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American Democracy Being Threatened by “Isms”

“Isms” are a widely discussed topic as it provides us with many different ideologies of our society. They are seen as harmful threats used against individuals and groups almost every day. With this in mind, there has to be one that constitutes more of a threat to a democratic society as a whole. Going back to why this discussion came about, is because of the movie, “Where to Invade Next”. Michael Moore travels to Europe in order to find “secrets” to bring back to America. One place being Norway, where they described how they stay together, and take care of Norway, and that way it makes more of a democracy (Moore). Being together is what makes a democracy and cannot be successful if such “isms” exist and occur. All “isms” pose a threat against American democracy; however, fascism poses the most significant threat, holding that it separates equality, it has a bad historical background, and is brought up through a negative thought process.

First, an unknown author determined 13 principles of democracy, which has been thought to exist in order to have a democratic government. The one most known and the one I am going to look at, is equality. The author wrote, “Equality means that all individuals are valued equally, have equal opportunities, and may not be discriminated against because of their race, religion, ethnic group, gender or sexual orientation” (principles). This principle is emphasized greatly throughout democratic societies. All “isms” go against this one principle, especially the most popular ones. As described in an article about the relationships between the isms, racism, sexism, classism, ableism, and ageism all are linked because they are negative with a purpose to maintain control and power (relationship). The point of “isms” in general is to separate individuals, and discriminate against those groups in order to gain power, and that contradicts the equality principle in democracy. With characteristics to democracy, there comes characteristics to fascism. Most prominently is, rampant sexism. Described, “The governments of fascist nations tend to be almost exclusively male-dominated” (The). Not only does fascism itself destroy democracy, but it also includes sexism as one of its characteristics.

Fascism has been around for centuries, dating back to Hitler, Mussolini, and many other European rulers. Three authors composed three different books, separately explaining fascism politically, socially, and ideologically. Robert Paxton’s *The Anatomy of Fascism* provides information historically goes back into French fascism. He wrote that individual fascist movements arose and took power, but he still pointed out how long-term shifts in fundamental political, social and economic structures interacted with the actions and choices of the political actors, explaining the development and fate of fascism (Berman). Also written, was how the democracies were coming through as weak, inefficient, and corrupt, with little inspiration, then leading to a world of fascism (Berman). Looking for a change, they found one, seeming right at the time, and helping their cause. Their were many more historical structures happening that provided great soil for fascism to grow from. Today, we are trying to fix that soil, and maintain a democratic society, and fascism is now growing out like a weed. Michael Mann takes a different approach at fascism, where you must understand its social base. Many of the fascists were how they were because they had participated in the First World War (Berman). Which happens to be one of the structures from Robert Paxton’s theory. The last author, Richard Wolin, interprets fascism as an intellectual phenomenon. It states, “Particularly after the First World War, Wolin notes, such ideas spread widely and chipped away at liberal democracy’s support and legitimacy” (Berman). The challenge we now face today is to eliminate the roots of fascism in Europe, but no matter the case they will always be rooted under our soil.

Contradicting the point that fascism threatens American democracy, Brian Frydenborg, believes that there can be a “democratic fascism”. To believe this, Frydenborg says that it is similar to the term “democratic socialism” brought up by Bernie Sanders. As this term differs from the forms of socialism yet is far less “socialist” than many of those, much like “democratic fascism”. Brian Frydenborg explains how fascism in Europe experienced a rebirth, it would be shaped by new circumstances, and not be “in its original form” of the fascism arising before WW2 (Frydenborg). Frydenborg also mentions, “Unlike fascist movements in the past-fascism in the United States would not use violence as a major vehicle to its power, but would, rather, primarily come to power through using media and twisting the concept of news”. He provides a good claim to his thoughts, yet, I believe that under the wrong person, the power can be taken out of hand, and become a more violent fascism, unlike Bernie Sanders’ “democratic socialism”.

To go against Frydenborg, I have looked into how fascism and democracy both work in the mind. Charny conducted a study of the brain, and discovered that fascism and democracy both have different patterns of behavior. The two of them have a gap that needs to be filled. He describes how democracy and fascism arose out of basic human needs at two different stages of development. Charny explains, “The fascist paradigm is a model for attempting to solve existential anxieties that trouble all human beings”. In contrast, a democratic mind, according to Charny, “ recognizes that what life is all about, first of all, is the sanctity of human life. It takes an overriding position of caring for life and the opportunity for life as the definitive prime principle”. Therapy is a believed way to life one self out of insecurity and to correct fascist-type rigidities (Broad). Meaning, that a bridge can be built over the gap between the two by therapy. Therefore, this breaks any connection stated by Brian Frydenborg, as Charny had analyzed case studies from his therapeutic career, differentiating democracy and fascism all together.

Fascism can now be seen as the main threat to American democracy, because of the separation of equality, the bad historical background, and the negative thought process. Democracy is the most known to be as “equal” and all “isms” and mostly fascism weaken that characteristic. Europe had been through a bad structures and it resulted in fascism, which seemed right at the time. Finally, fascism and democracy have found the bridge to their gap in the mind: therapy, deterring all other thoughts of them being used at the same time.

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