

Also by António Costa Pinto

RULING ELITES AND DECISION-MAKING IN FASCIST-ERA DICTATORSHIPS

THE BLUE SHIRTS: Portuguese Fascism in Inter-war Europe

SALAZAR'S DICTATORSHIP AND EUROPEAN FASCISM: Problems of Interpretation

DEALING WITH THE LEGACY OF AUTHORITARIANISM (*co-edited with Leonardo Morlino*)

CHARISMA AND FASCISM IN INTERWAR EUROPE (*co-edited with Roger Eatwell and Stein U. Larsen*)

SOUTHERN EUROPE AND THE MAKING OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (*co-edited with Nuno Teixeira*)

WHO GOVERNS SOUTHERN EUROPE? REGIME CHANGE AND MINISTERIAL RECRUITMENT, 1850–2000 (*co-edited with Pedro Tavares de Almeida and Nancy Bermeo*)

Rethinking the Nature of Fascism

Comparative Perspectives

Edited by

António Costa Pinto

*Professor of Modern European History and Politics,
University of Lisbon, Portugal*

palgrave
macmillan



Editorial matter, selection, introduction and chapter 9
© António Costa Pinto 2011
All remaining chapters © their respective authors 2011
Foreword © Stanley G. Payne 2011

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No portion of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, Saffron House, 6-10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS.

Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The authors have asserted their rights to be identified as the authors of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 2011 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

ISBN 978-0-230-27295-8 hardback
ISBN 978-0-230-27296-5 paperback

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Rethinking the nature of fascism: comparative perspectives / edited by
António Costa Pinto.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-230-27296-5 (pbk.)

1. Fascism—Philosophy. I. Pinto, António Costa.

JC481.R464 2011

335.6—dc22

2010033957

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham and Eastbourne

Contents

<i>List of Tables and Figures</i>	vii
<i>Foreword</i> <i>Stanley G. Payne</i>	viii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xiii
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	xiv
1 Introduction: Fascism and the Other 'isms' <i>António Costa Pinto</i>	1
Part I Fascism and the Social Sciences	
2 Decomposition and Recomposition of Theories: How to Arrive at Useful Ideas Explaining Fascism <i>Stein U. Larsen</i>	13
3 Desperately Seeking 'Generic Fascism': Some Discordant Thoughts on the Academic Recycling of Indigenous Categories <i>Michel Dobry</i>	53
4 Fascism and Culture: A Mosse-Centric Meta-Narrative (or how Fascist Studies Reinvented the Wheel) <i>Roger Griffin</i>	85
Part II New Approaches	
5 Theories of Fascism: A Critique from the Perspective of Women's and Gender History <i>Kevin Passmore</i>	119
6 Fascism and Religion <i>John Pollard</i>	141
7 Ideology, Propaganda, Violence and the Rise of Fascism <i>Roger Eatwell</i>	165

8	Political Violence and Institutional Crisis in Interwar Southern Europe <i>Giulia Albanese</i>	186
9	Ruling Elites, Political Institutions and Decision-Making in Fascist-Era Dictatorships: Comparative Perspectives <i>António Costa Pinto</i>	197
10	Fascism, 'Licence' and Genocide: From the Chimera of Rebirth to the Authorization of Mass Murder <i>Aristotle Kallis</i>	227
11	Concluding Remarks <i>Adrian Lyttelton</i>	271
	<i>Index</i>	279

List of Tables and Figures

Tables

2.1	A synthesis of Gregor's analysis	30
9.1	Ministers' occupational background (%)	213
9.2	Political offices held by ministers (%)	214

Figures

2.1	The Tingsten law of social gravitation	20
2.2	The law party polarization and Nazi vote	22
2.3	Passing thresholds among fascist parties, three thresholds and one 'winning wave'	26

1

Introduction: Fascism and the Other '-isms'

António Costa Pinto

This book revisits the major themes of research into, and interpretation of, the nature of fascism that have been developed since the 1970s. European fascism continues to attract a considerable degree of attention, as the continuous publication on theme testifies. During the past 20 years the comparative study of fascism has concentrated increasingly on its ideological and cultural dimensions, at times becoming 'ideology-centred'. We may even say that the analysis of so-called 'generic fascism' has moved from a 'sociological' to a more 'political' perspective, giving both ideology and culture much more importance than was previously the case. On the other hand, this area has become more restricted in disciplinary terms, with historians clearly dominating over sociologists and political scientists.

When, in 1969, the British historian Stuart Woolf published, under the title *The Nature of Fascism*, a balance of the main research tendencies concerning fascism, the situation within the social sciences was very different; indeed, so much so that a simple description of his main headings highlights the difference.¹ The first part of the book's four parts (covering politics, society, economy and culture) was dominated by a blend of theories of totalitarianism and modernization; in the second some Marxist 'class' determinisms were very much present; the third part, which contained Tim Mason's brilliant essay 'The primacy of politics: politics and economics in National Socialist Germany', was much more nuanced; while the fourth part was dominated by George L. Mosse's pioneering 'Fascism and culture'. The division between historians and political scientists was as clear then as it is today; however, the main turning point of the last decades was, without doubt, the cultural turn in fascist studies, which has helped refine earlier approaches and inspired new work.

As Stuart Woolf recognized in the 1960s, 'the basic division undoubtedly lay between the historians and the social scientists'.² However, despite this, he also noted that 'at least in the study of fascism, history provides more than the raw material for the elaborated model-building of the sociologists and political scientists, while the historians can but openly acknowledge their debt to the insights of concepts suggested by the social scientists'.³

During the last decades, the historiography of fascism has integrated not only contributions from political science, but also the historical research that eliminated, for good, the 'para-Marxist' 'economicist' approach that was dominant during the 1970s, and which did not do justice to the many perspectives on the autonomy of ideology in political and cultural change. Of course, many of the changes are also limited to reflect the impact of new social science paradigms and the emergence of more culturalist interpretations. The 'ideology versus political praxis and institutions' debate amongst 'fascistologists'—a debate that has already achieved parochial proportions—is still very much present in the field, as we shall see below.

The culturalist 'new consensus' on generic fascism that Roger Griffin saw in the late 1990s 'left many historians cold', and some of the cleavages are still very much present, as we shall clearly see in this book.⁴ However, the emergence of new themes for research, such as that of symbolic and political mobilization, of violence and genocide, of women or of the relationship between fascism and religion, has been important. As Adrian Lyttelton notes in his conclusion, 'the greatest advance [in the last decades] has certainly come from taking Fascist values and ideology seriously'. New analytical models, such as those of gender or of 'political religion', have also enriched the most recent research and it is interesting to note that all these themes are absent in *The Nature of Fascism*.

Although historians dominate current research, it is likely they will continue to be influenced by other social science disciplines in the future. For example, Juan J. Linz may be the political scientist who has left the biggest mark on the historiography of fascism in recent decades, and Michael Mann's *Fascists* represents a welcome return from the best traditions of comparative historical sociology towards the analysis of fascism and its role in the crises and collapse of democracy.⁵

As Stein Larsen notes in the first chapter of this book, 'there are important aspects in the empirical development of fascism that are analytically interesting without having much to do with "fascism" as such. Therefore, we shall welcome students studying fascism who are

theoretically oriented towards other fields of study.' On the other hand, authoritarianism is again an important field of study, particularly within political science. After the so-called 'third wave' of democratization at the end of the twentieth century had significantly increased the number of democracies in the world, the survival of many of the dictatorships based both in the old communist world and in traditionalist and anti-communist North Africa, Asia and the Middle East, and the emergence of new dictatorial regimes, have had an important impact.

Taking as starting point the dictatorships that have emerged since the beginning of the twentieth century—mainly those that were institutionalized after 1945—social science literature has returned to the big question of the factors that led to the survival and downfall of the dictatorships and dictators, which the fascist regimes did not escape. These included the regimes' capacity to distribute resources, divisions within the power coalitions, the political institutions of the dictatorships and the cost-benefit analysis of the rebellions; classic themes of the rational choice approach finally invade the theme.⁶

As another '-ism' of ideologies and political regimes, comparison should not be confined just to phenomena labelled 'fascist' and, as we shall see below, the authors sometimes disagree both in theoretical and methodological terms, offering readers the chance to engage in the debate. As Stanley G. Payne notes in his foreword, 'in no other phenomenon of modern history has the issue of multiple "interpretations" received so much attention—as with fascism—a diversity of analysis that is likely long to continue'. Highlighting existing lacunae and suggesting new research routes, Payne claims that significant new achievements will depend on the results of noteworthy new research and on the willingness to work in the broadest comparative context.

* * *

This book is divided into two parts. The first part, 'Fascism and the Social Sciences', makes a global critical assessment of the interpretations of and research into fascism. The political scientists, Stein Larsen and Michel Dobry, are, each in their own fashion, critics of the 'genetic approach' and culturalism in fascist studies, stressing that fascism, just as any other subject being studied in the social sciences, needs theoretical and methodological approaches that are not so very different from those used in the study of other movements and political regimes.

Larsen, in his 'Decomposition and Recomposition of Theories: How to Arrive at Useful Ideas Explaining Fascism', provides us with an

excellent introduction into how fascism has been analysed within the social sciences, noting research models that have been used in the past and, especially, introducing us to a very Popperian direction for studies towards 'emergence' as an analytical concept. He writes, 'There are two reasons for the need for a comprehensive reorientation of research on comparative fascism. The first is the need to abandon the genetic approach and provide an opening for emergence thinking.' It is also very true that there are important aspects in the empirical development of fascism that are analytically interesting without having much to do with 'fascism' as such. Therefore, 'we shall welcome students studying fascism who are theoretically oriented towards other fields of study'. We must also encourage scholars of fascism to move beyond their traditional realm and work on comparable matters that may be theoretically relevant for obtaining an understanding of their 'terrain' in an explanation of fascism.

Dobry, in his chapter provocatively entitled 'Desperately Seeking "Generic Fascism": Some Discordant Thoughts on the Academic Recycling of Indigenous Categories', utilizes case studies on the debates surrounding French fascism to criticize a 'classificatory approach' that is so 'essentialist' that it separates fascism from all other movements and right-wing authoritarian regimes and blocks its analysis. Much of the debate over the existence or non-existence of fascism in France is dominated by this essentialist paradigm, which is based on 'a priori classification' to include and exclude from fascism many of the radical right movements of the interwar years and, based on this 'finality' perspective, to condition the outcome so that 'social conservatism translates, or may translate, into an authoritarian orientation which ultimately leads to the establishment of authoritarian regimes, while fascism on the other hand, is compelled by its very "nature" to adopt a "revolutionary" orientation, leading inevitably to the establishment of "totalitarian" systems'. Much of Dobry's chapter is dedicated to the deconstruction of this classificatory approach that continues even today, and which 'treats fascism as a species apart, endowed with a radically different "nature" or "essence" from that of other authoritarian movements, and more specifically movements of the radical, conservative or extreme right'.

The alternative for Dobry would be to 'bring the category or concept of fascism back home, that is, back to the situations or "contexts" in which political actors actually used it, back to the struggles in which they had to define others as well as define themselves': in other words, to 'think in relational terms', to use the comparative method seriously, leading to the 'methodological normalization of these phenomenon'.

Both Larsen and Dobry are critics of some of the dimensions that have characterized the debate over the nature of fascism, particularly that of the most recent 'cultural approach', which is well presented in the following essay. In fact, Roger Griffin's contribution, 'Fascism and Culture: A Mosse-Centric Meta-Narrative of how Fascist Studies Reinvented the Wheel', is perhaps the most interesting defence of the 'culturalism' that has dominated many recent studies of fascism. Beginning with George L. Mosse's pioneering chapter, 'Fascism and Culture', which appeared in Woolf's book, Griffin traces the long journey in the reassessment of the significance of 'ideology' and of 'culture' in the study of fascism, which have often been rejected or underestimated in comparative studies.

It may seem strange at the beginning of the twenty-first century that there are no twentieth-century European history manuals that do not stress the central role of the great '-ism' ideologies in the political mobilizations of the time; however, the truth is that this process was very gradual. The hegemony of some variants of Marxism within the social sciences was certainly responsible for part of this blockage, as was the extreme politicization of research in some national historiographies. However, a diffuse 'rational choice' *avant la lettre* certainly has its place.

Griffin, who has been an important author in the area since publishing his comparative study in 1991, provides a historiographic overview of this slow and tortuous journey, remaining in the company of Mosse's influence.⁷ He shows how 'comparative fascist studies underwent a transformation to the point where all but a few recidivist Marxists deny that at the heart of interwar fascism lay the revolutionary agenda of purging the existing nation of decadence and creating a new total culture'. While it is clear that it 'will continue to be historians who retain a profound scepticism about the culturalist approach', the truth is that this has finally entered full maturity as a heuristic approach.

The second part of the book introduces the new themes and analytical approaches that have marked recent years. Kevin Passmore's contribution, 'Theories of Fascism: A Critique from the Perspective of Women's and Gender History', takes seriously the challenge of the preceding chapters that 'we must break the link between categorization and explanation', with a model essay showing how the theorists of fascism must learn something from women's and gender history.

Through his critique of some of the dimensions of the 'political religion' approach to fascism, particularly those that 'use a gendered understanding of progress and mass psychology to make the political religion the core of fascism', Passmore seeks to prove that the ideology of fascism has no 'core', and that 'the history of fascism [is] played

out through the practices of a disunited movement, allying and opposing other movements in varying contexts'. He then tentatively suggests that women's and gender history—as exemplars of the historical method more generally—may help us conceptualize fascism differently, and indeed to rethink the notion of a 'theory' of fascism.

Independently of whether or not it is a form of 'political religion', fascism had to confront the dominant religions in Europe at the time, and John Pollard concentrates on some specific aspects of the interaction between fascism and religion that have been the subject of attention by historians in recent decades—the attitude of the leadership and membership of fascist movements towards religion, the ways in which fascist regimes engaged in processes of 'sacralizing politics' and the appeal of fascism to Christians: in particular, the phenomenon of 'clerical fascism'.

Whatever the beliefs of individual members and leaders, the major interwar fascist movements and regimes increasingly presented themselves as an alternative religion in order to give greater emotional appeal and force to their core ideas: the state and the nation in Italian Fascism and race in National Socialism. This process of 'sacralization of politics' is also discernible in 'lesser' fascisms, such as the Romanian Iron Guard/Legion of the Archangel Michael, which he also examines.

The two following contributions tackle different dimension of the relationship between fascism, ideology and violence. Roger Eatwell's 'Ideology, Propaganda, Violence and the Rise of Fascism', deals with fascism's ascension within two broad frameworks: he seeks to show fascist ideology was especially sophisticated in terms of its views concerning propaganda and mass persuasion, seeking to deploy a variety of other themes and selective appeals. Secondly, while fascists saw violence as an important part of their armoury in the quest for power, both ideological and tactical conceptions of violence owed more to rationality than nihilism or religious fanaticism. He takes examples from the two countries in which major fascist movements emerged—Germany and Italy—with brief comparisons with two countries in which fascism remained a relatively marginal political force—Britain and France—although, in the latter, fascism enjoyed a notable cultural presence, and France has even been viewed as the seedbed of fascist ideology. He concludes by stressing that 'fascism is better seen as a political rather than cultural movement [...] whose organization and tactics need to figure prominently in both ideological analyses of "the nature of fascism" and more concrete analyses of why fascism succeeded, and failed, in specific national contexts'.

Para-militarism, as Michael Mann stresses, is both a key fascist value and an organizational form, and in recent years the discussion on the brutalization of politics after the First World War has been a central theme in research on interwar Europe.⁸ This issue was highlighted for the first time by Mosse before being developed by other scholars. In these studies, the origins of the brutalization of politics was related to the psychological and social impact of the use of arms and of life in the trenches and with mass mobilization caused by war. These reflections had two very important effects: they reopened the discussion on political violence, and gave it a place in international historiography. They also gave impetus to the reconsideration of the relationship between the birth of fascism and the presence of the languages and practices of violence during the interwar period.

Guilia Albanese's contribution, 'Political Violence and Institutional Crisis in Interwar Southern Europe', analyses the relationship between the development of various kinds of political violence, the spread of discourses favouring dictatorship and the crisis and fall of the so-called liberal institutions, using Italy, Spain and Portugal during the 1920s as case studies. In his introduction to *European Fascism*, Stuart Woolf identified a distinction between the fascisms of the 1920s and 1930s that still needs to be developed, and studying these three experiences of political violence and fascist regimes can fill the gap by analysing how political violence linked these two phases.

In the following chapter, 'Ruling Elites, Political Institutions and Decision-Making in Fascist-Era Dictatorships: Comparative Perspectives', the editor of this book explores an underdeveloped area in the study of fascism: the structure of power. The old and rich tradition of elite studies can tell us much about the structure and operation of political power in the dictatorships that were associated with fascism, whether through the characterization of the socio-professional structure or by the modes of political elite recruitment that express the extent of its rupture and/or continuity with the liberal regime, the type of leadership and the relative power of the political institutions in the new dictatorial system. Analysing four regimes associated with fascism (Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, Franco's Spain, and Salazar's Portugal) from this perspective, the chapter investigates the dictator-cabinet-single party triarchy from a comparative perspective, concentrating mainly on the changes in the locus of decision-making power, to conclude that the most appropriate explanatory hypothesis for the variations within those dictatorships that have been associated with fascism is the presence or absence of an independent fascist party during the period of transition to a dictatorial

regime and, once the regime is institutionalized, the role of the fascists in the single party.

In the last essay, 'Fascism, "Licence" and Genocide: from the Chimera of Rebirth to the Authorization of Mass Murder', Aristotle Kallis deals with the complex relation between fascism and genocide. He initially asks if it is a simple coincidence that the escalation, radicalization, and extension of aggressive 'eliminationism' in interwar Europe unfolded in tandem with the rise and diffusion of fascism? His main thesis is that 'certain ideological and political facets of what we have come to associate with the concept of fascism did facilitate, unleash and radicalize the elimination of particular "others" in the particular circumstances of interwar and Second World War Europe. Yet, this happened only where a certain potential for elimination against such particular "others" already existed, be that in the form of cultural traditions, collective prejudices, and/or recent memories. This was the absolute limit to fascist agency, whether ideological, political or both.'

Kallis suggests three ways in which interwar fascism entered the process and made a crucial contribution to it. The first pertains to the long-term relevance of fascism to the evolution of nationalist debates and identity-building processes in each community. The second dimension of fascist agency rests on its nationalist discourses across the continent, nurturing and radicalizing the exclusionary lines *vis-à-vis* particular 'contestant others'. The third and final form of fascist agency refers again to legitimizing elimination, but on a far more concrete, radical and action-oriented basis. If generic fascist ideology gave intellectual ammunition to extreme utopias inherent in nation-statism, then Nazi Germany in particular provided a powerful model for the systematic elimination of the 'other(s)' on a comprehensive scale and in a lethally systematic, effective way. Nazi agency was both direct and oblique—unequivocally and directly authorizing eliminationist violence, then spearheading it, but also allowing it to happen or evolve by stating its *a priori* benevolent indifference.

Genocides will always need aggressive majorities mesmerized by utopias of wholeness and purity and imbued with allegedly justified hatred against some other group in their midst, but they only happen when, in specific historical circumstances, existential hatred and then violence appear not just necessary but also permissible as means to a seemingly desirable end—in this case, a perverse utopia of a national community living without 'others', in full and uncontested sovereignty.

In his conclusion, Adrian Lyttelton notes that 'rather than resting within the bounds of a new consensus, historians should work towards

a new, provisional synthesis which succeeds in integrating the cultural and ideological approach with the study of fascism as a new, emergent system of power, and a new sociological approach which studies the reception and conditioning of fascism by its host societies, while accepting that fascist movements were active and autonomous agents of change'. This is also the course this book suggests.

Notes

1. I have used the American edition, S. Woolf (ed.), *The Nature of Fascism*, New York, 1969.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
4. See Roger Eatwell's chapter (Ch. 7).
5. See J. J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, Boulder, 2000; and M. Mann, *Fascists*, Cambridge, 2004.
6. See, for example, J. Gandhi, *Political Institutions under Dictatorships*, Cambridge, 2008.
7. R. Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, London, 1991.
8. M. Mann, *Fascists*, Cambridge, 2004.