Fascism & Nazism

Glorification of Power
Fascism

► An ideology opposed to liberalism, socialism, conservatism, and communism, because they brought economic depression, political betrayal, national weakness, and moral decline.

► Aggressively nationalistic ideology.
Roots of fascist thinking

The work of Friedrich Nietzsche influenced fascists, particularly the view expressed here:

*Man does not search for happiness.*

*Only the English liberal does that.*
Italian dictator Benito Mussolini coined the term in 1919, referring to the Roman symbol for “power through unity”—a bundle of reeds called “fasces,” individually weak but collectively strong.
Fascism & totalitarianism

Fascist ideology is totalitarian, which means a political system that controls every aspect of life, so that there is no private sphere or independent organizations.

Fascism extols aggressive nationalism and dominion of the totalistic state over the individual.
Ideas of Mussolini

Mussolini argued that citizens were *empowered* when they were subordinated to the state. By blindly obeying the state, they helped the state thrive, which benefited them.

To Mussolini, this distinguished the fascist state from repressive authoritarian governments, which sought to crush people, & not empower them.
Other Fascist Regimes

- Spain under Franco
- Portugal under Salazar
- Germany under Hitler – the most extreme
Regimes with fascist elements

- Argentina under Juan Peron (1946-55)
- Chile under Pinochet (1973-1990)
- South Africa apartheid regime for Blacks (1945-1990)
Fascist Principles

► Anti-individualistic
► Anti-democratic
► Anti-egalitarian
► Anti-capitalist
► Anti-pacifist
► Anti-internationalist
► Anti-conservative
► Anti-intellectual
Nazism

► Fascism taken to its extreme form.

► Racist and anti-Semitic elements that did not appear in Italian fascism.
Hitler’s Germany

- Germany had been hard-hit by its defeat in the First World War, the hyperinflation of 1923, and the Depression.

- Germans blamed socialists, Jews, and foreigners for their troubles.
Adolph Hitler

- Hitler considered himself superior, even though he was a drifter & failed artist during his youth.
- A corporal during WWI, he was devastated by Germany’s loss & blamed it on the Jews.
- He started his political career at age 30, joining the German Workers Party. He had exceptional speaking skills & came to be revered by others in the party. He was chosen its leader in 1921, and renamed it the National Socialist German Workers Party.
He mounted a coup attempt against the Weimar Republic in 1923; it failed. He broke from the right wing establishment when they didn’t back him.

It was at this point that he became convinced that he should become dictator of Germany, even though he lacked education and social status.

By 1933, Hitler’s party was the largest in the country and he was Reich Chancellor.
Hitler’s economic and social policies were spectacularly effective.

Public works contracts, a military build-up, and a policy of encouraging women to leave the work-place in order to release jobs for men led to an economic boom, low unemployment, and rising standards of living.
Mein Kampf (1924)

Hitler wrote this while serving a 9-month prison sentence after the unsuccessful coup attempt. He had been sentenced to 5 years but authorities sympathized with his extreme ethnic nationalism.
The title means *My Struggle*, and it expounds on Hitler’s anti-Semitism, worship of power, scorn for morality, and plan for world domination.
Nazi racial theory

Three races:

► Aryans (Germanic) – culture creating
► Jews – culture destroying
► Middle – culture maintaining

- At various levels of hierarchy between Aryans and Jews.
Nazi racial theory

► The belief that Germans were threatened the most from an internal enemy led to the Holocaust, the extermination of 6 million Jewish people in Europe.

► Everything was sublimated to the need to purify the German race. In fact, it even drove Nazi policies that worked against the war effort.
The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. defines the Holocaust as: “the state-sponsored systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945.”

The Nazi leaders used this euphemism to describe the policy: "The Final Solution to the Jewish Problem."
Genocide

► Nazi extermination of the Jews is considered to be **Genocide** - the systematic extermination of a whole people or race.

► The U.S. government has called the killing of Sudanese in Darfur by government-sponsored militia a “genocide.”
Other victims of Nazi ideology

► The Nazis also persecuted and killed Gypsies, non-Jewish Polish people, homosexuals and people with disabilities as racial purity reasons.

► They killed political dissidents, Soviet prisoners of war, Freemasons and Jehovah’s Witnesses for political reasons.
Hitler wrote, “The Jew has always been a people with definite racial characteristics and never a religion.” To him, the Jewish

religion is not the problem.

If their religious faith is not a threat, why should Non-Jews worry about Jews?
The Jewish “Problem”

- Seek to pollute Aryan blood.
- Cunning (not smart), with strong will to survive.
- Seek to destroy higher cultures.
- Not “idealistic;” no selfless or noble attitudes.
- No original contributions to art or science.
- In league with communists.
- Betrayed German state during WWI.
- Not human but subhuman.
How did Hitler make the argument about racial superiority?
1. Natural law: “one of the most patent principles of Nature's rule: the inner segregation of the species of all living beings on this earth.”

2. History: historical experience offers countless proofs, e.g., the purity of the race in North America has led to greater achievements than in Central & South America.

3. Religion: “sin against the will of the creator. He refers to a sin against the will of eternal Providence.”
from Mein Kampf

What metaphors does Hitler use to refer to the Jewish people?
a horde of rats
parasites in the body of other peoples
subhuman
Hitler and Communism

- Nothing socialist in NAZI policies. Very elitist.
- Communism was part of the Jewish conspiracy to destroy the Aryans.
  - Marx was a Jew who extracted “the most essential poisons “from the slowly decomposing world and brewed them into a concentrated solution to swiftly annihilate the independent existence of free nations... all in the service of his race.”
Hitler and Capitalism

Hitler did not like the bourgeoisie either. In fact, he scorned them for being only concerned with material comfort. He referred to middle class Germans as the “miserable army of our present-day shopkeepers.”
Ideology matters

Impact of ideology on our lives is not incidental or abstract. This is true of all ideologies but particularly clear in the example of Nazism.

The following photos chosen to illustrate its impact. Some are graphic.
Report by Himmler to Hitler: 363,211 Jews in Nazi-occupied USSR were murdered, Aug.-Nov. 1942.
Glorification of racial superiority

Nazi soldiers going to Poland. Sign reads: “We are going to Poland to strike out the Jews.”
Treating Jews as subhuman

Nazi soldiers in Russia beating a Jewish man
Treating Jewish prisoners as subhuman

Men and boy in Poland, humiliated & waiting to be executed
Pseudo-scientific elements

Phony “race theory” about Aryan superiority justified inhumane medical experiments.

Auschwitz children subjected to medical tests
Why is there neo-fascism?

► What is the continuing appeal of fascist ideas?

► What elements of modern society may make these ideas more appealing?