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Q1(d)

Mention the difference between Italian and German brands of fascism

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · PSIR GS 1 · 10 marks · Political Theory

Political Theory: meaning and approaches.

Core demand of the question

- Define fascism as a family of movements
- Distinguish the Italian brand under Mussolini from the German National Socialist brand
- Use **Gentile**, corporatism, race, and war as markers
- Avoid reducing both to a single slogan

Revision summary

Fascism is a genus of revolutionary right-wing mass movements hostile to liberal parliament and to Marxism.

Italian Fascism under Mussolini and **Gentile** exalted the ethical state, corporatism, and Roman imperial myth.

Race was not its original core, though racial laws arrived in 1938 under German pressure.

German National Socialism made biological antisemitism, Gleichschaltung, and genocidal war the centre of the regime.

Griffin's palingenetic ultranationalism covers both; Paxton and Arendt help explain why the German brand became totalitarian in a harsher sense.

Introduction

- **Fascism is a revolutionary right-wing family:** mass mobilisation, a cult of the leader, hostility to liberal parliament and to Marxist class war, and the worship of the nation as an organism. **Stanley Payne**, **Roger Griffin**, and **Robert Paxton** treat it as a genus. The Italian and German brands are the two type-species, and they are not twins.

Body**Italian Fascism**

Benito Mussolini's movement rose in a recently unified Italy, among veterans, nationalists, and a weak liberal state. **Giovanni Gentile** supplied actualism: the state as the true ethical reality, the individual complete only inside it. The 1932 Doctrine of Fascism, issued under Mussolini's name, rejected both socialism and laissez-faire. Corporatism would organise capital and labour in state-supervised syndicates. The myth was **Romanita**, the new Rome, and later empire in Ethiopia.

Race was secondary at first. Italy persecuted enemies, invaded, and issued racial laws in 1938 under German pressure, but it did not begin as a biological world-view. The monarchy and the

Church survived until the Salò collapse. Violence was squadrist and imperial, not industrial genocide as the original core.

German National Socialism

Adolf Hitler's National Socialism was built on völkisch antisemitism and a racial hierarchy with Jews as the existential enemy. **Gleichschaltung** coordinated party and state. War in the east was annihilation, with the **Holocaust** as policy. **Hannah Arendt** analysed this as ideology plus terror.

Italian doctrine exalted the ethical state; Nazi practice exalted race and Lebensraum. Both crushed labour and the left and used Griffin's palingenetic myth of rebirth. Biological racism and genocide are the decisive German difference.

Flow diagram

Fascist genus -> Italian Fascism
Fascist genus -> German Nazism
Italian Fascism -> Ethical state / Gentile
Italian Fascism -> Corporatism and empire
German Nazism -> Race and Lebensraum
German Nazism -> Terror and genocide

Conclusion

Italian Fascism was statolatry, corporatism, and imperial nationalism with a later racial overlay. German Nazism was racial totalitarianism and genocidal war. They share the fascist genus - leader, mass, anti-liberalism, anti-Marxism - and they must still be distinguished, or the word fascism loses its edge.

Facts & figures

Gentile

The philosopher of actualism presented the Fascist state as the ethical realisation of the individual, a doctrine Mussolini publicised in 1932.

Racial laws, 1938

Italy issued antisemitic laws late relative to Nazi Germany, showing that biological racism was imported more than foundational in early Fascism.

Holocaust

Nazi policy of industrial genocide has no Italian Fascist equivalent as the original programme, which is the hardest line between the two brands.