



# The Civic Foundations of Fascism in Europe: Italy, Spain, and Romania, 1870-1945

Dylan Riley

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Dylan Riley reconceptualizes the nature and origins of interwar fascism in this remarkable investigation of the connection between civil society and authoritarianism.

From the late nineteenth century to World War I, voluntary associations exploded across Europe, especially among rural non-elites. But the development of this "civil society" did not produce liberal democracy in Italy, Spain, and Romania. Instead, Riley finds that it undermined the nascent liberal regimes in these countries and was a central cause of the rise of fascism. Developing an original synthesis of Gramsci and Tocqueville, Riley explains this surprising outcome by arguing that the development of political organizations in the three nations failed to keep pace with the proliferation of voluntary associations, leading to a crisis of political representation to which fascism developed as a response. His argument shows how different forms of fascism in Italy, Spain, and Romania arose in response to the divergent paths taken by civil society development in each nation.

Presenting the seemingly paradoxical argument that the rapid development of civil society facilitated the rise of fascism in Italy, Spain, and Romania, Riley credibly challenges the notion that a strong civil society necessarily leads to the development of liberal democracy. Scholars and students interested in debates about the rise of fascism and authoritarianism, democratization, civil society, and comparative and historical methods will find his arguments compelling and his conclusions challenging.



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