

The origins and growth of fascism

Headings	Notes
WHY DEMOCRACIES FAILED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One important result of the First World War was the emergence of new states in central and Eastern Europe.
THE NEW STATES OF EUROPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 1914, four empires (Austria-Hungary – Habsburg Empire, Turkey – Ottoman Empire, Russia -Romanov Dynasty and Germany – Hohenzollern Dynasty) had ruled there. At the end of the war they collapsed and were replaced by 11 successor states. • The new states were Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Austria, Hungary, the Soviet Union (Russia), the Weimar Republic (Germany) and Turkey. • These states were weaker and unstable than the empires they replaced. • All the new states (apart from Lenin's Russia) became liberal democracies with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written constitutions which guaranteed freedom of speech, assembly, religion and the press. • Freely elected parliaments which passed laws, decided on taxes and elected the governments.
THE FAILURE OF DEMOCRACY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • But by 1939, many European countries had abandoned democracy and become dictatorships. This was due to (a) the economic problems left by the First World War, (b) the weakness of democratic governments and (c) the fear of communism. • The war damaged the European economy and through the 1920s and 1930s unemployment was high and most people were poor. They suffered from bad housing, poor health and limited access to education. • Poor economic conditions made many people feel that democracy was failing to give them what they wanted. What use was the right to vote if there were no jobs? What use was free speech if the children were hungry? • Some turned to anti-democratic parties – communist or fascist – whose leaders promised to create a better society.
WHO WAS AFRAID OF COMMUNISM?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After 1917 communist parties gained support from unemployed industrial workers and landless labourers who admired what Lenin did in Russia. • But the growth of communism terrified many people; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich landlords, bankers and factory owners feared they would lose their wealth and power.
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<p>WHO WAS AFRAID OF COMMUNISM</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who owned a little property (e.g. small farmers, shopkeepers) feared communists would confiscate it as they had in Russia. • The clergy and devout Christians feared the Church would be persecuted as it was in the Soviet Union. • Nationalists feared that 'international communism' would undermine respect for their nation. • These groups felt liberal democracy was too weak to protect them because 'free speech' left communists free to spread their ideas. • These groups wanted a 'strong leader' to protect them from communism, even if that meant giving up the freedoms guaranteed by democracy. • They looked for an alternative to liberalism and communism. They found it in Italy, where Mussolini and his Fascist Party won power in 1922, and by 1925 had destroyed Italy's democratic Constitution.
<p>ITALY 1919-1926: THE EMERGENCE OF FASCISM</p> <p>ITALIAN DISSATISFACTION WITH THE RESULTS OF THE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the First World War began in 1914, Italians stayed neutral. They joined in on the side of the Allies in 1915 after France and Britain promised them Tyrol and Dalmatia (parts of the Austria-Hungarian empire). • But at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, the Allies would only give Italy the South Tyrol and the north of Dalmatia. They also refused to give the Italians any German or Turkish colonies. • Italian nationalists resented Italy's limited gains. They demanded 'Italia irredenta' (unrecovered Italy). Some nationalists, led by the poet Gabriele D'Annunzio, took over Fiume (an Italian-speaking city in Dalmatia) and declared a republic. An embarrassed Italian government had to expel them.
<p>1919-1922: ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the war, Italy faced major economic and social problems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inflation was high (prices up by 600% since 1914), but wages stayed low and the poor were often hungry. • Unemployment grew as arms factories closed and millions of demobilised soldiers returned from the war.
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THE MARCH ON ROME	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mussolini hoped that he would be invited to join in a coalition, but the old established politicians despised him.• In October 1922, he threatened that 50,000 Blackshirts would 'march on Rome' to demand that Fascist Party be included in the government.• The Prime Minister, Facta, asked King Victor Emmanuel to call out the army and stop them; but the king, who feared communism, refused. Instead, he invited Mussolini to form a coalition and become Prime Minister.• Only then did the Fascists march into Rome.
1922-1926: STEPS TO DICTATORSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Between 1922 and 1926, Mussolini destroyed Italian democracy.• He incorporated the Blackshirts into the police and banned the Communist Party. This was popular with many people.• In 1923, he brought in the Acerbo Law to change the electoral system. The Party with most votes would automatically get 66% of the seats in the Assembly (parliament). He claimed this would provide stability.• In the 1924 election, the Fascists used brutal tactics to intimidate other parties especially the Socialists. They broke up their meetings, burned their offices and destroyed their newspapers.• When a leading Socialist, Giacomo Matteotti, protested he was murdered by fascist thugs. The scandal nearly destroyed Mussolini, but he was saved when the Socialists walked out of the Assembly in protest.• Not surprisingly, the Fascists got most votes and with his 66% majority, Mussolini could change the system of government from democracy to dictatorship.
1926-1945: THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP IMPOSING FASCISM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parliament gave Mussolini power to rule by decree, making laws and approving taxes. In theory, he was advised by the Fascist Grand Council, but in reality, he acted alone. He became known as Il Duce (the Leader).• All parties except the Fascists were banned. Trade unions were declared illegal. Newspapers and radio were censored and had to carry the Fascist message or be closed down.
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IMPOSING FASCISM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fascist officials replaced elected local councils and a secret police, the OVRA, was set up.• Although it could be brutal, Mussolini's regime was not as bad as Hitler's or Stalin's. By 1940, about 4,000 opposition politicians were in exile in remote villages or on islands off the coast and about ten had been executed.
PROPAGANDA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mussolini made skilful use of propaganda to develop a personality cult.• Newspapers and radio carried Mussolini's speeches in full. Photographs of Mussolini flying planes, riding horses, working on building sites or saving the harvest appeared every day.• Slogans like '<i>Il Duce is always right</i>' covered the walls of public buildings. The light was left on all night in Mussolini's Roman office to show he was working for the Italian people. In fact, he was seldom there.• The Fascists staged marches and demonstrations, with bands, music and flags, to whip up popular enthusiasm.
EDUCATION AND YOUTH POLICY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Education improved, with more children going to school, but schools were expected to teach the Fascist message.• Teachers had to belong to the Fascist Party. Schoolbooks encouraged boys to be good fascist soldiers and girls to be good fascist mothers.• History was rewritten to emphasise the glories of the Roman Empire, which Mussolini intended to repeat.• Young people were expected to belong to fascist youth 8-14 belonged to the Balilla, movements. Boys aged where they trained to be soldiers who would fight to create a new Roman Empire.
THE CORPORATE STATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mussolini claimed to have invented a middle way between liberal democracy and communism. He called it the Corporate State.• To avoid class conflict, all economic activity was divided into 32 corporations. There were corporations for mining, agriculture, fishing, etc. In each corporation, worker and employer representatives set wages and working conditions.
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THE CORPORATE STATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• But since the Fascists appointed the various representatives, the decisions made usually favoured employers• Workers were not allowed to form trade unions to defend their interests, so wages and working conditions got worse during the Fascist period.• In 1938, an Assembly of Corporations nominated by Mussolini was supposed to replace parliament.• Although largely a sham, the idea of the Corporate State appealed to many people in Europe (e.g. Churchill and de Valera).
ECONOMIC POLICY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unlike the communists, the Fascists did not confiscate private property, but they interfered a great deal in the economy, especially after the depression began in 1930.• Up to 1925, Albert de Stefani was Minister for Finance. He reduced taxes and borrowing.• Employment rose and the economy began to recover. This was also due to the improvement in the world economy.• But Mussolini sacked de Stefani because he wanted to follow a policy of 'self-sufficiency' (autarky) i.e. that Italy should produce all the food and raw materials it needed and not have to depend on imports.• This led to a series of propaganda 'battles':<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The 'battle for grain' encouraged farmers to grow more grain. It worked in northern Italy, but not in the south where the land and climate was more suitable for olives and fruit. High tariffs (taxes) on grain imports pushed up the price of food for ordinary Italians.• The 'battle for land' aimed at keeping more Italians in farming. Its main achievement was the draining of the mosquito-infested Pontine Marshes near Rome. The land was divided among landless peasants.• The 'battle for the lira' set the exchange rate for Italy's currency (the lira) very high. This hit exports and damaged the economy.• The 'battle for births' tried to increase the population by giving bounties for babies and taxing bachelors, It did not work.
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ECONOMIC POLICY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To create jobs, the government poured money into big building projects, improving the railways and building motorways.• In the 1930s, Mussolini, as part of his imperial policy, increased spending on armaments, which took money away from more socially useful projects.
MUSSOLINI AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Up to 1860, the Pope ruled Rome and a large part of central Italy. The Italian government took over his territories when the country was unified. This caused a quarrel with the Catholic Church which lasted from 1870 to the 1920s.• Mussolini was personally hostile to the Church, but realised this was pointless in a country where over 90% of people were Catholic. He tried to win favour with the Church by allowing Catholicism to be taught in schools.• Pope Pius XI (1922-1939) feared communism more than he valued democracy. He did not protest when Mussolini outlawed the Catholic People's Party and he accepted his dictatorship.• In 1926, negotiations opened between the two sides. This led to the Lateran Treaty, signed in 1929. Its terms were:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Italy recognised the independence of the Pope's Vatican state and the Pope recognised the Italian state.• Italy paid compensation to the Pope for the property it took in 1860-1870.• It recognised the Catholic Church as the official Church of Italy. This gave it control of religious education in the schools and banned divorce and contraception.• Later relations between Church and state deteriorated when Mussolini tried to close down the independent Catholic organisation Catholic Action.• The Pope also opposed Mussolini's introduction of anti-Jewish laws after his alliance with Hitler.
1922-1945: MUSSOLINI'S FOREIGN POLICY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When Mussolini came to power, he talked about re-establishing the old Roman Empire in the Mediterranean, especially in the Balkans. Up to 1936, he was also Foreign Minister and kept foreign policy in his own hands.• He had success in 1923, when he negotiated with the Yugoslav government to let the Italians take the city of Fiume.
EARLY SUCCESS	
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1923: THE CORFU INCIDENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two Italians who were working for the League of Nations on the Greek-Albanian border were killed in 1923.• Mussolini saw a chance to move into the Balkans. He demanded compensation from Greece and sent his army into the Greek island of Corfu to enforce the claim.• Britain and France did not want a war in the Mediterranean. They backed a League of Nations compromise: the Greeks would pay compensation, but Mussolini must withdraw his troops.• This showed Italy was not strong enough to defy the great powers, Britain and France, when they took a united stand.
THE INTERNATIONAL STATESMAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• After this Mussolini adopted the role of international statesman, while secretly meddling in the Balkans and Abyssinia with the intention of seizing territory.• He was active in the League of Nations and helped to negotiate the Locarno Pact and other international agreements.• In 1934, he successfully opposed Hitler's move against Austria and organised the Stresa Front to take a stand against Hitler's expansion plans.• But Mussolini still wanted an empire, and during the Depression years he needed a way of distracting Italians from their economic problems.• In 1935, he invaded Abyssinia. He was sure Britain and France would not object because they needed him on their side against Hitler.• But the Emperor of Abyssinia appealed to the League and public opinion in France and Britain forced their governments to agree to impose sanctions on Italy in 1936.• Sanctions did not stop the Italians, but they persuaded Mussolini to abandon his alliance with Britain and France and move towards Hitler.
THE ROME-BERLIN AXIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In July 1936, a civil war broke out in Spain. Mussolini sent 70,000 troops to help Franco (who had fascist support) because he saw this as a way of building up Italian influence in Spain. Hitler too helped the fascists.
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BENITO MUSSOLINI (1883-1945)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• His main achievement was the Lateran Treaty which solved the long-standing quarrel between Italy and the Pope.• In the 1930s, he allied with Hitler, introduced anti-Semitism, brought Italy into the second World War and was killed by communists in 1945.
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Rise of Fascism in Italy

Italy Before World War One

1. Northern Italy - industry
2. South of Italy based on agriculture.
3. Large wealth gap in North & South.
4. Lack of stable parliamentary democracy after unification in 1870.
5. Northern industrialisation led to the creation of modern urban working class. Envy of the wealth of industrialists.
6. Catholic Church opposed Italian unification – land confiscated.
7. Nationalists claimed Italian speaking land from Austria.

Impact of World War One

1. Italy divided between pacifists and those who supported fighting.
2. Treaty of London 1915.
3. 600,000 killed – 1 million wounded
4. War debt of 85 billion lire (£85m)
5. Treaty of Versailles – Italy did not get North Tyrol, Dalmatia and Fiume as promised. Opposed by GB and USA
6. D'Annunzio and nationalists occupy city of Fiume.
7. Rising inflation as government prints money to pay war debt.

Causes of Rise of Fascism

1. Resentment at Treaty of Versailles – Italy did not get promised territory. Rise of nationalist feeling (occupation Fiume)
2. Economic depression – rising inflation. Government prints money.
3. Social Unrest – strikes for higher wages to compensate for inflation, land seizures by peasants in the South.
4. Weakness of parliamentary democracy – large number of parties leading to unstable government.
5. Fear of Communism after Russian Revolution – Bolsheviks supported by Socialist Party.
6. Use of propaganda and intimidation by blackshirts. Attacks on striking workers.

Fascist Programme

1. Ultra Nationalism – Wanted empire and a restoration of glorious past.
2. Totalitarianism – One party government with one dictator. Complete control of the state.
3. Cult of the Leader – Government with strong rule and under an all-powerful leader.
4. Racism – Superiority of one's own race. Not as prominent in Italy as in Germany.
5. Anti-Communism – Industrialists and large landowners wanted a force to combat growing support for socialism..

Development of Fascism in Italy

1. 1919 - Mussolini established 'combat groups' – 'fascio di Combattimento'
2. Used symbols from Roman Empire.
3. Uniformed blackshirts – 'squadristi'
4. Support from ex-army officers, students, middle classes.
5. 1921 – Mussolini forms National Fascist Party
6. Financial support from FIAT, Pirelli tyre company and Italian banks.
7. 1921 elections – 35 seats.
8. 1919-1922 – 2,000 opponents killed by fascists.
9. 1922 – Fascists help break a general strike.
10. 1922 – 300,000 members.

March on Rome

1. Oct. 1922 – Mussolini demands to be made Prime Minister.
2. Announces 'March on Rome'
3. Fascists occupy towns across North and Central Italy.
4. King refuses to declare a State of Emergency and use army to crush fascists.
5. King gives in and appoints Mussolini Prime Minister.
6. Fascists stage 'victory march' in Rome.

Mussolini Consolidates Power

Establishing a Dictatorship

1. 1923 **Acerbo Law** - the party that gained the greatest number of votes in the election would get two-thirds of the seats.
2. In the election Mussolini used violence to make sure he won.
3. The Fascists murdered Matteoti the Socialist Party leader
4. Opposition withdraw from parliament.
5. Mussolini established '**rule by decree**' which allowed him to make laws without going through parliament.
6. All other political parties were banned.
7. The press and radio were censored.
8. The secret police (established 1926) – the OVRA were used to crush opposition.
9. Mussolini was called *Il Duce* and a cult of personality developed around him -photographed in heroic poses.

Propaganda

1. **Propaganda** played an important role in Mussolini's Italy. He used press, radio and cinema to glorify Fascist successes and the Fascists used slogans to communicate their ideas.
2. **Fascist education** - The education system and youth organisations used to *indoctrinate* or brainwash young boys and girls. Textbooks were changed to glorify Mussolini and fascism and teachers were vetted. Young people had to join Fascist youth organisations like the *Ballila*.
3. Mussolini called 'IL DUCE'.
4. Cult of Leadership.
5. Wanted to be the 'New Caesar'.
6. Huge Rallies.
7. Strict Press Censorship.

The Corporate State

1. Goal was to eliminate struggle between employers and workers.
2. All were to work for common good
3. Trade Unions banned.
4. Strikes forbidden.
5. Every profession and industry had its own corporate body (corporation).
6. Problems to be solved by negotiation.
7. In reality fascists were in control and issued orders to negotiating sides.
8. Wages fell.
9. Living standards remained low.

Relations with the Catholic Church

1. Ongoing dispute over confiscation of Church lands during unification of Italy.
2. The Catholic Church welcomed Mussolini as a safeguard against communism.
3. Religious instruction was allowed in primary schools.
4. In 1923 the government rescued the Catholic Bank of Rome from financial difficulties.
5. Mussolini had a Catholic marriage and baptised his children in 1925.
6. Obscene publications and swearing in public were banned.
7. Contraception and abortion banned.
8. 1925 - Pope Pius XI withdrew support from the Catholic Popular Party.

Economic Policies

1. Mussolini improved the main road system by building *autostrada* (motorways).
2. Mussolini reclaimed the Pontine Marshes near Rome, which provided more land and helped to prevent malaria.
3. Mussolini promoted the 'Battle for Grain' - doubled grain production.
4. He promoted the 'Battle for Births' to increase the Italian population.

Lateran Treaty 1929

1. The treaty restored the pope's control over the Vatican City.
2. In return, the Church gave formal recognition to the kingdom of Italy and the pope relinquished all claims to any other Italian territory.
3. Mussolini paid 750m lira to as compensation for loss of territory.
4. Catholicism became the state religion.
5. Clergy could not belong to a political party.
6. Divorce banned.

Mussolini's Foreign Policy

"Make Italy Great, Feared and Respected"

1. 1923 – occupied Corfu. Withdrew following intervention of League of Nations when Greece paid compensation.
2. 1924 – re-occupied Fiume.
3. Presented a 'reasonable face' for remainder of 1920's.
4. 1934 – Opposed unification of Austria and Germany.
5. 1935 – Formed 'Stresa Front' with Britain and France to oppose German rearmament and expansion.

Invasion of Abyssinia

1. 1935 - Italy invades Abyssinia.
2. Revenge for Abyssinian defeat of Italy in 1896.
3. League of Nations apply limited sanctions. Unsuccessful.
4. 400,000 troops with tanks and planes used.
5. Hitler supported Mussolini – used crisis to occupy Rhineland.
6. Collapse of 'Stresa Front'
7. Weakness of League of Nations.

Spanish Civil War

1. Mussolini supported the Fascist army of General Franco. Met with Spanish generals before the Civil War started and promised aid (failed to deliver).
2. Sent 80,000 troops during the war.
3. Hoped a Fascist victory would increase his international prestige and his reputation at home.
4. Intervention had the opposite effect. Italian troops were poorly equipped and trained.
5. Franco blamed Italians for some Fascist defeats.
6. Italy drew closer to Germany.

Rome-Berlin Axis – 1936

1. Mussolini becoming more dependent on the Nazis for strength.
2. Nov. 1936 – first treaty with Germany signed by Count Ciano (Foreign Minister and Mussolini's cousin).
3. European power revolved around an axis connecting Berlin and Rome.
4. 1937 – Italy, Germany and Japan sign the Anti-Comintern Pact. United Fascist countries in their aim to crush the USSR.

Pact of Steel 1939

1. March 1939 – Italy issues ultimatum to Albania to accept takeover – tries to bribe King Zog.
2. April 1939 – Italy invades Albania
3. Albania defeated – King Zog deposed and replaced as king by King Emmanuel of Italy.
4. May 1939 – Von Ribbentrop and Ciano sign 'Pact of Friendship and Alliance' – known as 'Pact of Steel'.
5. United Fascist Italy and Fascist Germany in war.
6. When WW2 breaks out Mussolini declares that Italy is neutral.

World War Two

1. Believing a Germany victory inevitable, Mussolini enters war in 1940.
2. Italian invasion of Egypt (from Libya) crushed by British forces.
3. 1941 – Italy loses Abyssinia.
4. Oct. 1940 – Italy invades Greece from Albania – attack defeated.
5. Germany intervenes to prevent Italian defeats.
6. Mussolini deposed but re-installed by Germans in Northern Italy.
7. Executed in 1945.