



Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler



Benito Mussolini



Fascism

- **Fascism**, political ideology and mass movement that dominated many parts of central, southern, and eastern Europe between 1919 and 1945 and that also had adherents in western Europe, the United States, South Africa, Japan, Latin America, and the Middle East.
- Europe's first fascist leader, Benito Mussolini, took the name of his party from the Latin word *fascēs* which referred to a bundle of elm or birch rods (usually containing an axe) used as a symbol of penal authority in ancient Rome.
- Although fascist parties and movements differed significantly from one another, they had many characteristics in common, including extreme militaristic nationalism, contempt for electoral democracy and political and cultural liberalism a belief in natural social hierarchy and the rule of elites, and the desire to create a *Volksgemeinschaft* (German: "people's community"), in which individual interests would be subordinated to the good of the nation.

Development of Fascism

- Fascism stands for a doctrine, ideology or a set of principles underlying the movement founded in Italy by Benito Mussolini and his followers in 1919.
- The term "fascismo" was invented by the Italian Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini (1883 - 1945) and the self-described "philosopher of Fascism" Giovanni Gentile (1875 - 1944).
- It is derived from the Latin word "fasces", an ancient Roman symbol consisting of a bundle of rods tied around an axe, used to suggest "strength through unity".
- Fascism can be applied to the formation of new revolutionary nationalist movements which rose to power in Europe between the World Wars. It is the rule through force and fear rather than intellectual and moral persuasion.

Types of Fascism

- Italian Fascism (in Italian, Fascismo) is the authoritarian political movement which ruled Italy from 1922 to 1943 under the leadership of Benito Mussolini (1883 - 1945). Similar movements appeared throughout the world (including Europe, Japan, and Latin America) between World War I and World War II.
- Nazism (or National Socialism) refers to the ideology and practices of the German Nazi Party (or National Socialist German Workers' Party) under Adolf Hitler (1889 - 1945) between 1933 and 1945. It was a strongly nationalist, totalitarian, racist, anti-Semitic and anti-Communist movement, which grew up in the aftermath of German humiliation after World War I, which was partly blamed on Germany's Jews.

Types of Fascism

- Clerical Fascism is an ideology that combines the political and economic doctrines of Fascism with theology or religious tradition. The term originally emerged in the 1920s referring to Catholic support for the Fascist regime of Benito Mussolini, but has since been applied to various regimes and movements, particularly in Europe and South America.
- Neo-Fascism is any post-Second World War ideology that includes significant elements of Fascism, or that expresses specific admiration for Benito Mussolini and Italian Fascism, again particularly in Europe and South America. It includes various Neo-Nazi movements, which can be found almost worldwide.

Basic Tenets of Fascism

- It is argued that Fascism has no doctrinal basis, it's a practical philosophy. However, it is a modified application of ideas stated by Plato, Machiavelli, Hobbes and Hegel. The fascists were also inspired by the ideas of Georges Sorel (1847-1922) – a French philosopher.
- Mussolini used to say that Fascism is based on reality, not on theory like Bolshevism. My programme is action, not talk. Alfred Rocco supported this argument when he said - “Acting first, theorising afterword, deriving its creed from experience and not from reasoning.”
- Giovanni Gentile, known as a Fascist philosopher says “Fascist doctrine is not be found primarily in formal treatises but rather in deals and proposals of men actually engaged in realising Fascist aims”.

Basic Tenets of Fascism

Fascism emphasizes:

- Action: Human beings find meaning and purpose by acting, not by reasoning or thinking.
- Community spirit: People need to be part of a community. Individualism is dangerous because it turns people away from their community.
- Nationalism: The community that matters the most is the nation. People should work together to promote the glory and power of the nation.
- Militarism: The nation must have a strong, powerful military. The nation displays its power by expanding its territory.
- The future: Fascists love the speed and power of technology. They look optimistically to the future.
- One party: The nation must be unified and speak with one voice. Therefore, only one political party is allowed, and that party rules with absolute power.
- Violence: The government rules its people through violence or the threat of violence.

Basic Tenets of Fascism

Fascism usually involves in the following elements:

- Nationalism (based on the cultural, racial and/or religious attributes of a region).
- Totalitarianism (state regulation of nearly every aspect of public and private sectors).
- Statism (state intervention in personal, social or economic matters).
- Patriotism (positive and supportive attitudes to a "fatherland").
- Autocracy (political power in the hands of a single self-appointed ruler).
- Militarism (maintaining of a strong military capability and being prepared to use it aggressively to defend or promote national interests).
- Corporatism (encouragement of unelected bodies which exert control over the social and economic life of their respective areas).

Basic Tenets of Fascism

Fascism usually involves in the following elements:

- Populism (direct appeals to the masses, usually by a charismatic leader).
- Collectivism (stress on human interdependence rather than on the importance of separate individuals). The Fascists substitute Liberty, Equality and Fraternity with Responsibility, Discipline and Hierarchy.
- Fascism opposes internationalism
- Fascism aims to establish a new economic system - Fascists does not recognise right to property of the individual as the liberals and labourer's rights as the socialists. While considering all economic issues national utility is the main matter of concern for them.

Fascism: Criticism

Liberal Critique

- The main liberal criticism of fascism is that it sought to destroy individual liberty by subordinating the individual to the absolute authority of the state and by reducing the individual to a means to serve the end of the state.
- Secondly, fascism emphasises the irrational element in human nature while liberalism pleads for man's freedom treating him primarily as a rational being.
- Thirdly, fascism rejects the liberal faith in the natural and social equality of men by advocating hero worship, superiority of elite and racist doctrines.
- Fourthly, fascism does not recognise the pluralistic nature of society and supports the monopoly of a single political party. It does not allow free and open competition for political power.
- Lastly, fascism demolishes constitutional government which is the guarantee of human freedom and rights.

Fascism: Criticism

Marxist Critique

- Marxists view fascism as an attempt to protect capitalism. By creating the myth of a nation, fascism try to suppress class conflict. Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), an Italian Marxist who was arrested and tortured by the fascist regime of Mussolini, maintained that the ideological propaganda of the fascists aimed to preserve capitalist 'hegemony' and 'structures of domination' which made it acceptable to the ignorant masses. The widespread fear of uncertainty (following the First World War) in a time of crisis served to provide an authoritarian basis for fascism.

Conclusion

- Fascism fosters anti-human and anti-progressive forces.
- It is an ideology of the champions of violence who advocate superiority of one race, sect, creed, region, religion, language or culture.
- Unfortunately, fascist tendencies are still prevalent and pose a threat to the security of those who do not follow them.