

## **Communism versus Fascism versus Democracy**

While communism is a system based around a theory of economic equality and advocates for a classless society, fascism is a nationalistic, top-down system with rigid class roles that is ruled by an all-powerful dictator. Both communism and fascism originated in Europe and gained popularity in the early to mid 20th century.

### **What are Communism and Fascism?**

As a socioeconomic system, communism considers all property to be communal — that is, owned by the community or by the state. This system also stresses the importance of a "classless" society, where there are no differences between the wealthy and the working classes, between men and women, or between races. While Marxist communism is the most common form of communism, there is also non-Marxist communism.

Contrary to communism's goal of a classless society, fascism upholds a strict class structure, ensuring that every member of society has a specific, unchangeable role. Often in fascist societies women are restricted to the home and child-rearing, and a certain racial or ethnic group is considered superior, with national and ethnic unity encouraged at the expense of individuality and diversity. For example, Hitler's fascist regime glorified the Aryan race and called for the extermination of Jews, Gypsies, and Poles during World War II. Moreover, other groups with actual or perceived differences, including homosexuals, the disabled, and communists, were targeted during the Holocaust.

## Political System

Both fascism and communism are against the democratic process but with some differences. Fascism looks down upon parliamentary democracy.

Fascist leaders like Hitler and Mussolini participated in electoral politics before coming to power. But after seizing power, fascist leaders tended to abolish political parties, oppose universal suffrage and became dictators and Rulers for life.

## Economic System

Communism is based on the equal distribution of wealth. The tenet of Marxian communism was "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need." Everyone in society receives an equal share of the benefits derived from labor, e.g., food and money. In order to ensure that everyone receives an equal amount, all means of production are controlled by the state.

Fascism allows for private enterprise, but its economic system is focused entirely on strengthening and glorifying the state. Both Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany aimed for self-sufficiency, so that each country could survive entirely without trade with other nations. *See fascist corporatism.*

Democratic and communist political systems are based on different ideological principles. Although superficially they seem to share the "power to the people" philosophy, in practice the two systems of government structure the economic and political fabric of society in markedly different ways.

In the economic sphere, communism calls for the government to take control of all the capital and industry in the country in an

effort to get rid of economic inequality. On the other hand, a democracy respects individuals' right to own property and means of production.

The political landscape is also very different in a democracy vs. under communism. In a democratic society people are free to create their own political parties and contest in elections, which are free of coercion and fair to all contestants. In a communist society, however, the government is controlled by one political party and political dissent is not tolerated.

Communism is traced back to 16th century English writer Thomas More, who described a society based on common ownership of property in his book Utopia. It first emerged as a political doctrine after the French Revolution, when Francois Noel Babeuf talked of the desirability of common ownership of land and total equality among citizens. Modern communism emerged from the industrial revolution, when Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels published the Communist Manifesto.

Democracy originated in Athens in ancient Greece. The first democracy was established in 508-7 BC. Athenians were randomly selected to fill government administrative and judicial offices, and the legislative assembly was made up of all Athenian citizens, who had a right to speak and vote. However, this excluded women, slaves, foreigners and anyone under the age of 20.