SOFTWARE & TECH

Liberal Fascism The Secret History Of The American Left

PUBLISHED
November 25, 2026

REFERENCE
#1795581392775688

Introduction: Redefining the Political Spectrum

The phrase "Liberal Fascism The Secret History Of The American Left" might strike many readers as an oxymoron. We are conditioned to think of fascism as a right-wing phenomenon, an extremist ideology associated with jackboots, Nazi rallies, and authoritarian nationalism. However, the central thesis of Jonah Goldberg's provocative and widely debated book, *Liberal Fascism: The Secret History of the American Left from Mussolini to the Politics of Change and Meaning*, argues that the roots of fascism are not on the right at all, but deeply embedded in the progressive, leftist movements of the early 20th century.

To understand this argument, we must first set aside our modern understanding of the political spectrum. The traditional left-right divide—with communism on the far left and fascism on the far right—is relatively modern and, according to this line of thought, misleading. Goldberg contends that both communism and fascism share a common intellectual parent: the progressive belief in the power of the state to engineer a perfect society. Rather than being polar opposites, they are rival totalitarian brothers fighting over the same territory. This article explores the core concepts of *Liberal Fascism: The Secret History of the American Left*, examining its historical evidence, its most controversial claims, and its enduring relevance in understanding modern American politics.

What Is "Liberal Fascism"? Unpacking the Central Thesis

Goldberg does not argue that modern American liberals are fascists in the traditional sense of wearing brown shirts or running concentration camps. Instead, he uses the term "liberal fascism" to describe a specific strain of political thought that values the collective good over individual liberty, often using the power of the state to enforce social, economic, and even biological outcomes. The key is the definition of "fascism" itself. Goldberg draws heavily from the Italian philosopher Giovanni Gentile, the intellectual father of Italian Fascism, who defined fascism as the merger of "the state and the individual" into a single entity.

The State as a Moral Arbiter

The book argues that the core of fascism is not necessarily racism or militarism (though those can be components), but the belief that the state has a moral duty to shape the citizenry. This includes controlling the economy, regulating personal behavior for the "public good," and promoting a quasi-religious devotion to the nation or the collective. In this framework, early 20th-century progressives in America, such as Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt, shared many of these core beliefs. They saw the state not as a limited umpire but as a dynamic, positive force for social transformation.

This perspective challenges the standard narrative that associates fascism exclusively with Hitler and Mussolini. Instead, *Liberal Fascism: The Secret History of the American Left*positions these dictators as products of the

same intellectual currents that produced the American Progressive Era. The book argues that the American Left, in its quest for social justice and economic equality, often adopted the very tools of social control that defined European fascism.

The Progressive Roots of Fascism: From Woodrow Wilson to Mussolini

One of the most startling claims in the book is the close intellectual relationship between American Progressivism and Italian Fascism. Goldberg provides extensive documentation showing that early American progressives admired Benito Mussolini. They saw him not as a brutal dictator but as a dynamic, efficient leader who was modernizing Italy and breaking the power of backward-looking elites.

Figures like the journalist Lincoln Steffens famously declared after meeting Mussolini: "I have seen the future, and it works." This admiration was mutual; Mussolini himself was an admirer of American progressivism, particularly the efficiency of Theodore Roosevelt and the social engineering of Woodrow Wilson. The point is not that these figures were morally equivalent, but that they shared a common philosophical toolkit: a belief in positivism, the rule of experts, the transformation of human nature through social policy, and a suspicion of classical liberal individualism.

Eugenics: The Progressive Science

Perhaps the most damning evidence presented in *Liberal Fascism The Secret History Of The American Left* is the history of eugenics. The book demonstrates that eugenics was not a right-wing or Nazi invention; it was a pet project of the American progressive Left. Leading progressives, including Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger, Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., and presidents like Theodore Roosevelt, were avid supporters of eugenics. They believed that science could and should be used to "improve" the human race.

The goal of eugenics was to breed a better society by encouraging the "fit" to reproduce and preventing the "unfit" from doing so. This included forced sterilizations of criminals, the mentally ill, and the poor—policies endorsed by the American progressive establishment long before the Nazis adopted them. The Nazis, in fact, looked to American eugenics laws as a model for their own racial hygiene laws. This is a crucial part of the "secret history" that the book seeks to uncover: the idea that some of the most illiberal policies of the 20th century were born not from conservative traditions but from the progressive passion for social engineering.

The New Deal: Saving Capitalism or Embracing Fascism?

The book also turns its attention to the most sacred cow of the American Left: the New Deal of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. While FDR is revered as the savior of American capitalism and democracy, Goldberg argues that the New Deal contained deeply troubling elements that mirrored the economic policies of fascist Italy.

The National Recovery Administration (NRA), for example, was a massive experiment in corporatism. Instead of free market competition, the NRA organized industries into cartels, setting prices and wages with government approval. This model of "managed capitalism" was strikingly similar to the corporatist system Mussolini used to control the Italian economy. The book does not argue that FDR was a fascist, but it suggests that the intellectual justification for the New Deal came from the same progressive wellspring that saw the state as the central driver of the economy and society.

The Cult of the State and the Leader

Furthermore, *Liberal Fascism: The Secret History of the American Left* examines the quasi-religious fervor that surrounded FDR and his policies. The worship of the "Leader" (or "Führerprinzip") is a hallmark of fascism. While FDR was a democrat, the book highlights the cult of personality that surrounded him—the constant radio addresses, the adoration of the masses, and the branding of government programs with his initials (CCC, WPA, etc.) as a form of state propaganda. The phrase "Happy Days Are Here Again" and the near-religious devotion

to the President suggested a movement that, while not totalitarian, shared certain psychological and aesthetic characteristics with European fascism.

The Critique: A Selective and Elastic Definition of Fascism

Of course, the thesis of *Liberal Fascism: The Secret History of the American Left* is not without its critics. Many historians have taken issue with the book's broad and flexible definition of fascism. Critics argue that by stretching the term to include any form of state intervention or social engineering, the term becomes meaningless. If everything from Woodrow Wilson's policies to the modern Department of Education can be labeled "fascist," then the word loses its historical specificity and its unique horror.

Furthermore, critics point out that the book glosses over the crucial differences between a democratic system with checks and balances and a totalitarian dictatorship. While American progressives may have admired Mussolini's efficiency, they operated within a constitutional framework that preserved free elections, a free press, and individual rights. The Nazis and Fascists systematically destroyed these institutions. Ignoring this distinction, critics say, is a fatal flaw in the book's argument.

Finally, many have accused the book of being a political polemic disguised as history. By linking contemporary liberalism to fascism, Goldberg provides a powerful rhetorical weapon for conservatives. The book is seen by many as an attempt to delegitimize the modern Left by tarrying it with the brush of the 20th century's greatest evil. The debate, therefore, is not just about history, but about the politics of the present.

The Legacy and its Relevance in Modern Politics

Despite the intense criticism, *Liberal Fascism: The Secret History of the American Left* remains a highly influential text. It has fundamentally altered the way many conservatives think about the history of progressivism and the nature of the political left. The book's framework is often used to critique modern phenomena, such as:

- The Administrative State: The belief that bureaucrats in agencies like the EPA or FDA have too much power over the lives of citizens without democratic accountability.
- PC Culture and Social Justice: The idea that "woke" culture is a form of social engineering that seeks to shape correct thought and behavior, reminiscent of the progressive desire to perfect humanity.
- COVID-19 Mandates: During the pandemic, some commentators used the language of "liberal fascism" to describe lockdowns, mask mandates, and vaccine passports as examples of the state using emergency powers to control the population for the "common good."
- The Climate Agenda: The push for a "Green New Deal" and aggressive climate action is often framed as a return to the progressive vision of a planned economy where the state dictates production and consumption patterns.

The book has given a name to a specific fear: that the desire for a perfect, safe, and equitable society can lead to authoritarianism, even when pursued with the best of intentions. It suggests that the road to serfdom can be paved with good intentions and government programs, not just jackboots and secret police.

Conclusion: A Disturbing Thesis That Demands Reflection

Jonah Goldberg's *Liberal Fascism: The Secret History of the American Left* is far more than a conventional political history. It is a thought experiment designed to shatter our comfortable assumptions about the political spectrum. Whether you agree with its central thesis or find it deeply flawed, the book forces the reader to confront an uncomfortable question: Are the tools of tyranny the exclusive property of the right, or are they available to anyone who believes they have the one true vision for a perfect society?

The book serves as a powerful warning against the hubris of social engineering. By tracing the "secret history" of liberal ideas within the progressive tradition, it argues that the action for everyone, regardless of political affiliation. Whether you see it as a brilliant historical revision or a dangerous political slur, *Liberal Fascism: The Secret History of the American Left* remains a crucial text for understanding the deep ideological currents that continue to shape American politics today. It reminds us that the defense of liberty requires constant vigilance, not just against our enemies, but against the temptations of our own most cherished ideals.

Related Articles

- **Are James Blunt And Emily Blunt Related**
  URL: https://signage.openstack.org/are-james-blunt-and-emily-blunt-related.pdf
- **Was Remember Me Based On A True Story**
  URL: https://signage.openstack.org/was-remember-me-based-on-a-true-story.pdf
- **Ess Employee Self Service Costco**
  URL: https://signage.openstack.org/ess-employee-self-service-costco.pdf
- **The Case For Christianity By Cs Lewis**
  URL: https://signage.openstack.org/the-case-for-christianity-by-cs-lewis.pdf

TOPIC INDEX

#liberal • #fascism • #secret • #history • #american

DIGITAL EDITION

liberal-fascism-the-secret-history-of-the-ame

DIGITAL EDITION

liberal-fascism-the-secret-history-of-the-ame

DIGITAL EDITION

liberal-fascism-the-secret-history-of-the-ame

DIGITAL EDITION

liberal-fascism-the-secret-history-of-the-ame