

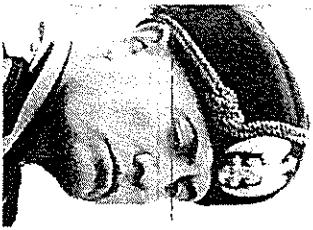
# What is FASCISM?

The years between the end of World War I and the start of World War II were characterized by the emergence of **fascism** in Europe. Fascism is a term used to describe any centralized, authoritarian government that is not communist whose policies glorify the state over the individual and are destructive to basic human rights. Unlike other ideologies, fascism has no unifying theory at its core. Because of this, no two fascist states were exactly alike in the 1920s and 1930s.

Despite their differences, all fascist states had some basic similarities. All forms of fascism were rooted in **extreme nationalism**, and even bordered on racism. Fascists glorified action, violence, and discipline. Fascist leaders demanded blind loyalty to the state and followed aggressive foreign expansion. Fascist leaders also viewed warfare as a struggle to keep their culture and values alive, echoing the idea of “survival of the fittest.”

In terms of politics and government, fascists were strongly **antidemocratic**. They rejected the idea of democracy because they believed that democracy led to corruption and weakness. To fascists, putting individual or class interests above the nation's goals would weaken the country. To that end, fascists rejected the concepts of equality and liberty, and constantly emphasized the supremacy of the state.

Although fascism shared some of the same characteristics of communism (like government control of the economy), one of the main differences between the two ideologies was their view on society. While communists believed in a classless society, fascists supported the idea of clearly defined social classes. Fascists tended to draw support from business leaders and wealthy landowners, whereas communists relied on the support of the working class in order to succeed.



## Questions

1. List ALL defining characteristics of fascism?
2. Why would a fascist leader be opposed to equality and liberty?



3. Do you think that fascism is an effective form of government?  
Why or why not?

## Hitler's Speech

### Adolf Hitler: Speech on the Treaty of Versailles (April 17, 1923)

With the armistice begins the humiliation of Germany. If the Republic on the day of its foundation had appealed to the country: Germans, stand together! Up and resist the foe! The Fatherland, the Republic expects of you that you fight to your last breath, then millions who are now enemies of the Republic would be fanatical Republicans. Today they are the foes of the Republic not because it is a Republic but because this Republic was founded at the moment when Germany was humiliated, because it so discredited the new flag that men's eyes must turn regretfully toward the old flag.

So long as this Treaty stands there can be no resurrection of the German people; no social reform of any kind is possible! The Treaty was made in order to bring 20 million Germans to their deaths and to ruin the German nation. But those who made the Treaty cannot set it aside. As its foundation our Movement formulated three demands:

1. Setting aside of the Peace Treaty.
2. Unification of all Germans.
3. Land and soil [*Grund und Boden*] to feed our nation.

Our movement could formulate these demands, since it was not

our Movement which caused the War, it has not made the Republic, it did not sign the Peace Treaty. There is thus one thing which is the first task of this Movement: it desires to make the German once more National, that his Fatherland shall stand for him above everything else. It desires to teach our people to understand afresh the truth of the old saying: He who will not be a hammer must be an anvil. An anvil we are today, and that anvil will be beaten until out of the anvil we fashion once more a hammer, a German sword!

Read the above speech by Adolf Hitler and respond to the following questions:

1. What changes does Hitler want to bring about in Germany?
2. What are Hitler's goals for Germany after World War I?
3. How does Hitler want to achieve these goals? Cite a sentence from his speech as evidence to prove your response is accurate!
4. Based on the above speech, what will the Treaty of Versailles lead to in Germany among the German people?

