

A Criterion for Fascisms

There is a certain amount of confusion surrounding the ideology known as Fascism, where in modern times the idea is used as a slur to slander the countries of the past and present, as well as political movements. However, there certainly have been Fascist countries, namely the German and Italian states during the 1930s and '40s, and their ideologies can be used to determine whether a country or movement is truly Fascist. Specifically their rejection of liberalism and their strong appeals to nationalism, which were unique to them, therefore these two ideas act as a checklist that determines if a country is fascist or not. With these specific guidelines, 1930s Japan can be proven to be a Fascist state on its ideologies alone.

Nationalism has always been the center of Fascist thought. Before he took power, Adolf Hitler gave a speech that was later reprinted in NSDAP's magazine, the *Volkischer Beobachter*, in which he discusses his views on Jews. Now at first, this speech may appear only as racism rather than nationalism. However, when looking at the arguments that he injects his racism onto, they are nationalistic in nature, "The only reason is that these 100,000 Jews were never really ready to work in an honorable manner in a national organism for the common good of all. From the beginning they regarded the whole national organism as nothing more than a hothouse in which they could thrive,"¹. Hitler does not hate Jews for no reason other than for hatred, he hates them because he sees them as a parasite to his country, and the fact that he wishes to remove them from Germany, thus in his eyes aiding Germany, makes him a nationalist. Much like Hitler's speech, Japan also produced literature that aimed to correct the wrong ways of the present and to uplift Japan through nationalistic efforts. In 1937 Japan's Ministry of Education commissioned a group of academics to write the *Kotutai no Hogi*, translated as the *National Polity*, which instead of Jews, blames European political philosophy for the problems they see in Japan, "The various ideological and social evils of present-day Japan are the result of ignoring the fundamental and running after the trivial, of the lack of judgment and the failure to digest things thoroughly. This is because, since the days of Meiji, so many aspects of European and American culture, systems, and learning have been imported and too rapidly,"². In a similar fashion, the revolutionary politician who staged two separate nationalistic coup d'état, Kingoro Hashimoto wanted to uplift Japan. In his, *Addresses to Young Men*, Hashimoto debates in favor of imperialism for the benefit it will bring to Japan, "We have already said that there are only three ways left to Japan to escape from the pressure of surplus population. We are like a great crowd of people packed into a small and narrow room, and there are only three doors through which we might escape, namely, emigration, advance into world markets, and expansion of territory"³. Although these three instances discuss a variety of topics, they do not aim to benefit the world in its entirety, they are internationalists, but instead, their goals lay only in their nation, making them nationalist.

Yet if nationalism were to be the deciding factor of whether or not a political movement was Fascist, many organizations of modern and past times, even those that state they are against Fascism, would fall under the label. This means that nationalism alone is too broad of a factor, and there must be some part of the Fascist ideology that

¹ Moeller 36

² Hogi 607-608

³ Kingoro

is apparent in all of its iterations. That is a stance against Liberalism, especially of the individualistic qualities it has. In *The Social and Political Doctrine of Fascism*, Benito Mussolini stresses these anti-individualist ideals while discussing Fascist philosophy, stating that “Fascism is opposed to all the individualistic abstractions of a materialistic nature like those of the eighteenth century,⁴”. He goes on to detail his problems with individualism, and states that it was caused by Liberalism, “Liberalism denied the State in the interest of the particular individual; Fascism reaffirms the State as the true reality of the individual⁵,”. Again, this belief can be seen across the world in Japan’s political writings, even for similar reasons. Further down in the *Kotutai no Hogi* it states that “As a matter of fact, the foreign ideologies imported into our country are mainly ideologies of the Enlightenment that have come down from the eighteenth century or extensions of them. The views of the world and of life that form the basis of these ideologies are rationalism and positivism, lacking in historical views, which, on the one hand, place the highest value on, and assert the liberty and equality of, individuals and, on the other hand, place value on a world by nature abstract, transcending nations and races,⁶” which like the writings of Mussolini, the Japanese also state a disdain for Liberalism, over the individualistic nature of the ideology.

This simple checklist to determine if a country is Fascist or not is inherently flawed. It oversimplifies complex political movements and does not address their other distinct aspects. However, although very basic, it is a good indicator to see if a country had the fundamentals of a Fascist country before diving deeper into their particular circumstance. In regards to whether Japan in the 1930s was Fascist, following the criterion of if they were Nationalistic and held a stance of anti-liberalism exemplified in other Fascist countries, then yes Japan was fascist.

⁴ Stone 78-79

⁵ Stone 79

⁶ Hongi 608