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# Fascism As A Political Ideology

## Introduction

Fascism as understood and promulgated by Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler, refer to a political creed that pays precedence to perpetual struggle in a nation in terms of political and social upheavals. Mussolini in particular, contrasted fascism with other peacetime ideologies such as Marxism, socialism and pacifism. He believed that in comparison to such ideologies, fascism was more productive in progressing human achievements since it was born of courage rather than cowardice. This paper will discourse on fascism as a political ideology, how it was championed by the two controversial dictators and why it had such an allure during the 1930s.

Fascism is a political ideology that is characterized by radical totalitarian nationalism marked by authoritarian and dictatorial ruling. In this political creed, the government's opposition is suppressed by forcible subjugation. The government is in total control of the subject nation's commerce and economic instruments and vehicles. Benito Mussolini was a notorious advocate for the ideology during his tenure as president in Italy in the 1930s (Halsall). He wrote extensively on the merits of the ideology and due to his charisma managed to have a fanatical following of citizens, who supported his presidency, or rather dictatorship. Adolf Hitler on the other hand also contributed to the promulgation of the fascist worldview. Although when he first wrote his ideas on the ideology people did not automatically respond to his ideas owing to the fact that he was at that time a political prisoner, during his tenure as the president of Germany, his ideas were implemented by his then popular party, the NAZIs.

According to Mussolini, fascism was necessary due to a number of factors. First, perpetual peace was an ideal that was impossible to actualize; therefore, he believed that the most prudent undertaking was to utilize socio-political instability by capitalizing on war so as to ensure his country's progress (Halsall). Moreover, he believed that perpetual peace would be detrimental to a country's growth and thereby deemed it unviable. In place of cultivating peace and advancing the ideal, he proposed the implementation of fascism. Another feature that Mussolini ascribed to fascism was that it was pro-life. In this sense, he claimed that it held human life in great value and thus was opposed to acts such as suicide. It viewed life as a God-given duty and thereby his citizens had to live in service not only to their lives but also to the lives of future Italian generations.

Mussolini further ascribed the characteristic of denouncing other political ideologies to fascism. He stated that the creed differed from socialism in the sense that while socialism sought to define human history on a materialistic basis, fascism upheld the basic but noble ideals of heroism and holiness. On democracy, he pits fascism against it, arguing that democracy is flawed from its theoretical basis since human societies are naturally shaped by inequality (Halsall). Moreover, he asserts that the majority cannot direct the progress of human civilization and shouldn't thus be made to by mechanistic ideologies such as democracy. While he castigates democracy for espousing the false belief of collective happiness, he claims that the belief of individual gratification espoused by liberalism is equally baseless. Lastly, he stated that fascism was characterized by the supremacy of the state. He claimed that all other bodies within the state itself were secondary after the state. He asserted that the main role of the state was to

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expand and acquire more power. He even went further to state that nations themselves could be regarded as ethnic states, seeing that they had personalities.

Adolf Hitler unlike Mussolini did not focus on describing his stance on fascism, but merely provided guidelines on how to implement the ideology. It is evident that from his entries in *Mein Kampf* that he supported the movement. He castigated cowardice and in contrast praised the gallantry of the military (Hitler). Moreover, he urges the people not to blame the prevailing harsh social conditions on wars that Germany had lost but on the pacifism that the previous German press had advocated. This is in line with the fascist strategy of promotion of war over peace. Another fascist characteristic that Hitler demonstrates in his speech is that of denouncing other political ideologies. Specifically, he castigated pacifism as being cowardly while aristocracy had encouraged the gradual increment in the number of low-tier Jewish businessmen who had purportedly ruined the German economy. Hitler moreover supports the authoritarian implementation of government policies by advocating for the use of propaganda. He advocated for a scheme that would ensure the complete subjugation of the German people. He even laid down guidelines as to how this propaganda in accomplishing the task. More specifically, he calls for an appeal to the public's emotions as opposed to their intellect.

Fascism had an enormous public acceptance during the 1930s. The reason behind fascism appeal was rooted in the tactics that Mussolini and Hitler utilized in promotion of the ideology. The two dictators were not only prolific writers to political journals in their respective countries, but were also charismatic orators who wooed the public through speeches (Hitler). In *Mein Kampf*, Adolf Hitler explicitly notes that appeal to the public's emotions was the most effective way of spreading political propaganda. Moreover, he had a great insight into the sociology of masses. He for instance stated that by dressing unfavorable political agenda in more publicly-accepted means, the people would ascribed to the agenda since their receptivity was limited and their collective intelligence marred by their numbers. The effectiveness of the technique was evidenced in the large numbers of people that backed him during his political rallies. The fact that they also used religious connotations in their speeches and articles also add to the reason the ideology had such a mass appeal. This is since in the majority of the two populations were highly religious, thus by tapping into their need for spirituality; the two dictators seemed as deliverers of the two countries. For example, Hitler likened the acceptance of capitalism to idol worshipping citing money to be the gods of capitalists (Hitler). Mussolini and Hitler moreover reached the educated and the uneducated portions of their populations through their dual strategy of writing and orating to successfully convince the above two respective portions.

## **Conclusion**

Fascism was a popular political ideology prior to the Second World War. Dictators in Europe promulgated the fascist agenda through providing definitions of the creed, its necessity and how the creed could be implemented. While Benito Mussolini, the then president of Italy, focused his ideology promotion on defining the building blocks of fascism, Adolf Hitler provided for a framework through which the features of fascism could be actualized in the then political environment. They used both writing and oration in achieving their goals. Whichever the method that the two leaders used in promoting fascism; they emerged successful seeing as they generated a mass appeal of the ideology.