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Roger Griffin, Werner Loh, Andreas Umland, eds.. *Fascism Past and Present, West and East: An International Debate on Concepts and Cases in the Comparative Study of the Extreme Right*. Stuttgart: Ibidem Verlag, 2006. 510 pp. $43.90, paper, ISBN 978-3-89821-674-6.

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Fascism Past and Present, *West and East* invites readers to take part in an international debate with thirty-one German- and English-speaking experts on fascism. On the surface, some of the key questions that frame the discussion are familiar, long-discussed ones: is German National Socialism best studied as a unique phenomenon or a form of fascism? Is fascism a strictly European phenomenon, confined to the period between 1918 and 1945, or are today's extreme right groups also "fascist"? But the ensuing discussion is hardly a simple revisiting of past questions and debates. Rather, the volume takes important steps in reshaping the study of fascism and in suggesting directions for future research. Significantly, the editors aim to examine fascism in the context of Soviet and post-Soviet studies. As Andreas Umland notes in the introduction, "The study of contemporary mainstream (and not only fringe) politics in Russia is a setting where 'fascism' is still a topical, and not only academic matter" and where fascism is "a concept of societal concern" (p. 22). In addition, Umland points to the significance of Germany as the place of publication, where studies of "totalitarianism" have branched into the discipline of "extremism studies" (p. 23). The volume's goals, then, are not only to rethink definitions of fascism but also to break down traditional divides of scholarship between West and East.

This challenging work--with over fifty short essays by leading scholars of fascism--features the arguments of Roger Griffin, beginning with his essay, which introduces the agenda for the rest of the volume (section 1), followed by critiques of Griffin (section 2),[1] his response to criticisms (section 3), a second round of critiques (section 4), and Griffin's final response (section 5). (The original discussion represented in this piece took place in *Erwägen Wissen Ethik* in 2004-2005). The Griffin article and discussion are followed by a secondary debate on the "fascism" of Russian political activist Aleksandr Dugin and an afterword by Walter Laqueur.

In this piece, "Fascism's New Faces (and Facelessness) in the 'Post-Fascist' Epoch," Griffin's anal-

ysis takes on three main tasks: to offer a "definitional core" of fascism that reflects a "new consensus" of "Anglophone fascist studies" (p. 29); to build a case, elaborated in his longer publications, [2] for the comparative study of fascism, thereby both rethinking the uniqueness of Nazism and examining the nature of post-1945 global fascist "variants" (p. 29); and to challenge German academics in particular who, according to Griffin, continue to resist comparative studies of fascism. Echoing Umland's introductory concerns, Griffin wants to draw attention to "the threat that the extreme right still poses to democracy" (p. 35).

In brief, Griffin offers the following "heuristic tool" for the comparative study of fascism: "fascism is a political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism" (p. 41). The very vagueness of "national rebirth," Griffin argues, encompasses the "conceptual fuzziness at the ideological core of fascism" (p. 44), which has been seen as both revolutionary and reactionary. Moreover, focusing on "national rebirth" as a key element of interwar fascism allows scholars to trace the development of fascism after World War II and to evaluate how fascist movements adapted to a post-1945 environment where liberal democracy had defeated and delegitimized fascism.

Recent manifestations of fascism, such as the European New Right and National Bolshevism, Griffin argues, have adapted to the post-1945 world in at least three significant ways. First, calls for "national rebirth" have become globalized, based less on the nation than on Western superiority or "white supremacy" (p. 51). Second, instead of using established political channels and processes to gain influence, recent fascists "have vacated the party-political space" and now focus more on "the battle for minds" (p. 51). Third, in contrast to the leader-centered, though still amorphous, structure of interwar fascist groups, today's global fascist movements lack centrality and are divided into small groups, resulting in "groupuscularization" and a "rhizomic" organizational structure (pp. 54-55). As he makes these distinctions between fascism past and present, however, Griffin emphasizes that adaptations of the New Right are not a complete departure from interwar fascism, but indicate instead an evolution of fascism: "Far from fading away to insignificance, fascism has displayed a vigorous Darwinian capacity for creative mutation" (p. 56). In sum, focusing on the "mythic core" of interwar fascism rather than on structural or stylistic characteristics such as the leader cult or militarism not only opens up discussions of fascism to include Nazism, it allows the recognition of an existing fascist threat as well.

Although Griffin finds general support in the material that follows, in particular regarding his call for the comparative study of fascism and inclusion of Nazism in a more general model (see, for example, the still-critical endorsements by Siegfried Jäger and Alfred Schobert, Philip J. Morgan, and Kevin Passmore), both German and Anglophone scholars are reluctant to accept Griffin's "definitional core." Griffin concludes from the responses that "the argument ... has been rejected by a fairly representative sample of contemporary academics" (p. 246). David Baker and Ernst Nolte, among others, note that Griffin's model of "national rebirth" on its own is too abstract to act as a methodological tool (p. 73) without application to specific cases, and, moreover, can be applied just as well to conservative, non-fascist as well as leftist groups; Klaus Holz and Jan Weygand call his ascription of the "myth of national rebirth" specifically to fascist ideologies "ahistorical" and "empirically false" (pp. 123-124). Alexander de Grand argues that, above all, "fascism offered a compelling myth of ***unity*** more than it did of national rebirth" (p. 95). Jeffrey M. Bale contends, referencing the work of Zeev Sternhell, that the definitional focus on the "myth of national rebirth" is "incomplete," and that Griffin underesti-

mates the role of the Left in shaping fascism (p. 78).

James Gregor contributes one of the most critical assessments of Griffin's definition, finding objections on several grounds: the concept of "populist ultranationalism" could just as well be applied to the "Marxist" Khmer Rouge, yet Griffin would agree they were not "fascist" (pp. 118, 311); ultranationalism does not adequately account for Nazism and Hitler's racism (not nationalism); "fascism" is too quickly applied to post-1945 extremist groups, especially if one considers that the leaders do not see themselves as fascist. Other respondents are also wary of extending the definitional core to recent extremism, objecting to the overly abstract idea of "groupuscularization" that could describe groups in the interwar period (for example, Jeffrey Bale; Roger Eatwell, and Wolfgang Wippermann). Alexander de Grand points to the contradiction in Griffin's argument that internationalism has replaced nationalism, which then leads to questions the applicability of an interwar fascist model to the postwar context.

After reflecting on the comments of the participants in both the first and second rounds, Griffin offers thoughtful responses and reevaluations that are somewhat conciliatory. He suggests that perhaps he is guilty of "biting off more than I could chew" (p. 244). In particular, he softens his criticism of German scholarship and his depiction of an Anglophone-German divide. In response to accusations of generalization and essentialism, Griffin notes that "generic terms" are the starting point of analysis, and that the "definitional minimum" is not sufficient "without soaking oneself in as many case-studies of the phenomenon as possible" (p. 258). Griffin does modify his theses through the discussions, as do his critics. He concedes, for example, that some concepts in his definition require precision; in the future, he would address the significance of both "myth" and "rational projects" in fascist ideology (p. 434). Nevertheless, Griffin stands by his main arguments: that fascism and Nazism should be considered manifestations of a larger generic phenomenon, and share a desire for "national rebirth," and that notwithstanding differences in organizational structure, fascism has adapted to the post-1945 environment and, in order to understand this mutation, scholars would do well to refer to the experiences of interwar fascism and the conditions that contributed to its emergence.

The apparent impossibility of Griffin and his most severe critics to come to a definitive consensus should not detract from the rich contribution this innovative volume makes to the study of fascism and to European and comparative history. Together, the exchanges advance the study of fascism by pointing to ways in which scholars may benefit from considering fascism together, as Griffin suggests, as both a "political generic concept" and "as a historical term" (p. 277). The participants represent different areas of expertise on fascism and the extreme right, and their discussions suggest intriguing areas for future research, such as the relationship between nationalism and racism--a distinction raised in particular by Gregor.

Perhaps the most significant contribution the volume makes is in shifting common approaches to European and comparative history. In organizing an international forum for the discussion of fascism, the editors challenge Cold War divisions--both the geographic divide between the "West" and "the rest" and the temporal divide of "1945 and after" that regrettably continue to inform much scholarship. This shift would have been even stronger if discussion of the "East" could have been more evenly woven through the work; the most direct engagement now appears as a secondary debate between Andreas Umland and A. James Gregor on Aleksandr Dugin at the end of the book.

This book will be a valuable resource for scholars of fascism in research and for teachers seeking to provide students a glimpse into aca-

demic discourse. In his afterword, Walter Laqueur questions how significant the concept of fascism will be for future generations of scholars. The forum in ***Fascism Past and Present, West and East***, however, suggests that debates on fascism will continue to have much value in advancing our understanding of global extremism, as well as in rethinking comparative studies of the past and present.

Notes

[1]. The respondents include the leading scholars of the field, both junior and senior: David Baker, Jeffrey M. Bale, Tamir Bar-On, Alexander De Grand, Martin Durham, Roger Eatwell, Peter Fritzsche, A. James Gregor, Klaus Holz and Jan Weyand, Siegfried Jäger and Alfred Schobert, Aristotle A. Kallis, Melitta Konopka, Bärbel Meurer, Philip Morgan, Ernst Nolte, Kevin Passmore, Stanley G. Payne, Friedrich Pohlmann, Karin Priester, Sven Reichardt, David D. Roberts, Albert Scherr, Robert J. Soucy, Mario Sznajder, Andreas Umland, Leonard Weinberg, and Wolfgang Wippermann.

[2]. See, for example, Roger Griffin, ***The Nature of Fascism*** (New York: St.Martin's, 1991); Griffin, ed., ***Fascism*** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Griffin, ed., ***International Fascism: Theories, Causes, and the New Consensus*** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). His most recent publication is ***Modernism and Fascism: A Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*** (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).