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Fascism is a term used to describe authoritarian nationalist political ideologies or mass movements that are concerned with notions of cultural decline or decadence and seek to achieve a millenarian national rebirth by exalting the nation or race, and promoting cults of unity, strength and purity.[1][2][3][4] Fascists promote a type of national unity that is usually based on (but not limited to) ethnic, cultural, national, racial, and/or religious attributes. Various scholars attribute different characteristics to fascism, but the following elements are usually seen as among its integral parts: nationalism, militarism, anti-communism, totalitarianism, statism, dictatorship, economic planning (including corporatism and autarky), populism, collectivism, autocracy and opposition to classic political and economic liberalism.[5][6] [7][8][9] Some authors reject broad usage of the term or exclude certain parties and regimes.[10] Following the defeat of the Axis powers in World War II, there have been few self-proclaimed fascist groups and individuals. In contemporary political discourse, the term fascist is often used by adherents of some ideologies as a pejorative description of their opponents. The term fascism The term fascismo was coined by the Italian Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini and the Neo-Hegelian philosopher Giovanni Gentile. It is derived from the Italian word fascio, which means "bundle" or "union".[11] and from the Latin word fasces. The fasces, which consisted of a bundle of rods tied around an axe, were an ancient Roman symbol of the authority of the civic magistrates; they were carried by his Lictors and could be used for corporal and capital punishment at his command. Furthermore, the symbolism of the fasces suggested strength through unity: a single rod is easily broken, while the bundle is difficult to break. It is also strongly associated with the fascist militia fasci italiani di combattimento ("League of Combat"). Originally, the term "fascism" (fascismo) was used by the political movement that ruled Italy from 1922 to 1943 under the leadership of Benito Mussolini. Definitions and scope of the word Historians, political scientists, and other scholars have engaged in long and furious debates concerning the exact nature of fascism and its core tenets. Since the 1990s, there has been a growing move toward some rough consensus reflected in the work of Stanley Payne, Roger Eatwell, Roger Griffin, and Robert O. Paxton. According to most scholars of fascism, there are both left and right influences on fascism as a social movement, and fascism, especially once in power, has historically attacked communism, conservatism and parliamentary liberalism, attracting support primarily from the "far right" or "extreme right." [12] (See: Fascism and ideology). Mussolini defined fascism as a collectivistic ideology in opposition to socialism, classical liberalism, democracy and individualism. He wrote in The Doctrine of Fascism: Anti-individualistic, the fascist conception of life stresses the importance of the State and accepts the individual only insofar as his interests coincide with those of the State, which stands for the conscience and the universal will of man as a historic entity.... The fascist conception of the State is all-embracing; outside of it no human or spiritual values can exist, much less have value.... Fascism is therefore opposed to that form of democracy which equates a nation to the majority, lowering it to the level of the largest number.... We are free to believe that this is the century of authority, a century tending to the 'right', a Fascist century. If the nineteenth century was the century of the individual we are free to believe that this is the 'collective' century, and therefore the century of the State.[13] Since Mussolini, there have been many conflicting definitions of the term fascism. Former Columbia University Professor Robert O. Paxton has written that: Fascism may be defined as a form of political behavior marked by obsessive preoccupation with community decline, humiliation, or victim-hood and by compensatory cults of unity, energy, and purity, in which a mass-based party of committed nationalist militants, working in uneasy but effective collaboration with traditional elites, abandons democratic liberties and pursues with redemptive violence and without ethical or legal restraints goals of internal cleansing and external expansion." [14] Paxton further defines fascism's essence as: "...a sense of overwhelming crisis beyond reach of traditional solutions; 2. belief one's group is the victim, justifying any action without legal or moral limits; 3. need for authority by a natural leader above the law, relying on the superiority of his instincts; 4. right of the chosen people to dominate others without legal or moral restraint; 5. fear of foreign 'contamination.'" [14] Stanley Payne's Fascism: Comparison and Definition (1980) uses a lengthy itemized list of characteristics to identify fascism, including the creation of an authoritarian state; a regulated, state-integrated economic sector; fascist symbolism; anti-liberalism; anti-communism; anti-conservatism.[15] He argues that common aim of all fascist movements was elimination of the autonomy or, in some cases, the existence of large-scale capitalism.[16] Semiotician Umberto Eco in his popular essay "Eternal Fascism: Fourteen Ways of Looking at a Blackshirt" attempts to identify the characteristics of proto-fascism as the "cult of tradition," rejection of modernism, cult of action for action's sake, life is lived for struggle, fear of difference, rejection of disagreement, contempt for the weak, cult of masculinity and machismo, qualitative populism, appeal to a frustrated majority, obsession with a plot, illicitly wealthy enemies, education to become a hero, and speaking Newspeak.[17] More recently, an emphasis has been placed upon the aspect of populist fascist rhetoric that argues for a "re-birth" of a conflated nation and ethnic people.