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A Sociology of Fascist Movements

TAKING FASCISTS SERIOUSLY

This book seeks to explain fascism by understanding fascists – who they were, where they came from, what their motivations were, how they rose to power. I focus here on the rise of fascist movements rather than on established fascist regimes. I investigate fascists at their flood tide, in their major redoubts in interwar Europe, that is, in Austria, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Romania, and Spain. To understand fascists will require understanding fascist movements. We can understand little of individual fascists and their deeds unless we appreciate that they were joined together into distinctive power organizations. We must also understand them amid their broader twentieth-century context, in relation to general aspirations for more effective states and greater national solidarity. For fascism is neither an oddity nor merely of historical interest. Fascism has been an essential if predominantly undesirable part of modernity. At the beginning of the twenty-first century there are seven reasons still to take fascists very seriously.

(1) Fascism was not a mere sideshow in the development of modern society. Fascism spread through much of the European heartland of modernity. Alongside environmentalism, it was the major political doctrine of world-historical significance created during the twentieth century. There is a chance that something quite like it, though almost certainly under another name, will play an important role in the twenty-first century. Fascists have been at the heart of modernity.

(2) Fascism was not a movement set quite apart from other modern movements. Fascists only embraced more fervently than anyone else the central political icon of our time, the nation-state, together with its ideologies and pathologies. We are thankful that today much of the world lives under rather mild nation-states, with modest, useful powers, embodying only

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a fairly harmless nationalism. National government bureaucracies annoy us but they do not terrorize us – indeed, they predominantly serve our needs. Nationalism usually also appears in comforting domesticated forms. Though French people often proclaim themselves as culturally superior, Americans assert they are the freest people on Earth, and the Japanese claim a unique racial homogeneity, these highly suspect beliefs comfort themselves, amuse foreigners, and rarely harm anyone else.

Fascism represents a kind of second-level escalation beyond such "mild nation-statism." The first escalation came in two parallel forms, one concerning the nation, the other the state. Regarding the nation, aspirations for democracy became entwined with the notion of the "integral" or "organic" nation. "The people" must rule, but this people was considered as one and indivisible and so might violently exclude from itself minority ethnic groups and political "enemies" (see my forthcoming volume, *The Darkside of Democracy*, chap. 1, for more analysis of this). Regarding the state, the early twentieth century saw the rise of a more powerful state, seen as "the bearer of a moral project," capable of achieving economic, social, and moral development.[1] In certain contexts this involved the rise of more authoritarian states. The combination of modern nationalism and statism was to turn democratic aspirations on their head, into authoritarian regimes seeking to "cleanse" minorities and opponents from the nation. Fascism, the second-level escalation, added to this combination mainly a distinctively "bottom-up" and "radical" paramilitary movement. This would overcome all opposition to the organic nation-state with violence from below, at whatever the cost. Such glorification of actual violence had emerged as a consequence of the modern "democratization" of war into one between "citizen armies." Fascism thus presented a distinctively paramilitary extreme version of nation-statism (my actual definition of fascism is given below in this chapter). It was only the most extreme version of the dominant political ideology of our era.

(3) Fascist ideology must be taken seriously, in its own terms. It must not be dismissed as crazy, contradictory, or vague. Nowadays, this is quite widely accepted. Zeev Sternhell (1986: x) has remarked that fascism had "a body of doctrine no less solid or logically indefensible than that of any other political movement." Consequently, said George Mosse (1999: x), "only . . . when we have grasped fascism from the inside out, can we truly judge its appeal and its power." Since fascists did offer plausible solutions to modern social problems, they got mass electoral support and intense emotional commitment from militants. Of course, like most political activists, fascists were diverse and opportunistic. The importance of leadership and

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power in fascism enhanced opportunism. Fascist leaders were empowered to do almost anything to seize power, and this could subvert other fascist values. Yet most fascists, leaders or led, believed in certain things. They were not people of peculiar character, sadists or psychopaths, or people with a "rag-bag" of half-understood dogmas and slogans flitting through their heads (or no more so than the rest of us). Fascism was a movement of high ideals, able to persuade a substantial part of two generations of young people (especially the highly educated) that it could bring about a more harmonious social order. To understand fascism, I adopt a methodology of taking fascists' values seriously. Thus each of my case-study chapters begins by explaining local fascist doctrine, followed, if possible, by an account of what ordinary fascists seem to have believed.

(4) We must take seriously the social constituency of fascist movements and ask what sorts of people were drawn to them. Few fascists were marginals or misfits. Nor were they confined to classes or other interest groups who found in fascism a "cover" for their narrow material interests. Yet there were "core fascist constituencies" among which fascist values most resonated. This is perhaps the most original part of this book, yielding a new view of fascism, and it derives from a methodology of taking fascist values seriously. For the core fascist constituency enjoyed particularly close relations to the sacred icon of fascism, the nation-state. We must reconstruct that nation-state–loving constituency in order to see what kinds of people might be tempted toward fascism.

(5) We must also take seriously fascist movements. They were hierarchical yet comradely, embodying both the leadership principle and a constraining "social cage," both of which heightened commitment, especially by single young men for whom the movement was almost a "total institution." We must also appreciate its paramilitarism, since "popular violence" was crucial to its success. Fascist movements also changed as they were tempted by two different prospects. One was to use power in more and more radical and violent ways. The other was to enjoy the fruits of power by compromising under the table with powerful traditional elites. These led toward either a hardening of fascism (as in Germany) or a softening (as in Italy, at least until the late 1930s). Fascists also experienced "careers" in the movement, which might lead them down either path. We must observe fascists in action: committing violence, trimming, pursuing careers.

(6) We must take "hardened" fascists seriously in a far more sinister sense, as the eventual perpetrators of great evil. We must not excuse or relativize this but seek to understand it. The capacity for evil is an essential human attribute, and so is our capacity to commit evil for what we believe to be

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moral purposes. Fascists were especially self-deluded. We need to know more of the circumstances in which we humans do this. Though we prefer to write history and sociology as a happy, progressive, moral tale, this grotesquely distorts the reality of human experience. The twentieth century saw massive evil, not as an accident or as the resurgence of the primitive in us, but as willed, purposive, and essentially "modern" behavior. To understand fascism is to understand how people of apparently high modernizing ideals could then act to produce evil that was eventually unmitigated. However, I leave the very worst for my forthcoming book, *The Dark Side of Democracy*.

(7) We must take seriously the chance that fascists might return. If we understand the conditions that generated fascists, we can better understand whether they might return and how we might avoid this. Some of the conditions that generated fascism are still present. Organic nationalism and the adoption of paramilitary forms, committed to ethnic and political cleansing, at present moves many thousands of people across the world to commit supposedly "idealistic" yet in reality murderous acts against neighbours and political opponents whom they call "enemies." This may horrify us, but it is not dismissible as a return to the "primitive" in us. Ethnic and political cleansing has been one of European civilization's main contributions to modernity; while violent paramilitarism has been distinctively twentieth-century. We must comprehend these aspects of modernity. It is rather fortunate nowadays that "statism" (the third main component of fascism after organic nationalism and paramilitarism) is greatly out of fashion, since both its historic carriers, fascism and communism, collapsed disastrously. Current cleansing regimes tend to be paramilitary and authoritarian, but pretend they are democratic; the words "fascist" and "communist" have largely become terms of imprecise abuse. Given time for a supposedly stateless neoliberalism to do similar damage to parts of the world, this rejection of the powerful state will probably fade. Then extreme statist values might be harnessed again to extreme paramilitary nationalism in movements resembling fascism – unless we can learn from the history I record here. I doubt new movements will call themselves fascist, since the word is now so abhorred. Yet some of the substance of fascism lives on.

There are two main schools of thought on fascism. A more idealist "nationalist school," which I discuss first, has focused on fascists' beliefs and doctrines, while a more materialist "class school," discussed second, has focused on its class basis and its relationship to capitalism. The debates between them constitute yet another replay of the traditional polemic between idealism and materialism in the social sciences. But since the two approaches

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often appear to be discussing different levels of phenomena – beliefs versus social base/functions – they frequently talk past each other. Thus we lack an acceptable general theory of fascism. Such a theory would have to build on top of both approaches, taking from each what is useful and adding what both neglect.

I have chosen not to here give the reader a heavy dose of sociological theory. But my own approach to fascism derives from a more general model of human societies that rejects the idealism-versus-materialism dualism. My earlier work identified four primary "sources of social power" in human societies: ideological, economic, military, and political.[2] Class theorists of fascism have tended to elevate economic power relations in their explanations, while nationalist theorists have emphasized ideology. Yet all four sources of social power are needed to explain most important social and historical outcomes. To attain their goals, social movements wield combinations of control over ultimate meaning systems (ideological), control over means of production and exchange (economic), control over organized physical violence (military), and control over centralized and territorial institutions of regulation (political). All four are necessary to explain fascism. Mass fascism was a response to the post–World War I ideological, economic, military, and political crises. Fascists proposed solutions to all four. Fascist organization also combined substantial ideological innovations (generally called "propaganda"), mass political electoralism, and paramilitary violence. All became highly ritualized so as to intensify emotional commitment. In attempting to seize power, fascist leaders also sought to neutralize economic, military, political, and ideological (especially church) elites. Thus any explanation of fascism must rest on the entwining of all four sources of social power, as my empirical case-study chapters demonstrate. My final chapter presents the pay-off from this model: a general explanation of fascism.

TOWARD A DEFINITION OF FASCISM

Obviously, we must define our terms, though this is no easy matter. Some scholars have refused to define fascism at all in any "generic" sense, believing that "true" fascism was found only in Italy, its original home. Along with many others, I disagree. However, I do not initially seek a generic definition that might apply across many times and places. I merely seek one offering heuristic utility across the interwar period in Europe – until my last chapter, when I raise the issue of whether fascist movements have existed in more recent times and in other places.

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Let us first get a general sense of fascism through the views of its prominent intellectuals, with the commentaries of Sternhell (1976, 1986, 1994) and Mosse (1999), plus Griffin's compilation of fascist texts (1995), as my main guides. Most of them were initially nonmaterialist leftists who then embraced organic nationalism. In 1898 the Frenchman Barrès called his fusion "Socialist Nationalism," though it was the Italian Corradini's inversion of these words, as "National Socialism," which caught on, though by socialism he really meant syndicalism: "Syndicalism and nationalism together, these are the doctrines that represent solidarity," he emphasized. Class and sectoral conflict could be harmonized with the help of syndicalist (labor union) organizations coordinated by a "corporate state." So national socialism would be confined within national boundaries, with class struggle transformed into struggle between nations. "Bourgeois nations" (such as Britain and France) exploited "proletarian nations" (such as Italy). To resist, the proletarian nation must fight, with economic weapons and through "the sacred mission of imperialism." Except for the last phrase, this resembles the "third world socialism" of recent years. These were not uncommon ideas in the twentieth century.

As leftists but not materialists, these men also lauded "resistance," "will," "movement," "collective action," "the masses," and the dialectic of "progress" through "struggle," "force," and "violence." These Nietzschean values made fascism "radical." Fascists were determined to overcome all opposition ruthlessly, by will, force, whatever was necessary, without compromise or scruples. This meant in practice forming paramilitaries as well as parties. As collectivists they despised the "amoral individualism" of free market liberalism and "bourgeois democracy," which neglected the interests of "living communities" and of "the nation as an organic whole." The nation was essentially one and indivisible, a living and breathing entity, defined as either "integral" or "organic." To be German, Italian, or French, fascists asserted, meant much more than just living in a geographical space; it meant something outsiders could not experience, involving a basic identity and emotion, beyond reason. As Mosse emphasizes, the Germanic version of the nation differed from the Southern European, being racial as well as cultural. It drew more on social Darwinism, anti-Semitism, and other nineteenth-century racialist strands of theory to generate a *Volk*, a singular ethnic-cultural unity transcending all possible conflicts within it, but erecting higher boundaries against other peoples.

Nonetheless, the nation had both a moral and a rational structure. Building on Rousseau and Durkheim, the theorists said that competitive institutions such as markets, parties, elections, or classes could not generate

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morality. This must come from the community, the nation. The Frenchman Berth railed against liberalism: "Society is brought to the point where it is only a market made up of free-trading atoms, in contact with which everything dissolves.... dustlike particles of individuals, shut up within the narrow confines of their consciousness and their money boxes." Panunzio and Bottai followed Durkheim in praising the virtues of "civil society," believing that voluntary communal associations were the foundations of liberty. Yet they must be integrated into an overall corporate state that would then represent the interests of the nation as a whole. Without this linkage between state and communal associations, they said, the state would be "empty," with "a deficiency of sociological content," as was the case in the liberal state (Riley 2002: chap. 1). In contrast, the fascist state would be "corporate" and "sociological," based on strong bonds of association. Again, this sounds quite modern. Berth and Panunzio might have been targeting the neo-liberalism dominant a hundred years later.

Fascist intellectuals also attacked a left trapped within passive "bourgeois materialism." Its revolutionary pretensions had been exposed, they argued, by the superior mobilizing power of modern warfare between entire nations. Nations, not classes, were the true masses of modernity. Class conflict between capitalists and workers was not the core of the problem, they insisted. Instead, the real struggle was between "workers of all classes," "the productive classes," ranged against "unproductive" enemies, usually identified as finance or foreign or Jewish capitalists. They would defend the productive workers of all classes. The Frenchman Valois wrote that "nationalism + socialism = fascism," and the Englishman Oswald Mosley said, "If you love our country, you are national, and if you love our people you are socialist." These were attractive ideas in the early twentieth century, the "age of the masses," since fascists promised to "transcend" a class struggle then seemingly tearing apart the social fabric. Indeed, milder versions of such claims to transcendence have been adopted by most of the successful political movements of the twentieth century.

The nation should be represented through a corporatist, syndicalist state. It could "transcend" the moral decay and class conflict of bourgeois society with a "total plan" offering a statist "third way" between capitalism and socialism. The Italian Gentile (a late convert to fascism) claimed that fascism resolved the "paradox of liberty and authority. The authority of the state is absolute." Mussolini agreed: "[E]verything in the State, nothing against the State, nothing outside the State." "Ours will be a totalitarian state in the service of the fatherland's integrity," proclaimed the Spaniard José Antonio Primo de Rivera. The Belgian Henri de Man applauded

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"authoritarian democracy." The "fascist revolution" would produce "the total man in the total society, with no clashes, no prostration, no anarchy." said the Frenchman Déat.

But this was the future. Right now, the nation must struggle against its enemies for self-realization. It would be led by a paramilitary elite. The more radical fascists endorsed "moral murder." They claimed that paramilitary violence could "cleanse," "purify," "regenerate" the elite who committed it, then the nation as a whole. Valois expressed this brutally:

> to the bourgeois brandishing his contracts and statistics:
> – two plus three makes. . . .
> – Nought, the Barbarian replies, smashing his head in.

For Valois the "barbarian" fascist represented morality since he alone represented the organic community of the nation, from which all moral values flow. Of course, for these intellectuals, inhabiting the same post-Nietzschean world that generated vitalism, surrealism, and Dadaism, much of this was just literary metaphor. Yet rank-and-file fascists were later to use these justifications of their activities.

O'Sullivan (1983: 33–69) notes that fascists hated the "limited" nature of liberal democracy, its imperfect, indirect, and only "representative" (rather than "direct") form of rule. Liberal democracy tolerates conflicts of interest, "smoke-filled rooms," "wheeler-dealing," and "dirty" and "unprincipled" compromises. Acceptance of imperfections and compromise is actually the essence of both liberal democracy and social democracy. This reduces the stature of potential "enemies" into mere "opponents" with whom deals might be struck. Liberal and social democracies recognize no monopoly of virtue, no absolute truth. They are antiheroic. I have learned from writing these two books not to expect our democratic politicians to be too principled. We need their instrumentalism, their dirty deals. But fascists differed. They saw politics as unlimited activism to achieve moral absolutes. In Max Weber's terms, this was "value rationality," conduct oriented toward the achievement of absolute values, not merely instrumental interests.

This brought a higher emotional content. Fascism saw itself as a *crusade*. Fascists did not view evil as a universal tendency of human nature. Fascists, like some Marxists, believed that evil was embedded in particular social institutions and so could be shed. The nation was perfectible if organic and cleansed. As O'Sullivan notes, the Romanian fascist leader Codreanu was an extreme example of this. He saw his "Legion of the Archangel Michael" as a moral force: "All [other] political organizations . . . believe that the country was dying because of lack of good programs; consequently they put together

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a perfectly jelled program with which they start to assemble supporters." In contrast, said Codreanu, "This country is dying of lack of men, not of programs." "We must have men, new men." Thus the Legion would free Romania from "the power of evil." It would contain "heroes," "[t]he finest souls that our minds can conceive, the proudest, tallest, straightest, strongest, cleverest, bravest and most hardworking that our race can produce." They must fight against the "enemies" polluting the nation (Codreanu 1990: 219–21). He believed that in defense of good against evil, violence was morally legitimate.

Obviously, however, to understand fascists we must move beyond the intellectuals. How could the ideas quoted above stir millions of Europeans into action? What conditions of real life made such extraordinary sentiments seem plausible? Sternhell tends to see fascism as complete before World War I, neglecting the war's conversion of the blustering rhetoric of the few into mass movements. Fascism would have probably amounted only to a historical footnote without the Great War. But to investigate the values and emotions of later subaltern fascists is not easy. Most left little record of their views. If they did, many lied (since at the time they were on trial for their lives). My empirical chapters assemble what evidence I have found.

Sternhell's account is also somewhat biased toward early Italian, Spanish, and French intellectuals and glaringly omits Germans. Mosse and others say that "fascism" is not the same as "Nazism." They say that the racist and anti-Semitic Nazis focused more on the people, the *Volk*, and less on the state and that the Nazis altogether lacked a model of a utopian state. The Nazi movement, not the state, represented the nation, just as the Führer personified it. In contrast, few Southern European fascists were racists or anti-Semites, and they developed corporatist, syndicalist blueprints of their desired state. Whereas Nazism was *völkisch*, fascism was statist (Mosse 1964, 1966, 1999; Bracher 1973: 605–9; and Nolte 1965, among others). And only Nazi racism perpetrated genocide, they say. Thus Nazism was not fascism.

Though there is some truth in this, I join those who believe that Nazis *were* fascists and that fascism can be treated as a more general phenomenon. Hitler and Mussolini thought they belonged to the same movement. "Fascism" was an Italian term, which Nazis, being German nationalists, did not want to borrow (nor did some Spanish writers whom everyone calls fascists). But, as we see below, the two movements shared similar core values, had similar social bases, and developed similar movements. Nationalism was more emphasized in Nazism, statism in Italian fascism. But these were variations on common themes.

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The tendency to dichotomize Nazism and Italian fascism also reveals an obsession with Germany and Italy. Yet fascism spread more broadly, against a backdrop of wider political ferment, especially on the political right. I focus on five cases of mass fascist movements: Italy, Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Romania. While each was unique, they all shared some features. They were a family of fascists, differing mainly in their abilities to seize power. Only the first three achieved stable (if short-lived) fascist regimes. This was mainly because the different timing of their forward surges led to different strategies of containment by their political rivals, especially those on the right. In fact, Austria, Hungary, and Romania are all cases in which we can analyze a dialectic between fascism and more conservative forms of authoritarianism, a dialectic that helps us better to understand the nature of fascism more generally. I finally analyze Spain, an example of countries that contained relatively few fascists but many fellow-travelers, and where more conservative nationalists and statists managed to keep firm hold over their fascist allies. My forthcoming book also includes a swath of fascist-leaning nationalist movements – Slovakian, Croatian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, and so on – adapting varying blends of Italian fascism and German Nazism to their own purposes. There was not a dichotomy but a *range* of fascist doctrines and practices – as there has been in movements such as conservatism, socialism, or liberalism.

But unlike socialism (which has Marxism), fascism contains no systematic theory. The men I have quoted above say a variety of things within only a looser *Weltanschauung* ("world view"), a number of views that broadly "hang together" and from which different fascist movements made different selections. Various scholars have sought to identify this core. Nolte (1965) identified a "fascist minimum" combining three ideological "anti's" – anti-Marxism, antiliberalism, and anticonservatism – plus two movement characteristics, the leadership principle and the party-army, all oriented toward a final goal: "totalitarianism." This is not very clear on what the fascists wanted positively, while his stress on the anti's makes him reach the dubious conclusion that fascism was essentially a reactionary form of antimodernism.

Stanley Payne is now the preeminent comparative historian of fascism. He says the fascist core comprises Nolte's three anti's, plus a list of other items: nationalism, authoritarian statism, corporatism and syndicalism, imperialism, idealism, voluntarism, romanticism, mysticism, militarism, and violence. Quite a list! He narrows this down into three categories of style, negations, and programs, though these are more abstract than substantive qualities. And he ends by saying that fascism was "the most revolutionary form of nationalism" and that it centered on philosophical idealism and

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moralistic violence (1980: 7; 1995: 7–14). The conclusion does not seem quite focused enough, and when he seeks to categorize subtypes of fascism, they turn out to be essentially nationalities (German, Italian, Spanish, Romanian, Hungarian, and a residual "underdeveloped" bunch of others), which seems halfway to denying any theoretical core to fascism.

Juan Linz is the preeminent sociologist of fascism. His definition is even lengthier:

> a hypernationalist, often pan-nationalist, anti-parliamentary, anti-liberal, anti-communist, populist and therefore anti-proletarian, partly anti-capitalist and anti-bourgeois, anti-clerical or at least, non-clerical movement, with the aim of national social integration through a single party and corporative representation not always equally emphasized; with a distinctive style and rhetoric, it relied on activist cadres ready for violent action combined with electoral participation to gain power with totalitarian goals by a combination of legal and violent tactics.

He also approvingly quotes Ramiro Ledesma Ramos, a leading Spanish fascist, who defined fascism at only slightly lesser length, in a series of terse sentences:

> Deep national idea. Opposition to demo-bourgeois institutions, to the liberal parliamentary state. Unmasking of the true feudalistic powers of present society. National economy and people's economy against the great financial and monopolistic capitalism. Sense of authority, discipline and violence. Hostility to the anti-national and anti-human solution that proletarian classism appears to solve the obvious problems and injustices of the capitalist system. (Linz 1976: 12–15)

These writers effectively convey the fascist *Weltanschauung* and suggest that its core is "hyper" nationalism. But a proper generic definition would seem to require more precise yet concise detail.

Recent scholars have attempted to supply this. Roger Eatwell gives a concise definition. Fascism, he says, "strives to forge social rebirth based on a holistic-national radical third way." He adds that in practice, fascism has tended to stress style, especially action and the charismatic leader, more than detailed program, and to engage in a "manichean demonisation of its enemies" (2001: 33; cf. 1995: 11; and 1996). He then amplifies this by elaborating four key characteristics: nationalism, holism (i.e., collectivism), radicalism, and "the third way." The third way lies between capital and labor, right and left, drawing from the best of both of them. Since this means that fascism has something practical to offer modern society, he sees fascism not as antimodern but as an alternative vision of modernity. Eatwell's definition is the closest to my own, given below.

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Roger Griffin seeks a generic definition focusing more exclusively on values. In this respect he follows in the footsteps of Sternhell and Mosse. He sees fascism as a "mythic core" of "populist ultra-nationalism" inspired by the idea of a rebirth of the nation, race, or culture and seeking to create a "new man." Fascism is a "palingenetic myth" of populist ultra-nationalism, seeking a nation rising Phoenix-like from the ashes of an old decadent social order. It is "a genus of modern politics which aspires to bring about a total revolution in the political and social culture of a particular national or ethnic community. . . . [G]eneric fascism draws its internal cohesion and affective driving-force from a core myth that a period of perceived decadence and degeneracy is imminently or eventually to give way to one of rebirth and rejuvenation in a post-liberal new order." He agrees with Eatwell that fascism is an alternative modernization. He says that his is becoming the "consensus" view of fascism, opposed only by materialists, whom he ridicules. It reveals "the primacy of culture" in fascism. He also describes fascism as a "political religion" (1991: 44; 2001: 48; 2002: 24).

Yet Griffin's idealism is nothing to be proud of. It is a major defect. How can a "myth" generate "internal cohesion" or "driving force"? A myth cannot be an agent driving or integrating anything, since ideas are not free-floating. Without power organizations, ideas cannot actually *do* anything. What is lacking here is any sense of *power*. Indeed, even a sense of practicality seems to be lacking in such a definition. Surely, fascists must have offered something more useful than the mythical rebirth of the nation. Who would vote for this? Though fascism did have an irrationalist side, it was also rather hard-headed, offering both economic programs and political strategies (as Eatwell 2001 also observes). It was also resolutely this-worldly, unconcerned with the sacred, religious side of human experience, though prepared to bend that to its purposes.

But idealism actually seems to lurk in most of these definitions. Primacy is generally given to fascist ideas. Nationalism seems rather disembodied, divorced from its actual main bearer in the real world, the nation-state. All fascists desired both a very cohesive nation and a very strong state, entwined together. Griffin also sanitizes fascism, remaining silent on its distinctively brutal violence and paramilitarism; while even Eatwell says that fascism only "sometimes" wields violence (Linz, Nolte, and Payne did not neglect violence).

The solution to such omissions, however, is not to embrace the traditional "materialist" alternative to idealism, adding fascism's relationship to capitalism and class. We must define fascism in its own terms, but to its values we must add its programs, actions, and organizations. Fascism was not just a

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collection of individuals with certain beliefs. Fascism had a great impact on the world *only* because of its collective actions and its organizational forms. Fascists became committed to the elitism, hierarchy, comradeship, populism, and violence contained in a rather loose and paramilitary form of "statism." If fascism had concerned only "palingenetic myths of rebirth," what would be the harm in that? 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. Their authoritarian state then forced compliance from their peoples, quashing opposition and perpetrating mass killings. So our definition of fascism should include both the key values and the key organizational forms of fascism.

A DEFINITION OF FASCISM

I define fascism in terms of the key values, actions, and power organizations of fascists. Most concisely, *fascism is the pursuit of a transcendent and cleansing nation-statism through paramilitarism*. This definition contains five key terms requiring further explanation. Each also contained internal tensions.

(1) *Nationalism*. As everyone recognizes, fascists had a deep and populist commitment to an "organic" or "integral" nation, and this involved an unusually strong sense of its "enemies," both abroad and (especially) at home. Fascists had a very low tolerance of ethnic or cultural diversity, since this would subvert the organic, integral unity of the nation. Aggression against enemies supposedly threatening that organic unity is the original source of fascism's extremism. Racially tinged nationalism proved even more extreme, since race is an ascribed characteristic. We are born with it, and only our death or removal can eliminate it. Thus Nazi racial nationalism proved more obsessed with "purity" and proved more deadly than Italian cultural nationalism, which generally allowed those who showed the right values and conduct to join the nation.

I view the notion of "rebirth," which Griffin saw as the key characteristic of fascism, as characteristic of nationalism more generally, including much milder nationalisms – as, for example, in Irish, Lithuanian, or Zimbabwean nationalism. Since nations are actually modern (with one or two exceptions) but nationalists claim that they are ancient, nationalists solve this paradox with a vision of a revival or rebirth of a supposedly ancient nation, but one now adapted to modern times.[3] In these cases the myth is of continuity back to the former greatness of the High Kings, the Grand

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Duchy, and Greater Zimbabwe – but no one supposes they would work today.

(2) *Statism*. This involved both goal and organizational form. Fascists worshiped state power. The authoritarian corporate state could supposedly solve crises and bring about social, economic, and moral development, as Gregor (1979) emphasizes. Since the state represented a nation that was viewed as being essentially organic, it needed to be authoritarian, embodying a singular, cohesive will expressed by a party elite adhering to the "leadership principle." Scholars used to emphasize the "totalitarian" quality of fascist goals and states; Burleigh (2000) and Gregor (2000) still do. Others agree that the fascist goal was "total transformation" of society, but they emphasize backsliding along the way. They see the desired fascist state as vague or contradictory, containing rival party, corporatist, and syndicalist elements, and they often note that fascism in power had a surprisingly weak state. They have detailed the factionalism and horse trading of Mussolini's regime (Lyttleton 1987) and the "polycracy" or even "chaos" of the Nazi regime (Broszat 1981; Kershaw 2000). So they rightly hesitate over the label "totalitarian." Fascist regimes, like communist ones, contained a dialectic between "movement" and "bureaucracy," between "permanent revolution" and "totalitarianism" (Mann 1997). We can also detect a tension between a more organized Italian-style syndicalism/corporatism and Nazi preference for a more "polycratic," fluid dictatorship. And in all regimes tendencies toward a singular, bureaucratic state were undercut by party and paramilitary activism and by deals with rival elites. Fascism was more totalitarian in its transformational aims than in its actual regime form.

(3) *Transcendence*. Fascists rejected conservative notions that the existing social order is essentially harmonious. They rejected liberal and social democratic notions that the conflict of interest groups is a normal feature of society. And they rejected leftist notions that harmony could be attained only by overthrowing capitalism. Fascists originated from the political right, center, and left alike and drew support from all classes (Weber 1976: 503). They attacked both capital and labor as well as the liberal democratic institutions supposedly exacerbating their strife. Fascist nation-statism would be able to "transcend" social conflict, first repressing those who fomented strife by "knocking both their heads together" and then incorporating classes and other interest groups into state corporatist institutions. The term "third way," preferred by Eatwell, seems too weak for this goal of revolutionary transformation, too capable of being appropriated by centrist politicians such as Tony Blair. It was definitely not a compromise or a mere drawing

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together of the best of both of them (as Eatwell says). For it did involve the supposed creation of a new man.

Fascism was partly a response to the crisis of capitalism (as materialists say), but it offered a revolutionary and supposedly achievable solution. We see below that the "core constituency" of fascist support can be understood only by taking seriously their aspirations to transcendence, for they were perfectly genuine about it. It was also the most ideologically powerful part of their appeal, for it offered a plausible, practicable vision of movement toward a better society. Transcendence was actually the central plank of fascism's electoral program. In my previous work I have argued that ideologies are at their most powerful when they offer plausible yet transcendent visions of a better world. They combine the rational with the beyond-rational.

Nonetheless, transcendence was the most problematic and the most variable of fascism's five key terms. It was never actually accomplished. In practice most fascist regimes leaned toward the established order and toward capitalism. Fascists lacked a general critique of capitalism (unlike socialists), since they ultimately lacked interest in capitalism and class. Nation and state comprised their center of gravity, not class. This alone brought them into conflict with the left rather than the right since Marxists and anarchists, not conservatives, tended to be committed to internationalism. But fascists, unlike the political left and right, could be rather pragmatic about classes – unless they saw them as enemies of the nation. Thus they attacked not capitalism per se but only particular types of profit-taking, usually by finance, or foreign or Jewish capitalists. In Romania and Hungary, where these types of capitalist dominated, this gave fascism a distinctly proletarian tone. Elsewhere fascist movements were more procapitalist. When they neared power, they encountered a special problem. Though they hoped to subordinate capitalists to their own goals, as authoritarians they believed in managerial powers yet recognized that they themselves lacked the technocratic skills to run industry. Thus they compromised with capitalists. Moreover, the German and especially the Italian fascist coups were aided by upper-class support. In power Mussolini never seemed to be correcting this pro–ruling-class bias, though Hitler was different. Had his regime lasted much longer, I doubt the Reich economy could still have been called "capitalist."

But in the short space of time allowed them, fascists did tend to backtrack from their original project of transcending class conflict. This "betrayal" is stressed by class interpretations of fascism and by others doubting the sincerity or consistency of fascist values (e.g., Paxton 1994, 1996). Yet fascists could not simply "settle down" into betrayal. All fascist movements remained riven between "radicals" and "opportunists," and this imparted an unresolvable

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dynamic to the movement. One form of this was especially revealed during the Nazi regime. This dynamic displaced rather than abandoned the goal of transcendence. They would transcend ethnic and class strife, but remove only ethnic enemies – since compromise proved necessary with the capitalist class enemy. This displacement of transcendent goals actually increased fascist murderousness – eventually in Italy as well as in Germany, as shown in my forthcoming book.

(4) *Cleansing*. Because opponents were seen as "enemies," they were to be removed, and the nation cleansed of them. This was fascist aggression in action. It is distressing that we have recently become familiar again with "ethnic cleansing," though cleansing of political enemies has been less publicized in the late twentieth century. Organic nationalists usually consider ethnic enemies the more difficult to cope with, since political identities may be changed more easily. Communists may be repressed, some killed, but if they recant, most can be admitted into the nation. Political cleansing thus often starts murderously, but eases off once the "enemy" gives in and is assimilated into the nation. Ethnic cleansing more often escalates, since the "enemy" may not be permitted to assimilate. Most fascisms entwined both ethnic and political cleansing, though to differing degrees. Even the Nazis' supposed "enemies" appeared in mixed political-ethnic garb, as in the dreaded "Judeo-Bolshevik." Movements such as Italian fascism or Spanish Nationalism identified most of their enemies in predominantly political terms. Thus the more ethnic Nazi end of the range was more murderous than the Italian.

(5) *Paramilitarism* was both a key value and the key organizational form of fascism. It was seen as "popular," welling up spontaneously from below, but it was also elitist, supposedly representing the vanguard of the nation. Brooker (1991) homes in on the comradeship of fascist movements as their defining characteristic, and they certainly viewed their battle-hardened comradeship as an exemplar of the organic nation and the new man. Violence was the key to the "radicalism" of fascism. They overturned legal forms by killings. Through it, the people would effect class transcendence, "knocking heads together." Its elitism and hierarchy would then dominate the authoritarian state that it would bring into being. In no case was a fascist movement merely a "party." Indeed, the Italian fascists were organized only into paramilitaries for many years. Fascism was always uniformed, marching, armed, dangerous, and radically destabilizing of the existing order.

What essentially distinguishes fascists from the many military and monarchical dictatorships of the world is this "bottom-up" and violent quality of its paramilitarism. It could bring popularity, both electorally and among elites.

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Fascists always portrayed their violence as "defensive" yet "successful" – it could roll over enemies who were the real source of violence. Not everyone believed them, but many did, and this increased their popularity, their votes, and their attractiveness to elites. Paramilitarism thus offered them a distinctive approach to electoral democracy and existing elites, both of which they actually despised. Paramilitarism must always be viewed as entwined with other two main fascist power resources: in electoral struggle and in the undermining of elites. It was paramilitarism – caging the fascists, coercing their opponents, winning the support or respect of bystanders – that enabled fascists to do far more than their mere numbers could. Thus paramilitarism was violence, but it was always a great deal more than violence. It certainly did not confer enough effective violence for fascists to stage coups if that meant taking on the state's army. Paramilitary was not the equivalent of military power. Only if fascists could neutralize military power by appealing to the soldiers themselves could fascist coups occur.

This combination of qualities obviously made fascists "revolutionary," though not in conventional left-right terms. It would be inexact to call them "revolutionaries of the right," as some have done. The combination also means that movements can be more or less fascist. We could in principle plot fascist movements (each one obviously unique) amid a five-dimensional space, though I confess that this is beyond my representational skills. It is also beyond my range here to compare fascist with communist movements in these respects, though there are some obvious similarities as well as some differences. They have been alternative, if failed, visions of modernity.

THE APPEAL OF FASCISM: CLASS THEORY

To whom did these key characteristics appeal? What kinds of people became fascists, and what did they want fascism to accomplish? Curiously – since these are movements denying the importance of classes – class theorists dominate the answers. They see fascism as the product of class conflict and economic crisis, its main accomplishment being to solve the crisis by repressing the working class. Thus it was supported by other social classes. There have been two variants, one seeing fascism as essentially middle or lower middle class, the other as essentially an ally or tool of the capitalist class. Renton (2000) calls these the "right" and the "left" Marxist theories, respectively. Marxists have understood the significance of violence and paramilitarism in fascism. Otto Bauer said that fascism was "the dictatorship of the armed gang." But Marxists tend to discount fascist beliefs, reducing them to their supposed socio-economic base. They have no problem in

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seeing fascism as a single generic type. Since class and capitalism are universal features of modern societies, fascism is also a universal potentiality. Yet since other social structures were just as universal across the early twentieth century, these might also imprint themselves on a single generic fascism – as I argue was the case with the nation-state and citizen warfare.

Anyone writing about the middle classes has first to cope with the plethora of labels used of those occupying the middle reaches of the class hierarchy. Different language groups cope differently. One includes everyone who is neither proletarian nor upper class in a cognate of the term "petty bourgeoisie." This is so in Italian and Spanish, while the German *Mittelstand* ("middle estate") can be similarly broad. Yet "petty bourgeoisie" is not in everyday English usage. Those who deploy it indicate only a subset of the middle strata – artisans, small shopkeepers, and small traders – small independent proprietors who may employ family but very little free-wage labor. I call this group "the classic petty bourgeoisie." Germans often call them, together with state employees, the "old" *Mittelstand*. Though the classic petty bourgeoisie is often falsely believed to be prone to fascism, its small numbers could not have sustained such a large mass movement. Thus most "middle class" or "petty bourgeois" theories of fascism have been broader-based, seeing fascism as a combined movement of (in English usage) the "lower middle class" and the "middle class." This combination I here label simply as "the middle class," in contradistinction to two other broadly labeled "classes": the working class and the upper class. These terms are obviously not precision instruments, but since my empirical chapters explore occupational classifications in considerable detail – and show that classes by *any* definition make only a limited contribution to understanding fascists – this book does not need more precise class definitions.

As early as 1923 Salvatorelli was arguing that fascism was an independent movement of disgruntled middle-class people (I quote him in Chapter 3) and the Jewish Comintern leader Karl Radek was labeling fascism as "the socialism of the petty bourgeoisie." Such interpretations strengthened after World War II, as research piled up seeming to confirm that fascists came disproportionately from nonelite, nonproletarian groups – and especially from the lower middle class (e.g., Lipset 1963: chap. 5; Bracher 1973: 145 Kater 1983: 236; Stachura 1983b: 28). The usual explanation offered for this was economic:

> a malaise, a maladjustment of capitalist society . . . [affected those who were] . . . uprooted and threatened by social and economic change, whose position in society was being undermined, who had lost their traditional place, and were frightened of

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> the future. These were, above all, the lower middle classes – or rather certain groups within them: the artisans and independent tradesmen, the small farmers, the lower grade government employees and white-collar workers. (Carsten 1980: 232–3)

These theorists accept that some fascists were anticapitalist but believe that far more were antisocialist. Under fascism, capitalism would be controlled, but socialism destroyed. For – it is said – the middle class feared the threat from below more than that from above.

Middle-class theory has sometimes come in even broader forms. Fascism has been seen as the failure of an entire "middle class society" founded on liberalism and capitalism (Eley 1986: chaps. 9 and 10). It is difficult to see any precise meaning in this. Neither an entire society nor a whole epoch can be defined only in terms of a single class. Nor did liberalism or capitalism in general fail. Others have stretched the theory by yoking the middle class to other, more marginal groups. Carsten (1976) summarizes a tradition stretching back into the 1920s to Togliatti, Tasca, Fromm, Reich, and Nolte by identifying the backbone of fascism as students, ex-soldiers, "jobless intellectuals," *déclassés*, and the "lumpen proletariat," joining together with small shopkeepers, artisans, and white-collar workers. This is a motley crew, perhaps reflecting more the author's dislike of fascists than any principle of unity among these groups. Carsten suggests that such diverse people became fascists because they shared an experience of economic and status deprivation. Indeed, some writers emphasize economic deprivation more than middle-class identity. Zetkin, Thalheimer, Löwenthal, Sauer, and Germani saw the deprived, the losers, the marginal, the uprooted as flocking to fascism – "a true community of bankruptcy," declared Löwenthal. Whenever such writers believe an occupational group (be it soldiers, students, lawyers, or construction workers) was particularly fascist, they tend to attribute this to economic deprivation, unemployment, or declining wage levels. Rather curiously, most psychological theories of fascism have also been based on the middle class. The Frankfurt School reinterpreted Freudian theory to view "repression," "the authoritarian personality," "status insecurity," and "irrationality" as being distinctively "bourgeois," resulting especially from the decay of the bourgeois family. None of these psychological theories of fascism is empirically well supported (as Payne 1995: 454, notes). And even if some of these groups were predisposed toward fascism, it may not have been for class reasons. Ex-officers might become fascists more because of their military values, students more because of their age and the ideological climate of universities. People do not simply have a single social identity, conferred by class.

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In fact none of these middle-class theories now stand up very well. Like most political movements, fascism began among sections of the middle class. But once fascism became an established political movement, this changed, as Chapters 3 to 8 show. Most fascists in the larger movements were neither economically deprived nor particularly middle-class.[4] After 1930 neither Nazis nor Nazi voters were especially bourgeois or petty bourgeois. They drew support from all classes. Italian fascists are still often seen as bourgeois, though the data are poor. Yet the Hungarian and Romanian rank-and-file were more proletarian (as Berend 1998: 342–3, has recently recognized). Payne's comprehensive review accepts most of this, yet still tries to save something of middle-class theory. He concludes: "[M]iddle class radicalism" remains "one of the most important strands of fascism but is inadequate to provide a general theory" (1995: 445). Though this is a sensible conclusion, it does not take us very far. If persons from all classes became fascists, it seems unlikely that class consciousness or class conflict would directly explain much of fascism.

The second class theory sees fascists as essentially the allies or tools of the capitalist class. In its "imperialist" or "monopolist" or "crisis" phase in the early twentieth-century capitalism needed an authoritarian state in order to preserve itself against the rising proletariat. Though this theory may allow fascists a measure of "Bonapartist" "relative autonomy" from capitalism, they were ultimately accountable to capitalists. Thus Poulantzas actually defined fascism as an "exceptional capitalist state," functionally necessary amid crisis to protect the capitalist class from the proletariat (1974: 11). Two crises supposedly threatened capitalism: the post-1918 surge in revolutionary socialism (causing the Italian seizure of power) and the mass unemployment and pressure on state budgets produced by the Great Depression (causing the Hitler seizure of power). Some see capitalists embracing fascism early and enthusiastically, but most have see the embrace as tardy, reluctant, and distrustful.

This theory has lost some of its popularity as Marxism has declined more generally. But Hobsbawm has endorsed it, saying that "faced with insoluble economic problems and/or an increasingly revolutionary working class, the bourgeoisie now had to fall back on force and coercion, that is to say, on something like fascism" (1994: 136).

Disregarding the dangerously functionalist expression "had to," even a casual glance at the five major fascist countries reveals great variation in the extent to which capitalists might plausibly regard the proletariat as a dangerous threat. If they feared a nonexistent threat from below, perhaps we should enter into psychological rather than sociological analysis. Though

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I do not quite do this, I puzzle over why the propertied classes appeared to overreact to a rather small level of threat from below. My solution is given in the final chapter. Empirically, while the degree of capitalist support for fascist movements remains controversial, it has varied considerably between the different countries. As in middle-class theory, the evidence is sometimes padded out by rather stronger evidence of support from adjacent social groups, in this case from the "old regime" of the preceding period: monarchs, aristocrats, top civil servants, army high commands, churches, and higher professionals. Though these people also tended to be substantial property owners, their motives for supporting fascism might have derived from their military, religious, or old regime needs rather than from capitalist ones. Capitalist class theory is supported by the tendency of fascist leaders to backtrack on their claim to transcend class conflict. If such "sellouts" always occurred and dominated the subsequent trajectory of fascism, then the social background of the fascist rank-and-file would be largely irrelevant: Fascism would be indeed the handmaiden or stooge of capitalism. Sometimes it has been, more often not. In general I show that capitalist class theory – like middle-class theory – explains something, but not all that much, of fascism.

Some have sought to fuse these two class theories. Renton (2000: 101) says that though fascism is in origin "the socialism of the middle class," it is ultimately reactionary, antiworker, and supportive of capitalism. Kitchen also believes the "social basis" of fascism was middle-class, but its essential "function" was capitalist. He says that "fascist parties were largely organizations of the petit bourgeoisie" who comprised "the overwhelming majority." Yet their role was to operate "in close conjunction with the capitalist elite" (1976: 59, 65). This dual approach can get a handle on some of the dynamics of fascist movements – on the tension between a "radical" petty bourgeois rank-and-file and more conservative and opportunistic leaders. The conflict ranging "radicals" such as Gregor Strasser and the SA rank-and-file against the more conservative-opportunist Hitler and Göring, or between "radical" Ras (local fascist bosses) and Mussolini, are often viewed in this way, with the leaders defeating the radicals. Again, all this has some truth content.

But by centering on "social base" and "objective functions," most class theorists obviously ignore fascists' own beliefs. They view fascism "from outside," from a perspective that made little sense to fascists, who rebutted class theories as they did all "materialism." Fascists focused elsewhere. At the beginning of Chapter 3 I present a class theory of Italian fascism (derived from Salvatorelli), and then Mussolini's own account of why he embraced fascism. They appear to be discussing quite different things. Perhaps others

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knew better than Mussolini what he was up to, or perhaps he was distorting the truth (indeed, he partly was). But the disjunction is disconcerting, especially to a sociologist. Most sociologists subscribe to the maxim: "If people define things as real, they are real in their consequences." If fascists believed they were pursuing certain goals, this belief had consequences for their actions and cannot be merely dismissed.

There is one final difficulty for a class interest–driven approach to fascism. Fascists were motivated by a highly emotional struggle to cleanse their nation of "enemies," and so they indulged in reckless aggression and terrible evil. That aggression and evil usually did not benefit them materially. Fascists were too aggressive for their own good – especially in their keenness for war. They were chronically overconfident about what the new man could achieve. And though material interests drove forward some of the atrocities against Jews and other "enemies" (looting was ubiquitous), genocide is another matter. It did only material harm to Germany (and both army generals and SS officers entrusted with economic planning knew it). The fascist combination of morality, aggression, and murder ultimately confounds material interest theories. Fascists were driven by both value and instrumental rationality. Eventually, the former predominated and destroyed them.

The failure of nationalist interpreters of fascism in this regard is a different one. They fail to explore the core constituencies of fascism, unlike class theorists. They focus on the content of its ideology and ignore its social base. Occasionally, they just borrow the class interpretation. Curiously, values such as nationalism, racism, or militarism are said to be essentially "bourgeois" or "petty bourgeois" (Mosse 1964, 1966; Carsten 1980: 232). I am at a loss to understand why these values should be thought distinctively middle-class. Many scholars don't seem to like the petty bourgeoisie. Maybe it is the class background from which they themselves are trying to escape. Even some nonclass theorists seem obsessed by class. Books with subtitles claiming to be "social profiles" of Nazi members and voters turn out to be 90 percent about occupation and classes (e.g., Kater 1983; Manstein 1988) – as if our social identities were 90 percent conferred by our occupational class!

Payne (1995) provides the most comprehensive review of fascists' backgrounds. He explores their class backgrounds at great length. He also notes more briefly other relevant social characteristics, such as youthfulness and masculinity, the preponderance of military backgrounds, higher education, religion, and (occasionally) region. But he attempts to relate only the class data to general theories of fascism. The rest is treated as complicating detail and is not theorized. Linz (1976) had provided an excellent earlier analysis of fascists' backgrounds – their occupations, sectors, regions, religions,

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age, gender, and so on. But, puzzlingly (since he is a fine sociologist), he failed to find patterns underlying such apparently diverse identities. Though these scholars see fascism as extreme nationalism, they have not attempted to identify "core nationalist constituencies." There is a gaping hole between ideology and social base. We can fill it by recognizing nation-statist and paramilitary constituencies of support, alongside class constituencies. Class theories do have considerable truth content. Fascism borrowed heavily from class ideologies and organizations, was obsessed with the threat of "Bolshevism," and was sensitive to class interests. Kitchen is correct: We should understand fascism's social base and functions. Yet "social" should not be equated with "class." Let us briefly examine the social settings in which fascism resonated.

THE SOCIAL RESONANCE OF FASCISM

Very large numbers of fascists have so far appeared only amid five social settings. I start with the very broadest.

The Macro-Period: Interwar Crises of European Modernity

The interwar period in Europe was the setting that threw up most of the self-avowed fascists and saw them at their high tide. My definition is intended firstly as "European-epochal," to use Eatwell's (2001) term (cf. Kallis 2000: 96), applying primarily to that period and place – though perhaps with some resonance elsewhere. The period and the continent contained four major crises: the consequences of a devastating "world," but in fact largely European, war between mass citizen armies, severe class conflict exacerbated by the Great Depression, a political crisis arising from an attempted rapid transition by many countries toward a democratic nation-state, and a cultural sense of civilizational contradiction and decay. Fascism itself recognized the importance of all four sources of social power by explicitly claiming to offer solutions to all four crises. And all four played a more specific role in weakening the capacity of elites to continue ruling in old ways.

It is nonetheless possible that fascism had different causes in each country – here generated by defeat in war, there by the Great Depression. Yet fascism was strongest where we find distinctive combinations of all four. The problem is one of degree: To what extent did each crisis – economic, military, political, and ideological – contribute to the rise of fascism? The problem is discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 2. These crises seem to have been necessary causes of fascism. Without them, no fascism. But none seems to

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have been an individually sufficient cause. Most countries coped with crisis without turning to organic nation-statism, let alone fascism. So this leads to a second level of analysis, and specifically to the question: Which places made these turns?

The Macro-Place: One-Half of Europe

In the interwar period, as Map 2.1 will reveal below, virtually all of Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe embraced a family of rightist authoritarian governments, one of whose members was fascism. Only tiny minorities in the northwest of the continent sought such government. There were also fascist-leaning movements in the more economically developed countries of other continents, especially Japan, South Africa, Bolivia, Brazil, and Argentina. Here fascism had some resonance, though just how much is a matter of debate (Payne 1995: chap 10; Larsen 2001). My general view of these non-European cases is that none combined all the essential values of fascism listed above. Japan, for example, did have a highly developed nation-statism that produced the most sophisticated quasifascist economic theory in the world (Gao 1997: chaps. 2 and 3). Yet it lacked a bottom-up mass movement or paramilitary (see Brooker 1991 for comparisons between Japan and Europe). Militarism, not paramilitarism, dominated what many call Japanese "fascism." In contrast, Argentina and Brazil generated mass populist and somewhat authoritarian movements with some "radical" and statist tendencies, but these lacked cleansing nationalism. We can find theorists all over the interwar world reading Barrès, Mussolini, Hitler, and so on, adapting them to local conditions and then arriving at their own quasifascist doctrines. In India, for example, Golwalkar adapted Hitler's racial theories to his demand for a pure and organic Hindu theocratic state. Infuse the RSS Hindu paramilitary movement with such theories and the blend is quite close to Nazism (Jaffrelot 1996). But in the 1930s this movement was tiny, like almost all the other quasifascist militias and parties of the time. Only one continent came anywhere near being dominated by fascism: Europe.

Why did authoritarian nation-statism dominate one-half of Europe, liberal democracy the other half? It cannot have been some general crisis of modern society, such as the Great Depression or the defects of liberalism, for then it would have affected all of Europe, not just half of it. The difference is one that turns crucially on the behavior of political conservatives, "old regimes," and the property-owning classes. For here class does matter, profoundly, if in a rather peculiar way. Right across one-half of Europe, the upper classes turned toward more repressive regimes, believing these could

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protect themselves against the twin threats of social disorder and the political left. But this does not seem to have been very "rational" behavior. For they greatly exaggerated the threats and neglected safer means of avoiding them that were prevalent across the northwest. They overreacted, reaching for the gun too abruptly, too early. Explaining this puzzle – of class behavior that seems somewhat irrational – is one of the principal tasks of this book. Such an explanation is essential to understanding the macro-regional environment of authoritarian nation-statism in which fascism could flourish. But this cannot also explain the specific emergence of fascism, since only a few countries in this zone actually generated mass fascism, and they did not usually do so at the initiative of the upper classes.

Meso-Places: The Five Fascist Countries

Why did Italians, Germans, Austrians, Hungarians, and Romanians embrace fascism in such large numbers when most of their neighbors stopped at milder movements? It is true that quite large quasi-fascist movements later emerged in a few regions of other countries, as in the Sudetenland, Slovakia, the Ukraine, or Croatia. I examine these, but in my forthcoming book. Yet few fascists emerged in other countries and regions. Fascists did not surge only in the more economically advanced countries or in the Greater Powers of the center, east, and south (as is often argued). This argument stems from obsession with Germany and Italy. But Hungary and Romania were rather backward countries and minor powers – and so some writers argue that it is backwardness that generates fascism (e.g., Berend 1998). Yet fascism had sufficiently broad appeal – like socialism – that it could be interpreted in the light of either an advanced or a backward economy. To explain this, we must look for the commonality between these cases – and this can hardly be level of development. But this will not provide a sufficient answer. For even in these countries, only some people (minorities at that) became fascists. Who were they and why did they become fascists?

Meso-Places: Core Fascist Constituencies

Which particular social groups within these countries were most attracted to fascism? I spend many pages over several chapters examining the social backgrounds of fascist leaders, militants, members, fellow-travelers, co-conspirators and voters – compared (wherever possible) with their counterparts in other political movements. How old were fascists, were they men or women, military or civilian, urban or rural, religious or secular, economic

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winners or losers, and from which regions, economic sectors, and social classes did they come? I have gratefully pillaged the work of the scholars of many countries to assemble the broadest collection of data yet presented on fascists. These data suggest three core "fascist constituencies" among which the fascist values and organizations identified earlier resonated most strongly, and which therefore came to organize actual fascist movements. Of course, fascist constituencies did not come ready-made. Fascists had to discover them and then they had to work on them, organizing, persuading, bribing, coercing. Some fascists were more agile than others. Some fascist movements misperceived their constituencies, some stumbled on them almost by accident (as the Nazis stumbled on German Protestantism). Since not all fascist movements were the same, their constituencies also differed somewhat. Yet amid the variations and the accidents we can perceive the following three broad patterns of mass support. This support came from the millions who voted fascist and the thousands who joined fascist organizations. Both were critical to fascist success, though in very different ways. For the moment, however, I am not distinguishing them

(1) *Constituencies Favoring Paramilitarism*. The fascist core consisted everywhere of two successive generations of young men, coming of age between World War I and the late 1930s. Their youth and idealism meant that fascist values were proclaimed as being distinctively "modern" and "moral." They were especially transmitted through two institutions socializing young men: secondary and higher education, encouraging notions of moral progress, and the armed forces, encouraging militarism. Since the appeal was mainly to young men, it was also distinctly macho, encouraging an ethos of braggart, semi-disciplined violence, in peacetime encouraging militarism to mutate into paramilitarism. The character of fascism was set by young men socialized in institutions favorable to moralizing violence and eventually to murder. Yet the similarity of values between paramilitarism and militarism always gave fascism a capacity to appeal to armed forces themselves, not to the extent of inducing military rebellions but to the extent of generating sympathy there that at its most extreme could immobilize the army.

(2) *Constituencies Favoring Transcendence*. Fascism was usually neither particularly bourgeois nor particularly petty bourgeois. True, there were some class biases in Italy and perhaps also in Austria. But after 1930 there were none in Germany (if we add the SA and SS paramilitaries to the Nazi Party). These fascist coups also received some support from upper classes. But Romanian and Hungarian fascists were recruited more from proletarian than bourgeois backgrounds and received less upper-class support. Class composition was thus complex and variable. Yet there were more constant tendencies

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of *economic sector*. Fascists tended to come from sectors that were not in the front line of organized struggle between capital and labor. They were less likely to be workers in urban, manufacturing settings (though they were around Budapest and Bucharest because industry there was more part of the "statist" constituency). They were less likely to be small or large businessmen or their managers. Yet they were not "marginal" or "rootless." Their social location was (for the interwar period) relatively secure. But from their slightly removed vantage point they viewed class struggle with distaste, favoring a movement claiming to transcend class struggle. Of course, in most cases transcendence was not achieved, and we find tension (noted by many writers) between a more "radical" fascist base and a more "opportunist" leadership faction seeking compromise with elites. Similarly, capitalists and old regimes might also provide a more opportunistic constituency for such flawed transcendence. But if we do take fascists' beliefs seriously, then it would follow that fascism would appeal to those viewing class struggle from "outside," declaring "a plague on both your houses!"

(3) *Constituencies Favoring Nation-Statism*. Fascists' backgrounds appeared rather heterogeneous. They tended to have had military experience, be highly educated, work in the public or service sectors and come from particular regional and religious backgrounds. For many observers, this has confirmed that fascism was a "ragbag" movement (a particularly prevalent view of the Nazis, as we see in Chapter 4). But there was a principle of unity amid these varied attributes: Fascists were at the heart of either the nation or the state. Some "nation-statist" locations were similar across countries: Soldiers and veterans above all, but also civil servants, teachers, and public sector manual workers were all disproportionately fascist in almost all the countries of mass fascism. Other characteristics varied by country. Rather distinctively, industrial development around the capitals of Hungary and especially Romania was state-assisted, which gave some private-sector workers a more statist orientation. Religion was almost everywhere important, reinforcing organic nation-statism (except in Italy, where the Church was transnational). Evangelicals in Germany between 1925 and 1935, the Orthodox faithful and clergy in Romania, and Catholics in "Austro-Fascism" were drawn toward fascism since these religions were central to the identity of their desired nation-state. Among Germans the role of religion varied as Nazism itself changed: The perpetrators of genocide, unlike earlier Nazi voters, were disproportionately ex-Catholics (I demonstrate and seek to explain this in my forthcoming volume). In some countries fascists came more from regions that had been at the heart of the historic state or nation, but more often they came from "threatened" border territories or from refugees from

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"lost territories." We see below that these were all distinctively nation-statist constituencies.

Obviously, not all fascists were from these three core constituencies, nor were all inhabitants of such constituencies fascists. Nor did fascism remain unchanged in its values or characteristics. Nor were vaguely sympathetic persons taking ten minutes to register their votes the same as elites scheming for a year to do a deal with fascists. Neither were these the same as the fascist member or militant devoting enormous time and energy to the movement – perhaps even risking life. Let us consider them.

The Micro-Cage: Fascist Movements

"Fascists" were not fully formed at the moment they entered the movement. People may formally sign up for a movement and yet possess only a rudimentary knowledge of it – sympathy for a few slogans, respect for a charismatic Führer or Duce, or simply following friends who have joined. Most recruits joined the movement young, unmarried, unformed, with little adult civilian experience. On them, fascist parties and paramilitaries were especially powerful socialization agencies. These movements were proudly elitist and authoritarian, enshrining a pronounced hierarchy of rank and an extreme cult of the leader. Orders were to be obeyed, discipline to be imposed. Above all, they imposed a requirement of activism. Thus militants experienced intense emotional comradeship. Where the movement was proscribed, clandestinity tightened it. Many activists lost their jobs or went into prison or exile. Though this deterred many of the more fainthearted, among those remaining active such constraints further tightened the movement.

So did paramilitarism. In some fascist movements (such as the early Italian or the Romanian) the paramilitary *was* the movement; in others (such as the Nazi) the paramilitaries existed alongside party institutions. The paramilitaries were time-consuming, enjoining discipline tempered by comradeship in pursuit of small group violence. Members felt strong pressures on them that were simultaneously coercive and pleasurable, since they involved physical hardship and danger, abusive discipline, intense comradeship, and a very active collective social life amounting in some cases to a cage, a virtual "total institution," in Goffman's sense of the term. Obviously, some were put off by this and many left. But for those who stayed, paramilitarism provided distinctive fascist socialization. For example, Austrian Nazis were persecuted by their government during the years 1934 to 1938. Many fled to Germany, where in the SS and its Austrian Legion they became full-time

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revolutionaries, "working" together, drinking together in Nazi bars, sleeping together in Nazi barracks.[5] It was from such socially caged groups that fascist leaders liked to recruit "reliable," "toughened" cadres for especially murderous tasks.

They became well prepared for violence. The one adult experience of many of the early young recruits was war. The first, or "front," generation of fascists had almost all fought in World War I; the second, or "home," generation had only been schoolboys during the war, though many had been longing to fight and now did so in the many paramilitary border skirmishing campaigns occurring around Europe in the immediate aftermath of the war. The third generation of recruits received only distorted remembrances of war from their elders, but they were plunged into extralegal street violence. By this time the longer-term members might be inured to "peacetime" violence, and they were commanding the new recruits. Moreover, successful and unpunished violence may have both a cathartic and a liberating effect on the perpetrators. It can take them beyond conventional morality and into technically illegal behavior, past points of no return, reinforcing their collective sense of being a segregated, hardened elite, beyond conventional standards of behaviour. For these young men, this was reinforced by two more conventional qualities of "gangs": the resonance of violence amid macho assertions of masculinity and the excessive consumption of inhibition-releasing alcohol. It is difficult to think of fascist paramilitaries without barroom violence. All these qualities make violence easier to repeat, once embarked on.

Careers within the fascist movement also brought material and status rewards. As the movement expanded, so did the promotion prospects and the power, the pickings, and the status. But promotion required character qualities beyond mere opportunism. Fascist elites became staffed disproportionately by experienced, "reliable," "toughened" members. Educated reliables became the "officers" of fascism, less-educated "old fighters" became the "NCOs." At most levels experienced, inured, "toughened" fascists provided an order-giving elite, able to discipline and socialize the newcomers into "normal" fascist behavior. Fascist movements had differing trajectories. The smaller movements of Northwestern Europe often rose and then declined quite quickly. When their members got the worse of street fighting, many sensibly decided to quit. But in the five major fascist countries it is impossible to understand the success of only thousands of fascists, amid the opposition/indifference of millions, without appreciating the contribution made by their extraordinary and violent activism.

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OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

The above conceptual framework helps to explain fascists. I examine the social crises and the responses of elites, of the thousands who joined fascist movements, and of the millions who sympathized. The next chapter examines interwar crises, explaining the macro-level: why one half of Europe was receptive, the other half hostile. Since I believe I can answer this question, it is not necessary to examine variations among the hostile cases of Northwestern Europe. Instead, the following seven chapters deal with the other half of the continent in order to explain why some went more for fascism, others for other types of authoritarian rightist movements. This is the basis of my choice of six case-study countries. In Italy, Germany (which gets two chapters), and Austria, fascism dominated and rose into power unassisted. In two – Hungary and Romania – fascists became almost equal players in a kind of dialectic of death within the authoritarian family. The final country – Spain – was the most riven by struggles between democrats and authoritarians and illuminates those cases where fascism remained a subordinate member of the authoritarian family. My methodology in these case studies is almost entirely secondary analysis of other scholars' primary research – to whom I therefore owe an enormous debt of gratitude. The case studies then permit me to develop a more general explanation of fascists' rise, which is presented in my concluding chapter.

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