

Fascism as a Political Limit:
The Political Implications of Fascism Debates

by
Mark Shepard

The University of Chicago

A paper submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree
in the Master of Arts Program in the Social Sciences

August 2024

Faculty Advisor: John Boyer

Preceptor: Max Smith

According to Alexander Motyl, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) shared

13 significant similarities with fascism:

the glorification of the nation and the state, eternal conflict as the essence of life, the exaltation of militarism and imperialism, will and faith as the motive forces of history, action as the solution to all problems, the nation as a living organism, the individual person and the social class as organic parts of the nation, the absolute rejection of Marxism and communism, the commitment to state-regulated capitalism, the subordination of social conflict to national unity and the regulation of class struggle, an authoritarian, hierarchical, and corporatist state and social structure, a totalitarian national ideology, and a totalitarian political elite.¹

However, because they agitated for a state, while fascists sought power in an already existing

state, “the OUN is best regarded as a nationalist – and not a fascist – movement.”² In other

words, Motyl believes an otherwise similar movement’s positionality *vis-à-vis* the state can

entirely determine its “fascism.” While logically consistent, his later contention that “the Putin

system may plausibly be termed fascist” reveals that contemporary political concerns (also)

motivate Motyl’s reasoning.³ Namely, he thinks that Ukrainian nationalism does not deserve the

opprobrium associated with “fascism,” while Russian nationalism, its biggest threat, does.

The above anecdote exemplifies why the many scholarly debates about whether certain regimes or movements can properly be called “fascist” have failed to reach consensus.⁴ Since no agreed upon definition of “fascism” exists, “by engaging in a deconstruction and reconstruction

¹ Motyl, Alexander J. 1980. *The Turn to the Right: The Ideological Origins and Development of Ukrainian Nationalism, 1919-1929*. East European Monographs, LXV. New York: Columbia University Press. 163-164.

² Motyl, *Turn to the Right*, 165; Motyl, Alexander. 2010. “Ukraine, Europe, and Bandera.” *Cicero Foundation Great Debate Paper* 10 (05): 1–14. 4.

³ Motyl, Alexander J. 2016. “Putin’s Russia as a Fascist Political System.” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 49 (1): 25–36. 26.

⁴ Alongside those studied herein, there are “fascism debates” about regimes/movements in Croatia, Greece, and the US, to name a few. See Iordachi, Constantin, and Goran Miljan. 2023. “‘Why We Have Become Revolutionaries and Murderers’: Radicalization, Terrorism, and Fascism in the Ustaša–Croatian Revolutionary Organization.” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 35 (8): 1704–23. 1706; Kallis, Aristotle. 2010. “Neither Fascist nor Authoritarian: The 4th of August Regime in Greece (1936-1941) and the Dynamics of Fascistisation in 1930s Europe.” *East Central Europe* 37 (2–3): 303–30; and Jackson, Paul Nicholas. 2021. “Debate: Donald Trump and Fascism Studies.” *Fascism* 10 (1): 1–15.

of the concept,” Motyl can create his own definition that, coincidentally or not, serves the goals of contemporary Ukrainian nationalism.⁵ However, since “fascism” is not unique in lacking some consensus definition, terminological ambiguity cannot be the sole cause of the deadlock. Instead, the primary reason for the interminability of fascism debates is that, though ostensibly about resolving terminological uncertainty, they actually are disagreements over the threat of “fascism” in the present.

Scholars negotiate the contemporary threat level of “fascism” by engaging its status as a “political limit” in a given context. Political limits are social (and sometimes legal) boundaries on political beliefs and behaviors. When violated, effective political limits can proscribe certain individuals and practices. An illustrative example of a political limit is Nazism in post-WWII European, and especially German politics. There, for over half a century, few aiming for political success have survived any (public, explicit) associations with Nazism.⁶ In order that the Third Reich’s atrocities are not repeated, anything which (in some or another respect) embodies Nazism must be stamped out early on.⁷ Given their historical connection, “Nazism” and “fascism” are related as political limits.⁸ However, unlike “fascist,” there is a (mostly) clear

⁵ For starters, Roger Griffin, Zeev Sternhell, and Robert Paxton all offer differing definitions of “fascism.” Griffin’s definition of fascism as “a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism” has come closest to consensus. See Griffin, Roger. 1993. *The Nature of Fascism*. London and New York: Routledge. 26; Sternhell, Zeev, Mario Sznajder, and Maia Asheri. 1994. *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution*. Translated by David Maisel. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. 6; and Paxton, Robert O. 2005. *The Anatomy of Fascism*. New York, NY: Random House. 218; Motyl, “Putin’s Russia as Fascist,” 25.

⁶ Associations with Nazism remain politically unconscionable, even for radical-rightists. Marine Le Pen’s French National Rally split with *Alternative Für Deutschland* (AfD) at the EU level after party-member Maximilian Krah said SS members were “not automatically” criminals, *DW*. 2024. “French Far-Right National Rally Splits with Germany’s AfD,” May 22, 2024, sec. Politics | Germany. <https://www.dw.com/en/french-far-right-national-rally-splits-with-germanys-afd/a-69144718>.

⁷ Germany has banned a number of neo-Nazi symbols and organizations. „Rechtsextremismus: Symbole, Zeichen und verbotene Organisationen.” 2022. Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz. <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/SharedDocs/publikationen/DE/rechtsextremismus/2022-02-rechtsextremismus-symbole-zeichen-organisationen.html>. 20-53.

⁸ Since 1945, fascism has not seen success in Europe. Arguably exceptions include the Italian Social Movement (MSI) during the second half of the 20th century, Golden Dawn in Greece and People’s Party Our Slovakia (L’SNS) during the early 2010s, and Our Homeland Movement (MHM) in contemporary Hungary.

division between “Nazi” (as pejorative) and “Nazi” (as national socialist). One might be called “Nazi,” but without swastikas, distinctive *völkisch* racism, and the like, one will not seriously be considered an ideological national socialist. Practically, this means that scholars do not furiously debate which regimes/movements can properly be deemed “Nazi.”

Still, because to be called “fascist” is to be condemned, each fascism debate is reducible to a single, normative question: *Should* we call X regime/movement fascist? “Exclusivists” argue that we should not, “inclusivists” argue that we should.⁹ Though he does not use my terminology, Constantin Iordachi also notes this “cleavage” in fascism debates. To Iordachi, exclusivists contend that fascism is “an epochal phenomenon confined to inter-war Europe,” and thus not a contemporary problem. Inclusivists contend that fascism is “a generic or universal phenomenon,” and therefore liable to creep up anytime and anywhere.¹⁰ My analysis shows that these different diagnoses have divergent political implications. As fascism’s contemporary threat level is represented by its status as a political limit, exclusivists (typically associated with the right) want to dismantle or contest “fascism” as a political limit, while inclusivists (typically associated with the left) want to create or defend “fascism” as a political limit.

Paul Gottfried – Exclusivism & Political Limits:

Like many conservatives, Paul Gottfried is an exclusivist.¹¹ Representing the debate’s rightmost (scholarly) flank, not (necessarily) rank-and-file exclusivism, his arguments are illustrative of the politics of fascism debates. While Gottfried never explicitly contests the idea of fascism as a political limit (instead disavowing fascism), he feels that properly-defined fascism is

⁹ “Exclusivist” and “inclusivist” are used to avoid constant repetition of “those who believe X should/should not be called fascist.” They have no implications beyond a scholar’s position in a fascism debate.

¹⁰ Iordachi, Constantin, 2010. “Comparative Fascist Studies: An introduction.” In *Comparative Fascist Studies: New Perspectives*, by Constantin Iordachi, 1-50. *Rewriting Histories*. London and New York: Routledge. 26.

¹¹ While I highly doubt Gottfried would dispute his characterization as conservative, it requires evidence: Gottfried is editor-in-chief of the “paleoconservative” *Chronicles* magazine: <https://chroniclesmagazine.org/editorial-team/>

different from what inclusivists mean by “fascism” (basically Nazism).¹² Thus, while he by no means ignores “Nazi atrocities,” he feels it is misguided to equate Nazism with other interwar regimes (or anything extant in modern politics).¹³ Exclusivists like Gottfried posit that, far from genocide prevention, contrived continuities between interwar “fascism” and today’s nationalist right are used to silence “politically incorrect protestation, whether directed against gay marriage or the introduction of Sharia law into European countries.”¹⁴ In other words, “fascism” is brandished to suppress (what he sees as) legitimate politics. For some exclusivists, the incorrect application of “fascism” as a political limit distracts us from graver threats in need of limiting.

Gottfried implies that, rather than focusing on (practically non-existent) contemporary fascism, inclusivists should focus on sundry historical leftist infractions, like provoking the right. For example, though he acknowledges that “Spanish fascists shared an almost mystical view of the effects of revolutionary violence,” Gottfried thinks it “was clearly an attitude they carried with them from the Left.”¹⁵ Thus, though he believes fascism to be of the “Right,” there is a “difference between fascism and the more authentic Right,” namely, violence.¹⁶ Exclusivists like Gottfried often emphasize this leftist role in fascist misdeeds, whether as inspirators, provocateurs, or even fabricators. Exclusivists imply that, if inclusivists were really worried about the consequences of “fascism,” they might look closer to home.

For an exclusivist like Gottfried, an accurate sense of interwar history would result in political limits that equally circumscribe the right and (the equally bad, if not worse) left. For

¹² An important quirk of “fascism” as compared with communism, liberalism, anarchism, etc. is that next to no one in academia (explicitly) supports it. Instead of attack and defense, exclusivists and inclusivists play hot potato with a universally undesirable distinction. Gottfried, Paul. 2017. *Fascism: The Career of a Concept*. Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press. 1, 3

¹³ Gottfried, *Fascism*, 78.

¹⁴ Gottfried, *Fascism*, 152.

¹⁵ Gottfried, *Fascism*, 157.

¹⁶ Gottfried, *Fascism*, 157.

example, while Adolf “Hitler killed tens of millions of people and overran other countries... internally his government was nowhere as controlling as Stalin’s Russia.”¹⁷ Gottfried thinks that the modern left is not held as responsible for Stalin’s crimes as the modern right is for Hitler’s because “since the defeat of Nazi Germany... what were once deemed leftist ideas have been in the ascendant.”¹⁸ Alongside deleterious effects in contemporary politics, exclusivists feel that leftist bias distorts the historical record, framing leftists as victims when they were actually just combatants.

Gottfried argues (other exclusivists more commonly imply) that (discounting Nazis), “fascists” were actually no more barbarous than their leftist contemporaries. Further, Gottfried contests the conflation of Nazi violence with non-Nazi “fascism.” Without Nazism, he intimates, “fascism” was not quite so evil. For example, in contrast to Nazism, Gottfried thinks António de Oliveira Salazar’s Portugal and Benito Mussolini’s Italy were “far less destructive forms of right-wing authoritarianism.”¹⁹ In sum, while not (necessarily) desirable, exclusivists may feel that, when analyzed in context, “fascism” as a movement was a legitimate response to a violent left, and “fascism” as a regime was preferable to interwar leftism. Gottfried feels that leftist blinders are the reason this is not more widely understood.

Michael Parenti - Inclusivism & Political Limits:

Like (almost) any left-wing scholar, Michael Parenti is an inclusivist. With his Marxist, pro-Soviet politics, he represents the leftmost flank of fascism debates, meaning (like Gottfried) his arguments are illustrative and not (necessarily) representative.²⁰ Parenti would find it curious

¹⁷ Gottfried, *Fascism*, 53.

¹⁸ Gottfried, *Fascism*, 154.

¹⁹ Gottfried, *Fascism*, 155.

²⁰ Like Gottfried, Parenti hardly hides his politics. Chapter 3 of his *Blackshirts and Reds*, appropriately titled “Let Us Now Praise Revolution,” (not uncritically) defends communism in Russia, China, Vietnam, Cuba, and elsewhere. In Chapter 5, he questions the scale of Stalin’s brutality, with headings like “How Many Victims?” (He accepts there

that Gottfried and other exclusivists feel so constrained by “fascism” as a political limit. If anything, given that “fascism survives as something more than a historical curiosity,” the political limit is not effective enough.²¹ An example of fascism’s survival are the “works of various writers bent on ‘explaining’ Hitler, or ‘reevaluating’ Franco, or in other ways sanitizing fascist history.”²² Though Parenti does not provide examples, this implicit reference to exclusivism means he would certainly consider Gottfried (as well as many scholars covered later on) among such sanitizers. Parenti hopes that by un-sanitizing fascist history, thereby imposing or reinforcing “fascism” as a political limit, he can draw attention to (and hopefully weaken) contemporary “fascist” politics. That (in the eyes of inclusivists), such politics have not already been weakened proves, despite Gottfried’s claims to the contrary, that the *real* political limit is on the left.

In fact, fascism *was* a political limit on the left, materially speaking. “In Germany as in Italy, the communists endured the severest political repression of all groups.”²³ Today, false narratives about fascism continue in the same tradition. After 1945, instead of an antifascist consensus, “[h]istory was turned on its head, transforming the Blackshirts into victims and the Reds into criminals. Allied authorities assisted in these measures.”²⁴ Far from instigators or equivalents, Parenti argues, “Reds” (who opposed fascism most vociferously), were victims. Thus, “totalitarianism,” when used to imply meaningful similarities between (especially Nazi) fascism and (especially Soviet) communism, “is a case of reducing essence to form,” overlooking their contrasting class characters.²⁵ Perhaps totalitarianism is also a case of

were negative aspects, he just thinks them overblown). See Parenti, Michael. 1997. *Blackshirts and Reds: Rational Fascism and the Overthrow of Communism*. San Francisco: City Lights Books. 26, 77.

²¹ Parenti, *Blackshirts and Reds*, 1.

²² Parenti, *Blackshirts and Reds*, 1.

²³ Parenti, *Blackshirts and Reds*, 6.

²⁴ Parenti, *Blackshirts and Reds*, 18.

²⁵ Parenti, *Blackshirts and Reds*, 16.

projection, because “[o]ne of the things conveniently overlooked by mainstream writers is the way Western capitalist states have cooperated with fascism.”²⁶ Contra counter-revolutionary historiography, Parenti and many other inclusivists see “democracy,” not communism, as similar to fascism.²⁷

Inclusivists challenge any ideas about a total defeat of fascism. While Gottfried references some post-1945 antifascist consensus, Parenti emphasizes that “[a]fter World War II, the Western capitalist allies did little to eradicate fascism from Italy or Germany, except for putting some of the top leaders on trial at Nuremberg.”²⁸ US-led support for Italian neo-fascists in the late 20th century continued the working relationship between “democracy” and fascism.²⁹ Indeed, “Hitler’s progeny are still with us and... they have dangerous links with each other and within the security agencies of various Western capitalist nations.”³⁰ Thus, for Parenti, because fascism survives materially, even ideas about an antagonism between “democracy” and fascism are false. In reality, fascism is a last-ditch conspiracy hatched by crooked, capitalist elites to crush the upstart masses once and for all. “In such diverse countries as Lithuania, Croatia, Rumania, Hungary, and Spain, a similar fascist pattern emerged to do its utmost to save big capital from the impositions of democracy.”³¹ The expansive array of fascisms cited by Parenti confirms him to be an inclusivist *par excellence*. His inclusivism is not only geographic, but also temporal.

Given the close collaboration between “democracy” and fascism, along with the persistence of underlying structural factors which precipitate fascism, inclusivists argue that we

²⁶ Parenti, *Blackshirts and Reds*, 17.

²⁷ Here, “democracy” will signify Western-style, capitalist, liberal democracy (in the Cold War sense).

²⁸ Parenti, *Blackshirts and Reds*, 18.

²⁹ Parenti, *Blackshirts and Reds*, 20-21.

³⁰ Parenti, *Blackshirts and Reds*, 21.

³¹ Parenti, *Blackshirts and Reds*, 6.

should be wary of fascism's contemporary threat. "Whether or not the ruling circles still wear blackshirts, and whether or not their opponents are Reds... the struggle continues, today, tomorrow, and through all history."³² Though cosmetic changes have been made, the powers-that-be have learned "how to achieve fascism's class goals within the confines of quasi-democratic forms."³³ We still have the same capitalist system and the same ruling class, which have shown themselves willing to call on fascism to defend their ill-gotten gains. Thus, despite changes, politics within capitalist systems are always liable to "fascistize." Fascism might appear again.³⁴

While the steady flow of contributions to fascism debates might suggest scholars are nearing a consensus, the actual motivations for continued engagement in this semantic strife are to be found in contemporary politics. Many participating scholars even understand that personal politics inform positions in fascism debates.³⁵ However (to my knowledge), a comparative analysis which explicitly focuses on the political implications of fascism debates is so far lacking. Moving chronologically, my analysis of debates in Austria and Spain will show how, in a "Western" context, "fascism" functions as a political limit on the nationalist right. My analysis of the debate in Ukraine shows that, in a Russian (previously Soviet) context, "fascism"

³² Parenti, *Blackshirts and Reds*, 160.

³³ Parenti, *Blackshirts and Reds*, 22.

³⁴ "Fascistization" refers to processes by which something becomes more fascist. The term has become commonplace in fascism studies. Relevant for our purposes, inclusivists see much of the interwar European right as having fascistized. See Kallis, Aristotle A. 2003. "Fascism, 'Para-Fascism' and Fascistization": On the Similarities of Three Conceptual Categories." *European History Quarterly* 33 (2): 219–49. 221.

³⁵ Botz, Gerhard. 2014. "The Coming of the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg Regime and the Stages of Its Development." In *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe*, 121–53. Springer. 121; Townson, Nigel. 2007. "Introduction." In *Spain Transformed: The Late Franco Dictatorship, 1959-75*, edited by Nigel Townson, 1–29. Palgrave Macmillan. 5; Erlacher, Trevor. 2021. *Ukrainian Nationalism in the Age of Extremes: An Intellectual Biography of Dmytro Dontsov*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. 31; Himka, John-Paul. "OUN and Fascism, Definitions and Blood." *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society* 7, no. 2 (2021): 166-175. 167.

functions as a political limit on (allegedly) anti-Russian/Soviet nationalisms. Taken as a whole, it becomes clear that all fascism debates have similar structures.

After 1945, the function of “fascism” (popular or academic), has been to limit certain nationalist politics. By contesting this limit, exclusivists attempt to broaden or maintain (what they see as) acceptable political possibilities. Conversely, inclusivists seek to make “fascism” into a national taboo (similar to Nazism in Germany), thereby hoping to limit the scope of contemporary nationalist politics.

Was the Dollfuss/Schuschnigg Regime Fascist?

Austria’s Dollfuss/Schuschnigg regime (D/SR) lasted from 1934 until 1938, when it was forcibly removed during the Nazi *Anschluss*. After Nazism’s defeat and a period of Allied occupation, a coalition of former “Austro-Marxists” (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs*, SPÖ) and former “Austrofascists” (*Österreichische Volkspartei*, ÖVP) governed Austria’s Second Republic. Given Austro-Marxists and Austrofascists fought a “civil war” in February of 1934, each side had material reasons to be suspicious of the other. Gerhard Botz contends that, alongside the ÖVP’s desire to forget the D/SR, the SPÖ’s “conservative opponents for a long time did not trust that their partners in the coalition government had really given up class struggle and Marxist ideas.”³⁶ Thus, in the interest of stability, past struggles were put aside; there was a “mutual wish to control the opponent-partner by embracing him tightly.”³⁷

According to exclusivists, if non-Nazi “fascism” ever seriously threatened Austria, this ceased in 1955 (at the very latest). Conversely, inclusivists like Lucille Dreidemy believe that, instead of

³⁶ Botz, Gerhard. 2016. “The Short-and Long-Term Effects of the Authoritarian Regime and of Nazism in Austria: The Burden of a ‘Second Dictatorship.’” *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung. Supplement*, 191–213. 201.

³⁷ Botz, “Burden of Second Dictatorship,” 201.

eliminating fascism, Austria's emphasis on reconciliation produced a "coalition historiography [*Koalitionsgeschichtsschreibung*],"³⁸ which continues to prevent honest engagement with Austria's (native) fascist past.

Of the fascism debates studied herein, the "Austrofascism" debate has the longest lifespan and largest volume. Indeed, despite *Koalitionsgeschichtsschreibung*, there has never been consensus over how to classify the D/SR, its ruling *Vaterländische Front* (VF) party, or their ideology (or lack thereof). One reason for this is that Austria became an independent democracy in 1955, while Spain and Ukraine remained illiberal until 1975 and 1991, respectively. The latter two propagated regime-imposed understandings of "fascism," but Austrian discourse on the subject was (nominally) open. Another second reason for the Austrofascism debate's scope is Austria's precocious radical right, which, in the form of the *Freiheitliche Partei Österreich* (FPÖ), emerged earlier and grew stronger than radical rights in many other European countries. Given that fascism debates are really about contemporary "fascist" politics, it is no surprise that (relatively) open dialogue on the one hand, and a powerful radical right on the other, contributed to this debate's vastness.

Since scholars have played a decisive role in this debate, it is worthwhile to begin our survey in 1936 with Eric Voegelin and Karl Polanyi. The Vienna-based Voegelin was an academic of the right, and the Vienna-born Polanyi of the left; each sheds light on the politics of exclusivism and inclusivism.

³⁸ Dreidemy, Lucile. 2021. „Austrofascismus und Dollfuß-Mythos im Licht und Schatten der Geschichtsschreibung.“ In *(K)ein Austrofascismus? Studien zum Herrschaftssystem 1933 - 1938*, by Carlo Moos, 29–41. Wien: Lit Verlag. 41.

Eric Voegelin's Proto-Exclusivist Scholarship:

In *The Authoritarian State*, Voegelin casted doubt on the usefulness of “political symbols” forged during “political struggle.”³⁹ Terminological confusion was bound to arise because “[t]he context of scientific judgments is not identical with the context of the political struggle and the resulting linguistic forms.”⁴⁰ To conduct political analysis, Voegelin needed to (temporarily) distinguish between “political” (normative) and “scientific” (empirical) judgements. However, since “the context of the political struggle” is not something which can be isolated and ignored, “[i]t is impossible to assign to political verbal expression a meaning that is ‘correct’... we cannot ‘define’... authoritarian state.”⁴¹ In other words, the “political” context of any political term at least partially determines (and obfuscates) its “scientific” content. However, since polemically powerful terms cannot be discounted because of their scientific shortcomings, we have to translate them, with their political baggage, “into the language of science.”⁴² Thus, Voegelin used the term “authoritarian” to classify the D/SR (understanding its political/normative implications). Similarly, scholars today use “fascism” to talk about various interwar regimes/movements (understanding its political/normative implications).⁴³

Voegelin never denied the D/SR had certain fascist characteristics, even referring to “Austria’s fascist-authoritarian political direction.”⁴⁴ Unfortunately, this one-time inclusion of the term (in reference to the D/SR) was not explained further. Still, in his analysis, Voegelin

³⁹ The political symbols are “total state,” “authoritarian state,” and “volk.” Like “fascism,” each term’s primary political function decisively determines its empirical content.

⁴⁰ Voegelin, Eric. 1999. *The Authoritarian State: An Essay on the Problem of the Austrian State*. Edited by Gilbert Weiss. Translated by Ruth Hein. Vol. 4. The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin. Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press. 57.

⁴¹ Voegelin, *Authoritarian State*, 58.

⁴² Voegelin, *Authoritarian State*, 79.

⁴³ Kallis, Aristotle, and António Costa Pinto. 2014. “Introduction.” In *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe*, edited by António Costa Pinto and Aristotle Kallis, 1–10. Palgrave Macmillan. 3.

⁴⁴ Voegelin, *Authoritarian State*, 247.

pointed out some of the D/SR's decidedly un-fascist characteristics. First, there was an Austrian state, but no Austrian nation, "no *demos* with the will to statehood."⁴⁵ Further, the "authoritarian" D/SR lacked "despotism" and/or "dictatorship," because "authority is not despotism or dictatorship but is defined as ordered power in accordance with authorial representation."⁴⁶ To Yoshihiko Takahashi, Voegelin believed that the D/SR "defended Austrian independence against Nazi-Germany and also gave the Austrian nation particular meaning of existence."⁴⁷ At least according to Takahashi, "[i]t is not an exaggeration to say that '*Der autoritäre Staat*' was written to defend the Austrofascist regime."⁴⁸ While Voegelin may have issued a defense, Polanyi issued a warning.

Karl Polanyi's Proto-Inclusivist Scholarship:

Polanyi was of the opinion that the D/SR (and the Church) were engaged in an "experiment with a kind of Catholic Fascism."⁴⁹ While he acknowledged the many differences between various fascist instantiations, Polanyi nonetheless posited a unity underlying each: all fascisms lay on a line of increasing extremity ending in Nazism. "Parallel movements in other countries are but comparatively undeveloped variants of the prototype."⁵⁰ "National-Socialism" was the essence and endpoint of fascism; only there could we "discover the political and philosophical characteristics of full-fledged Fascism."⁵¹ Thus, though today "National-Socialism is... almost as far ahead of... Austrian Fascism as Socialism in Soviet Russia is of the tentative

⁴⁵ Voegelin, *Authoritarian State*, 147.

⁴⁶ In hindsight, this distinction seems spurious, given the undoubtedly arbitrary despotism of this indisputable dictatorship. Voegelin, *Authoritarian State*, 102.

⁴⁷ Takahashi, Yoshihiko. 2012. "Eric Voegelin's Vienna: The Crisis of Democracy in the Austrian First Republic." *Journal of Political Science & Sociology*, no. 17 (August), 57–74. 61.

⁴⁸ Takahashi, "Eric Voegelin's Vienna," 58.

⁴⁹ Polanyi, Karl. 1936. "The Essence of Fascism." In *Christianity and the Social Revolution*, 359–94. Scribner's. 359.

⁵⁰ Polanyi, "Essence of Fascism," 360.

⁵¹ Polanyi, "Essence of Fascism," 360.

Socialist policies of Labour Governments,” this was bound to change.⁵² Presaging later fascism studies, Polanyi expected each regime to undergo a kind-of “fascistization,” radicalizing along Nazi lines. While he was right to note the many similarities between regimes in Austria, Italy, and Germany, like many of his ideological peers (past and present), Polanyi often conflated fascism and Nazism, convinced that the former must always develop into the later. Furthermore, he insistently interpreted a number of unique regimes through the specific-yet-arbitrary prism of “fascism.” If fascism was going to develop into Nazism anyway, Polanyi had little reason to center the term.

The Austrofascism debate has not changed much since Voegelin and Polanyi wrote over a century ago. For example, the right-left division between Voegelin, who called the D/SR “authoritarian,” and Polanyi, who called it “fascist,” is standard in the contemporary debate to which we now turn.⁵³

Contemporary Austrian Exclusivism:

Contemporary exclusivists engage in comparative analysis to “prove” the D/SR was not fascist. Instead, to Thomas Simon, it had more in common with interwar Europe’s non-fascist regimes.⁵⁴ If the D/SR was “fascist,” “one would quickly come [*käme man flugs*] to the... absurd outcome of an indiscriminately [*unterschiedslos*] ‘fascist’ interwar Eastern Europe.”⁵⁵ More often, exclusivists highlight differences between the D/SR on the one hand, and fascist Italy and Germany on the other. Helmut Wohnout notes that, constitutionally, the dictatorship of Engelbert

⁵² Polanyi, “Essence of Fascism,” 360.

⁵³ Moos, Carlo. 2021. „Einleitung.“ In *(K)ein Austrofaschismus? Studien zum Herrschaftssystem 1933 - 1938*, by Carlo Moos, ix–xvii. Wien: Lit Verlag. xiv.

⁵⁴ Simon, Thomas. 2021. „Der ‚autoritäre Ständestaat‘ in Österreich und die Diktaturen im Osteuropa der Zwischenkriegszeit.” *Parliaments, Estates and Representation* 41 (2): 145–60. 157.

⁵⁵ Simon, „autoritäre Ständestaat in Österreich,” 159.

Dollfuss and Kurt Schuschnigg lacked the “charismatic character” of fascist dictatorships.⁵⁶ Like Voegelin, Wahnout never denies that similarities between the D/SR and fascism exist, but evidently believes these to be outweighed by the differences. However, as in the opening Motyl anecdote, since there is no consensus definition of fascism, we lack accepted standards for evaluating which “fascist” characteristics are more essential than others, or at which point a certain amount or composition of traits constitutes “fascism.” Instead, whether one considers something fascist depends on one’s definition, which in turn depends on one’s pre-existing politics. A core component of the exclusivist definition of fascism would seem to be the presence of a mass movement, something they feel inclusivists tend to ignore.⁵⁷

While it is certainly true that the D/SR *tried* to mobilize the masses, they failed.⁵⁸ Wahnout agrees “[t]hat the regime never managed to set up in any phase of the authoritarian rule... a grassroots basis for the *Vaterländische Front*..., comparable to the Fascist mass organizations in Italy and Germany.”⁵⁹ Instead, the VF “remained a bureaucratic organizational shell with no dynamic development or significance of its own.”⁶⁰ Due to the VF’s weakness, Ernst Hanisch argues, there cannot have been “Austrofascism.” “Without a mass movement [*Massenbewegung*], no fascism.”⁶¹ According to Botz, the regime “served rather to demobilise than to mobilise the crisis-driven middle classes and to alienate large segments of the working

⁵⁶ Wahnout, Helmut. 2021. „Italienischer (und sonstiger) Faschismus in Österreich?“ In *(K)ein Austrofascismus? Studien zum Herrschaftssystem 1933 - 1938*, by Carlo Moos, 310–321. Wien: Lit Verlag. 313.

⁵⁷ Perhaps a reason that exclusivists emphasize fascism’s mass character is that it undermines the (originally Marxist) inclusivist narrative of fascism being a conspiracy carried about from above.

⁵⁸ Simon notes an “attempt [*Versuch*].” In Simon, „autoritäre Ständestaat in Österreich,” 158.

⁵⁹ Wahnout, Helmut. 2003. “A Chancellorial Dictatorship with a “Corporative” Pretext: the Austrian Constitution Between 1934 and 1938.” In *The Dollfuss/Schuschnigg Era in Austria: A Reassessment*, edited by Anton Pelinka, Günter Bischof, and Alexander Lassner, 143-162. 1st ed. Routledge. 156.

⁶⁰ Wahnout, “Chancellorial Dictatorship,” 156.

⁶¹ Hanisch, Ernst 2021. „’Christliche Ständestaat’ und autoritäre / faschistische Systeme.“ In *(K)ein Austrofascismus? Studien zum Herrschaftssystem 1933 - 1938*, by Carlo Moos, 467–471. Wien: Lit Verlag. 469.

classes from the Austrian state.”⁶² Simon thinks that, unlike fascist regimes, the D/SR did not seek the “revolutionary development [*Weiterentwicklung*] and reformation [*Neuformierung*] of the social body, but rather the preservation of the preceding [*Bewahrung der überkommenen*] propertied- and social order.”⁶³ In sum, exclusivists feel that the D/SR was conservative and elitist, not revolutionary or populist. Instead of upheaval, there was continuity between the old Christian Social government and the D/SR.⁶⁴ The D/SR and other non-fascist, “authoritarian” regimes of interwar eastern Europe shared this urge to “stabilize.”⁶⁵ In contrast, “totalitarian” fascism and communism sought to “mobilize” their populations.⁶⁶

It is worth considering what makes certain characteristics decisive (or not) of fascism, even outside of a strictly comparative context. We cannot expect the D/SR to be a simulacrum of neighboring fascisms. At least for this author, a regime with every possible fascist characteristic *except* a mass movement would still be fascist. However, there is no accepted way of measuring a mass movement’s significance to fascist ideology *vis-à-vis* something like anti-capitalism. Instead (once again), everything boils down to a single, normative question: *Should* we call the D/SR fascist?

Voegelin, Gottfried, and most other exclusivists are willing to acknowledge that the D/SR had some fascist aspects.⁶⁷ Thus, Carlo Moos accepts the term “small-state fascism.”⁶⁸ Botz, too, acknowledges that “fascist movements... National Socialism and the Heimwehr... influenced

⁶² Botz, “Burden of Second Dictatorship,” 192-193.

⁶³ Simon, „autoritäre Ständestaat in Österreich,” 153.

⁶⁴ Botz, “Coming of Dollfuss-Schuschnigg Regime,” 135.

⁶⁵ Simon, „autoritäre Ständestaat in Österreich,” 152.

⁶⁶ Simon, „autoritäre Ständestaat in Österreich,” 152, 153.

⁶⁷ Gottfried, *Fascism*, 14.

⁶⁸ The term is meant to underscore the non-irredentist character of the D/SR. I disagree with Moos’ implication that expansionism is a defining characteristic of fascism. Neither Romania’s Legionaries nor Mosley’s blackshirts were particularly irredentist; both were fascist. Moos, Carlo. 2021. „Von konstruierten Begriffen und der Relativität des Benannten.“ In *(K)ein Austrofaschismus? Studien zum Herrschaftssystem 1933 - 1938*, by Carlo Moos, 477–500. Wien: Lit Verlag. 497.

either as counterparts or agents of transfer of ideas and support... the [D/SR's] formation."⁶⁹ Exclusivists see the D/SR's hybridity as having marginalized its fascism. Since fascism was just one aspect of the D/SR, Moos suggests that we allow multiple terms to "coexist."⁷⁰ He would certainly appreciate Botz's summation: "the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg regime is best described as strong authoritarian and as a hybrid, in which pre- and anti-democratic traditions particular to Austria and time-specific authoritarian, corporatist and fascist concepts, tendencies, movements and political projects entered into an ever-changing symbiosis."⁷¹ Botz's embrace of complexity is refreshing, but lacks the punchiness of "Austrofascism." Due to the debate's grounding in contemporary political concerns, we cannot hope to replace a word with a paragraph. Brevity holds an advantage because complexity does not satisfy the debate's normative requirement: A verdict on the historiography of the D/SR *vis-à-vis* 20th century fascism. A straightforward answer is needed (and often already arrived at).

Of the exclusivists referenced here, Simon is most uncompromising. Unlike Botz or Moos, he does not feel the D/SR was fascist, even according to an "extremely broad concept of fascism."⁷² Like Botz, who emphasizes "anti-democratic traditions particular to Austria," Simon argues that the D/SR had its own "specifically Austrian" ideology, a kind of "political Catholicism" which stood "in direct contrast" to fascism.⁷³ The source of this ideology was Catholic social teaching, not Mussolini or Hitler.⁷⁴ Another source was "a virtually [*nachgerade*] fantastical [*wunderliche*] idea of empire."⁷⁵ Practically, this manifested in Habsburg-

⁶⁹ Botz, "Coming of Dollfuss-Schuschnigg Regime," 126.

⁷⁰ Moos, „Begriffen und Relativität des Benannten,“ 499.

⁷¹ Botz, Gerhard. 2017. "‘Corporatist State’ and Enhanced Authoritarian Dictatorship: The Austria of Dollfuss and Schuschnigg (1933–38)." In *Corporatism and Fascism*, 144–73. Routledge. 167.

⁷² Simon, Thomas. 2021. „‘Austrofascismus’ und moderne Faschismusforschung." *Parliaments, Estates and Representation* 41 (2): 161–84. 163.

⁷³ Botz, "Enhanced Authoritarian Dictatorship," 167; Simon, „Austrofascismus,“ 163.

⁷⁴ Simon, „Austrofascismus,“ 164.

⁷⁵ Simon, „Austrofascismus,“ 165.

restorationist sentiments. For example, According to US Ambassador George Messersmith, “Schuschnigg is a good Monarchist... I think he sincerely believes that Monarchy is the Government best suited to Austria.”⁷⁶ Based on its political Catholicism and Habsburg-nostalgia, Simon argues, the D/SR was “black and gold” (like the Habsburgs) rather than black and/or brown (like Fascism or Nazism).⁷⁷ Simon’s implications are clear: the D/SR was too nationally specific to be an instantiation of some universal (or “transnational”) fascism.⁷⁸

Simon is a proponent of the so-called *Lager* theory, according to which interwar Austrian politics can be (more or less) divided into three camps [*Lager*]: (the formerly Christian Social, later D/SR) Catholic conservatives, the socialists (and/or social democrats), and (the increasingly Nazi) German nationals.⁷⁹ The theory tends to relegate pro-*Anschluss* pan-Germanism to the German national camp. Accordingly, Simon claims that Catholic conservatives were *least* inclined towards *Anschluss* of all *Lager*.⁸⁰ True, Dollfuss and his VF wanted a “German” Austria, but the D/SR also wanted a sovereign Austrian state.⁸¹ In their embrace of German (national) identity on the one hand, and upholding of Austrian (statist) sovereignty on the other, the D/SR’s “distance” from the concept of a nation-state was such that Simon cannot even call it “nationalist.”⁸² Of course, a non-nationalist regime cannot be called fascist.

⁷⁶ Messersmith, George S. Typed Letter Copy. 1934. “Messersmith, G.S., Vienna. To Jay Pierrepont Moffat, Washington,” September 20, 1934. Box 4, F26. George S. Messersmith papers. <http://udspace.udel.edu/handle/19716/6393>. 3.

⁷⁷ Uppercase F “Fascism” denotes the particular ideology of Mussolini’s Italy. Simon, „Austrofaschismus,” 171.

⁷⁸ The understanding of fascism as a “transnational” phenomenon has become standard among contemporary inclusivists. See Iordachi, “Comparative Fascist Studies,” 4.

⁷⁹ Simon, „Austrofaschismus,” 171. Botz also endorses the Lager theory. See Botz, “Coming of Dollfuss-Schuschnigg Regime,” 135.

⁸⁰ Simon, „Austrofaschismus,” 168.

⁸¹ “Wir wollen den sozialen, christlichen, deutschen Staat Österreich auf ständischer Grundlage, unter starker, autoritärer Führung!” Dollfuss, Engelbert. 1933. “Trabrennplatzrede 1933.” Austria-Forum. September 11, 1933. https://austria-forum.org/af/Wissenssammlungen/Symbole/Faschismus_-_die_Symbole/Trabrennplatzrede_1933

⁸² Simon, „Austrofaschismus,” 171.

Exclusivists who do recognize some of the D/SR's fascist aspects (like the paramilitary *Heimwehr*) argue that the regime "defascistized." Though he does not explicitly use the term, Wahnout details this process:

[I]n the autumn of 1935, Schuschnigg managed to crowd the two *Heimwehr* leaders... out of the government. In May 1936, he also succeeded in getting rid of the chief *Heimwehr* leader... Ernst Rüdiger Starhemberg, who had also directed the *Vaterländische Front* up until then. A short time later, the *Heimwehr* was dissolved and its militias merged with those of the *Vaterländische Front*... Schuschnigg's strategic plan was to divest the *Heimwehr* of any political influence but still ensure governmental support for its policies by keeping in office several personalities selected from the dissolved organization.⁸³

Contrary to Polanyi's prediction, Botz does not notice an inevitable radicalization of the D/SR. Instead, like Wahnout, Botz interprets the above "internal regime process... as a kind of defascistization, or at least the elimination of its Austro-fascist component."⁸⁴ Alongside fascism's aforementioned partial presence, its temporary tenure means that the D/SR as a whole cannot be called "fascist." For exclusivists, it was only on March 13, 1938, that actual fascists entered Austria.

While Botz acknowledges that "Nazism could use the autocratic structures already imposed on Austria by the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg government," exclusivists do not think the D/SR left Austria with an enduring fascist legacy.⁸⁵ This would have been difficult, given that "immediately after the Anschluss, a stringent purge of Austrian Fascism was carried out by the Nazis."⁸⁶ Instead Botz, like Voegelin, believes that, due to the D/SR's defense of Austrian sovereignty, "modern Austrian national identity can be considered to some extent... a long-term effect of the Catholic conservative dictatorship."⁸⁷ Simon concurs that the D/SR "sought to

⁸³ Wahnout, "Chancellorial Dictatorship," 156-157.

⁸⁴ Botz, "Enhanced Authoritarian Dictatorship," 164.

⁸⁵ Botz, "Burden of Second Dictatorship," 195.

⁸⁶ Botz, "Burden of Second Dictatorship," 194.

⁸⁷ Botz, "Burden of Second Dictatorship," 194.

create an independent Austrian state idea [*eigenständige österreichische Staatsidee*].”⁸⁸

Unsurprisingly (given their grounding in contemporary politics), exclusivism and inclusivism diverge the most regarding the D/SR’s long term political effects. In no uncertain terms, inclusivists see the above contentions as the product of “myth.”⁸⁹

Contemporary Austrian Inclusivism:

Inclusivists also compare the D/SR with paradigmatic Italian and German fascism, this time to highlight their similarities. According to Emmerich Tálos, “in the overall development [*Gesamtentwicklung*] of Austrofascism, numerous elements can be recognized [*lassen sich... erkennen*], that were borrowed from fascist neighbors.”⁹⁰ For example, Dreidemy notes that the “form and scope [*Umfang*] of political violence in Austria and Italy were quite [*durchaus*] comparable.”⁹¹ Dreidemy’s claim only holds water if we ignore Mussolini’s international exploits, such as “a ruthless military policy directed against the civilian population that between 1928 and 1932 maybe have taken the lives of as many as 60,000 of the 225,000 inhabitants of the Cyrenaica region.”⁹² The D/SR never did anything of the sort, lending (some) credence to Moos’ contention that inclusivists sideline (or ignore) the violence and racism of actual fascism in order to foreground similarities with the D/SR.⁹³ However, Moos’ point is a corollary of the fact that there are *no* accepted standards for comparing one “fascist” trait to another. Exclusivists and inclusivists both sideline crucial facts in order to make political points.

⁸⁸ Simon, „Austrofascismus,” 168.

⁸⁹ Thorpe, Julie. 2010. “Austrofascism: Revisiting the ‘Authoritarian State’ 40 Years On,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 45 (2): 315–43. 318.

⁹⁰ Tálos, Emmerich. 2021. „Einbettung und Charakterisierung des österreichischen Herrschaftssystems 1933-1938.“ In *(K)ein Austrofascismus? Studien zum Herrschaftssystem 1933 - 1938*, by Carlo Moos, 2–14. Wien: Lit Verlag. 4.

⁹¹ Dreidemy, „Austrofascismus und Dollfuß-Mythos,” 32.

⁹² Payne, Stanley G. 1995. *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 233.

⁹³ Moos, „Begriffen und Relativität des Benannten,” 495, 497.

Without doubt, there were similarities between the D/SR and paradigmatic fascism. The D/SR's leisure organization (*Neues Leben*), maternity organization (*Mutterschutzwerk*) and youth wing (*Österreichisches Jungvolk*) were all heavily influenced by those in Italy and Germany.⁹⁴ Julie Thorpe adds that, like Nazi Germany, the D/SR had storm troopers whose "slogan... was a staccato variation of the SS slogan."⁹⁵ Further, both Italy and the D/SR "fascistized" the press, initially through censorship and then by attempting to consolidate a ministry of propaganda. Thorpe thinks these "press reforms over the space of five years of fascist rule were comparable to the press reforms achieved in more than a decade of fascism in Italy."⁹⁶ However, it is somewhat unclear what makes the D/SR's press consolidation "fascist," given similar processes in authoritarian (and/or communist) states. Once again, despite the fresh "fascistization" frame, what makes a process "fascist" has a lot to do with a scholar's pre-existing, normative notions about what *should* be fascist.

Another similarity between the D/SR, Italy, and Germany was that a single party presided over each. According to Tálós, "Italian and German fascism were unmistakably the sponsors [*standen... Pate*] for the creation of the political monopoly-organization [*Monopolorganisation*] *Vaterländische Front* and its constituent sub-organizations [*einzelnen Teilorganisationen*]."⁹⁷ Contrary to exclusivist objections, Tálós contends the VF did have a "mass base."⁹⁸ As of March 1939, it had 3.3 million members (out of 6.7 million total Austrians).⁹⁹ Dreidemy agrees that the VF was a mass party, pointing out that, although not comparable to Germany's *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (NSDAP), it had similar membership numbers to

⁹⁴ Thorpe, "Austrofascism," 323, 324.

⁹⁵ Thorpe, "Austrofascism," 323.

⁹⁶ Thorpe, Julie. 2011. *Pan-Germanism and the Austrofascist State, 1933-38*. Manchester University Press. 66.

⁹⁷ Tálós, „Einbettung und Charakterisierung,” 4.

⁹⁸ Tálós, „Einbettung und Charakterisierung,” 9.

⁹⁹ Tálós, „Einbettung und Charakterisierung,” 9.

Italy's *Partito Nazionale Fascista* (PNF): "about 50% of the population."¹⁰⁰ Such reasoning skirts the exclusivist point. A party's "mass" character is not solely determined by membership numbers, whether total or proportional. The VF differed significantly from fascist parties in terms of timing and influence. Unlike the VF, the PNF and NSDAP emerged *before* their respective regimes seized power, and exerted non-negligible bottom-up influence on their regimes. Austria, Italy, and Germany may all have had single parties (not solely characteristic of fascism), but they differed in terms of origin and organization. Such differences are left out because they complicate an otherwise strong inclusivist argument.

Inclusivists also take issue with exclusivist understandings of the D/SR's dictatorship. Dreidemy objects to exclusivists (like Wohnout) who claim that the D/SR lacked "a charismatic leader [*Führer*] and a corresponding leader cult [*entsprechenden Führerkults*]." ¹⁰¹ In fact, the D/SR did have a leadership cult which emerged after the failed Nazi attempt on Dollfuss' life on October 3, 1933. After spending months as a living martyr, Dollfuss' cult emerged in full after he was assassinated on July 25, 1934. For example, in 1936, Schuschnigg attempted to oversee the construction of a "colossal Dollfuss-Stadium modelled after the 'Foro Mussolini' in Rome."¹⁰² The *Dollfußkult* is another reason exclusivist narratives which paint Dollfuss as an anti-fascist martyr are misleading. Generally, inclusivists contest any historiography, like *Koalitionsgeschichtsschreibung* or the *Lager* theory, which they feel overly distinguishes fascism and the D/SR.

In order to problematize the *Lager* theory, Janek Wasserman analyzes interwar Vienna's rightist intelligentsia. Intellectually, "Black [as opposed to Red] Vienna" was not divided into

¹⁰⁰ Dreidemy, „Austrofaschismus und Dollfuß-Mythos," 32.

¹⁰¹ Dreidemy, „Austrofaschismus und Dollfuß-Mythos," 35.

¹⁰² Dreidemy, „Austrofaschismus und Dollfuß-Mythos," 37.

rigid camps, but “formed a relatively coherent and influential ideological space... While hardly monolithic, this cultural field was more integrated than has been assumed, especially before 1933.”¹⁰³ This milieu of monarchists, political Catholics, corporatists, pan-Germanists, quasi-Nazis, and many things in between frequented the same circles and wrote in the same publications. Black Vienna united around “defeating social democracy, replacing democratic, capitalist Austria, excluding Jews and foreigners, and restoring German and Austrian greatness.”¹⁰⁴ In other words, while exclusivists see the hybridity of Austria’s interwar right as existing at the expense of fascism, inclusivists see such hybridity as thoroughly fascistized. Accordingly, “[t]he Catholic and national *Lager* split only *after* Austrians had developed their own radical – and fascist – conservatism.”¹⁰⁵ Wasserman’s implications are explicit: If Black Vienna, and thus Austrian conservatism, was fascist, then “Austria was a fascist state well before 1938.”¹⁰⁶

Like Wasserman, Thorpe also challenges the *Lager* theory.¹⁰⁷ Together, they make a compelling case that a clean separation between interwar Austrian conservatism and fascism (or even Nazism) is unwarranted. Certainly, at the individual level, ideological distinctions were blurry. According to Messersmith, as Schuschnigg “is Catholic and Monarchistic by tradition, so he is mildly anti-Semitic... Schuschnigg does not like Jews.”¹⁰⁸ Ideological hybridity also characterized Dollfuss. While the political Catholic valued Austrian sovereignty, in his much-publicized *Trabrennplatzrede* (Trabrennplatz Speech) announcing the dictatorship, Dollfuss affirmed that “[w]e are so German, so obviously [*selbstverständlich*] German, that it appears to

¹⁰³ Wasserman, Janek. 2014. *Black Vienna: The Radical Right in the Red City, 1918–1938*. Cornell University Press. 19.

¹⁰⁴ Wasserman, *Black Vienna*, 8.

¹⁰⁵ Wasserman, *Black Vienna*, 9.

¹⁰⁶ Wasserman, *Black Vienna*, 223.

¹⁰⁷ Thorpe, “Austrofascism,” 319.

¹⁰⁸ Messersmith, “Messersmith To Jay Pierrepont Moffat,” 4.

us superfluous [*überflüssig*], to emphasize this specifically.”¹⁰⁹ Evidently, if we take the *Lager* theory as a given, many Austrians would have to be placed in multiple *Lager*. In particular (inclusivists never mention ideological cross-contaminations between socialists and the other camps), inclusivists emphasize significant crossovers between the Catholic conservative and German national *Lager*.

While Simon contests whether it was nationalist at all, Thorpe thinks the D/SR had a clear pan-German orientation. In fact, based on an analysis of the D/SR’s school textbooks, she argues that “[t]he construction of an Austrian pan-German identity, under the guise of an apparent conservatism, was at the core of Austrofascism.”¹¹⁰ That pan-Germanism is not commonly understood as central to “Austrofascism” has important contemporary political implications. “In overlooking the relationship between pan-Germanism and the Austrofascist state, historians have manufactured a popular myth that the ‘nationalist’ camp supported National Socialism while the ‘conservative’ camp... acted as a bulwark against fascist movements.”¹¹¹ Thorpe would probably group Simon among such myth-manufacturing historians. Inclusivists see this “myth” as an Austria instantiation of “history... turned on its head.”¹¹²

If inclusivists are correct that the D/SR was itself fascist, and even espoused pan-German nationalism, it is not far-fetched for Wasserman to claim that, partially due to their embrace of fascist ideas, “Austrian conservatives... actively contributed to the destruction of the First Republic and indirectly facilitated the *Anschluss*.”¹¹³ Thorpe goes further. “Nazis and their

¹⁰⁹ Dollfuss, „Trabrennplatzrede.“

¹¹⁰ Thorpe, “Austrofascism,” 319.

¹¹¹ Thorpe, *Pan-Germanism and Austrofascist State*, 8.

¹¹² Parenti, *Blackshirts and Reds*, 18.

¹¹³ Wasserman, *Black Vienna*, 157.

sympathizers sometimes clashed with Austrofascists, but more often converged in their efforts to build a new state of German citizens.”¹¹⁴ Given the terroristic activities of the Nazis during the D/SR, including assassinating Dollfuss, Thorpe’s claim is at least questionable. Nonetheless, if proven, a causal relationship between “Austrofascism” and Nazism would make exclusivist talk about “defascistization” misleading at best.

Inclusivists do not believe the D/SR’s fascism is properly understood by the Austrian general public, and hold *Koalitionsgeschichtsschreibung* partially responsible for this lack of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*.¹¹⁵ As a consequence of Austria’s flawed historiography, “former *Heimwehr* Fascists and functionaries of the Dollfuss dictatorship were hardly investigated or even punished for what they had done.”¹¹⁶ The primary goal of inclusivist scholarship is to address Austria’s un-righted fascist wrongs.

Austrofascism & *Opferthese*:

Beyond *Koalitionsgeschichtsschreibung*, another reason for Austria’s absent *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* was (one of) the new Republic’s founding myths, the “*Opferthese*” (victim’s thesis). Though contemporary exclusivism is typically more nuanced than a reiteration of the *Opferthese*, and exclusivists do not “support” the D/SR, Simon acknowledges that they remain representative of a “conservative narrative style.”¹¹⁷ According to Günter Bischof, the *Opferthese* “posited that an Austria whose statehood lay dormant, could not be held liable for the crimes committed by its Nazi occupiers. In this ‘externalization’ of responsibility, the Austrians

¹¹⁴ Thorpe, *Pan-Germanism and Austrofascist State*, 7.

¹¹⁵ „*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*,“ often translated as “coming to terms with the past,” refers to the process of dealing with, and hopefully overcoming, Nazism’s legacy in Germany.

¹¹⁶ Botz, “Burden of Second Dictatorship,” 201.

¹¹⁷ Simon, „autoritäre Ständestaat in Österreich,“ 146.

were hapless victims-the Germans were guilty perpetrators.”¹¹⁸ In David Art’s opinion, “[n]ot a single important actor in Austrian politics or society challenged this victim narrative for four decades.”¹¹⁹ Since victims are not responsible for the crimes of their victimizers, but coerced into whatever atrocities they are involved with, if Austrians were victims, it would be hard to simultaneously consider them “fascists” (the consummate victimizers).¹²⁰

Inclusivists mount an explicit challenge to the *Opferthese* by attempting to mainstream “Austrofascism.” Dreidemy argues that the “perception [*Vorstellung*] of the Anschluss in 1938 as pure aggression from outside is also without any foundation [*entbehrt... jeglicher Grundlage*].”¹²¹ If Austria did have a native fascism, and the D/SR was in favor of German nationalism, it is hard to consider them (just) victims. Instead, according to Eric Grube, the *Anschluss* “had a certain endogenous logic to it. Anti-Nazi fascists in Austria spent 1936 to 1938 constructing their regional autonomy with the combustible tinder of ethno-racial German nationalism... they built structures that advantaged the greatest arsonists of them all: the Nazis.”¹²² Essentially, inclusivists argue that the D/SR (and Austria) were (to greater or lesser extent) responsible for the *Anschluss* (and/or subsequent Nazi atrocities). For inclusivists, that Austria has not dealt with this fascist past is cause for great concern.

Fascism in Contemporary Austria?

On the basis of the D/SR’s (mostly) non-fascist character, as well as its subsequent defascistization and persecution at the hands of the Nazis, exclusivists contest the use of fascism

¹¹⁸ Bischof, Günter. 2004. “Victims? Perpetrators? ‘Punching Bags’ of European Historical Memory? The Austrians and Their World War II Legacies.” *German Studies Review* 27 (1): 17–32. 18.

¹¹⁹ Art, David. 2006. *The Politics of Nazi Past in Germany and Austria*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. 101.

¹²⁰ Inclusivists like Parenti also portray their “side” as victims in order to deflect from criticisms about alleged political extremism.

¹²¹ Dreidemy, „Austrofascismus und Dollfuß-Mythos,” 35.

¹²² Grube, Eric. 2023. “Borderland Brothers: Austrofascist Competition and Cooperation with National Socialists, 1936–1938.” *Journal of Austrian Studies* 56 (1): 1–24. 5.

as a political limit on Austria's past (and/or present). There are various levels to the exclusivist contention. In 1935, Johannes Messner's hagiographic biography of Dollfuss argued that the D/SR was a righteous government, victim of Nazism, and a necessary bulwark against an undemocratic, revolutionary, "atheistic and materialistic" left.¹²³ Less polemically, Simon argues that, given the totally non-fascist nature of the D/SR, there is no justification to scour Austrian history for anything comparable to Nazism. Generally, exclusivists think that (except for maybe Nazism) Austria should have nothing to apologize for. For exclusivists, the past is in the past. If Austria actually was a "fascist" country, this is no longer the case.

In contrast, largely because it improperly reckons with fascism, inclusivists like Dreidemy believe *Koalitionsgeschichtsschreibung* is "dangerous" and should be subjected to "radical criticism."¹²⁴ Like Parenti, Dreidemy challenges a narrative which frames fascism and "democracy" as antagonistic. If this were really the case, fascism would not threaten Austria like it does today. For example, the "*Dollfuß-Mythos*" persisted into the Second Republic, where "the ÖVP celebrated him as hero-chancellor and resistance fighter."¹²⁵ Dreidemy references a Dollfuss portrait which remained hanging in ÖVP headquarters until 2014.¹²⁶ Though present in a democratic Austria, this image of Dollfuss as a "light and shadow figure [*Licht- und Schattenfigur*]" is actually a direct product of his fascist *führerkult*.¹²⁷ Instead of *Koalitionsgeschichtsschreibung*, which seeks solidarity in the neutral ground of parliamentary compromise, Dreidemy calls for a revisionist historiography that highlights the D/SR's fascist character. She wants Dollfuss' legacy to be far more maligned than it is currently, and for the

¹²³ Messner, Johannes. 2004. *Dollfuss: An Austrian Patriot*. Norfolk, VA: Gates of Vienna Books. 67.

¹²⁴ Dreidemy, „Austrofaschismus und Dollfuß-Mythos,” 40, 41.

¹²⁵ Dreidemy, „Austrofaschismus und Dollfuß-Mythos,” 38.

¹²⁶ Dreidemy, „Austrofaschismus und Dollfuß-Mythos,” 38.

¹²⁷ Dreidemy, „Austrofaschismus und Dollfuß-Mythos,” 41.

D/SR to be understood as an “Austrofascist” regime which enabled *Anschluss*. It is fascism’s function as a political limit that leads Dreidemy to believe describing Dollfuss and his regime as “Austrofascist” will inaugurate their unacceptability among Austrians.¹²⁸

Thorpe’s political aims are equally clear: “In the light of what many interpreted as a marriage of convenience (or another 'reluctant alliance'?) between the 'conservative' [Wolfgang] Schüssel and the 'far right' [Jörg] Haider in the 2000 election... it is incumbent on historians to revisit the relationship between Austrofascism and pan-Germanism.”¹²⁹ Thorpe hopes inclusivist revisionism like Dreidemy’s will draw attention to certain continuities between the D/SR and contemporary right, thereby imposing political limits on the country’s right-wing, nationalist politics. There is some basis for Thorpe’s hope. Like in Germany, Nazism is a strong political limit in Austrian politics, though it emerged slightly later. Before the 1986 presidential election, ÖVP candidate Kurt Waldheim’s *Wehrmacht*-record was revealed, drawing international opprobrium, dividing Austrian society, and calling the *Opferthese* into serious question.¹³⁰ Even today, German nationalism, once a fixture of pre-war Austrian political discourse, is not something Austrian politicians with serious ambitions advocate. We might say that Nazism (as a political limit) successfully circumscribed German nationalism in Austrian politics. Finally, in 1999, “[s]anctions by all 14 EU nations” were imposed on Austria after the FPÖ’s aforementioned Haider, an alleged Nazi sympathizer, entered a coalition government with the ÖVP.¹³¹ Given Thorpe explicitly mentions the latter incident, we can safely say her inclusivist goal is to make “Austrofascism” a similarly effective limit as Nazism.

¹²⁸ “Authoritarian” would not have the same effect.

¹²⁹ Thorpe, “Austrofascism,” 343.

¹³⁰ Bischof, “Victims? Perpetrators? Punching Bags?” 22-23.

¹³¹ Bischof, “Victims? Perpetrators? Punching Bags?” 18.

However, even if inclusivists are successful in anathemizing the D/SR as “Austrofascist,” it is unlikely they will achieve their desired results in contemporary politics. In Austria, Nazism’s strength as a political limit has not always marginalized the radical right. For example, while the FPÖ’s early pan-Germanism contributed to its initial weakness, scholars such as Antonis Ellinas believe that the Waldheim affair “allowed the nationalist wing of the FPÖ to enter the mainstream debate, gain media visibility, and legitimize its claims... the FPÖ achieved a major electoral breakthrough.”¹³² In this case, the attempt to negotiate a political limit backfired, lending fodder to the contemporary radical right by allowing them to capitalize on a newly politicized issue (and avoid difficult questions about potentially problematic policies). Further, Nazism as a political limit will not last forever. With the continued success of Austria’s FPÖ (and rise of Germany’s AfD) we might be watching it wither away. If the power of the Nazism as a political limit in Austria (and even Germany) is being eroded, it is unlikely that a much less powerful political limit would be successful in contemporary Austria. Like the example of EU sanctions, a large part of Nazism’s strength as a political limit comes from abroad. It is extremely improbable that “Austrofascism” will draw international opprobrium at similar levels to Nazism.

Alongside explicating the relationship between Nazism and fascism as political limits, my analysis of the Austrofascism debate substantiates my contention that this insular semantic squabble is really about the boundaries of acceptable political discourse and action in contemporary Austrian society. If Austria does not have a (native) fascist past, exclusivists imply, there is no (particularly Austrian) need to fear fascism in the present. If Austria does have a fascist past, inclusivists hope, Austria’s nationalist right can be prevented from repeating past

¹³² Ellinas, Antonis A. "Party and Media Politics in Austria: The Rise of the FPÖ." *The Media and the Far Right in Western Europe: Playing the Nationalist Card*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010. 41-75. 43.

mistakes. Looking west, we find that Austria is not the only country disputing terminology in order to work through their 20th century.

Was Francoist Spain Fascist?

Scholars cannot agree what Francoist Spain (1939-1975) *should* be called. In some ways, the Francoism and Austrofascism debates are similar: both are normative, and each concern the nature of regimes (rather than movements or ideologies). In other ways, they differ. For example, Francisco Franco's regime lasted for nearly four decades. Thus, "Should Francoist Spain be called fascist?" addresses a period over seven times longer than the D/SR. Some historical context would be appropriate.

What began in July of 1936 as a military coup against a contested Second Spanish Republic spilled into a civil war between "Nationalists" or "Rebels" (eventually led by General Franco, and strongly supported by the Mussolini and Hitler regimes) and "Republicans" or "Loyalists" (which received support from Stalin's USSR). This war, in which half a million people perished, was a far bloodier than Austria's four-day affair.¹³³ Afterwards, Franco's new regime conducted a vicious purge of its enemies. According to Jorge Marco, "[f]rom 1939 to 1952, at least 20,000 'reds' who had survived the war were also killed in a deliberate and

¹³³ Of course, the death toll of the Spanish Civil War is extremely controversial. According to *Encyclopedia Britannica* (a reliable and, importantly, given the politically charged nature of much historiography, relatively neutral source), "[t]he number of persons killed in the Spanish Civil War can be only roughly estimated... More recent estimates have been closer to 500,000 or less. This does not include all those who died from malnutrition, starvation, and war-engendered disease." Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Spanish Civil War." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, June 23, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Spanish-Civil-War>.

continuous elimination campaign.”¹³⁴ The real number may be higher; many murders were extrajudicial.¹³⁵ When the purges ceased, the Franco regime did little to acknowledge the dead.

Thus, another crucial difference between this and the Austrofascism debate: While the latter is primarily terminological, terminology forms only a part of the Francoism debate. Instead, Aleksandra Hadzelek thinks that “the most recent literature seems more preoccupied with the issue of violence applied heavily by the Franco regime, particularly in the immediate post-war period.”¹³⁶ At issue is: 1) whether or not said force is in any way explicable in light of the hypothetical force used by potentially victorious Republicans; and 2) the historiography of Francoist violence; namely whether it has been properly grappled with and/or commemorated. No serious observer denies that many innocents were killed, or that Francoist forces committed numerous atrocities, but this fact alone is not decisive enough to distinguish the existence and/or degree of “fascism.” We will see that, as in Austria, victimhood is a major component of the historiography of Spanish fascism. Here, what is crucial is the victim status of Franco’s opponents.

While the Austrofascism debate has taken place primarily among intellectuals, Spanish fascism has loomed larger in the media, especially during the civil war. Given that, as Nigel Townson puts it, “[t]he origins of the debate over the nature of the Franco dictatorship lie in the

¹³⁴ Marco, Jorge. 2016. “States of War: ‘Being Civilian’ in 1940s Spain.” In *Interrogating Francoism: History and Dictatorship in Twentieth-Century Spain*, edited by Helen Graham, translated by Carl-Henrik Bjerstrom and Helen Graham, 159–78. London and New York: Bloomsbury. 162.

¹³⁵ Some killings were conducted in the manner of *Ley de Fugas*, where “prisoners were shot while supposedly ‘trying to escape.’” Marco, “States of War,” 162, 163.

¹³⁶ Hadzelek, Aleksandra. 2012. “Spain’s ‘Pact of Silence’ and the Removal of Franco’s Statues.” *Past Law, Present Histories*, 153–76. 156.

Civil War,” before confronting today’s scholarly debate, we should examine what Franco’s contemporaries in print media had to say.¹³⁷

Proto-Exclusivist Print:

Those who view Franco positively have always been the least likely to call his forces “fascist” (opting instead for “Nationalist”), so it is unsurprising that pro-Franco proto-exclusivists rarely mentioned the term (other than to refute its application). Dr. Joseph Thorning deployed “fascism” but once.¹³⁸ Even though “we have heard so much about fascism,” it was “a term which Gen. Franco expressly repudiated in a personal interview with me.”¹³⁹ Already in 1936, exclusivists like Thorning felt that “fascism” was overused. Writing anonymously, “An American Business Man” illustrated that such wrongheaded abuse of “fascism” during the civil war had fatal consequences, because “[a]ny persons against whom the extremists [Republicans] had a grudge might be accused of being a fascist and arrested. In most cases this meant being put into a car, driven to some outlying road, beach or cemetery, and assassinated. Thousands of Spaniards have been done away with in this way.”¹⁴⁰ The above writers recommended restraint regarding “fascism,” but no such restraint was applied with communism (and like terms/concepts).

Thorning and the Business Man did not see the Republicans as beleaguered democrats, instead referring to them as “Reds,” emphasizing their bloodthirsty, extremist character. The Business Man even informed us that “communism of the Russian variety may be considered

¹³⁷ Townson, “Introduction,” 4.

¹³⁸ In a similarly sympathetic article, Major General J.F.C Full also limits his use of “fascism” to a singular instance. Fuller, Maj. Gen. J.F.C. 1937. “Franco Bringing Order To Spain, Observer Finds: Military Critic Describes 1,600 Mile Tour.” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 7, 1937. 17.

¹³⁹ Thorning, Joseph F. 1938. “A Visit to Nationalist Spain: Franco’s Lines Found Holding Firm by Scholar.” *The Washington Post*, February 15, 1938.

¹⁴⁰ Manuel, Frank E. and An American Business Man. 1937. “Spanish Left and Right.” *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 10, 1937. 13.

conservative in comparison with the brand of extremism practiced by these Spanish syndicalists and anarchists, who argue against any kind of government other than their own local labor dictatorships.”¹⁴¹ The implication here was explicit: the Nationalists *had* to do something. “It seemed a case of striking or being struck.”¹⁴² These pro-Franco proto-exclusivists believed that Nationalist actions were in some sense proportional to an existing (or potential) “Red” threat. Thus, Francoist violence was not the arbitrary repression of victims (like “fascism”), but standard warfare against an enemy. While, like Austria’s debate, the division between exclusivist and inclusivist usually breaks down along left-right lines, one did (does) not need to support the Nationalists in order to reject categorizing Franco as a fascist.

Franz Borkenau would eventually become a strident anticommunist, but he was certainly no Francoist, and remained of the left in 1937.¹⁴³ Still, Borkenau did not feel Franco was a fascist. For one, unlike Mussolini or Hitler, Franco was “not the representative of a mass movement.”¹⁴⁴ He “came to the top, not because the masses brought him there, but because... the other insurgent generals, acknowledged him as chief commander.”¹⁴⁵ Already in 1937, proto-exclusivists were making arguments about Francoist Spain which mirror exclusivist arguments about the D/SR today. Namely, that Francoism’s lack of a mass movement as distinguished it from fascism.¹⁴⁶

Proto-Inclusivist Print:

Communist (and most non-communist) inclusivists never call(ed) those who opposed Franco’s fascist coup “Reds,” but instead “anti-fascists” or “Loyalists.” However, they applied

¹⁴¹ Manuel and Business Man, “Spanish Left and Right,” 13.

¹⁴² Manuel and Business Man, “Spanish Left and Right,” 13.

¹⁴³ Incidentally, Borkenau, who was of Jewish descent and supported the Socialists, fled Austria early in the D/SR.

¹⁴⁴ Borkenau, Franz. 1937. “Spain Calls Its Own Tune.” *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 24, 1937. 2.

¹⁴⁵ Borkenau, “Spain Calls Its Own Tune.” 2.

¹⁴⁶ Botz, “Enhanced Authoritarian Dictatorship,” 165.

much less definitional courtesy to the Nationalists. Nearly all communists view(ed) Francoism as fascism, so the contemporary communist press almost always assumed, rather than justified, the term's appropriateness.¹⁴⁷ Writing in the *Daily Worker* after the civil war, Harry Gannes did not mince words. "Spanish fascism, inheritor of the degenerate and universally hated Spanish Inquisition, and willing puppet and stooge of the murderous Mussolini and Hitler, has clamped its iron heel down on unhappy Spain."¹⁴⁸ Gannes was at home among inclusivists in seeing fascism as the ultimate existential threat. Far from a foreign problem, "fascism will attempt to use Franco to conquer the Western Hemisphere."¹⁴⁹ Given the severity of the menace, Loyalist excesses were more understandable. For example, while they were roundly criticized for their violent victimization of clerical persons and property, *Western Worker* pointed out that "[t]he Pope has 'prayed' for a Fascist victory in Spain."¹⁵⁰ Unfortunately, the Spanish clergy were no less fascist than the Pope. "When the workers and peasants burned churches in Spain before the 'putsch' attempt, they were motivated by the fact that the churches in Spain are organizational centers of the Fascists and serve as stores for their weapons."¹⁵¹ This argumentation, which challenged the innocence of alleged victims, mirrored the above pro-Franco exclusivists. If the church was supplying the fascists with arms, the Loyalists had no choice but to defend themselves.

Despite proto-exclusivist claims, "Reds" were not the only ones who opposed Franco, nor were they the only ones who considered his forces fascist. David Darrah, writing in the (hardly communist) *Chicago Daily Tribune*, concurred with Gannes about the fascist nature of Franco's

¹⁴⁷ The term "Nationalists" is rarely used.

¹⁴⁸ Gannes, Harry. 1939. "Spanish Fascist 'Victory' - Aids War Axis Offensive Against the American Continent." *Daily Worker*, March 29, 1939, sec. World Front.

¹⁴⁹ Gannes, "Spanish Fascist 'Victory.'"

¹⁵⁰ *Western Worker*. 1936. "Fascism Was Harbored By Cath. Church: Victory For Spanish Fascists, Prayed For By Pope," September 7, 1936.

¹⁵¹ *Western Worker*, "Fascism Harbored By Church."

forthcoming regime. A prime indicator was Franco's labor charter (*Fuero del Trabajo*), because "the régime of Premier Mussolini of Italy also issued a labor charter as one of its early acts."¹⁵² Darrah's comparative approach, and reference to the *Fuero del Trabajo* in particular, anticipated later inclusivism.¹⁵³

Like Gannes, historian Frank E. Manuel also regarded fascist Spain as a continental and existential peril. Writing in the *Christian Science Monitor*, Manuel argued that "victory for General Franco will further proclaim the power of fascist Germany and Italy on the Continent. Within the boundaries of Spain, it will inaugurate a regime of brutality unknown in western Europe since the barbarian invasions."¹⁵⁴ Manuel thought that, unfortunately, Spain had been fascistizing since (at least) the 1933 elections, when "[t]he republic of 1931 was transformed into a clerical fascist regime."¹⁵⁵ Clearly, Manuel also noticed a convergence between Spanish fascism and Spanish church, and contended (as did the *Western Worker*) that "[t]here is definite proof that many of the church fires were acts of provocation on the part of fascists themselves."¹⁵⁶ Thus, even before Franco's regime, "fascism" had become intimately tied in the Spanish context with victimhood and violence, and their centrality in the Francoism debate has not changed.

Contemporary Spanish Exclusivism:

As Simon does with the D/SR, exclusivists in the Francoism debate compare Spain to other non-fascist regimes in interwar Europe. To Juan Linz, Francoist Spain was the

¹⁵² Darrah, David. 1938. "Franco To Build Fascist State If He Wins War: Monarchy Is Planned for Spain by Rebels." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 15, 1938. 5.

¹⁵³ Albanese, Matteo, and Pablo del Hierro. 2016. *Transnational Fascism in the Twentieth Century: Spain, Italy, and the Global Neo-Fascist Network*. A Modern History of Politics and Violence. Bloomsbury Academic. 43.

¹⁵⁴ Manuel and Business Man, "Spanish Left and Right," 12.

¹⁵⁵ Manuel and Business Man, "Spanish Left and Right," 5.

¹⁵⁶ *Western Worker*, "Fascism Harbored By Church."; Manuel and Business Man, "Spanish Left and Right," 12.

paradigmatic “authoritarian” regime, in the same category as the D/SR.¹⁵⁷ For Stanley G. Payne, it was “more analogous to that in eastern Europe and in Portugal, where the military remained a significant political power factor, ultimately helping to limit the possibilities of any independent fascist mobilization.”¹⁵⁸ Similar to Wohnout and Botz, exclusivists also compare the respective institutions and ideologies of Francoist Spain on the one hand, to those of Mussolini’s Italy and/or Hitler’s Germany on the other, in order to highlight Francoist Spain’s non-fascist character.

Unlike fascist regimes, but similar to the D/SR, the power of Francoist Spain’s single-party, *Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista* (FET-JONS, or Falange) was comparatively limited. For Paxton, it “played a smaller role in the functioning of the Francoist regime than the Nazi Party played in Hitler’s Germany or even the Fascist Party played in Mussolini’s Italy.”¹⁵⁹ Payne concurs, adding that (like the VF) FET-JONS’ membership was comparatively disinterested, ideologically speaking.¹⁶⁰ “[T]he bulk of the male membership was relatively passive and rarely mobilized. The FET would never develop an organized mass activism equal to the totalitarian model of the Soviet Union or Nazi Germany.”¹⁶¹ Like Wohnout, Simon, and Borckenau, Payne agrees that mass-movements are a decisive characteristic of fascism.

Importantly for exclusivists, FET-JONS’ power decreased with time. According to Matteo Albanese and Pablo del Hierro, “[a]fter 1943, the most radical falangists were isolated...

¹⁵⁷ Linz, Juan J. 1964. “An Authoritarian Regime: Spain.” In *Cleavages, Ideologies and Party Systems: Contributions to Comparative Political Sociology*, 291–341. Helsinki: Academic Bookstore. 294.

¹⁵⁸ Payne, Stanley G. 1999. *Fascism in Spain, 1923–1977*. University of Wisconsin Press. 472.

¹⁵⁹ Paxton, Robert. 2013. “Franco’s Spain in Comparative Perspective.” *Falange. Las Culturas Políticas Del Fascismo En La España de Franco (1939-1975)*. Zaragoza: Diputación de Zaragoza, 13–25. 18.

¹⁶⁰ At least compared to the NSDAP. Opportunism and lack of ideological rigor of FET cadres could certainly be compared to similar conditions in the PNF (though it could also be compared to state of the VF).

¹⁶¹ Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, 316.

and replaced by a series of docile politicians whose only allegiance was to Franco himself; as a result of this, the party became more subordinated to Franco and the government.”¹⁶² Franco, the military, and the church (in that order) came before the party in Francoist Spain’s hierarchy. However, while Borkenau also identified the military’s preeminence as a reason Francoist Spain was not fascist, personalist leadership is not usually considered a non-fascist trait.

In his regime, Franco’s sovereignty was supreme.

As Head of State, Prime Minister, Commander-in-Chief, and Head of the Movement (or single party), Francisco Franco regarded himself as being responsible not to an electorate, the Cortes, the Cabinet, the Army, the Falange, the Catholic Church, or, indeed, to any other body, but only ‘to God and History.’¹⁶³

Franco’s ideology was his regime’s ideology and, crucially for exclusivists, he did not self-identify as fascist. After achieving absolute power, he “would set the limits for the fascistization of the country which would continue in subsequent years.”¹⁶⁴ Payne cites a speech on February 18, 1937, in which Franco “declared, ‘there is no question about a movement that could be called exclusively fascist... If our Movement were explicitly fascist, I would have no reluctance in saying so, since I consider fascism a respectable form of government.’”¹⁶⁵ Thus, while exclusivists never deny the existence of fascists in Franco’s regime, they argue said regime remained non-fascist because it was controlled by a non-fascist Franco.

Albanese and del Hierro emphasize Francoist Spain’s ideological hybridity. Alongside fascism, Franco “and many of the other generals in charge were also influenced by Social-Catholicism, regenerationist theories from the beginning of the twentieth century, the experience of the Primo de Rivera regime, and also by the far right parties of the 1930s, especially RE

¹⁶² Albanese and del Hierro. *Transnational Fascism*, 58.

¹⁶³ Townson, “Introduction,” 7.

¹⁶⁴ Albanese and del Hierro. *Transnational Fascism*, 44.

¹⁶⁵ Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, 263.

[*Renovación Española*, an Alfonsist party].”¹⁶⁶ Like Simon, exclusivists argue that certain political (Catholic, monarchist) particularities were not only present alongside fascism, but ultimately more decisive in constituting the regime’s non-fascist ideology. For Payne, “especialmente... from 1937-1959,” Francoist Spain “was built in a fashion more nearly corresponding to the ideas and doctrines of Calvo Sotelo and the *Acción Española* group [equivalent to *Österreichische Aktion*] than to those of Falange Española.”¹⁶⁷ Thus, according to Albanese and del Hierro, “[t]he Francoist regime of the years 1942 and 1943 [fascism’s high point] certainly had fascist features, but it was not, and would not become, fully fascist.”¹⁶⁸ Instead, like in the Austrofascism debate, exclusivists accept terms like “semi-” or “hybrid-” fascism, which illustrate the partial nature of the fascism in question.¹⁶⁹

Unlike in Germany, fascism in Spain never birthed a new, ideologically fascist Christianity. Instead, because of Catholicism’s historical centrality to Spanish national identity, Payne argues that fascism “would inevitably be mutated and syncretized into a more hybrid ‘fascismo frailuno [friar fascism].’”¹⁷⁰ Jesús M. Zaratiegui Labiano and Alberto García Velasco agree that, rather than sacralizing politics and creating a political religion (as did fascism), Francoism “politicized religion.”¹⁷¹ Thus, according to Payne, FET-JONS “took the official position that the religious teachings of the Catholic Church were correct and binding, and that the Spanish state must be a strongly Catholic state that would help to imbue Catholic teachings in the

¹⁶⁶ Albanese and del Hierro. *Transnational Fascism*, 42.

¹⁶⁷ *Österreichische Aktion* was an interwar Austrian monarchist group. Wasserman considers it a part of Black Vienna. Wasserman, *Black Vienna*, 157; Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, 132.

¹⁶⁸ Albanese and del Hierro. *Transnational Fascism*, 60.

¹⁶⁹ Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, 477.

¹⁷⁰ Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, 471.

¹⁷¹ Labiano, Jesús M Zaratiegui, and Alberto García Velasco. 2016. “Franquismo: ¿fascista, nacional católico, tradicionalista?” In *Siglo. Actas del V Congreso Internacional de Historia de Nuestro Tiempo*, 1st ed., 379–95. Logroño: Universidad de La Rioja. 390.

national society.”¹⁷² However, this was not the position of more radical Falangists (for example in the Spanish University Union, SEU), who wanted a larger role for fascism, especially in education.¹⁷³ Thus, ideologically (and institutionally, since FET-JONS was subordinate to the church), there was “a basic tension... between the fascist pretensions of the core Falange and the Church.”¹⁷⁴ Eventually, Falangist fascism was muted in favor of Catholicism and, after 1945, the tension was resolved in favor of the church.

Exclusivists cite the above as an example of Francoist Spain’s defascistization. For them, Spain’s (like the D/SR’s) fascism was relatively short-lived (and only ever “semi-”). For Townson, “the dictatorship can be divided into a quasi-totalitarian or semi-fascist phase from 1939 to 1945, a National-Catholic, corporativist one up to the late 1950s, and... a period defined above all by its technocratic, developmental nature, which lasted up until the demise of the dictator in 1975.”¹⁷⁵ If Francoism left behind any legacy, “apologists” argue, it was not “fascism,” but Spain’s “economic miracle” after (economic) liberalization began in 1959.¹⁷⁶ While most exclusivists are not so bullish as to see Francoism as solely (or even primarily) responsible for such a miracle, Pablo Martín Aceña and Elena Martínez Ruiz do argue that “[t]he merit of the economic policy of the regime consisted of taking advantage of the so-called Golden Age of world capitalism.”¹⁷⁷ In other words, despite crucial external factors, they think Spain’s economic improvements were (partially) a product of the regime’s will. By contrast, like the

¹⁷² Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, 309.

¹⁷³ Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, 320.

¹⁷⁴ Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, 309.

¹⁷⁵ Townson, “Introduction,” 7.

¹⁷⁶ Townson, “Introduction,” 12.

¹⁷⁷ Aceña, Pablo Martín, and Elena Martínez Ruiz. 2007. “The Golden Age of Spanish Capitalism: Economic Growth without Political Freedom.” In *Spain Transformed: The Late Franco Dictatorship, 1959-75*, edited by Nigel Townson, 30–46. Palgrave Macmillan. 46.

D/SR's alleged creation of Austrian national identity, inclusivists regard Francoism's purported "economic miracle" is a "myth."¹⁷⁸

External factors also played a decisive role in Spain's defascistization: Had the Axis won, Francoism would have fascistized further. However, this can only be speculation, and Spain might equally have gone the way of the D/SR. In reality, Axis fortunes waned, and political associations with fascism became less expedient. Accordingly, "the regime made serious efforts after 1945 to sever its links with a fascist past."¹⁷⁹ While Edward Malefakis understands that such severing was not an entirely smooth process, its "overall movement was only in one direction, away from what might be called the high degree of abnormality it had developed during the Civil War, through its almost exclusively military origins, as well as through its close association with Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany."¹⁸⁰ Spain's defascistization *might* have been a product of opportunism, but the reason(s) behind defascistization are subordinate to the fact of its occurring, if only for exclusivists.

Contemporary Spanish Inclusivism:

More so than the D/SR, Francoist Spain shared many similarities with the paradigmatic fascist regimes of Italy and Germany. Angel Viñas mentions that the aforementioned "*Fuero del Trabajo*... of 9 March 1938... was directly inspired by the Fascist *Carta del Lavoro* and the Nazi *Gesetz zur Ordnung der nationalen Arbeit*."¹⁸¹ Further, like the D/SR,

¹⁷⁸ Graham, Helen. 2016. "Writing Spain's Twentieth Century in(to) Europe." In *Interrogating Francoism: History and Dictatorship in Twentieth-Century Spain*, edited by Helen Graham, 1–24. London and New York: Bloomsbury. 6.

¹⁷⁹ Preston, Paul. 1990. "8. Populism and Parasitism: The Falange and the Spanish Establishment 1939-75." In *Fascists and Conservatives*, 138–56. London: Unwin Hyman. 145.

¹⁸⁰ Malefakis, Edward. 2007. "A Bifurcated Regime?" In *Spain Transformed: The Late Franco Dictatorship, 1959-75*, edited by Nigel Townson, 248–254. Palgrave Macmillan. 252-253.

¹⁸¹ Viñas, Angel. 2016. "Natural Alliances: The Impact of Nazism and Fascism on Franco's Domestic Policies." In *Interrogating Francoism: History and Dictatorship in Twentieth-Century Spain*, edited by Helen Graham, 139–158. London and New York: Bloomsbury. 143.

Spain imported institutions equivalent to the Nazi *Hitlerjugend* (Frente de Juventudes, or Youth Front), *Bund deutscher Mädel* (Sección Femenina, the Women's Section of the Falange), *Winterhilfswerk* (Auxilio Social, wartime relief/welfare organization) and *Kraft durch Freude* (Educación y Descanso, worker education/welfare section...¹⁸²

Finally, fascism was also present in Franco's economic policies.

Franco was wedded to autarky, despite its "disastrous effects on the Spanish economy during World War II."¹⁸³ Viñas posits that

the very *economic* basis of autarky, and in particular, Franco's astounding tenacity in refusing for so long to relinquish it... constitutes prima facie evidence of the enduring influence of Nazi and Fascist ideology. These were to shape the dictatorship's economic policy, and through it the entire Spanish economic system, for more than twenty years – i.e. more than half the total span of the Franco dictatorship.¹⁸⁴

Franco's fascist economics were reminiscent of Nazism another way: "The management of companies was to be shaped along Fascist lines with the employers acting as little Führers."¹⁸⁵

Of the comparative similarities, economic policy is the most convincingly "fascist" with respect to Franco's personal ideology, given its prolonged duration in the face of poor results.

Paul Preston notes that while FET-JONS's influence waned, "[i]mmediately after the civil war and during the Second World War, the regime's ideological tone was set by the Falange."¹⁸⁶ Inclusivists like Mercedes Peñalba-Sotorrío thus emphasize that Spain was at one point shaped by a fascist party, regardless of when this stopped. "The central role that the Falange came to have in the early years of Francoism only highlights even more the fundamental contribution of Spanish fascism to the political culture of the dictatorship."¹⁸⁷ Even later, despite its diminishing influence, Preston points out that FET-JONS was by no means absent from Spanish society.

¹⁸² Viñas, "Natural Alliances," 143.

¹⁸³ Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, 328.

¹⁸⁴ Viñas, "Natural Alliances," 150.

¹⁸⁵ Viñas, "Natural Alliances," 143.

¹⁸⁶ Preston, "Populism and Parasitism," 140.

¹⁸⁷ Peñalba-Sotorrío, Mercedes. 2021. "Of Fascist Heroes and Martyrs." In *The Crucible of Francoism: Combat, Violence, and Ideology in the Spanish Civil War*, edited by Ángel Alcalde, Foster Chamberlin, and Francisco J. Leira-Castiñeira, 15-34. Sussex Studies in Spanish History. Sussex Academic Press. 29.

Throughout the complex evolution of the regime... the Falange remained like a resentful and obstructive octopus, its tentacles everywhere, incapable of preventing change altogether but with its capacity for disruption unimpaired... it had entrenched itself too well in every area of national life, unwilling to let go and too powerful to be pushed.¹⁸⁸ Exclusivist claims about (eventual) defascistization would hardly negate the fact of a (relatively) powerful fascist party which lived through the regime's entirety. Further, Falangist "tentacles" were not the only vestige of fascism which persisted throughout the duration of Franco's regime.

(Again) like in the Austrofascism debate, inclusivists challenge those who read the nature of Franco's dictatorship as somehow non-fascist. Viñas believes that "the Franco regime must be characterized as a dictatorship ultimately based on the *Führerprinzip*, whether applied publicly or secretly."¹⁸⁹ For inclusivists, Franco's dictatorial domination was itself fascist, perhaps even Nazi-esque. In fact, "Franco went much further than Hitler or Mussolini, and he was more successful, in the sense that he maintained right up to his death in 1975 both his open and his secret role as lawmaker/fount of law."¹⁹⁰ Thus, whether or not Franco *said* he was a fascist, fascist ideas absolutely informed his political behavior. While this is a potentially compelling argument, is it unclear why we ought to associate arbitrary autocratic behavior with fascism first and foremost. Certainly, personalist dictatorships, like single-parties and press consolidations, have been present in various sorts of regimes, fascist and non-fascist alike.

While exclusivists argue that Francoist Spain's hybridity limited its fascism, Ferran Gallego and Francisco Morente think, "such heterogeneity was not a weakening factor, but the historical condition and strength of the fascist project."¹⁹¹ Since they see Francoism as the

¹⁸⁸ Preston, "Populism and Parasitism," 141.

¹⁸⁹ Viñas, "Natural Alliances," 148.

¹⁹⁰ Viñas, "Natural Alliances," 148.

¹⁹¹ Gallego, Ferran, and Francisco Morente. 2017. "Introduction: The Peculiarities of Spanish Fascism." In *The Last Survivor: Cultural and Social Projects Underlying Spanish Fascism, 1931-1975*, edited by Ferran Gallego and Francisco Morente, 1–35. Sussex Studies in Spanish History. Sussex Academic Press. 18.

Spanish variant of transnational fascism, hybridity with other aspects of Spanish political thought is expected given fascism's nationalist character.

While technically, Spain's fascist parties were always electorally weak, given the interwar right's fascistization "by late 1935 and early 1936, Spanish fascism abundantly overflowed the strictly fascist confines of the FE-JONS party container."¹⁹² Like those in Wasserman's "Black Vienna," "Spanish conservatives, far from being an isolated, monolithic block, were a heterogenous force profoundly influenced by German Nazism, Italian Fascism, and French Traditionalism."¹⁹³ As in the Austrofascism debate, inclusivists challenge exclusivist differentiations between various "camps," such as political Catholicism and fascism.

Thus, contrary to Payne, who sees Catholicism as a countervailing or limiting force on fascism in Spain, inclusivists think Catholicism was a major component of Spanish fascist ideology.¹⁹⁴ Rather than Catholicism as such, radical Falangists objected to the institutional power of the church, which necessarily existed at the expense of further institutional power for FET-JONS. Thus, to Alejandro Quiroga and Miguel Ángel del Arco, "Catholicism did not hamper the Spanish right's process of fascistization. On the contrary, religion stalwartly contributed to the ultranationalist adoration of the fatherland and became a direct means to the 'sacralization of the nation', that is, to the transformation of the patria into a divine entity."¹⁹⁵ In the literal sense, this approach to fascism as a "political religion" is "functional." Whether deliberately or not, it assumes that the nation was substituted for God to mimic the function of religion.

¹⁹² Morente, "The Falange and Academia," 69.

¹⁹³ Quiroga, Alejandro, and Miguel Ángel del Arco. 2012. "Introduction: Soldiers of God and Apostles of the Fatherland in Interwar Europe." In *Right-Wing Spain in the Civil War Era: Soldiers of God and Apostles of the Fatherland, 1914-45*, edited by Alejandro Quiroga and Miguel Ángel del Arco, vii-xix. London and New York: Continuum. vii.

¹⁹⁴ Much like Orthodoxy was a major component of Romanian fascist ideology, for example.

¹⁹⁵ Quiroga and del Arco, "Introduction," xi.

Inclusivists extend their functionalist approach to fascist socio-economics. This contrasts with some exclusivists, who tend to focus on ideology. The inclusivist “stress on fascism’s socio-economic (as opposed to its political) dimension was of Marxist inspiration,” but is critical for anyone who wishes to grasp any regime in full, regardless of political orientation.¹⁹⁶ This approach leads Helen Graham, like Parenti, to conclude that “all forms of fascism” are “counter-revolutionary.”¹⁹⁷ In other words, fascism’s function is to suppress the masses when they get out of line. That an “Anonymous Business Man” wrote in Franco’s defense certainly buttresses Graham’s definition of fascism as a “form of radical reaction which sought to reconfigure society and politics without destroying the power of private capital.”¹⁹⁸ While the Falange may have lost power, and Franco may have separated himself from his former allies, inclusivists believe Francoism’s fascist *function* stayed stable. Thus, Gallego and Morente argue that “changes generated by the regime did not substantially alter it from how it had been constituted in the early 1940s. Some essential elements of the original fascism never disappeared.”¹⁹⁹ Indeed, inclusivists seek to prove (like in the Austrofascism debate) that Francoism left behind a fascist legacy. Naturally, Spain’s remaining fascist until 1975 would have immense political implications.

Fascism in Contemporary Spain?

For exclusivists like Malefakis, because Francoism underwent drastic changes between WWII and the 1960s, there can be little talk of Spanish fascism after 1945, let alone today.

To appreciate the singularity of what happened in Spain one would have to imagine that Stalin himself had carried out the gigantic changes instituted after his death by Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and Gorbachev, or that Mao Zedong had ordered the even more

¹⁹⁶ Townson, “Introduction,” 5.

¹⁹⁷ Gallego and Morente, “Introduction,” 8.

¹⁹⁸ Graham, “Writing Spain in(to) Europe,” 1.

¹⁹⁹ Gallego and Morente, “Introduction,” 24.

extraordinary reforms introduced after his death by Deng Xiaping [sic] and his successors in China.²⁰⁰

To exclusivists, the massive scope of these changes, and their continuous orientation *away* from fascism, means they can safely say fascism is no longer an issue in Spain. Malefakis goes a step further than distancing Francoism from fascism. “Given that the regime changed so much during its nearly four decades of existence, what kind of overall evaluation does it deserve? Clearly a mixed one, neither overly favourable nor entirely unfavourable.”²⁰¹ If changes away from fascism are the reason for Malefakis’s “mixed” review of Francoist Spain, then he believes if Francoist Spain *did* bequeath a fascist legacy, its overall legacy would be “entirely unfavourable.” Again, no one in these debates (explicitly) supports “fascism.”

Naturally, inclusivists disagree with ideas about Francoist Spain’s defascistization, and see such talk as fascist apologia. Even according to Malefakis, far from disappearing, Francoist elites played decisive roles in the regime’s “changes,” both during and after. For Graham, Spain’s transition to democracy “was a process entirely supervised by a reformist Francoist elite without any policy of lustration... thus ensuring a virtually total continuity of state and political personnel from the dictatorship to the new democratic system.”²⁰² As a result, “Spain’s transition, seen from the inside, was a limited process of change which never really escaped the control of those reformist insiders driving it.”²⁰³ In light of the continuities between “democracy” and fascism noted by Parenti and Graham, this is not surprising. Given that Francoist Spain retained its fascist essence throughout its duration, and given that the reforms it did make were carried out by Francoists themselves, inclusivists argue that Francoism (and therefore fascism) remains a problem for contemporary Spain.

²⁰⁰ Malefakis, “Bifurcated Regime?” 249.

²⁰¹ Malefakis, “Bifurcated Regime?” 253.

²⁰² Graham, “Writing Spain in(to) Europe,” 7.

²⁰³ Graham, “Writing Spain in(to) Europe,” 7.

As in Austria, inclusivists think a reason for Spain's improper *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* is that a desire for post-"fascist" coalition building led to *Koalitionsgeschichtsschreibung*. "The fact that the Transition was made possible by a collaboration between Francoists and anti-Francoists might also have inhibited research on the period for fear of stirring up politically divisive – even democratically damaging – debates over the past activities of those that served the dictator."²⁰⁴ Indeed, much more so than the Austrofascism debate (understandable given the differing regime durations), Francoism remains identified with the contemporary Spanish right, at least for inclusivists. To Graham, "a large portion of the mainstream right... had always remained Francoist in terms of their political and cultural values."²⁰⁵ Thus, far from content with post-Franco "democracy," Spanish society must remain vigilant, for Francoism (and thus fascism) lurks, not just on the radical, but also mainstream right. In contemporary Spain, inclusivists find fascism to be diffused indeed. One way Francoism's continued presence manifests is in exclusivist narratives about the Spanish Civil War.

Victimhood & Francoist Violence:

If we are to have political limits based on interwar conduct at all, exclusivists imply, one which only circumscribes the right would be misplaced. Like Gottfried, exclusivists emphasize the non-democratic, often revolutionary, communist (or anarchist) character of many Republicans, as well as their violent behavior. Unlike Thorning and the Business Man, the goal is not (necessarily) to engage in Francoist apologetics, but to complicate an understanding of Nationalists-as-victimizer vs. Loyalists-as-victim. If the Republicans posed a legitimate threat to innocent people, and if their hypothetical post-war government looked more like a Soviet

²⁰⁴ Townson, "Introduction," 10.

²⁰⁵ Graham, "Writing Spain in(to) Europe," 11.

satellite than a Scandinavian social democracy, then, while there may have been “excesses,” Francoist violence did not come out of nowhere. In the eyes of Gottfried, such violence was precipitated by the left anyway, and actually prevented a much worse fate. According to Payne, “it would be he [the Marxist Luis Araquistain] and his colleagues in the violent, revolutionary sector of socialism who would soon be providing much of the rationale for Spanish fascism.”²⁰⁶ Payne wants to make clear that “the real essence of ‘fascist style’ was shared by many different groups on both sides: the military, monarchists, anarchists, Communists, Socialists, and sometimes even left Republicans.”²⁰⁷ Like Gottfried, Payne thinks “fascists” were not the only ones in Spain with a penchant for illiberalism and violence. Ultimately, the point is to distinguish Franco’s victims (as wartime opponents) from those of fascism (typified by the victims of Nazi genocide).

In direct contrast, Preston places the analogy between Francoist victims and Nazi victims in the title of his book, *The Spanish Holocaust*.²⁰⁸ Generally, inclusivists argue that the violence committed by the Franco regime was not proportional (or even close); it was more reminiscent of genocide than warfare. To Graham, the idea of Republicans as undemocratic extremists is “revisionist delegitimization of the Second Republic.”²⁰⁹ Such revisionism is “indebted to Cold War political effects in its foreclosing of any discussion of the fact that some measure of economic democracy is the necessary precondition to enable and consolidate, indeed *to make*, political democracy.”²¹⁰ Thus, far from undemocratic, Graham thinks the Republicans were the only ones who actually understood democracy in a complete way (that is, as necessitating a kind

²⁰⁶ Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, 469-470.

²⁰⁷ Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, 248.

²⁰⁸ Preston, Paul. 2012. *The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-century Spain*. New York, W.W. Norton & Co.

²⁰⁹ Graham, “Writing Spain in(to) Europe,” 17.

²¹⁰ Graham, “Writing Spain in(to) Europe,” 17.

of socialism). This, as opposed to revolutionary terror, is why Republicans were victimized by the fascist Franco, and why an accurate grappling with their legacy remains discouraged by the “democratic” powers-that-be. Like our continued unwillingness to view Franco as a fascist, our continued inability to understand the truly democratic character of the Spanish Republicans is a result of propaganda. It is one example of what Parenti sees as the demonization of “Reds” at the expense of an accurate understanding of “blackshirts.” Instead of bashing the victims, inclusivists think we should come to terms with their unjust demise at the hands of fascists. Of course, this will only happen if Spaniards confront the fascism which *still* haunts their country.

While how we remember Francoist Spain has much less to do with “fascism” (as a designation) than how we remember the D/SR, scholarly understandings about violence and victimhood still correspond to “exclusivist” and “inclusivist” positions. Indeed, the substantial similarities between the Austrofascism and Francoism debates demonstrate that “fascism debates” are a phenomenon, not my arbitrary lumping together of disparate, nationally-bounded historiographic conflicts. By “transnationalizing” fascism debates, it becomes clear that they are indeed about fascism’s threat in the present. Based on one’s verdict, a position is taken on whether something should be classified (literally), but also condemned (morally) alongside Mussolini’s Italy and Hitler’s Germany.

The subsequent OUN debate will expand upon the relationship between fascism on the one hand, and violence and victimhood on the other. We will see that, in the scholarly and popular understanding, victims of fascism (as groups, not individuals) are *always* innocent. The converse is also true: fascists are *never* victims.²¹¹

²¹¹ Hence why Austria claimed victimhood to disassociate itself from fascism, and why Parenti frames communists as victims to deflect from “totalitarianism.”

Was the OUN Fascist?

Especially after Russia's recent invasions, Ukrainian "fascism" is controversial. However, since it remains misunderstood, some background is required. Like many other nationalities of the former Habsburg and Russian empires, Ukrainians fought for a nation-state after World War I. The failure to obtain one, and subsequent division of the Ukrainian population between Poland and the USSR, resulted in a radicalized nationalist milieu, agitating for national sovereignty at all costs.²¹² This political grouping, which Motyl (following John A. Armstrong) calls "Ukrainian Nationalism," has been variously described as "integral nationalist," and/or "fascist."²¹³

Today, no one disputes that during WWII, (more or less) to achieve national independence, some Ukrainian Nationalists, notably the OUN and its paramilitary Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), collaborated with Nazis against the Soviets.²¹⁴ After the war, the UPA fought a protracted war against the Soviets in western Ukraine until they were crushed in 1949.²¹⁵ Meanwhile, the OUN dispersed into émigré communities and continued their agitation from abroad, often receiving support from anti-communist nations and organizations. Until the late 1970s/early 80s, "the OUN/UPA remained a taboo subject."²¹⁶ Even the UPA's guerilla war in west Ukraine was rarely discussed by official Soviet organs. When it was, "Soviet propaganda obsessively conflated Ukrainian nationalism with Nazism."²¹⁷ In other words, Nazism (and

²¹² Motyl, *Turn to the Right*, 1.

²¹³ Motyl, *Turn to the Right*, 1, 2.

²¹⁴ A note on terminology: in 1940, the OUN split into two factions, the OUN-M (led by Andriy Melnyk) and the OUN-B (led by Bandera). In this paper, any reference to the OUN before 1940 refers to the organization as a whole, while any reference after 1940 refers to the OUN-B.

²¹⁵ Erlacher, Trevor. 2013. "Denationalizing Treachery: The Ukrainian Insurgent Army and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists in Late Soviet Discourse, 1945-85." *Region 2* (2): 289–316. 289-290.

²¹⁶ Erlacher, "Denationalizing Treachery," 294.

²¹⁷ Erlacher, "Denationalizing Treachery," 295.

fascism) functioned as a political limit on Ukrainian nationalism of any variety.²¹⁸ Generally, in the USSR, “fascist” came to mean anything that was (deemed to be) anti-“Soviet” and/or anti-Russian; it became a political limit for dissent. In Russia, after the fall of the USSR, “fascism” continued to function as a political limit, used in reference to anything that was (deemed to be) anti-Russian.²¹⁹

Today, there are two well-entrenched, popular narratives about the OUN’s activities: 1) they were victims, agitating for national-liberation (broadly identified with Ukrainian nationalists, and during the Cold War, anticommunists); or 2) they were victimizers, collaborating in fascist violence (broadly identified with Russia, and during the Cold War, the USSR). The OUN debate reflects these narratives. Some scholars entertain complexity, but “two contradictory and almost mutually exclusive trends [exclusivist and inclusivist] still compete in historiography.”²²⁰ Thus, despite this debate’s significantly different political context, it too hinges on a normative question: *Should* we call the OUN fascist?

To introduce the Austrofascism and Francoism debates, we looked at intellectuals and print media, respectively. Given the OUN debate’s origins in the immediate aftermath of WWII and beginnings of the Cold War, to examine this debate’s early stages, we consult a pair of propagandistic pamphlets.

²¹⁸ It will become clear that in the Soviet/Russian context, the distinction between fascism and Nazism is much less clear, if it is made at all.

²¹⁹ Motyl, “Putin’s Russia as Fascist,” 26; Shkandrij, Myroslav. 2015. “National Democracy, the OUN, and Dontsovism.” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 48 (2/3): 209–16. 215.

²²⁰ Zaitsev, Oleksandr. 2015. “Fascism or Ustashism? Ukrainian Integral Nationalism of the 1920s–1930s in Comparative Perspective.” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 48 (2–3): 183–93. 184.

“Ukrainian Resistance and its Leader”

In 1950, the Scottish League for European Freedom produced *Ukrainian Resistance and Its Leader*, which briefly covered the history, activities, and beliefs of the OUN/UPA and their “Leader,” Stepan Bandera.²²¹ It was an anticommunist document, polemical and shameless. The League’s chairman, John F. Stewart, explicitly aimed for “the complete disintegration of the U.S.S.R. into its component independent States [like Ukraine] ... I see no other way to end the Russian terrorisation of the world.”²²² To achieve this goal, “[o]ur allies in this struggle ought to be the Western democracies... we ought to make all the efforts necessary to acquaint these countries with our ideas.”²²³ This choice of allies made any (explicit) associations with “fascism” (or worse yet, Nazism) unproductive to say the least, given their post-WWII status as political limits.

In the previous fascism debates, proto-exclusivists more often ignored “fascism” than disputed its use. It is not surprising, then, that *Ukrainian Resistance* never referred to the OUN as fascist. In fact, the words “fascism”/“fascist” did not appear *at all* (“Nazis” is used once).²²⁴ Instead, *Ukrainian Resistance* talked about the “Ukrainian Resistance Movement,” whose activities were anti-fascist, if anything. For example, during WWII, “Bandera, to thwart the plans of the Germans as well as the Bolsheviks, proclaimed the independence of the Ukraine.”²²⁵ Bandera was even arrested by the Germans for this reason. In both the Austrofascism and OUN

²²¹ It seems the Scottish League for European Freedom was connected to the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations (ABN), a far-right émigré group founded by the OUN’s Yaroslav Stekso, who appears multiple times in the pamphlet.

²²² Stewart, John F. 1950. *Ukrainian Resistance and Its Leader*. Edinburgh: Scottish League for European Freedom. 3.

²²³ Stewart, *Ukrainian Resistance*, 12.

²²⁴ Stewart, *Ukrainian Resistance*, 8.

²²⁵ Stewart, *Ukrainian Resistance*, 6.

debates, exclusivists contend that, because their leaders were victimized for upholding national sovereignty in the face of Nazism, the D/SR and OUN could not have been fascist.

According to the pamphlet, the Resistance never collaborated, but “launched the fight against the Germans and Bolsheviks simultaneously.”²²⁶ They were not fascist victimizers, but victims, “enslaved by Moscow,” waging a “struggle against the occupying forces [which] goes on to this day.”²²⁷ Indeed, theirs was a formidable foe. “Bolshevik totalitarianism is the greatest enemy of humanity, of culture, of civilisation and of all the human values embodied in the words, Liberty and Justice.”²²⁸ Bolshevism was framed in terms more likely to scare the new allies whom the “Resistance” hoped to court. Talk of “Judeo-Bolshevism” and the like was abandoned in favor of references to a besieged “Christian idea.”²²⁹ Communism, not fascism, was the ultimate existential threat. “Our salvation, the salvation of all mankind, is to be found in a national anti-Bolshevik revolution.”²³⁰ Though *Ukrainian Resistance* never mentioned OUN/UPA violence (other than those allusions to “revolution” and “resistance”), the implication was clear: No form of resistance to such an existential threat would be too extreme.

Ukrainian Resistance's strategy seemed to be denial and revisionism, rather than open confrontation with uncomfortable facts. Such a strategy was not limited to apologist outsiders, but was initiated by Ukrainian Nationalists themselves. “OUN émigrés and UPA veterans began producing forged or manipulated documents during the Cold War, by means of which they whitewashed their own history. They removed undesirable and inconvenient phrases from republished documents, especially those relating to fascism, the Holocaust, and other

²²⁶ Stewart, *Ukrainian Resistance*, 6.

²²⁷ Stewart, *Ukrainian Resistance*, 2, 6.

²²⁸ Stewart, *Ukrainian Resistance*, 11.

²²⁹ Stewart, *Ukrainian Resistance*, 11. Ukrainian nationalists were hardly alone. In Germany, men like Matthes Ziegler did the same. See Hanebrink, Paul. 2018. *A Specter Haunting Europe: The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. 200-201.

²³⁰ Stewart, *Ukrainian Resistance*, 12.

atrocities.”²³¹ Thus, similar to Franco’s Spain, nationalists in need of Western support manipulated the historical record to distance themselves from “fascism.”²³² Indeed, after perusing this pamphlet, one could not be faulted for remaining ignorant about the facts of Ukrainian collaboration.

Condemned by History:

Condemned by History (hereafter *Condemned*), a collection of writings about Ukrainian nationalists from the Soviet perspective, was produced in 1978, though much of it comes from decades earlier.²³³ For the compiler, Taras Mihal, “[t]he entire chronicle of activities of the Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists is an endless string of crime and treason.”²³⁴ Portrayed in *Ukrainian Resistance* earth’s last line of defense against barbarous Bolshevism, *Condemned* showed us a very different side of Ukrainian nationalism.

Unlike the previous pamphlet, which eschewed the word, *Condemned* referenced “fascists” and “fascism” literally hundreds of times. The authors were not interested in nuance, they never differentiated between various Ukrainian nationalists. All were fascists, and, Mihal told us, “long after fascist Germany had fallen apart, long after Hitler’s and Himmler’s corpses had decayed in the ground, the Ukrainian nationalists continued working for fascism.”²³⁵ Much of what followed was a collection of harrowing anecdotes. According to Rotislav Bratun, fascists

²³¹ Rossoliński-Liebe, Grzegorz. 2014. *Stepan Bandera: The Life and Afterlife of a Ukrainian Nationalist: Fascism, Genocide, and Cult*. Stuttgart, Germany: ibidem-Verlag. 40.

²³² According to Jan van Muilekom, who studies Francoist censorship, historical material which related Francoism and fascism too closely was censored by the regime. See Muilekom, Jan van. 2021. *The Franco Regime and Its Historiography: Spanish Historians Confronting Propaganda and Censorship*. Sussex Studies in Spanish History. Sussex Academic Press. 82.

²³³ Little else is available about this publisher. However, it seems fair to assume it was somehow connected to the Soviet state.

²³⁴ Mihal, Taras. 1978. “Introduction.” In *Condemned by History: A Collection of Pamphlets and Articles*, edited by Taras Mihal, translated by Anatole Bilenko, 5–23. Kiev: Dnipro Publishers. 5.

²³⁵ Mihal, “Introduction.” 17.

threw babies into the air and shot them.²³⁶ In another instance, they loaded their fellow Ukrainians onto cattle-cars labelled “*Nach Deutschland*” to be used for forced labor.²³⁷

Condemned's authors saw Ukrainian nationalists as anything but “resistance.” They might have resisted Soviet rule, but when the Nazis invaded, “resistance” ceased. Volodymyr Vlny directly addressed Stetsko, who, in *Ukrainian Resistance*, claimed to have fought both the Bolsheviks and Nazis.²³⁸ Vlny identified this as a lie.²³⁹ According to Volodymyr Belyaev and Mikhaïlo Rudnitsky, after 1941, nationalists actually “honored the arrival of Hitler’s troops by putting up crosses with the inscription ‘Heil Hitler and Bandera!’”²⁴⁰ Again and again, *Condemned* stressed that these Ukrainians were fascist collaborators.

For Mihal, the reason for this treasonous collaboration was not to achieve an independent state. Instead, Ukrainian nationalists supported fascism because they were also fascists. “The OUN knew pretty well that Hitler would never permit them to have any sort of state... nonetheless they supported him and loyally served fascism.”²⁴¹ Ukrainian nationalists’ fascism outweighed their Ukrainian-ness, since they “went out of their way to ape the fascist *Übermensch*... in everything, and strove to be similar to their Berlin lords.”²⁴² To prove this, Bratun took a comparative approach. Ukrainian nationalists adopted Nazi colors, modeled their constitution after Hitler and Mussolini, and mimicked the Roman salute. Indeed, “it would take

²³⁶ Bratun, Rotislav. 1959. “The Land Accuses.” In *Condemned by History: A Collection of Pamphlets and Articles*, edited by Taras Mihal, translated by Anatole Bilenko, 24–32. Kiev: Dnipro Publishers. 28.

²³⁷ Belyaev, Volodymyr and Mikhaïlo Rudnitsky. 1956. “‘Saviors’ of the Third Reich.” In *Condemned by History: A Collection of Pamphlets and Articles*, edited by Taras Mihal, translated by Anatole Bilenko, 71–85. Kiev: Dnipro Publishers. 80.

²³⁸ Stewart, *Ukrainian Resistance*, 8.

²³⁹ Vlny, Volodymyr. 1975. “‘The White Gloves of Herr Stetsko.’” In *Condemned by History: A Collection of Pamphlets and Articles*, edited by Taras Mihal, translated by Anatole Bilenko, 85–98. Kiev: Dnipro Publishers. 89.

²⁴⁰ Belyaev and Rudnitsky. “Saviors of Third Reich.” 72.

²⁴¹ Mihal, “Introduction.” 18.

²⁴² Bratun, “The Land Accuses.” 30-31.

too long to list everything the OUN did to emulate their father Hitler.”²⁴³ Shameful imitation of and obsequiousness towards German fascism buttressed the Soviet claim that these so-called “nationalists” were not “true” Ukrainians, but traitors.²⁴⁴

The victorious Soviets put a stop to Ukrainian nationalism’s nefarious machinations, but *Condemned* informed us that these fascists remained as dogged as ever. Soviet inclusivists, like all other inclusivists, were intent on emphasizing historical fascism in order to demonstrate fascism’s enduring threat, despite the claims of expatriate exclusivists.

Contemporary Ukrainian Exclusivism:

A key difference between the Austrian and Spanish debates on the one hand, and the Ukrainian debate on the other, is that the former are about fascist *regimes*, while the latter is about a fascist *movement*. We can now return to the anecdote with which we began.

Motyl argues that “the fundamental philosophical difference concerning the nation-state relationship primarily defines the relationship between the OUN’s Nationalism and Fascism.”²⁴⁵ If the difference between the D/SR and “fascism” has to do with Austria’s lack of a nation, then Motyl thinks the difference between Ukrainian nationalism and fascism revolves around Ukraine’s lack of a state. On the basis of this difference, Oleksandr Zaitsev proposes an entirely new term to classify the OUN: “ustashist.”²⁴⁶ Ustashists agitate *for* a state, distinguishing them from fascists, who seek power in an *already existing* state. “[I]ntegral nationalist organizations of stateless peoples like the OUN, Ustasa, and others constitute a separate genus of political movements and respective ideologies, different both from fascism and from the democratic trend

²⁴³ Bratun, “The Land Accuses.” 30-31.

²⁴⁴ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Bandera*, 377.

²⁴⁵ Motyl, *Turn to the Right*, 165.

²⁴⁶ The term derives from the Ustaše, Croatian nationalists who also collaborated with the Nazis, and about whom there is another fascism debate.

in national liberation movements.”²⁴⁷ Because there was no Ukrainian state, neither Motyl nor Zaitsev believe the OUN should be called fascist. Of all fascism’s aspects, this dubious distinction cannot be the decisive definitional factor, one difference should not outweigh so many similarities. However, without an accepted standard of comparison, which could only exist based on an accepted definition of fascism, “should not” is all we can say.

Zaitsev’s ustashism differentiates the OUN from fascism *and* national liberation movements, but some exclusivist scholars do not believe such middle ground is needed. With more nuance (and more evidence) than *Ukrainian Resistance*, exclusivists like Oleksandr Pahiria suggest that, given the USSR’s imperial ambitions and Russia’s colonial history, Ukrainian nationalists were more anti-imperialist than fascist. “[D]espite the obvious influence of Fascism and National Socialism... the Ukrainian nationalist movement is typologically closer to the category of anti-colonial and national liberation rather than fascist/proto-fascist movements.”²⁴⁸ In other words, fascism is the wrong comparative context for the OUN. Instead of thinking about them alongside Hitler and the Nazis, Motyl argues that Bandera

and his radical nationalist comrades closely resembled the Algerian nationalists in the National Liberation Front, the Palestinian nationalists in the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Jewish nationalists in the Irgun or the ‘Stern Gang.’ Bandera was the Ukrainian version of Ahmed Ben Bella, Yasser Arafat, Menachem Begin, and Avraham Stern.²⁴⁹

If this is true, it would qualitatively change (in the eyes of many) the nature of the OUN’s violence. It is worth pausing here.

As we have seen, “fascists” *also* framed themselves as resistance (to “Reds,” for one).

Further, they certainly saw themselves as working towards national liberation (from

²⁴⁷ Zaitsev, “Fascism or Ustashism?” 184.

²⁴⁸ Pahiria, Oleksandr. “In Search of a Third Way: The OUN between Fascism and Anti-Colonialism.” *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society* 7, no. 2 (2021): 159-165. 164.

²⁴⁹ Motyl, “Ukraine, Europe, Bandera,” 2.

“international Jewry,” for example). Many Ukrainians concurred with aspects of this worldview. Alongside the fact of Ukraine’s very real persecution at the hands of “Reds,” “[t]here was a feeling widespread among Ukrainians that Jews exploited them, and this feeling was to play a part in the Holocaust.”²⁵⁰ In other words, Ukrainian nationalists, like fascists, saw themselves as victims. However, though anyone can *claim* to be a victim, academics are unlikely (for good reason) to see “resistance” to Judeo-Bolshevism as legitimate. Put simply, fascist “victimhood” is not seen as legitimate grounds for resistance. However, if Motyl and Pahiria can frame Ukrainian victimhood as being akin to the colonized, and thus OUN violence as being akin to anti-colonial violence, academics are much more likely to accept it.²⁵¹ Far from a genocide at the hands of fascist victimizers, exclusivists say, OUN violence *should* be understood as the violence of the victimized. This gives said violence a liberatory character, something never associated with fascism (anymore). In fact, like some anti-colonial revolts, OUN violence might have been necessary.

Arguments about necessity are not limited to violence, but even extend to “fascism.” Motyl maintains that “many of the fascist-like elements of the Ukrainian nationalist movement can be accounted for by the demands of illegal underground activity.”²⁵² Thus, for Serhiy Kvit, the OUN was not actually “authoritarian” in a fascist “sense.”²⁵³ Rather, it “was authoritarian in the sense that it was a military organization... The authoritarianism of interwar Ukrainian nationalism did not signify an intention to accomplish any particularly authoritarian/totalitarian

²⁵⁰ Himka, John-Paul. 2021. *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust: OUN and UPA’s Participation in the Destruction of Ukrainian Jewry, 1941-1944*. Ukrainian Voices 12. Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag. 162.

²⁵¹ This argumentation is akin to that of Spanish exclusivists, who argue that the Republicans represented a real (Soviet) threat. If true, Francoist victimhood becomes more legitimate, and Francoism might become non-fascist.

²⁵² Motyl, “Ukraine, Europe, Bandera,” 4.

²⁵³ For transparency’s sake, Kvit’s extreme-right ties must be noted here. See Rossoliński-Liebe, *Bandera*, 471.

project once independent Ukraine had been achieved.”²⁵⁴ Perhaps the OUN, upon taking power in 1941, would have transformed Ukraine into a pluralist, liberal democracy. Who knows?

Another of these “fascist-like elements” which can be explained (away) is collaboration. Basically, the OUN may have collaborated, but out of necessity, not due to any “fascism.” Usually, this is only implied. However, Kvit argues that “the Ukrainian nationalist movement did not have much choice but to cooperate with Italy, Lithuania, Finland, and Germany... on a joint anti-communist platform.”²⁵⁵ Indeed, if the two options are victimized or victimizer, one’s “fascism” becomes a secondary concern. This is reminiscent of the *Opfertheses*. If “fascism” is the only alternative to death or severe punishment, it is hard for others to pass judgement.

A final point made by exclusivist scholars is that OUN ideology was too unique, in terms of its hybridity and national particularity, to have been fascist. This is essentially the same as arguments made in the previous two debates.

For some exclusivists, “fascism” is a static term which does not capture the OUN’s living, breathing contours. Rather than a consistent espousal of fascism, Motyl argues, the group’s “relationship to political ideologies changed continuously, proceeding from an apolitical militarism to authoritarianism to fascism to democracy to social democracy.”²⁵⁶ Like Franco’s Spain, much of this change was driven by practical concerns. When the OUN adopted fascist practices, it was only because fascists were advisable anti-Bolshevik allies. *Ukrainian Resistance* provides us evidence that, after “fascism” lost the war, Ukrainian nationalists changed their ideology to appeal to another set of anti-communist allies, namely the liberal democracies.

Essentially, the argument here is that the OUN’s (temporal) hybridity precludes us from calling

²⁵⁴ Kvit, Serhiy. "Ukrainian Nationalism, Ustashism, and Fascism: The Subject-Matter and Context of the Discussion." *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society* 7, no. 2 (2021): 146-158. 150.

²⁵⁵ Kvit, "Ukrainian Nationalism, Ustashism, Fascism," 155.

²⁵⁶ Motyl, "Ukraine, Europe, Bandera," 4.

them fascist. However, that “fascism” does not capture OUN ideology for the entirety of its existence hardly discounts the use of the word to describe the OUN at some point or another, or over a certain period of time.

In the Austrofascism debate, Simon argued that D/SR ideology is best understood as a unique, Austrian phenomena.²⁵⁷ Similarly, Motyl argues that “in spite of its ideological affinity with non-Ukrainian right-wing movements, the Nationalist ideology was primarily (and obviously) a product of the post-war Ukrainian intellectual and socio-political climate.”²⁵⁸ For him, there is “no question of Ukrainian Nationalism’s having ‘borrowed’ from or ‘imitated’ foreign examples or of its having been ‘artificially transplanted’ to Ukrainian soil.”²⁵⁹ If, as exclusivists claim, OUN ideology was the product of Ukraine, the implication is that (contrary to some inclusivist arguments) it cannot have been an example of transnational fascism.

Contemporary Ukrainian Inclusivism:

John-Paul Himka disagrees with the empirical basis of ustashism and its associated arguments. Actually, it is not correct to call the interwar Ukrainians a “stateless” people. “[I]n early July 1941 OUN did achieve something like statehood; in fact, I think that OUN proceeded as if it had a Ukrainian state for the whole of July and much of August.”²⁶⁰ Himka is referring to events which began on June 30, 1941 in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv. The Nazis arrived in the city that morning, and in the “evening Stetsko held a meeting in the Prosvita building where proclaimed the renewal of Ukrainian statehood.”²⁶¹ During the subsequent period, which Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe calls the “Ukrainian National Revolution,” there is little doubt about

²⁵⁷ Simon, „Austrofascismus,” 163.

²⁵⁸ Motyl, *Turn to the Right*, 172.

²⁵⁹ Motyl, *Turn to the Right*, 173.

²⁶⁰ Himka, “OUN and Fascism,” 173.

²⁶¹ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and Holocaust*, 208.

this potential state's fascist character. "On 3 July 1941... Stets'ko, the head of the newly established government, sent official letters to... the Duce of Italy, Benito Mussolini... the Croatian poglavnik Ante Pavelić... the Caudillo of Spain, Francisco Franco, and... the Führer, Adolf Hitler. The letters were all written in German, the lingua franca of the new fascist Europe."²⁶² Thus, whether or not the OUN *successfully* established a state, they *attempted* to do so.

Despite the arrests of Bandera and Stetsko, "[i]n July 1941 the Germans were finding certain services of the OUN useful: in particular OUN was able to set up a relatively loyal local civil administration to replace what the Soviets had established, and the OUN militias helped them implement their anti-Jewish policies."²⁶³ Indeed, during the "Ukrainian National Revolution," the OUN embarked on a years-long series of pogroms. "In Galicia and Volhynia alone, 153 pogroms have been counted for that summer."²⁶⁴ The SS assisted in these crimes, but "OUN-B was able to retain control of most of the local administration in Galicia and Volhynia."²⁶⁵ Alongside the OUN's attempt to create a state, at least in some capacities, namely antisemitic violence, inclusivists also feel that the OUN was (more or less) *acting* like a state.

Inclusivists raise an interesting question for Zaitsev and other proponents of ustashism: Is it really the case that the OUN was not fascist until the very moment it achieved a state, after which it immediately became fascist? If the answer is yes, then exclusivists have constructed a definition of fascism which perfectly excludes the OUN on the basis of a singular difference. Clearly, what is crucial is not some set of empirically "fascist" characteristics, but the decision

²⁶² Rossoliński-Liebe, Grzegorz. 2011. "The 'Ukrainian National Revolution' of 1941: Discourse and Practice of a Fascist Movement." *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12 (1): 83–114. 99.

²⁶³ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and Holocaust*, 209.

²⁶⁴ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and Holocaust*, 199.

²⁶⁵ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and Holocaust*, 215.

about whether something *should* be fascist, which is usually made before entering the debate (or is the reason for entering the debate in the first place).

Since fascists are never victims, inclusivists seek to prove the OUN's behavior upon seizing power was more reminiscent of a victimizer, thus demonstrating OUN fascism. To do this, inclusivists problematize notions that the OUN's primary motivation was righteous resistance to imperial victimization. In fact, Himka shows us that the OUN's ideology was itself imperial. "Some ideologues of OUN expressed clearer visions of creating a Ukrainian state and removing non-Ukrainians by resettlement, expulsion, and murder. Some of this was linked with imperialist ambitions. There were prominent nationalists who envisioned a Ukrainian empire ruling over peoples to the east."²⁶⁶ This sounds much more like national liberation, fascist-style, than national liberation, decolonial-style. As we have seen, the difference between national liberation and fascism, in terms of ethnic violence, has to do with the legitimacy of the targets selected. National liberation movements target victimizers, fascists target the victims. It is on the basis of the OUN's targets that Omer Bartov questions the legitimacy of their anti-imperial "resistance." "[F]rom which occupiers was the OUN trying to liberate Ukraine? Just as in the case of German Nazis, or French fascists, or the Hungarian Arrow Cross, or the Romanian Iron Guard... the occupiers were just as much from within as from without, namely the Jews."²⁶⁷ Because the OUN's targets were illegitimate, inclusivists do not accept the OUN's framing of their violence as "national liberation." Whatever it was, their "resistance" not a product of necessity.

²⁶⁶ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and Holocaust*, 153.

²⁶⁷ Bartov, Omer. "Fascism in Practice and Contemporary Politics." *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society* 7, no. 2 (2021): 176-184. 181.

Far from victims of circumstance, inclusivists from Mihail to the present see the OUN as fascists willing to join other fascists to fight for the (transnational) fascist cause. *Condemned* presents an exaggerated version of such ideas, but it is true that “Ukrainian nationalists welcomed a leader [Hitler] who wanted to destroy the Versailles system and redivide Europe according to the ethnic principle.”²⁶⁸ They did not *have* to do this, and anyone familiar with Hitler’s writing (which at least some of OUN was) was aware that he had no intention of giving the Ukrainians an independent state.²⁶⁹ At best, Ukraine would be a semi-autonomous region in a “totalitarian” empire, in other words, the same position from which they began the war. The only difference was that the OUN supported one form of totalitarianism, but not the other.

Like collaboration, violence too was not thrust upon the OUN during WWII, because “OUN engaged in terror throughout the 1930s.”²⁷⁰ Neither was antisemitism. In his own words, Stetsko “supported ‘the destruction of the Jews and the expedience of bringing German methods of exterminating Jewry to Ukraine, barring their assimilation and the like.’”²⁷¹ Stetsko’s genocidal sentiments, and the OUN’s behavior, would seem to make Kvit’s claims about the unknowable qualities of a future OUN government spurious, even ridiculous. Their genocidal activities were not a product of necessity, but an outgrowth of their (fascist) ideology.

On the grounds of their many similarities, Rossoliński-Liebe feels the OUN should be understood, not alongside anticolonial revolts, but in the context of other transnational fascist movements. It “ended up very similar to other East European fascist organizations: the Iron

²⁶⁸ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and Holocaust*, 130.

²⁶⁹ Dmytro Dontsov, while not a member of the OUN, was a fellow-traveler, and “[b]y 1926 he had already translated parts of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* into Ukrainian and had published them.” See Rossoliński-Liebe, *Bandera*, 78; Hitler desired a greatly expanded German *Reich*, citing as examples the territorial extent of the US, Russia, and China, as well as the French and British empires. He was explicit that Germany must expand eastward, towards “*Russia* and her vassal border states.” See Hitler, Adolf. 1943. *Mein Kampf*. Translated by Ralph Manheim. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 644, 654-655.

²⁷⁰ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and Holocaust*, 136.

²⁷¹ Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and Holocaust*, 238.

Guard in Romania, the Hlinka Party in Slovakia, the Arrow Cross Party in Hungary, and the Ustasha in Croatia.”²⁷² That exclusivists *also* believe the OUN was similar to such movements, but come to different conclusions (by creating a new term, no less), is yet another example of this debate’s normative character.

Anton Shekhovtsov echoes Rossoliński-Liebe’s view. “Taking into consideration the emerging consensus in ‘fascist studies’, which reflects the growing academic acceptance of the generic interpretation of fascism as a form of revolutionary ultranationalism, the ideology of the OUN can be considered fascist.”²⁷³ Unlike the D/SR’s VF then, the OUN *was* revolutionary. “[T]he OUN’s leaders, including Bandera, used... national revolution’ and ‘permanent revolution’ – to prepare a revolutionary act, take over power, and establish a fascist dictatorship.”²⁷⁴ Thus, in the OUN debate, exclusivists and inclusivists also seem to agree that both the OUN and fascists were revolutionary ultranationalists. That, overall, they still disagree, again reveals the political concerns which are really at stake here.

Alongside the OUN’s ideological (and political) connections with other interwar European fascisms, and their lack of connection with contemporary anti-imperialist movements (the latter point remains unaddressed by exclusivists), the inclusivist suggestion to understand the OUN as an instantiation of transnational fascism seem reasonable. However, there remains something to say for the alternative view.

If you were living in Ukraine, especially as a Ukrainian in east Ukraine, would you accept the “fascism” of the OUN, even if it was obvious? By doing so, you would be validating decades of Soviet and Russian propaganda, echoing the rhetoric, verbatim, of a country you are

²⁷² Rossoliński-Liebe, “Ukrainian National Revolution,” 90.

²⁷³ Shekhovtsov, Anton. 2011. “The Creeping Resurgence of the Ukrainian Radical Right? The Case of the Freedom Party.” *Europe-Asia Studies* 63 (2): 203–28. 208.

²⁷⁴ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Bandera*, 31.

currently at war with. It may sound polemical, but these are the political stakes beneath exclusivist and inclusivist arguments.

The Stakes of Exclusivism:

Like Gottfried, but unlike in previous debates, some exclusivists (like Motyl or Kvit) are explicitly sympathetic towards the OUN. One reason for this is that, for many Ukrainians, the OUN did become a representative of anti-imperial resistance.

Because romanticizing or expressing admiration for Bandera or the OUN-UPA was punishable, and anyone who did so in public could be accused of counter-revolutionary propaganda, the *Providnyk* [Bandera] became, over time, a symbol of resistance. Simultaneously every black spot on the image of the OUN-UPA and Bandera was whitewashed.²⁷⁵

Rather than a changed narrative after the fall of the USSR, Russian aggression towards Ukraine, rhetorical and physical, continues to ensure this pro-OUN narrative's popularity to this day.

Alongside “fascist” and “Nazi,” “Banderite” is used by Vladimir Putin's propagandists as a term of abuse... many Ukrainians mockingly describe themselves as ‘Banderites,’ using the term as a synonym for ‘nationalist’ or ‘freedom fighter.’²⁷⁶ While Bandera and the OUN committed heinous crimes, Motyl argues that “[n]o one regards the nationalists’ violence against Poles and Jews as laudable... few regard it as central to what Bandera and the nationalists represent: a rejection of all things Soviet, a repudiation of anti-Ukrainian slurs, and unconditional devotion to Ukrainian independence.”²⁷⁷ Motyl even believes “[w]hat Russian chauvinists had used as a term of opprobrium—Bandera—became a term of praise, much in the way that African Americans appropriated the ‘N word.’”²⁷⁸ Again, the centrality of victimhood is key. Not only are Ukrainians non-fascist, their relationship to fascism is similar to that between African

²⁷⁵ Rossoliński-Liebe, *Bandera*, 392.

²⁷⁶ Shkandrij, “National Democracy, OUN, Dontsovism,” 215.

²⁷⁷ Motyl, “Ukraine, Europe, Bandera,” 9.

²⁷⁸ Motyl, “Ukraine, Europe, Bandera,” 8.

Americans and a violent term of abuse which originated during chattel slavery (ultimate victimhood). Naturally, such polemical interpretations of Ukraine's positive post-Soviet reception of Bandera often elide more concrete political motivations.

Despite the OUN's crimes, many are hesitant to abandon or condemn a powerful nationalist symbol, even more so during war time, when national unity and identity are crucial. Given fascism's status as a political limit, *it would be extremely difficult to both admit the OUN's fascism and retain it as a national symbol*, at least if further integration into the West is desired. Thus, here, as in the previous two debates, fascism is being negotiated as a political limit. In our opening example Motyl, like Gottfried, not only contests a political limit, but seeks to impose another on his political adversaries.

The Stakes of Inclusivism:

We should make sure not to conflate good inclusivist scholarship with Soviet propaganda. The vast majority of inclusivist scholars have political motivations, but these are usually legitimate concerns about the far right; past, present, and future. Typically, this political concern is held by those on the left, but this is hardly the same as engaging in Soviet agitation. Certainly, those arguing that we should be wary of unbridled nationalism cannot be dismissed as Soviet propagandists. Nonetheless, the Soviet narrative looms large in these debates, and informs, if only in the minds of exclusivists, inclusivist arguments.

Today, in the Russian context, political limiting occurs at the top, and within a continuation of the Soviet "Great Patriotic War" narrative. One aspect of continued fascist aggression is the activities of Ukrainian nationalists in eastern Ukraine, where many ethnic Russians live. In 2019, when Ukraine implemented a policy which "requires that Ukrainian be used in most aspects of public life," official Russian discourse about Ukrainian fascism became

(even more) bellicose.²⁷⁹ In fact, for Putin, Russia must be *more* aggressive than was the USSR in the face of fascist threats. “The attempt to appease the aggressor ahead of the Great Patriotic War proved to be a mistake which came at a high cost for our people. In the first months after the hostilities broke out, we lost vast territories of strategic importance, as well as millions of lives.”²⁸⁰ To Putin, any violation of the rights of Russian nationals, real or fabricated, is fascism or Nazism. Once a political limit has been defied, drastic measures must be taken. Accordingly, Putin has used pre-existing limits on Ukrainian nationalism to augment his war’s legitimacy. In a speech on February 24, 2022, Putin declared “[t]he aggression our country is facing today directly shows that back in 1945, Nazism was defeated, but not eliminated. Russophobia, xenophobia, and nationalism have become weapons of revanchists in many European countries, in the Baltic states, and, unfortunately, in Ukraine.”²⁸¹ Any instantiation of fascism, determined by the crossing of fascism-as-a-political-limit, must be defeated by any means necessary, just like during the Great Patriotic War.

Hence the immediate importance of the OUN debate. Little media spin is needed to disseminate these ideas about rampant Ukrainian neo-Nazism among the Russian population, where new propaganda is layered atop of decades of similar propaganda. If Ukraine is a hive of fascists, ‘independence’ appears a spurious justification for genocidal killing. Furthermore, if the Ukrainians still idolize these fascists, such genocidal, anti-Russian killing remains a possibility in the future.

²⁷⁹ Denber, Rachel. 2022. “New Language Requirement Raises Concerns in Ukraine: The Law Needs Safeguards to Protect Minorities’ Language Rights.” *Human Rights Watch*, January 19, 2022, sec. Dispatches. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/01/19/new-language-requirement-raises-concerns-ukraine>.

²⁸⁰ Putin, Vladimir. 2022. “Address by the President of the Russian Federation.” Speech, The Kremlin, Moscow, February 24. <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843>.

²⁸¹ Putin, Vladimir. 2024. “Putin’s Speech at Gala Concert.” Speech presented at the Concert to mark the 80th anniversary of breaking the Nazi siege of Leningrad, St. Petersburg, January 27. <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/73335>.

The OUN debate proves that “fascism” functions similarly in the Soviet/post-Soviet and Western contexts; that is, as a political limit on certain nationalisms. Fascism functions this way in both contexts for a simple reason: the political discourse of both the Western and Eastern blocs were (and still are) shaped by the experience of WWII. For exclusivists like Gottfried, this meant a half-baked anti-fascist consensus, in which poorly-defined “fascism” became synonymous with evil. For inclusivists like Parenti and Graham, it meant a conciliatory understanding of fascism which falsely exculpated liberalism and downplayed the victimhood of interwar leftists. Each side is attempting to negotiate the post-WWII political limit on fascism for contemporary political reasons.

A comparative analysis of the political implications underlying fascism debates allows us to freshly engage some worn-out questions: Why are fascism debates occurring? How can they end? Finally, what is fascism?

Politics at the End of Liberalism:

Fascism debates persist because the much-maligned “end of history” did not come to pass. Especially (but far from exclusively) among academics, there was never a “total exhaustion of viable systemic alternatives to Western liberalism.”²⁸² To the contrary, we have seen scholars negotiating space for politics at the end of liberalism in real time. Some, like Graham, openly call for a new politics. Others wish to remove (what they see as) unfair associations from the historiographic record. Scholars who lean right do not want potential alternative politics limited by negative associations with “fascism” (Mussolini and/or Hitler). Scholars who lean left do not want to see all leftism hampered by associations with Stalin. Scholars on both sides would like to

²⁸² Fukuyama, Francis. “The End of History?” *The National Interest*, no. 16 (1989): 3–18. 3.

see their enemies circumscribed, as no political actor would permanently eschew an effective political limit. Until fascism stops functioning this way (unlikely, given the crimes it is associated with remain a part of living memory), scholarly discussions must first and foremost grapple with fascism as a political limit.

Given fascism's political relevance, the reader will inevitably find themselves in a fascism debate. My resolution aims to help said reader navigate the debate's fundamental deadlock, while still allowing them to (more) productively engage such situations.

Towards a Resolution:

All fascism debates have two resolutions. First, a coercive resolution: Like the Spanish and Soviet governments, we can attempt to establish official interpretations about "fascism." This means imposing a consensus definition (in general and/or for specific regimes/movements) from above. Such a draconian solution is of course undesirable. Further, it is unlikely to be effective. At the most it will limit public debates, and only temporarily, since no regime lasts forever. Hence the second (and really only) solution: We can understand "fascist" regimes/movements in a broader context, instead of in reference to Fascism and Nazism. In order to do this, of course, we must engage the question: What is fascism?

We should first recall Gilbert Allardyce: "Only individual things are real; everything abstracted from them, whether concepts or universals, exists solely in the mind. There is no such thing as fascism. There are only the men and movements that we call by that name."²⁸³ Allardyce reminds us that "fascism" as such does not exert itself on history. Speaking about fascism in this way elides the fact that what we are actually referring to is not "fascism," but whatever we have

²⁸³ Allardyce, Gilbert. 1979. "What Fascism Is Not: Thoughts on the Deflation of a Concept." *The American Historical Review* 84 (2): 367–88. 368.

decided “fascism” to be. This is a crucial difference. Given the weight of contemporary political concerns in these debates, decisions about what constitutes “fascism” are extremely fluid.

Outside of broad, indecisive traits like nationalism, militarism, and dictatorship, my analysis shows that the only thing academics actually agree on is that fascism is negative. Any further, and decisions about what “fascism” is are arbitrary at best, and politically motivated at worst.

The above does not make every definition equally acceptable. Historically speaking, if “fascism” is to have specific, empirical content, it was (or is) a radicalized form of Italian nationalism; or the sum total of similarities between Fascism and Nazism, and how this combination influenced Europe’s interwar right (and beyond).²⁸⁴ Though the first definition is historically defensible, it ignores the fact that Fascism and Nazism are inextricably intertwined, at least within contemporary consciousness. In the second definition, “fascism” is more similar to “totalitarianism” than to “communism” or “liberalism.” In other words, mostly useful as a heuristic construction.

I am not suggesting that we ignore the numerous similarities between specific regimes/movements and Fascism and/or Nazism. However, the latter two are our terminological points of reference for a primarily contemporary political (not empirical or historical) reason – their function as political limits. A comparison between some regime/movement on the one hand, and Fascism and/or Nazism on the other, might well be informative, but in no way proves the independent existence of “fascism” outside the confines of scholarly discussions. Unless we

²⁸⁴ During its initial phases, “fascism” was intimately tied to Italian nationalism. For example, Italy did not export fascism to Spain solely in the form of a universal ideology. Instead, much of what was being exported as “fascism” was Italian language, culture, literature, and so on. Certainly, an Italian fascist of the 1930s would not wish to distinguish fascism and Italian nationalism. Instead, the former was meant to be the perfection of the latter. See Albanese and Hierro. *Transnational Fascism*, 45.

seriously think Vladimir Putin and/or Donald Trump are brushing up on Mussolini and Hitler to sharpen their respective ideologies, then “fascism” is not an active force in history.

Scholarship has indeed suffered from fascism controversies. Behaving like Procrustes, hacking and sawing at past regimes/movements to fit them into an arbitrary conceptual category, sidelines genuine attempts to understand regimes/movements as they actually were, in favor of their relationship to another (contrived) ideology. The existence of terms like “semi-fascism” proves that we have prioritized “fascism” above concerns over accuracy or descriptiveness. Instead of categorizing things according to what they are, we categorize them based on their (sort-of) relationship to the definitionally challenged (but polemically useful) “fascism.” In fact, while “fascism” might draw people’s attention, it is a misleading (and stultifying) prism through which to interpret the authoritarian right in interwar Europe; even more so for regimes/movements elsewhere or later on.

Fascism (and Nazism) were both radicalized instantiations of a larger “authoritarian turn” in European politics, a regime/movement type which also includes the D/SR, Francoist Spain, and even the OUN.²⁸⁵ Calling this turn (or a segment of this turn) “fascist” may be instructive, but it is also a choice, not an empirical necessity. Other than time and place, “fascism” tells us no more about a regime than terms like “dictatorial corporatism” and/or “populist ultranationalism.” Thus, when possible, I eschew “fascism,” unless in reference to Mussolini, Hitler, or explicit fascist imitators like Oswald Mosley. Instead, when I want to condemn a regime/movement, I do so explicitly. Something does not have to be “fascist” for it to be unsavory or undesirable.

²⁸⁵ Kallis would strongly disagree with my contention that “fascism” is a subset of this turn, but he references an authoritarian “turn” and or “departure.” See Kallis, Aristotle. 2014. “The ‘Fascist Effect’: On the Dynamics of Political Hybridization in Inter-War Europe.” In *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe*, edited by António Costa Pinto and Aristotle Kallis, 13–41. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

While my resolution seeks to skirt the political implications of “fascism,” it does not do so arbitrarily. In no uncertain terms, this author understands fascism as dangerous. However, if we wish to root out and prevent mistakes made by fascism in the past, it is unclear that “fascism” is the best place to look in the present. By restricting our search for danger to interwar nationalism, we may be blinding ourselves to more pressing concerns.