted. When abuse was egregious, the tactic was to use secrecy, denial, and disinformation.

3. Identification of enemies/scapegoats as a unifying cause.

The most significant common thread among these regimes was the use of scapegoating as a means to divert the peoples attention from other problems, to shift blame for failures, and to channel frustration in controlled directions. The methods of choice relentless propaganda and disinformation were usually effective. Often the regimes would incite spontaneous acts against the target scapegoats, usually communists, socialists, liberals, Jews, ethnic and racial minorities, traditional national enemies, members of other religions, secularists, homosexuals, and terrorists. Active opponents of these regimes were inevitably labeled as terrorists and dealt with accordingly.

Team B: Put a story or example on the 3x5 card for each of the warning signs you see now. Note those absent. Report your findings to the group.

4. The supremacy of the military/avid militarism.

Ruling elites always identified closely with the military and the industrial infrastructure that supported it. A disproportionate share of national resources was allocated to the military, even when domestic needs were acute. The military was seen as an expression of nationalism, and was used whenever possible to assert national goals, intimidate other nations, and increase the power and prestige of the ruling elite.

5. Rampant sexism.

Beyond the simple fact that the political elite and the national culture were male-dominated, these regimes inevitably viewed women as second-class citizens. They were adamantly anti-abortion and also homophobic. These attitudes were usually codified in Draconian laws that enjoyed strong support by the orthodox religion of the country, thus lending the regime cover for its abuses.

6. A controlled mass media.

Under some of the regimes, the mass media were under strict direct control and could be relied upon never to stray from the party line. Other regimes exercised more subtle power to ensure media orthodoxy. Methods included the control of licensing and access to resources, economic pressure, appeals to patriotism, and implied threats. The leaders of the mass media were often politically compatible with the power elite. The result was usually success in keeping the general public unaware of the regimes excesses.

Team C: Put a story or example on the 3x5 card for each of the warning signs you see now. Note those absent. Report your findings to the group.

7. Obsession with national security.

Inevitably, a national security apparatus was under direct control of the ruling elite. It was usually an instrument of oppression, operating in secret and beyond any constraints. Its actions were justified under the rubric of protecting national security, and questioning its activities was portrayed as unpatriotic or even treasonous.

8. Religion and ruling elite tied together.

Unlike communist regimes, the fascist and protofascist regimes were never proclaimed as godless by their opponents. In fact, most of the regimes attached themselves to the predominant religion of the country and chose to portray themselves as militant defenders of that religion. The fact that the ruling elites behavior was incompatible with the precepts of the religion was generally swept under the rug.

Propaganda kept up the illusion that the ruling elites were defenders of the faith and opponents of the godless. A perception was manufactured that opposing the power elite was tantamount to an attack on religion.

9. Power of corporations protected.

Although the personal life of ordinary citizens was under strict control, the ability of large corporations to operate in relative freedom was not compromised. The ruling elite saw the corporate structure as a way to not only ensure military production (in developed states), but also as an additional means of social control. Members of the economic elite were often pampered by the political elite to ensure a continued mutuality of interests, especially in the repression of have-not citizens.

10. Power of labor suppressed or eliminated.

Since organized labor was seen as the one power center that could challenge the political hegemony of the ruling elite and its corporate allies, it was inevitably crushed or made powerless. The poor formed an underclass, viewed with suspicion or outright contempt. Under some regimes, being poor was considered akin to a vice.

Team D: Put a story or example on the 3x5 for each of the warning signs you see now. Report your findings to the group.

11. Disdain and suppression of intellectuals and the arts.

Intellectuals and the inherent freedom of ideas and expression associated with them were anathema to these regimes. Intellectual and academic freedom were considered subversive to national security and the patriotic ideal.

Universities were tightly controlled; politically unreliable faculty harassed or eliminated. Unorthodox ideas or expressions of dissent were strongly attacked, silenced, or crushed. To these regimes, art and literature should serve the national interest or they had no right to exist.

12. Obsession with crime and punishment.

Most of these regimes maintained Draconian systems of criminal justice with huge prison populations. The police were often glorified and had almost unchecked power, leading to rampant abuse. Normal and political crime were often merged into trumped-up criminal charges and sometimes used against political opponents of the regime. Fear, and hatred, of criminals or traitors was often promoted among the population as an excuse for more police power.

13. Rampant cronyism and corruption.

Those in business circles and close to the power elite often used their position to enrich themselves. This corruption worked both ways; the power elite would receive financial gifts and property from the economic elite, who in turn would gain the benefit of government favoritism. Members of the power elite were in a position to obtain vast wealth from other sources as well: for example, by stealing national resources. With the national security apparatus under control and the media muzzled, this corruption was largely unconstrained and not well understood by the general population.

14. Fraudulent elections.

Elections in the form of plebiscites or public opinion polls were usually bogus. When actual elections with candidates were held, they would usually be perverted by the power elite to get the desired result. Common methods included maintaining control of the election machinery, intimidating and disenfranchising opposition voters, destroying or disallowing legal votes, and, as a last resort, turning to a judiciary beholden to the power elite.

Does any of this ring alarm bells? Of course not. After all, this is America, officially a democracy with the rule of law, a constitution, a free press, honest elections, and a well-informed public constantly being put on guard against evils. Historical comparisons like these are just exercises in verbal gymnastics. Maybe, maybe not.

When facism comes to America, it will be wrapped in the American flag.

- Huey Long