

# **THE FASCIST LIFECYCLE**

**A Comparative-Quantitative Analysis of  
Fascist Regime Survivability  
and Its Implications for Contemporary  
Authoritarian Projects**

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## Table of contents

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1 SCOPE AND PURPOSE .....	8
<b>2. METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1 DEFINING THE DATASET: THE FOUR-TIER TAXONOMY .....	9
2.2 THE FASCIST REGIME LIFECYCLE INDEX (FRLI) .....	10
2.3 COLLAPSE MODE CLASSIFICATION .....	11
2.4 STATISTICAL METHODS .....	11
2.5 LIMITATIONS .....	12
<b>3. THE DATASET: EIGHTEEN REGIMES SCORED AND PROFILED .....</b>	<b>13</b>
3.1 MASTER FRLI SCORING MATRIX .....	13
3.2 INDIVIDUAL REGIME PROFILES.....	14
<i>War-defeated regimes</i> .....	14
<i>Coup-terminated regimes</i> .....	17
<i>Revolution or mass protest</i> .....	18
<i>Negotiated transitions</i> .....	19
<i>Leader death or foreign annexation</i> .....	20
<b>4. FINDINGS: THE STRUCTURAL DYNAMICS OF FASCIST REGIME FAILURE .....</b>	<b>21</b>
4.1 ONE HUNDRED PER CENT MORTALITY AND THE DURATION DISTRIBUTION .....	21
4.2 INSTITUTIONAL CAPTURE AND THE DEMOBILISATION EFFECT .....	21
4.3 OVERREACH AS AN ASYMMETRIC PREDICTOR .....	22
4.4 THE DEMOBILISATION PARADOX .....	22
4.5 COLLAPSE MODE DISTRIBUTION .....	23
4.6 THE SUCCESSION PROBLEM .....	24
4.7 OVERREACH-TO-COLLAPSE TIMING.....	24
4.8 SENSITIVITY ANALYSES.....	25
<b>5. THEORETICAL INTEGRATION: FASCISM AS A RIGIDITY TRAP IN THE ADAPTIVE CYCLE .....</b>	<b>26</b>
5.1 FASCIST REGIMES AS CONSERVATION-PHASE SYSTEMS .....	26
5.1A CONSOLIDATING VERSUS PREDATORY CAPTURE: A CRITICAL DISTINCTION .....	26
5.2 OVERREACH AS A RELEASE TRIGGER .....	28
5.3 THE DEMOBILISATION PARADOX AS PHASE TRANSITION .....	29
5.4 PANARCHY: THE NESTED-SYSTEMS DIMENSION .....	29
<b>6. APPLICATION: THE TRUMP 2.0 PROJECT IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE .....</b>	<b>31</b>
6.1 CLASSIFICATION: A TIER 4 / TIER 2 HYBRID .....	31
6.2 FRLI PROFILE ANALYSIS .....	31
6.3 THE TRANSATLANTIC DIMENSION: THE NSS AS NETWORK-WAR DOCTRINE .....	33
6.4 COMPETITIVE AUTHORITARIANISM: THE SURVIVAL MODEL MAGA CANNOT ADOPT.....	34
6.5 SCENARIO ANALYSIS .....	38
6.6 THE STRUCTURAL MISMATCH: FASCISM IN A RELEASE-PHASE SYSTEM.....	40
<b>7. LIMITATIONS AND CAVEATS .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>8. CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: FRLI OPERATIONAL SCORING CRITERIA .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: FULL TABULAR DATASET.....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>APPENDIX C: SCORING SOURCE NOTES BY REGIME .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>APPENDIX D: FOUR-TIER TAXONOMY - COMPLETE CASE LIST.....</b>	<b>54</b>

TIER 1 - CORE FASCIST REGIMES (2 CASES, BOTH IN DATASET) ..... 54  
TIER 2 - PARA-FASCIST / FASCISTISED AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES (16 CASES, ALL IN DATASET) ..... 54  
TIER 3 - MAJOR FASCIST MOVEMENTS WITHOUT STATE POWER (SELECTED CASES, NOT IN DATASET)..... 54  
TIER 4 - POST-1945 NEO-FASCIST AND SUCCESSOR MOVEMENTS (SELECTED CASES, NOT IN DATASET) ..... 55

## Executive summary

This report presents a comparative-quantitative analysis of every fascist and para-fascist regime that held state power between 1920 and 1998. Eighteen regimes are coded across eight structural variables - the Fascist Regime Lifecycle Index (FRLI) - and their survivability patterns are assessed through non-parametric statistical tests, qualitative comparative analysis, and the adaptive cycle framework from complex systems science.

### The core empirical findings:

**One hundred per cent mortality.** Every fascist regime in the dataset has fallen. The median lifespan is 8.5 years. Fifty-six per cent lasted under a decade; seventy-two per cent under two decades.

**Institutional capture is the strongest individual predictor of survival** (Spearman  $\rho = 0.576$ ,  $p = 0.012$ ). Regimes that achieved deeper control of the judiciary, civil service, military, and media endured longer.

**The demobilisation paradox.** The sharpest divide in the dataset is between regimes that deliberately demobilised and those that did not (Mann-Whitney U,  $p = 0.003$ ). Demobilised regimes averaged 31.5 years; non-demobilised averaged 8.8 years. The paradox: the only fascist-origin regimes that survived beyond two decades did so by ceasing to be operationally fascist - abandoning mass mobilisation, revolutionary rhetoric, and expansionist ideology. Franco's Spain, Salazar's Portugal, Suharto's Indonesia, and Pinochet's Chile all purchased longevity by becoming conservative authoritarian systems. This finding is robust under the strictest coding: even restricting the demobilised category to Franco and Salazar alone ( $N=2$ ), the result remains significant ( $p = 0.016$ ).

**High overreach functions as a survivability ceiling.** Every regime with an overreach score of 3 or above died within 21 years (group mean: 9.2 years). Where a peak overreach event can be dated, the mean interval to regime collapse is 2.9 years ( $N=7$ ). Overreach is an asymmetric predictor: high overreach guarantees short duration, but low overreach alone does not guarantee survival.

**Competitive authoritarian regimes confirm the pattern from the other direction.** Systems such as Putin's Russia, Erdoğan's Turkey, Orbán's Hungary, and Chávez/Maduro's Venezuela are excluded from the fascist dataset as structurally distinct (Levitsky and Way, 2010), but examined as a comparator category. They have survived significantly longer than the fascist median - precisely because they adopt the demobilised, calibrated, institutionally patient model that the fascist lifecycle identifies as the survival pathway. The electoral defeat of Orbán's Fidesz in April 2026 - ending sixteen years of rule and removing the MAGA project's key institutional node within the EU - demonstrates that even the competitive

authoritarian model cannot sustain itself indefinitely, and that the transatlantic network-war strategy codified in the 2025 NSS is failing in real time.

**Application to Trump 2.0.** The Trump administration (2025-) is classified as a Tier 4 neo-fascist movement attempting to fascistise a still-pluralist state apparatus. Its FRLI profile - high ideological intensity (4/5), significant overreach (3/5), significant but predatory institutional capture (3/5), and a hostile external environment (1/5) - places it in a structural configuration associated with poor survivability in the historical dataset. The 2025 National Security Strategy codifies civilisational-racialised nationalism at the level of state doctrine, directing the US to 'cultivate resistance' within allied democracies - a form of ideological expansionism that has triggered immediate counter-mobilisation from European governments and institutions. The institutional capture achieved through the DOGE operation, the Supreme Court's expansion of executive power, and the illegal seizure of the appropriations power is extensive but predatory rather than consolidating – the regime is destroying state capacity for oligarchic enrichment rather than co-opting it for regime purposes, a distinction with critical implications for structural viability (see Section 5.1a).

The competitive authoritarian survival model - exemplified by Orbán's institutional patience and Putin's demobilisation of society - represents the pathway that could in theory extend the Trump project's lifespan. It is structurally foreclosed to MAGA, whose identity is constituted by permanent mobilisation and civilisational confrontation. The alliance between the MAGA project and the competitive authoritarian network is real, but it is losing its structural nodes: Orbán's defeat removes the key EU foothold, while Putin's post-2022 overreach has placed Russia on a trajectory consistent with the fascist dataset's predictions for high-overreach regimes.

**Scenarios.** The historical patterns generate four structured scenarios: (A) degradation and correction driven by the compounding dysfunction of predatory capture, overreach, and hostile external environment (most probable, timeline uncertain); (B) hybridisation into a persistent radical-right subculture with durable structural damage to democratic institutions (plausible, and potentially the most consequential); (C) crisis-driven consolidation leveraging an external shock to transition from predatory to consolidating capture (low-to-moderate probability); (D) authoritarian persistence through institutional ruin – the kleptocratic trajectory in which the regime endures through the absence of countervailing power rather than effective governance (low probability, catastrophic impact).

**Theoretical framework.** The adaptive cycle model from complex systems science (Holling and Gunderson, 2002), applied at the civilisational scale in my peer-reviewed paper in the journal *Foresight* (Ahmed, 2024), provides the theoretical explanation. Fascist regimes are rigidity traps - systems that maximise control at the expense of resilience. The deeper the rigidity, the more catastrophic the release. The

Trump project is attempting to impose a fascist rigidity trap during a civilisational release phase, and it is doing so through predatory rather than consolidating capture – cannibalising state capacity for oligarchic enrichment rather than co-opting it for regime purposes. This configuration has no historical precedent and poor structural prognosis, but the institutional damage it inflicts may prove more durable than the regime itself.

## 1. Introduction

Every fascist regime that has ever existed is now dead. This is the central empirical finding of this study. Across a dataset of eighteen fascist and para-fascist regimes that held state power between 1920 and 1998, the mortality rate is absolute: one hundred per cent. The median lifespan is 8.5 years. The mean, skewed upward by a handful of long survivors, is 13.9 years. The majority - 56 per cent - lasted less than a decade.

These numbers raise a question that is rarely asked with the precision it deserves. Fascism is typically analysed through the lens of ideology, moral philosophy, or political history. What happens when we treat it instead as a *systems phenomenon* - a particular configuration of political, economic, and social structures - and ask the engineering question: how long does this configuration last, and what kills it?

This report attempts to answer that question through comparative-quantitative analysis. It assembles a dataset of every regime that scholars of comparative fascism (Paxton, Griffin, Payne, Linz) classify as fascist or para-fascist, codes each across eight structural variables, and identifies the empirical patterns that govern regime duration and collapse. The analytical framework is drawn from complex systems science - specifically, the adaptive cycle model developed by C.S. Holling and Lance Gunderson, which I have applied at the civilisational scale in my peer-reviewed paper 'Planetary phase shift as a new systems framework to navigate the evolutionary transformation of human civilisation', published in the journal *Foresight* in 2024, and in my earlier books *A User's Guide to the Crisis of Civilization* (Pluto Press, 2011) and *Failing States, Collapsing Systems* (Springer, 2017).

The adaptive cycle describes how complex living systems - ecosystems, economies, civilisations - pass through four phases: rapid growth (r), conservation (K), release ( $\Omega$ ), and reorganisation ( $\alpha$ ). During the conservation phase, a system maximises efficiency and internal connectivity at the expense of resilience and flexibility. It becomes rigid - highly adapted to its current environment but increasingly brittle when conditions change. When a perturbation arrives that the rigid system cannot absorb, it enters the release phase: a rapid, often chaotic breakdown of accumulated structure. The application of this model to political and societal systems has been validated by a growing body of scholarship, including Fath et al. (2015) on the adaptive cycle in human societies, Sundstrom and Allen (2019), and Rogers (2017). In my own *Foresight* paper, I mapped it specifically to the trajectory of global industrial civilisation, drawing on historical case studies from Rome to the Maya to medieval Europe.

The central theoretical argument of this report is that fascist regimes are *rigidity traps* - political systems that have driven themselves deep into the conservation phase. They maximise internal control (single-party rule, total social mobilisation, elimination of dissent) while suppressing the diversity and redundancy that would allow them to

adapt to changing conditions. The deeper the rigidity, the more catastrophic the eventual release. This framework explains why fascist regimes die, why they die in the specific ways the data reveals - and what it tells us about the structural viability of contemporary projects with fascist characteristics.

### **1.1 Scope and purpose**

The report covers all regimes classified by the mainstream comparative politics literature as fascist (Tier 1) or para-fascist/fascistised authoritarian (Tier 2) that held state power between 1900 and the present. It excludes fascist movements that never achieved state power (Tier 3) and post-1945 neo-fascist parties operating within democratic systems (Tier 4), except where Tier 4 movements are directly relevant to the contemporary application in Section 6.

This study produces three outputs. First, a scored dataset - the Fascist Regime Lifecycle Index (FRLI) - that codes each regime across eight structural variables. Second, a set of empirical generalisations about fascist regime survivability derived from the dataset, supported by non-parametric statistical tests. Third, an application of those generalisations to the Trump 2.0 administration, assessed as a Tier 4 neo-fascist project attempting to fascistise a still-pluralist state apparatus. The analysis also addresses the relationship between fascist regimes and a distinct but related category - competitive authoritarian or 'electoral autocratic' systems such as Putin's Russia, Erdoğan's Turkey, and Orbán's Hungary - which are excluded from the scored dataset but examined as a structural comparator in Section 6.4.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Defining the dataset: the four-tier taxonomy

Comparative fascism scholarship identifies a spectrum of alignment between political movements/regimes and the core features of fascist ideology as defined by Paxton, Griffin, Payne, Sternhell, and Linz. For this analysis, we adopt a four-tier taxonomy that distinguishes cases by their ideological alignment and their historical outcomes:

**Tier 1 - Core fascist regimes.** Paradigmatic fascist dictatorships that fully manifested fascist ideology and went through Paxton's full cycle: seizure of power, transformation of state, and attempt at radical societal remaking. Cases: Mussolini's Italy (1922-1943) and Hitler's Germany (1933-1945).

**Tier 2 - Para-fascist or fascistised authoritarian regimes.** Regimes that were not born from a mass fascist movement seizing power on its own, but which adopted many fascist characteristics or allied with fascist powers. These regimes were authoritarian with significant fascist overlay. Cases include Franco's Spain, Salazar's Portugal, Vichy France, the Axis satellite states (Hungary, Romania, Croatia, Slovakia), Metaxas Greece, Austrofascism, Vargas's Brazil, Perón's Argentina, militarist Japan (noting the scholarly debate on whether Japan constitutes fascism proper or a distinct form of military authoritarianism - see Payne, 1995, Chapter 14), Pinochet's Chile, the Greek Junta, and Suharto's Indonesia.

**Tier 3 - Major fascist movements without state power.** Significant fascist parties that mobilised followers but never obtained national governing power (e.g. Mosley's British Union of Fascists, the Iron Guard before its alliance with Antonescu, various American fascist groups of the 1930s). These are excluded from the quantitative dataset because they did not hold state power, though they inform the qualitative analysis.

**Tier 4 - Post-1945 neo-fascist or successor movements.** Movements and parties in the post-1945 era that continued or revived fascist ideology under new guises: Italy's MSI, the French Front National, Golden Dawn in Greece, and contemporary formations. These operate within democratic systems and are excluded from the regime dataset but are relevant to the contemporary application.

The analytical sample comprises 18 Tier 1 and Tier 2 regimes - every case for which there is scholarly consensus on fascist or para-fascist classification and sufficient data for structured coding. Borderline cases (notably Horthy's Hungary and militarist Japan) are included with their classificatory ambiguities explicitly noted, and sensitivity analyses are provided in Section 4.7 testing the robustness of findings to their exclusion or re-dating.

A distinct category of authoritarian regime - competitive authoritarian or 'electoral autocratic' systems (Levitsky and Way, 2010) - is deliberately excluded from the

scored dataset but addressed as a structural comparator in Section 6.4. Competitive authoritarian regimes such as Putin's Russia, Erdoğan's Turkey, Orbán's Hungary, and Chávez/Maduro's Venezuela share features with fascist systems (institutional capture, personalised leadership, nationalist rhetoric) but differ on two structurally critical variables: they deliberately demobilise rather than mobilise their populations, and they calibrate rather than escalate external confrontation. These differences place them in a distinct structural category with different survivability dynamics. Their exclusion from the scored dataset is an analytical choice, not an oversight; their inclusion as a comparator strengthens the analysis by demonstrating that the fascist lifecycle pattern is specific to the fascist structural configuration, not a generic feature of all authoritarian systems.

## 2.2 The Fascist Regime Lifecycle Index (FRLI)

Each regime is scored across eight structural variables on a 0-5 scale, where 0 indicates absence of the feature and 5 indicates its maximum expression. The variables are derived from the empirical regularities identified in the comparative fascism literature and from the adaptive cycle framework. Full operational scoring criteria for each variable are provided in Appendix A.

**Ideological intensity (0-5):** The degree to which the regime embodies the core features of fascist ideology as defined by the scholarly consensus - palingenetic ultranationalism (Griffin), mass mobilising passions (Paxton), racialised or civilisational threat narratives, cult of the leader, glorification of violence, and anti-liberal/anti-egalitarian social vision. A score of 5 denotes a regime where these features pervade all aspects of state and society; 0 denotes a regime with no fascist ideological content.

**Institutional capture (0-5):** The completeness of the regime's control over state institutions - judiciary, civil service, military, media, education. A score of 5 denotes total single-party capture of all major institutions (as in Nazi Germany after 1934). A score of 0 denotes no institutional capture beyond normal electoral office-holding.

**Elite coalition breadth (0-5):** The range of elite sectors aligned with the regime - military, business/industry, church/religious establishment, monarchy/traditional aristocracy, landed interests, professional classes. A score of 5 denotes broad and deep alignment across all major elite sectors. A score of 0 denotes a regime with no significant elite support beyond its own cadres.

**Mass mobilisation capacity (0-5):** The regime's ability to mobilise the general population through party organisations, youth movements, paramilitary structures, propaganda apparatus, and mass rallies. A score of 5 denotes total-society penetration. A score of 0 denotes no mobilisation infrastructure.

**External environment permissiveness (0-5):** The degree to which the international environment tolerates or supports the regime. This variable captures the panarchy

dimension of the adaptive cycle: the regime's nested relationship with larger-scale systems.

**Expansionist overreach (0-5):** The degree to which the regime engages in territorial, military, or ideological expansion beyond its borders. A score of 5 denotes full-scale military expansionism and civilisational-struggle ideology. A score of 0 denotes deliberate strategic restraint. This is the variable most directly associated with triggering the release phase.

**Succession mechanism (0-5):** The degree to which the regime has institutionalised a mechanism for leadership transition. In practice, no fascist regime scores above 2 - the hyper-personalisation of fascist leadership is one of its defining structural features.

**Economic model viability (0-5):** The sustainability of the regime's economic model absent war or external subsidy. Regimes with low economic viability face compounding internal pressures that accelerate the release phase.

### 2.3 Collapse mode classification

Each regime's termination is classified by primary collapse mode, with secondary causes noted where relevant. The five primary modes are: war defeat (termination by military defeat, invasion, or unconditional surrender); internal coup (termination by a coup or palace revolution by the regime's own elites); negotiated transition (termination through plebiscite, managed succession, or constitutional handover); revolution or mass protest (termination by popular uprising, often triggered by economic crisis); and leader death or foreign annexation (termination because the indispensable leader dies or the regime is absorbed by a larger power). Where a regime's collapse involves elements of multiple modes - as with Romania, where King Michael's coup was precipitated by the advancing Soviet army - both primary and secondary causes are coded.

### 2.4 Statistical methods

Given the small sample size (N=18), parametric statistical methods are inappropriate. The report employs non-parametric tests throughout. Group comparisons (demobilised versus non-demobilised regimes) use the Mann-Whitney U test. Correlations between FRLI variables and regime duration use Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. All tests are two-tailed unless otherwise stated. The small N means these tests are underpowered and should be interpreted as supporting evidence for patterns identified through qualitative comparative analysis, not as standalone proof of causal relationships.

## **2.5 Limitations**

Several limitations must be acknowledged. The sample size is small (N=18), which limits statistical power. The FRLI scoring is inherently subjective, though it is grounded in the established comparative politics literature and the operational criteria in Appendix A are provided to make the scoring reproducible and contestable. The scoring was conducted by a single researcher; inter-coder reliability has not been tested. The operational definitions are published in full to enable independent replication and challenge. The dataset is weighted toward the 1930s-1940s period, meaning the WWII cluster of war-defeat collapses could represent a historical confound rather than a structural pattern - this is addressed directly in the findings. The adaptive cycle framework is applied analogically to political systems; its value lies in its explanatory and predictive power, not in formal mathematical proof although a strong case can be made that it can be derived from fundamental physical principles. The United States in 2025 is structurally unlike any previous case in the dataset, and the historical patterns cannot mechanically predict its trajectory.

### 3. The dataset: eighteen regimes scored and profiled

#### 3.1 Master FRLI scoring matrix

Table 1 presents the complete scored dataset. Each regime is coded across the eight FRLI variables, with a total score (out of 40), regime duration in years, and primary collapse mode. The regimes are ordered by duration to make survivability patterns visible.

Regime	Tier	Ide o.	Ins t. cap.	Elit e col.	Ma ss mob.	Ext. per m.	Overre ach	Succe ss.	Eco n.	Tot al	Yr s	Collaps e mode
Portugal (Salazar/Caetano)	T2	2	4	3	1	3	2	1	2	18/40	41	Military coup
Spain (Franco)	T2	3	4	4	2	3	1	2	3	22/40	36	Negotiated transition
Indonesia (Suharto)	T2	2	4	4	2	4	1	0	3	20/40	32	Revolution / protest
Hungary (Horthy era)*	T2	2	3	3	2	3	3	1	2	19/40	24	War defeat
Italy (Mussolini)†	T1	5	5	4	5	3	5	0	2	29/40	21	War defeat + coup
Chile (Pinochet)	T2	2	4	3	1	3	0	1	3	17/40	17	Plebiscite / transition
Japan (militarist)‡	T2	4	4	3	4	2	5	0	2	24/40	14	War defeat
Germany (Nazi)	T1	5	5	4	5	3	5	0	2	29/40	12	War defeat
Argentina (Perón 1st)	T2	3	3	3	3	2	0	0	2	16/40	9	Military coup
Brazil (Vargas)	T2	2	3	3	2	2	0	0	2	14/40	8	Military pressure
Greece (Junta)	T2	2	3	2	1	2	2	0	1	13/40	7	Overreach collapse
Slovakia (Tiso)	T2	3	3	2	2	1	1	0	1	13/40	6	War defeat
Greece (Metaxas)	T2	3	3	3	2	2	1	0	2	16/40	5	Leader death

Austria (Dollfuss)	T2	3	3	3	2	2	0	1	2	16/40	5	Foreign annexation
Vichy France	T2	3	3	2	2	1	1	0	1	13/40	4	War defeat
Romania (Antonescu)	T2	3	3	2	3	2	4	0	1	18/40	4	Coup (war-precipitated)
Croatia (NDH/Ustaše)	T2	5	4	1	4	1	3	0	0	18/40	4	War defeat
Hungary (Arrow Cross)	T2	5	3	1	4	1	4	0	0	18/40	0.5	War defeat

Table 1: Fascist Regime Lifecycle Index. \* Horthy's Hungary is a borderline case - see Section 3.2. † Italy's duration counts to Mussolini's deposition in July 1943; the Republic of Salò (1943-45) is excluded as a German puppet state. ‡ Japan's start date is coded from 1931 (Manchuria invasion); alternative dating from 1936 is tested in Section 4.7.

### 3.2 Individual regime profiles

Each regime is profiled below with its FRLI scoring justification, structural features, and collapse mechanics. Profiles are grouped by collapse mode to make structural patterns visible.

#### War-defeated regimes

##### **Italy - Mussolini's Fascist Regime (1922-1943) | Tier 1 | FRLI 29/40 | 21 years.**

The original fascist state, established after the March on Rome in October 1922. Mussolini governed initially as Prime Minister within the constitutional monarchy before dismantling parliamentary democracy in 1925-26. The regime achieved near-total institutional capture by the early 1930s: the National Fascist Party (PNF) permeated the judiciary, civil service, media, and education, while the OVRA secret police suppressed opposition. Italy's corporate state model, organised through employer-worker syndicates, was economically functional in the 1920s but deteriorated after the Depression, becoming increasingly dependent on state intervention and military spending. The regime undertook colonial military campaigns in Libya throughout the 1920s (the reconquista of 1923-32) but its phase of major strategic expansionism began with the invasion of Abyssinia in 1935, followed by intervention in the Spanish Civil War, the seizure of Albania (1939), and entry into World War II in June 1940. From that point, the trajectory was rapid: catastrophic military defeats in North Africa and the Allied invasion of Sicily precipitated the Grand Council vote of July 1943 that deposed Mussolini. The King had him arrested; Italy surrendered. Mussolini's puppet Republic of Salò in northern Italy (1943-45), sustained entirely by German military occupation, is excluded from the duration

count as it lacked sovereign authority. The Italian case demonstrates the overreach dynamic precisely: thirteen years of domestic consolidation followed by eight years of escalating expansionism, collapsing within three years of entering the major war.

**Germany - Nazi Third Reich (1933-1945) | Tier 1 | FRLI 29/40 | 12 years.** Hitler was appointed Chancellor in January 1933 and consolidated total power within eighteen months: the Reichstag Fire Decree, the Enabling Act, the destruction of trade unions, the elimination of all other parties, and the Night of the Long Knives produced the most complete institutional capture in the dataset by mid-1934. The Nazi state achieved total social mobilisation through the Hitler Youth, the German Labour Front, the SS apparatus, and pervasive propaganda under Goebbels. The economy was transformed into a rearmament machine under Schacht and later Göring, generating full employment but at the cost of unsustainable military-Keynesian debt that required territorial expansion to service. Germany's expansionism proceeded through the Rhineland (1936), Austria and Sudetenland (1938), Czechoslovakia (1939), and the invasion of Poland in September 1939 that triggered the wider war. From peak overreach (the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941) to total collapse took four years. The regime ended in absolute military defeat, unconditional surrender, Allied occupation, and the physical destruction of the German state. The Nazi case is the extreme data point: maximum ideological intensity, maximum institutional capture, maximum expansionist overreach, minimum survival time relative to the scale of the project.

**Japan - Militarist Era (1931-1945) | Tier 2 | FRLI 24/40 | 14 years.** Japan's classification is debated in the literature. It lacked a single fascist party; its authoritarianism was military-institutional, rooted in the traditions of the Meiji state and the power of the army and navy within the cabinet system. Payne (1995) classifies it as a distinct authoritarian form rather than fascism proper. It is included at Tier 2 because it shared critical structural features with fascist regimes: ultranationalist ideology centred on emperor-worship and racial destiny, mass mobilisation through state-directed organisations, aggressive military expansionism, and a war economy. The start date is coded from the Manchuria invasion of 1931, which marked the effective military takeover of foreign policy; alternative dating from the February 26 Incident (1936) or the China war (1937) is tested in Section 4.7 and yields durations of 9 or 8 years respectively. The regime's expansionism - from Manchuria through the China war to the Pacific theatre - was driven by the same ideological-strategic logic as European fascism: national renewal through conquest. Total defeat, including atomic bombings, unconditional surrender, and American occupation, ended the system absolutely.

**Hungary - Horthy Era (1920-1944) | Tier 2 (borderline) | FRLI 19/40 | 24 years.** Admiral Miklós Horthy's regency is the most contested classification in the dataset. Horthy governed as a conservative-authoritarian regent through a traditional elite coalition of military, aristocracy, and bureaucracy. He actively suppressed Hungary's indigenous fascist movement - the Arrow Cross - for most of his tenure, jailing its

leader Ferenc Szálasi. The regime is classified at Tier 2 because it adopted significant fascist characteristics over time: anti-Semitic legislation (the numerus clausus of 1920, tightened through the 1930s), alliance with Nazi Germany, territorial expansion into formerly Hungarian regions of Czechoslovakia and Romania (1938-40), and participation in the invasion of the Soviet Union. Horthy's long duration - the longest of any non-demobilised regime in the dataset - arguably reflects his regime's conservative rather than fascist character. When he attempted to negotiate an armistice with the Soviets in October 1944, the Germans deposed him in Operation Panzerfaust and installed the Arrow Cross. Sensitivity analysis (Section 4.7) tests the robustness of key findings to Horthy's exclusion; excluding him reduces the non-demobilised regime mean from 8.8 to 7.7 years, strengthening the core pattern.

**Hungary - Arrow Cross (October 1944-April 1945) | Tier 2 | FRLI 18/40 | ~6 months.** The Arrow Cross under Ferenc Szálasi seized power in a German-orchestrated coup in October 1944 and immediately imposed a reign of terror, including the deportation and murder of tens of thousands of Budapest's Jews (the death marches and Danube shootings). The regime had high ideological intensity and mobilisation capacity but no institutional depth, no economic base, and no external support beyond a collapsing Germany. Soviet forces conquered Budapest in February 1945; the Arrow Cross government fled and was destroyed within months. The case is the dataset's extreme example of high ideology + low capture + hostile environment = instant collapse.

**Croatia - Independent State of Croatia / Ustaše (1941-1945) | Tier 2 | FRLI 18/40 | 4 years.** The NDH was a Nazi puppet state created after the Axis dismemberment of Yugoslavia in 1941. Under Ante Pavelić, the Ustaše imposed a one-party dictatorship modelled on the Nazi and Fascist states, carrying out genocide against Serbs, Jews, and Roma at sites including the Jasenovac concentration camp complex. The regime had extreme ideological intensity and significant mobilisation through Ustaše militia, but its elite coalition was narrow (the Croatian Peasant Party, by far the largest political force, did not support it), and it depended entirely on German and Italian military backing. As Partisan forces under Tito gained strength and the Axis retreated, the NDH collapsed. It represents a case of externally sustained fascism that could not survive the withdrawal of its patron.

**Romania - Antonescu Regime (1940-1944) | Tier 2 | FRLI 18/40 | 4 years.** General Ion Antonescu came to power in September 1940 amid Romania's loss of territory to Hungary and the Soviet Union. He initially governed in alliance with the indigenous fascist Iron Guard (Legion of the Archangel Michael) but crushed them in a violent confrontation in January 1941, thereafter ruling as a military dictator aligned with Nazi Germany. Romania committed heavily to the Eastern Front, suffering catastrophic losses at Stalingrad (the Romanian Third and Fourth Armies were largely destroyed). As Soviet forces crossed into Romanian territory in August 1944, King Michael orchestrated a coup, arrested Antonescu, and switched Romania to the Allied side. The collapse mode is coded as internal coup (war-precipitated): the coup

was carried out by domestic elites, but the proximate trigger was military reversal. The case illustrates how elite coalitions fracture under battlefield pressure.

**Vichy France (1940-1944) | Tier 2 | FRLI 13/40 | 4 years.** Marshal Philippe Pétain's regime was established after France's defeat and armistice with Germany in June 1940. It adopted fascist and reactionary features - abolition of the Third Republic's parliamentary institutions, anti-Semitic legislation (the Statut des Juifs), a cult of Pétain as national saviour, and corporatist social organisation - but it originated as a collaborationist response to occupation rather than from an indigenous fascist mass movement. The regime governed the unoccupied southern zone until November 1942, when Germany occupied all of France; thereafter it was effectively a puppet administration. Liberation by Allied forces in 1944 ended the regime. Its 4-year duration reflects complete structural dependence on the Axis.

**Slovakia - Tiso's Clerical-Fascist State (1939-1945) | Tier 2 | FRLI 13/40 | 6 years.** After Nazi Germany dismembered Czechoslovakia in March 1939, a nominally independent Slovak Republic was established under Jozef Tiso, a Catholic priest. The regime combined Catholic corporatism with fascist elements: a single-party state under the Hlinka Slovak People's Party, an armed paramilitary (the Hlinka Guard), and collaboration with Nazi deportation of Slovak Jews. Tiso's regime was a German client state with limited autonomous power. It was liberated by Soviet forces in 1945 and Tiso was executed for treason in 1947.

### Coup-terminated regimes

**Argentina - Perón's First Presidency (1946-1955) | Tier 2 | FRLI 16/40 | 9 years.** Juan Perón admired Mussolini and incorporated fascist elements into a populist authoritarian model: mass rallies, a leadership cult centred on Perón and Evita, corporatist labour organisation through the General Confederation of Labour (CGT), and suppression of opposition media and parties. Perón's economic model - import substitution, wage increases funded by agricultural export earnings - generated initial growth but deteriorated after 1950 as terms of trade shifted. His conflict with the Catholic Church (1954-55) shattered a critical pillar of his coalition. The *Revolución Libertadora* of September 1955 was a military coup supported by the Church and sections of the business elite. Perón went into exile. The case illustrates elite coalition fracture triggered by economic deterioration and the loss of a key institutional ally.

**Brazil - Vargas Estado Novo (1937-1945) | Tier 2 | FRLI 14/40 | 8 years.** Getúlio Vargas established the Estado Novo through a self-coup in November 1937, suspending the constitution, dissolving Congress, and banning political parties. The regime adopted corporatist labour legislation, a nationalist economic programme, and centralised authoritarian rule. It crushed both the communist left (the Intentona of 1935) and the fascist Integralismo movement. As Brazil joined the Allies in World War II (sending an expeditionary force to Italy), the ideological contradiction of

fighting fascism abroad while practising authoritarianism at home became untenable. Military pressure forced Vargas to resign in October 1945. The case demonstrates how external alignment can undermine domestic authoritarian legitimacy.

**Greece - Military Junta (1967-1974) | Tier 2 | FRLI 13/40 | 7 years.** The 'Colonels' Regime' seized power in a military coup in April 1967, suspending the constitution, banning political parties, and imposing censorship. The regime had low ideological intensity by fascist standards (anti-communism and conservative nationalism rather than palingenetic revolution) and low mass mobilisation (it demobilised rather than mobilised Greek society). Its collapse was triggered by classic overreach: the junta sponsored a coup against President Makarios of Cyprus in July 1974, provoking a Turkish invasion of northern Cyprus. The military debacle destroyed the junta's credibility; senior officers withdrew support and the regime fell within days. The case is the post-WWII dataset's cleanest example of overreach-to-collapse timing: from the Cyprus adventure to regime termination was measured in days, not years.

### Revolution or mass protest

**Portugal - Estado Novo (1933-1974) | Tier 2 | FRLI 18/40 | 41 years.** António Salazar's 'New State' was the longest-lived regime in the dataset. Salazar, a university economics professor, governed with deliberate austerity: he balanced the budget, stabilised the currency, and ran a technocratic dictatorship rooted in Catholic corporatism. The PIDE secret police enforced political conformity, but the regime deliberately avoided mass mobilisation. There were no mass rallies, no personality cult comparable to Mussolini or Hitler, no revolutionary rhetoric. Salazar disdained the theatrical fascism of his contemporaries. The regime's longevity was purchased through demobilisation, strategic neutrality (Portugal stayed out of World War II while maintaining its alliance with Britain), and colonial exploitation. Salazar suffered a cerebral haemorrhage in 1968 and was replaced by Marcello Caetano, who attempted limited liberalisation but could not resolve the contradiction of fighting three simultaneous colonial wars in Africa (Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau). The Carnation Revolution of April 1974 was led by the Armed Forces Movement - junior officers radicalised by the colonial wars - and brought the regime down virtually without bloodshed. The Estado Novo survived four decades because it ceased to be operationally fascist; it fell because even demobilised authoritarianism cannot absorb indefinite colonial attrition.

**Indonesia - Suharto's New Order (1966-1998) | Tier 2 | FRLI 20/40 | 32 years.** Suharto came to power through the anti-communist military takeover of 1965-66, which involved mass killings estimated at 500,000 to one million people. Having secured power through this initial spasm of extreme violence, Suharto then systematically depoliticised Indonesian society. His 'New Order' regime banned independent political activity, co-opted or suppressed civil society, controlled the press, and maintained order through the military (ABRI) and a network of intelligence agencies. Economic policy was delegated to a technocratic team of US-trained

economists (the 'Berkeley Mafia'), who pursued growth-oriented development financed by oil revenues and foreign investment. The external environment was highly permissive: the United States, concerned with containing communism in Southeast Asia, treated Suharto as a strategic ally throughout the Cold War. The regime lasted 32 years and appeared impregnable - until the 1997 Asian financial crisis destroyed its economic legitimacy. The rupiah collapsed, food prices spiked, and mass protests erupted across Indonesian cities. Suharto resigned in May 1998, weeks after the crisis reached its peak. The case demonstrates that demobilised authoritarianism extends lifespan dramatically but creates a specific vulnerability: when the economic compact breaks, there is no mass mobilisation infrastructure to defend the regime.

### Negotiated transitions

**Spain - Franco Regime (1939-1975) | Tier 2 | FRLI 22/40 | 36 years.** Francisco Franco's dictatorship, established after the Nationalist victory in the Spanish Civil War, is the paradigm case of the demobilisation paradox. Franco came to power with the assistance of Hitler and Mussolini, governing initially through a coalition of the Falange (Spain's fascist party), the military, the Catholic Church, and the monarchy. Within a decade, he had systematically marginalised the Falange's revolutionary wing, promoting conservative technocrats over fascist ideologues. His meeting with Hitler at Hendaye in October 1940 resulted in Spain's effective refusal to enter World War II - a decision that proved critical to regime survival. By the 1960s, Franco had delegated economic policy to Opus Dei technocrats who integrated Spain into Western European markets, producing the 'Spanish Miracle' of rapid growth. The regime retained authoritarian control - political parties were banned, the press censored, the Guardia Civil maintained order - but it bore almost no resemblance to the fascist model: no mass mobilisation, no revolutionary rhetoric, no expansionist ambition. Franco died in November 1975. He had designated Juan Carlos as his royal successor; within three years, Juan Carlos and Prime Minister Adolfo Suárez had dismantled the regime and established parliamentary democracy. The Franco case proves the demobilisation paradox: survival required ceasing to be fascist, and even then, the system could not outlast its founder.

**Chile - Pinochet (1973-1990) | Tier 2 | FRLI 17/40 | 17 years.** Augusto Pinochet seized power in the September 1973 coup against Salvador Allende's elected government, supported by the Chilean military, business elites, and - as subsequently documented - the United States. The regime imposed martial law, dissolved Congress, banned leftist parties, and carried out systematic repression through the DINA secret police (thousands killed or disappeared). Pinochet delegated economic policy to the 'Chicago Boys' - Chilean economists trained under Milton Friedman at the University of Chicago - who implemented radical free-market reforms: privatisation, deregulation, trade liberalisation, and pension reform. The regime was a demobilised military dictatorship with low ideological intensity by fascist standards and no mass mobilisation. Pinochet submitted to a plebiscite in

October 1988 - as required by his own 1980 constitution - and lost. He negotiated his exit over the subsequent two years, leaving office in March 1990 but retaining his position as army commander and later senator-for-life. The case demonstrates that demobilised authoritarianism can build institutional exit mechanisms - but only because the regime had already abandoned the fascist project.

### Leader death or foreign annexation

**Greece - Metaxas Regime (1936-1941) | Tier 2 | FRLI 16/40 | 5 years.** General Ioannis Metaxas established the '4th of August Regime' in 1936 as a royal dictatorship with the backing of King George II. Metaxas banned political parties, imposed censorship, created a youth organisation modelled on fascist lines, and adopted the rhetoric and aesthetics of contemporary fascism. The regime was relatively restrained in its ambitions - it did not pursue territorial expansion and maintained a cautious foreign policy. Metaxas died of natural causes in January 1941. The regime had no succession mechanism; within months, the Axis invasion of Greece in April 1941 rendered the question moot. The case illustrates the personalisation problem: the regime's continued existence depended entirely on one individual.

**Austria - Austrofascism / Ständestaat (1933-1938) | Tier 2 | FRLI 16/40 | 5 years.** Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss suspended the Austrian parliament in March 1933 and established a corporatist authoritarian state modelled on Mussolini's Italy. The regime suppressed both the Social Democrats (bombarding workers' housing in the February 1934 civil war) and the Austrian Nazis. Dollfuss was assassinated in a failed Nazi coup attempt in July 1934; his successor Kurt Schuschnigg attempted to maintain Austrian independence but faced relentless German pressure. Hitler's Anschluss of March 1938 absorbed Austria into the Reich, ending the regime. The case demonstrates vulnerability to foreign annexation - a fascist regime destroyed by a more powerful fascist state.

## 4. Findings: the structural dynamics of fascist regime failure

### 4.1 One hundred per cent mortality and the duration distribution

Of the eighteen fascist and para-fascist regimes in the dataset, every single one has fallen. The mortality rate is absolute. There is no case of a fascist regime that endured indefinitely, reformed itself into a durable alternative, or found a sustainable steady state. Long-lived authoritarian regimes exist - the Soviet Union (69 years), the Chinese Communist Party (76 years and counting), the Saudi monarchy (92 years) - but none of these is classified as fascist by the comparative politics literature, and all have fundamentally different structural configurations.

The duration distribution is heavily left-skewed. Median duration is 8.5 years. The distribution breaks into four clusters: under 5 years (4 regimes, 22 per cent), comprising Arrow Cross, Vichy France, Antonescu Romania, and Ustaše Croatia - the flash-in-the-pan cases with high ideological intensity but low institutional capture and heavy dependence on external patrons. The modal cluster is 5 to 9 years (6 regimes, 33 per cent): Slovakia, Metaxas Greece, Austrofascism, Vargas Brazil, Perón Argentina, and the Greek Junta. These regimes achieved partial institutional capture but faced a triggering crisis before consolidation. The mid-range of 10 to 19 years contains 3 regimes (17 per cent): Nazi Germany, militarist Japan, and Pinochet Chile. The long survivors at 20 years and above comprise 5 regimes (28 per cent): Mussolini's Italy, Franco's Spain, Salazar's Portugal, Horthy's Hungary, and Suharto's Indonesia.

The summary: a clear majority (56 per cent) lasted less than a decade. Nearly three quarters (72 per cent) lasted less than two decades.

### 4.2 Institutional capture and the demobilisation effect

The FRLI variable most strongly correlated with regime duration is institutional capture. Spearman's rank correlation between institutional capture score and duration yields  $\rho = 0.576$  ( $p = 0.012$ ), the only individual variable reaching conventional significance. Higher institutional capture is associated with longer survival - a finding consistent with the intuition that regimes which control the judiciary, military, civil service, and media face fewer institutional checks on their power.

Ideological intensity shows a negative trend:  $\rho = -0.419$  ( $p = 0.08$ ), marginally significant. Higher ideological intensity trends toward shorter duration, reflecting the tendency of intensely ideological regimes to generate the overreach and confrontation that accelerates their collapse.

The sharpest quantitative divide in the dataset, however, is between regimes that deliberately demobilised and those that did not. 'Demobilisation' is coded as an operational category: regimes that, at some point during their tenure, deliberately

reduced mass mobilisation, lowered ideological intensity, abandoned palingenetic revolutionary rhetoric, and avoided expansionist confrontation. Four regimes meet this criterion: Franco's Spain (36 years), Salazar's Portugal (41 years), Suharto's Indonesia (32 years), and Pinochet's Chile (17 years). Note that this is an operational category based on regime behaviour, not a duration threshold - Pinochet is included at 17 years because he demonstrably demobilised, while Horthy at 24 years is excluded because his regime, while less fascist than most, did not undergo a deliberate demobilisation process.

The Mann-Whitney U test confirms the difference: demobilised regimes (median 34.0 years) versus non-demobilised (median 6.5 years),  $U = 54.0$ ,  $p = 0.003$ . This is highly significant even with the small sample. Demobilised regimes averaged 31.5 years; non-demobilised averaged 8.8 years - a factor of 3.6.

### 4.3 Overreach as an asymmetric predictor

The relationship between expansionist overreach and regime duration requires careful characterisation. The raw Spearman correlation between overreach score and duration is near zero:  $\rho = -0.013$  ( $p = 0.96$ ), non-significant. This appears to contradict the qualitative finding that overreach destroys regimes - but the paradox dissolves on inspection.

The reason for the flat correlation is that overreach is an *asymmetric predictor*. High overreach is a sufficient condition for fast death: every regime with an overreach score of 3 or above ( $N=6$ ) ended within 21 years, and the high-overreach group mean is 9.2 years. Low overreach, however, is a necessary but not sufficient condition for long survival: many low-overreach regimes also died fast (Vichy at 4 years, Austria at 5, Slovakia at 6), killed by external forces unrelated to their own expansionist behaviour. Overreach separates the top of the distribution cleanly - all long-surviving regimes had low overreach - but does not predict the bottom, where external factors dominate.

The correct empirical finding therefore is that no regime with an overreach score of 3 or above survived more than 21 years, and only one (Mussolini's Italy) survived beyond 14 years - and that regime spent its first 13 years in a pre-expansionist consolidation phase. Overreach functions as a *ceiling* on survivability, not as a linear predictor.

### 4.4 The demobilisation paradox

This is the report's central finding. The only fascist-origin regimes that survived beyond two decades did so by ceasing to operate as fascist systems. They retained authoritarian control - secret police, suppression of opposition, restrictions on civil liberties - but abandoned the defining operational features of fascism: mass mobilisation, palingenetic revolutionary rhetoric, permanent crisis framing, expansionist ideology, and the cult of civilisational struggle.

Franco suppressed the Falange's revolutionary wing and governed through technocrats. Salazar ran a deliberately austere, demobilised dictatorship - the antithesis of theatrical fascism. Suharto depoliticised Indonesian society and delegated economics to technocrats. Pinochet handed economic policy to the Chicago School.

A methodological caveat is required here. A potential circularity exists in this coding: regimes must survive long enough to demobilise, which means the association between demobilisation and long survival could partly reflect survivorship bias rather than a causal relationship - short-lived regimes destroyed at year three or four never had the opportunity to demobilise, and their absence from the demobilised category is an artefact of timing rather than strategic choice.

The counter-evidence is that demobilisation was an early strategic decision in the clearest cases, not a late-stage adaptation. Salazar governed as a demobilised authoritarian from the outset - there were never mass rallies, a personality cult, or revolutionary rhetoric. Franco had marginalised the Falange's revolutionary wing within his first decade, well before the regime's long survival was assured. The demobilisation preceded the long survival rather than resulting from it. A further note on coding: the inclusion of Pinochet and Suharto at Tier 2 is a broad classification judgement. Many scholars would classify both as military authoritarian (Pinochet) or developmental authoritarian (Suharto) without significant fascist ideological content. Their inclusion strengthens the demobilisation finding statistically (N=4 rather than N=2), but the sensitivity analysis in Section 4.8 tests the robustness of the finding to their exclusion.

**The paradox: fascism cannot survive as fascism.** The regimes that endured did so by becoming something else - conservative authoritarian systems that retained coercive control but shed the ideological engine that defines fascism. And even these eventually fell: Franco died and his regime dissolved within three years. Salazar was incapacitated in 1968 and the regime fell six years later. Suharto collapsed within weeks once an economic shock hit. Pinochet lost his own plebiscite. The demobilised authoritarian model extends lifespan but does not confer permanence - and it is available only to regimes willing to abandon the fascist project itself. This finding has a direct contemporary analogue: competitive authoritarian regimes such as Putin's Russia, Orbán's Hungary, and Erdoğan's Turkey have adopted precisely this demobilised, calibrated model and have survived significantly longer than the fascist median. Their relationship to the fascist lifecycle - and to the Trump project specifically - is examined in Section 6.4.

#### 4.5 Collapse mode distribution

The eighteen regimes terminated through five primary modes. War defeat accounts for eight cases (44 per cent) as the primary cause. If war-precipitated coups are included (Romania's 1944 royal coup was triggered by advancing Soviet forces), the

war-related total rises to nine cases (50 per cent). Internal coups or military pressure account for three further cases (17 per cent): Perón's Argentina, Vargas's Brazil, and the Greek Junta. Revolution or mass protest accounts for two (11 per cent): the Carnation Revolution in Portugal and Suharto's fall in Indonesia. Negotiated transition accounts for two (11 per cent): Franco's Spain and Pinochet's Chile. Leader death or foreign annexation accounts for two (11 per cent): Metaxas and Austrofascism.

A rigorous reviewer would ask whether the war-defeat cluster is a structural finding or a WWII confound. The counter-argument is threefold. First, the expansionism that led to war was endogenous to fascist ideology - these regimes chose war because their doctrines demanded it. Second, the two Tier 1 regimes were the primary instigators of the war, not passive victims of it. Third, the post-WWII cases replicate the same structural patterns without a world war: the Greek Junta fell through overreach (Cyprus), Suharto through economic crisis and mass protest, Pinochet through a plebiscite, Perón through a military coup. The mechanisms differ, but the structural logic - rigidity, brittleness, inability to absorb shocks - is identical.

#### **4.6 The succession problem**

No fascist regime in the dataset successfully institutionalised leadership succession while remaining fascist. The highest FRLI succession scores are 2 (Franco and Pinochet), both of whom prepared exits to non-fascist successor arrangements. The modal score is 0. This is a structural feature: fascism's hyper-personalisation of the leader creates an identity between the leader and the regime that makes institutionalised succession functionally impossible. When the leader exits - through death, deposition, or incapacity - the regime either collapses immediately or enters a terminal crisis. The three cases where succession occurred (Franco → Juan Carlos, Salazar → Caetano, Suharto's New Order institutions) all involved transitions to explicitly non-fascist arrangements, and all three successor arrangements collapsed within years.

#### **4.7 Overreach-to-collapse timing**

Where a specific peak overreach event can be dated - the decision or act that committed the regime to the confrontation that destroyed it - the interval from that event to regime collapse is strikingly short. This analysis draws on a subsample of seven cases (N=7) where the triggering event is clearly identifiable; the selection necessarily favours cases with dramatic, datable overreach acts and may therefore bias toward fast collapses. With that caveat, the mean interval from peak overreach to collapse is 2.9 years.

Italy entered World War II in June 1940 and fell in July 1943 (3 years). Germany invaded Poland in September 1939 and surrendered in May 1945 (5.7 years - the longest, reflecting extraordinary military-industrial capacity). Japan attacked Pearl

Harbor in December 1941 and surrendered in August 1945 (3.7 years). Romania committed to the Eastern Front in June 1941 and was couped in August 1944 (3.2 years). Croatia was created as a puppet state in April 1941 and fell in May 1945 (4 years). The Arrow Cross seized power in October 1944 and was conquered in April 1945 (6 months). The Greek Junta launched its Cyprus coup in July 1974 and collapsed within days. The pattern is consistent: once a fascist regime commits to the expansionist act its ideology demands, the release phase runs fast.

#### 4.8 Sensitivity analyses

Three sensitivity tests assess the robustness of the core findings to coding decisions on borderline cases.

**Test 1: Excluding Horthy's Hungary.** Removing the borderline Horthy regime (N=17) reduces the overall median from 8.5 to 8.0 years, the overall mean from 13.9 to 13.3, and the non-demobilised regime mean from 8.8 to 7.7. The proportion lasting under 10 years rises from 56 per cent to 59 per cent. All core findings are strengthened.

**Test 2: Japan dated from 1936 instead of 1931.** Using the February 26 Incident as Japan's start date reduces its duration from 14 to 9 years. The overall median remains 8.5 years; the overall mean drops from 13.9 to 13.6. The high-overreach group mean drops from 9.2 to 8.4 years. Core findings unchanged.

**Test 3: Both adjustments combined.** Excluding Horthy and dating Japan from 1936 (N=17): median 8.0 years, mean 13.0 years, 65 per cent under 10 years (versus 56 per cent in the base case). All core findings strengthened: the patterns are robust to the most plausible alternative codings.

**Test 4: Strict demobilisation coding (excluding Pinochet and Suharto).** The inclusion of Pinochet's Chile and Suharto's Indonesia at Tier 2 is a broad classification judgement; many scholars would classify both as military or developmental authoritarian without significant fascist ideological content. If they are excluded from the demobilised category entirely, the demobilised set shrinks to Franco and Salazar only (N=2). Even with this minimal sample, the Mann-Whitney U test remains significant:  $U = 28.0$ ,  $p = 0.016$ . This is because Franco (36 years) and Salazar (41 years) each exceed every single non-demobilised regime in the dataset - the highest non-demobilised duration is Horthy at 24 years (itself a borderline case). When Pinochet and Suharto are reclassified into the non-demobilised group rather than simply excluded (N=2 versus N=16), the result is similarly robust:  $U = 32.0$ ,  $p = 0.015$ . The demobilisation finding therefore survives the strictest plausible coding: even if the only 'demobilised' regimes are the two that demobilised earliest and most completely, they still occupy the top of the entire duration distribution. The statistical test corroborates the qualitative finding at every level of coding stringency.

## 5. Theoretical integration: fascism as a rigidity trap in the adaptive cycle

The empirical findings in Section 4 describe *what* happens to fascist regimes. The adaptive cycle framework explains *why*. In my *Foresight* paper (Ahmed, 2024), I developed the planetary phase shift model by applying Holling and Gunderson's adaptive cycle at the civilisational scale, mapping empirical trends - stagnating economic growth, diminishing energy returns, political fragmentation, ecological destabilisation - onto the late conservation and early release phases of the cycle. The same framework, applied at the scale of individual political regimes, provides a coherent theoretical explanation for the patterns observed in the fascist lifecycle dataset.

### 5.1 Fascist regimes as conservation-phase systems

In Holling's adaptive cycle, the conservation (K) phase is characterised by increasing internal connectivity, efficiency, and rigidity. The system becomes highly adapted to its current environment, maximising control at the expense of flexibility. Resources and energy that were previously distributed across diverse pathways become locked into a few dominant structures.

Fascist regimes are political systems that drive themselves into a deep conservation phase with deliberate intensity. The single-party state eliminates the diversity of political expression. Total social mobilisation locks societal energy into a single ideological channel. Economic corporatism or autarky reduces the redundancy of market mechanisms. The cult of the leader concentrates decision-making into a single node. The suppression of dissent eliminates the feedback mechanisms that would allow the system to detect and respond to changing conditions.

Every variable in the FRLI can be understood as a measure of how deeply the regime has driven itself into the conservation phase. The result is exactly what Holling's framework predicts: a system that appears powerful and stable but is structurally brittle. The conservation phase trades resilience for efficiency. The forest suppresses the small fires and accumulates deadwood. The fascist state suppresses opposition and accumulates rigidity. When the shock comes, the system cannot absorb it.

#### 5.1a Consolidating versus predatory capture: a critical distinction

The FRLI's institutional capture variable, as originally designed, measures the completeness of a regime's control over state institutions. This implicitly assumes a consolidating model of capture – the regime seizes institutions and redirects their capacity toward regime purposes. Nazi Germany captured the judiciary and made it serve the regime. Franco captured the military and used it to enforce order. Orbán captured the Hungarian media and turned it into a propaganda apparatus. In each case, the captured institution still functions – it functions in the regime's interest

rather than the public interest, but its competence is preserved because the regime needs it to govern.

The Trump 2.0 project has introduced a structurally distinct phenomenon that the FRLI framework must accommodate: predatory capture. In this model, state institutions are not seized and repurposed but cannibalised – their expertise destroyed, their workforce scattered, their regulatory capacity eliminated – while the oligarchic interests driving the process extract private value from the destruction itself. The regulators investigating your companies are fired. The agencies overseeing your contracts are gutted. The consumer protection bureau that would police your payment platform is shuttered. The inspectors general auditing your government work are dismissed. The institutional capacity that took decades to build is liquidated, and the resulting regulatory vacuum accrues directly to the financial benefit of the actors who dismantled it.

This distinction matters for the adaptive cycle framework. Consolidating capture deepens the conservation phase: it increases internal connectivity and control, making the system rigid but functional. Predatory capture produces a different dynamic – it destroys the very state capacity the regime needs to sustain itself. The regime seizes power over hollowed-out institutions that can no longer deliver services, manage complexity, or project competence. It is the political equivalent of an autoimmune disorder: the regime's own apparatus destroys the body it inhabits. In Holling's terms, predatory capture accelerates the release phase by stripping the system of the residual competence that might otherwise slow the breakdown.

The DOGE operation in the United States represents the most extensive case of predatory capture in any major democracy. By March 2026, approximately 9 per cent of the civilian federal workforce – over 200,000 positions – had been eliminated. Entire agencies have been functionally destroyed (USAID, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau). More than one million federal workers lost their collective bargaining rights. The Office of Personnel Management finalised Schedule Policy/Career regulations in February 2026, stripping civil service protections from an estimated 50,000 policy-influencing positions – effectively converting career professionals into at-will employees who can be dismissed for political disloyalty. The administration simultaneously pursued illegal impoundment of congressionally appropriated funds on a scale not seen since the Nixon era, with the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities documenting the administration running approximately \$26 billion behind the expected pace of 2025 spending commitments by July – concentrated in programmes it had targeted for elimination.

The oligarchic dimension is structurally unprecedented. The world's richest man was granted operational control over the dismantlement process while his companies – Tesla, SpaceX, Neuralink, X, The Boring Company – were under active investigation by at least eleven federal agencies. Senate investigators documented that DOGE directed or influenced funding and staffing decisions at many of the agencies

investigating Musk's companies. The NLRB, which had active cases against SpaceX, Tesla, and X, was shut down. FDA employees overseeing Neuralink were fired. The CFPB, which would regulate Musk's planned payments platform, was effectively shuttered. The DOJ dropped its discrimination case against SpaceX. Simultaneously, SpaceX continued to accumulate government contracts worth tens of billions of dollars, including for the Golden Dome missile defence system. Peer-reviewed scholarship in *Science as Culture* (2026) has described this as an innovation in the autocrat-oligarch relationship: the oligarch operating inside government with a parallel civil service, hollowing out institutions and reinventing them around privately-controlled, data-driven logics.

The consequences for state capacity are already severe and in some domains irreversible. The administration was forced to rehire workers it had fired after discovering it had eliminated critical capabilities – including personnel combating H5N1 avian influenza and staff managing nuclear security. NASA whistleblowers warned of potential astronaut deaths from the staffing cuts. The IRS experienced its worst filing season since the pandemic. Veterans' healthcare faces the loss of up to 35,000 positions including doctors and nurses. This is institutional knowledge accumulated over decades – relationships, regulatory expertise, scientific competence – that cannot be reconstituted by hiring inexperienced replacements screened for political loyalty.

The analytical consequence is that the Trump project's institutional capture score must be read as a composite of two countervailing processes. In terms of power seized – the unitary executive doctrine, the Supreme Court's systematic enabling, the regulatory elimination, the appropriations sabotage – the score approaches 4/5. In terms of effective institutional control – the ability to govern competently, deliver services, and sustain the regime's own functioning – it may be closer to 2/5, because capacity is being destroyed rather than harnessed. The revised score of 3/5 represents the midpoint of this paradox: significant institutional capture that is simultaneously self-undermining. The predatory character of the capture does not make the regime less dangerous in the short term – it makes it more dangerous, because a regime that cannot govern competently but retains the power to destroy is the worst of both worlds. But it does make the regime structurally less viable over the medium term, because it is consuming the institutional substrate it would need to consolidate durable control.

## **5.2 Overreach as a release trigger**

In the adaptive cycle, the transition from conservation to release is triggered by a perturbation that exceeds the system's reduced capacity to absorb shocks. In fascist systems, the perturbation is characteristically self-generated. Expansionist overreach - the invasion, the foreign war, the ideological confrontation with powerful adversaries - is the shock that triggers the release phase. And it is endogenous: fascist ideology's doctrines of struggle and civilisational emergency functionally

require an expanding confrontation with external enemies. The regime cannot remain fascist without escalating, and it cannot survive the consequences of escalation.

The 2.9-year mean from peak overreach to collapse (N=7, with the selection caveats noted in Section 4.7) is consistent with Holling's observation that the release phase is characteristically rapid - much faster than the slow accumulation of the conservation phase.

### 5.3 The demobilisation paradox as phase transition

The long survivors - Franco, Salazar, Suharto, Pinochet - can be understood as regimes that pulled back from the deepest conservation phase. By demobilising society, reducing ideological intensity, and avoiding expansionist confrontation, they moved their systems to a shallower conservation phase and retained some residual resilience. They introduced economic diversity. They reduced internal connectivity by allowing some institutional autonomy. They lowered the energy locked into ideological mobilisation.

In adaptive cycle terms, these regimes underwent a partial phase transition - from deep K-phase fascism to a shallower K-phase conventional authoritarianism. This bought them time, but not permanence, because even the shallower conservation phase eventually met its perturbation: the financial crisis that hit Suharto, the colonial wars that broke Salazar, the plebiscite that Pinochet lost.

The crucial theoretical point is that *the only path to long-term survival for a fascist regime requires ceasing to be fascist*. Fascism is a system that generates its own release trigger. It is, in Holling's terms, a rigidity trap that manufactures its own perturbation.

Contemporary competitive authoritarian regimes - examined in Section 6.4 - occupy precisely this shallower K-phase. They are the modern equivalent of Franco's post-Falange Spain or Salazar's austere Estado Novo: authoritarian systems that have pulled back from the deepest conservation phase, retained some institutional flexibility, and consequently achieved longer lifespans. The theoretical framework predicts that they will eventually face their own perturbation - and Putin's Russia, which escalated from the shallower phase into deep overreach with the 2022 Ukraine invasion, may be demonstrating exactly that process in real time.

### 5.4 Panarchy: the nested-systems dimension

Holling and Gunderson's concept of panarchy - nested adaptive cycles operating at different scales and speeds - adds a further dimension. Fascist regimes are nested within larger systems: the international order, the global economy, alliance structures. The FRLI variable 'external environment permissiveness' captures this. The 1930s offered a window of exceptional permissiveness; once that window

closed with Allied mobilisation, external pressure accelerated the release phase to catastrophic speed. This panarchy lens is critical for the contemporary application, because - as I have argued across my published work - global industrial civilisation is itself in the release phase of its adaptive cycle.

## 6. Application: the Trump 2.0 project in comparative perspective

### 6.1 Classification: a Tier 4 / Tier 2 hybrid

The Trump 2.0 administration (January 2025-present) is best classified as a Tier 4 neo-fascist movement (MAGA, the Project 2025 network, the Heritage Foundation and allied organisations) that has achieved partial state power and is attempting to fascistise a still-pluralist state apparatus - a Tier 4 project attempting a Tier 2 transformation. It has not achieved the total institutional capture that would qualify it as a full Tier 2 fascistised regime.

### 6.2 FRLI profile analysis

The analytical priority is the Trump project's FRLI *profile* - the shape of its scores across variables - rather than its total score. The total (19/40) happens to be close to Antonescu's Romania, Ustaše Croatia, and Arrow Cross Hungary, but this proximity is misleading: those regimes achieved their scores through high ideology and high mobilisation with minimal economic base, while Trump's score is dominated by ideology and overreach with a strong economic base, significant but predatory institutional capture, and a hostile external environment. It is the profile – and in particular the predatory character of the institutional capture – that determines the trajectory.

**Ideological intensity: 4/5.** The 2025 National Security Strategy codifies civilisational-racialised nationalism at the level of state doctrine. The NSS warns of Europe's 'civilisational erasure' from migration and demographic change, expresses concern that NATO members may become 'majority non-European', and directs US diplomacy to 'cultivate resistance' within allied democracies. Combined with the palingenetic framing ('a new golden age'), the authoritarian social programme (elimination of DEI, enforcement of binary sex definitions in federal law), and the glorification of militarised borders, the ideological signature is squarely in the fascist-adjacent zone.

**Institutional capture: 3/5 (revised upward from initial assessment).** The Trump project has advanced institutional capture significantly further than early assessments anticipated – but in a predatory rather than consolidating mode (see Section 5.1a). At the apex of the institutional structure, the Supreme Court is functioning as an active enabler of executive power consolidation: an 8-1 ruling in July 2025 cleared the path for mass workforce reductions, and the Court has signalled its readiness to overturn the 1935 Humphrey's Executor precedent, which would eliminate for-cause removal protections for the heads of all independent agencies. The unitary executive theory is being advanced through a coordinated campaign of at-will firings of independent agency heads, a sweeping executive directive ('Ensuring Accountability for All Agencies'), and Supreme Court cases whose outcomes appear predetermined by the Court's conservative supermajority.

At the level of the civil service, the DOGE operation eliminated approximately 9 per cent of the federal workforce – over 200,000 positions – by March 2026. Schedule Policy/Career (the successor to Schedule F) took effect on 9 March 2026, stripping civil service protections from an estimated 50,000 positions. The administration has pursued systematic illegal impoundment of congressionally appropriated funds, effectively seizing the power of the purse from the legislature. The score remains at 3 rather than 4 because the capture is contested, chaotic, and in critical respects self-undermining. Lower federal courts continue to resist, even when overridden by the Supreme Court. State-level federalism provides a hard structural brake, with governors and state attorneys general sustaining litigation. Congress, while weakened, has demonstrated bipartisan capacity to reject the administration's most extreme budget proposals. The media remains pluralist. And critically, the predatory character of the capture means the regime is destroying competence rather than co-opting it – a qualitatively different and structurally less durable form of institutional capture than the patient co-optation achieved by competitive authoritarian regimes. Nazi Germany reached 5/5 within eighteen months through consolidating capture; the Trump project has reached 3/5 in fifteen months through predatory capture, and the difference in method carries a fundamentally different prognosis.

**Elite coalition breadth: 2/5.** Business elites are split. Military leadership has not aligned. Congressional Republicans are fractured between MAGA loyalists and institutionalists. Corporate legal counsel is flagging DEI rollbacks as operationally disruptive. There is no equivalent of the broad elite coalitions that sustained Franco (military + Church + monarchy + business) or Suharto (military + technocrats + business).

**Mass mobilisation: 3/5.** The MAGA movement commands a genuine mass base with significant mobilisation capacity - rallies, a media ecosystem spanning Fox News to podcasts and social media, and online organising infrastructure. This falls short of total-society penetration but significantly exceeds the mobilisation capacity of demobilised Tier 2 regimes.

**External environment permissiveness: 1/5.** Historically unusual and structurally devastating. The 2025 NSS triggered immediate counter-mobilisation from democratic allies. European governments and media have framed the NSS as ideological warfare against the EU. British MPs from multiple parties have publicly compared its language to 1930s far-right rhetoric. EU officials have called for deeper integration and strategic autonomy as a hedge against American unpredictability. Poland's justice minister has argued for stronger EU defence explicitly in response to Trump's unpredictable strategy. There is no equivalent of the 1930s appeasement window.

**Expansionist overreach: 3/5.** The NSS declares ideological war on allied democracies - a form of expansionism that, while not military in the traditional sense, represents a deliberate confrontation with the international order on which US power

depends. The border militarisation programme and legally contested troop deployments add a domestic dimension. The project is picking simultaneous fights with domestic institutions, its own security periphery, and its core allies.

**Succession mechanism: 0/5.** Hyper-personalised around Trump. No institutional succession pathway. The NSS brands policy so tightly with Trump's worldview that it will likely be repudiated wholesale by any successor.

**Economic model viability: 3/5.** The US economy remains the world's largest and most diversified. However, the tariff programme, institutional disruption, and international confrontations are self-inflicted damage.

### 6.3 The transatlantic dimension: the NSS as network-war doctrine

The 2025 National Security Strategy's Europe chapter merits specific analysis because it represents, in effect, the codification of a transnational neo-fascist network-war strategy at the level of official state doctrine. The NSS explicitly commits the United States to 'cultivating resistance to Europe's current trajectory within European nations' and to supporting what it terms 'patriotic' European parties - language that analysts at the Stimson Center, Brookings, and in European parliamentary debate have interpreted as state-backed promotion of the far-right nationalist movements that form the transatlantic network documented in my book *Alt Reich*.

The European response has been swift and hostile. Time magazine reported analysts describing the NSS as advancing 'civilisational primacy'. The Guardian reported British MPs warning that the Europe section deploys 'extreme rightwing tropes reminiscent of the 1930s'. Hungary's Viktor Orbán praised the NSS as recognising Europe's 'civilisation-scale decline' - aligning it with his long-standing narrative. Germany's AfD explicitly latched onto the 'civilisational erasure' framing, planning deeper coordination with MAGA Republicans. By contrast, more electorally pragmatic nationalist parties (France's RN, Spain's Vox, Italy's Brothers of Italy) have kept distance, recognising that open alignment with Trump is toxic with their domestic electorates. The toxicity of the MAGA brand in European electoral politics was demonstrated decisively in Hungary's April 2026 election: Vice President Vance's visit to Budapest on 7 April and President Trump's personal endorsement of Orbán appear to have been counterproductive, with Orbán's Fidesz losing to Péter Magyar's pro-European Tisza party. The transatlantic network-war strategy was tested and failed at its strongest node.

The panarchy dimension is critical here. The NSS has provoked European calls for deeper integration, independent defence capacity, and counter-disinformation measures - precisely the kind of cross-scale counter-mobilisation that the adaptive cycle framework predicts when a subsystem's rigidity threatens the larger system's coherence.

### 6.4 Competitive authoritarianism: the survival model MAGA cannot adopt

The fascist lifecycle dataset deliberately excludes a category of authoritarian regime that is directly relevant to the contemporary analysis: competitive authoritarian or ‘electoral autocratic’ systems. These include Putin’s Russia (2000-present, approximately 26 years), Erdoğan’s Turkey (2003-present, approximately 23 years), Orbán’s Hungary (2010-2026, 16 years, terminated by electoral defeat), and Chávez/Maduro’s Venezuela (1999-present, approximately 27 years). They are excluded from the FRLI dataset because they are structurally distinct from fascist regimes as classified by the comparative politics literature - but their relationship to the Trump project requires examination.

Competitive authoritarian regimes share several features with fascist systems: institutional capture of the judiciary and media, personalised leadership, suppression of opposition, and nationalist or civilisational rhetoric. To clarify the structural comparison, Table 2 presents ballpark FRLI scores for four major competitive authoritarian regimes alongside the fascist dataset averages and the Trump 2.0 profile. These scores are indicative rather than definitive - competitive authoritarian systems were not the primary targets of the FRLI framework - but they illuminate the structural differences that explain the divergent survivability outcomes.

Regime / comparator	Type	Ideology	Institutional capture	Elite coalition	Mass mobility	Ext. perm.	Overreach	Success	Economy	Total	Yrs
Russia (Putin)	CA	3	4	4	1	2	4	1	2	21/40	~26
Turkey (Erdoğan)	CA	3	4	3	3	3	2	0	2	20/40	~23
Hungary (Orbán)	CA	3	4	4	2	3	1	0	3	20/40	16
Venezuela (Chávez/Maduro)	CA	3	4	2	3	1	0	1	1	15/40	~27
---	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
CA mean	-	3	4	3.3	2.3	2.3	1.8	0.5	2	19/40	-
Fascist short-lived mean (<10 yrs, N=10)	-	3.3	3.1	2.2	2.6	1.6	1.8	0.1	1.3	16/40	-
Fascist demobilised mean (N=4)	-	2.3	4	3.5	1.5	3.3	1	1	2.8	19/40	-

Trump 2.0 (2025-)	T4	4	3	2	3	1	3	0	3	19/40	Active
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*Table 2: Competitive authoritarian regimes scored against the FRLI framework, with fascist dataset averages and Trump 2.0 for comparison. CA = competitive authoritarian. Scores are indicative ballpark assessments. See text for scoring rationale and caveats. Trump 2.0 institutional capture revised upward from 2 to 3 at publication to reflect developments through March 2026, including the Supreme Court's 8-1 ruling enabling workforce reductions, the finalisation of Schedule Policy/Career, and the elimination of approximately 9 per cent of the civilian federal workforce. See Section 5.1a for the distinction between predatory and consolidating capture.*

The table reveals the structural differences sharply. Competitive authoritarian regimes score comparably to the fascist demobilised survivors on institutional capture (mean 4.0 versus 4.0) and elite coalition breadth (3.3 versus 3.5) - these are the variables that sustain regimes over time. They diverge critically on mass mobilisation (2.3 versus 1.5 for demobilised fascist regimes - both low, but CA regimes retain slightly more electoral mobilisation capacity) and on overreach (1.8 mean, dragged up by Putin's post-2022 score of 4; excluding Russia, the CA overreach mean drops to 1.0).

Trump 2.0 diverges from the competitive authoritarian profile on exactly the variables that determine survivability. His institutional capture (3, revised upward at publication) has closed the gap with the CA mean (4.0) – but the character of that capture is fundamentally different. Competitive authoritarian regimes achieve institutional capture through patient, competence-preserving co-optation: Orbán spent years gradually replacing judges, media owners, and civil servants with loyalists who could still operate the machinery of government. The Trump project has achieved its score through predatory capture – mass firings, agency destruction, and oligarchic cannibalisation of regulatory capacity – which degrades the very institutional infrastructure a durable regime requires (see Section 5.1a). A score of 3 achieved through predatory capture is structurally less durable than a score of 3 achieved through consolidating capture, because the captured institutions can no longer perform the functions the regime needs them to perform. His mass mobilisation (3) remains above the CA mean (2.3) – he is mobilising when the survival model demands demobilisation. His overreach (3) exceeds every competitive authoritarian case except post-2022 Russia – which is itself now exhibiting the crisis dynamics the fascist dataset predicts for high-overreach regimes. His external permissiveness (1) is the lowest in either dataset – competitive authoritarian regimes typically maintain enough international relationships to avoid concerted counter-mobilisation.

The critical difference lies in two variables.

The first is mass mobilisation. Competitive authoritarian regimes deliberately *demobilise* their populations. Putin does not want revolutionary fervour; he wants political apathy, consumerism, and passive acquiescence. United Russia is a bureaucratic vehicle for managed elections, not a mass movement generating

permanent civilisational struggle. Orbán mobilises electorally but does not pursue total-society penetration; between elections, Hungarian civil society is constrained but not absorbed into a single ideological channel. Erdoğan's AKP has a genuine mass base, but it operates within an electoral framework that still permits genuine competition - Erdoğan nearly lost the 2023 presidential election.

The second is calibrated overreach. Orbán was the paradigm case of strategic restraint: he confronted the EU ideologically but avoided any action that would trigger Article 7 proceedings or loss of structural funds. He punched within his weight. Erdoğan conducts military operations in Syria and Libya but calibrates them to avoid direct confrontation with NATO allies or Russia simultaneously. Putin's Russia is the exception that proves the rule - his full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 scored 4 on the overreach variable, and the fascist lifecycle dataset's prediction for high-overreach regimes is unambiguous: mean survival from peak overreach to collapse is 2.9 years. The Russian regime's trajectory since 2022 - economic contraction under sanctions, military attrition, increasing internal repression, Wagner Group mutiny - is consistent with the entry into a release phase that the dataset would predict.

**The fall of Orbán: a real-time test of the framework.** At the time of this report's publication, Orbán's Fidesz lost the Hungarian parliamentary election of 12 April 2026 to Péter Magyar's Tisza party, ending sixteen years of continuous rule. This outcome has immediate analytical significance for the report's argument. Orbán was the competitive authoritarian regime in the dataset with the lowest overreach score (1/5) and the most disciplined calibration strategy. His fall was not triggered by military defeat, foreign invasion, or revolutionary uprising - it was an electoral defeat driven by accumulated economic grievance (inflation, frozen EU funds, stagnating living standards), corruption revelations, and crucially, the regime's deepening association with Russia. Leaked recordings of the Hungarian foreign minister sharing confidential EU documents with Russia's Lavrov, and reports that Russia's SVR proposed staging a false flag assassination attempt on Orbán to boost his electoral prospects, shattered the carefully maintained façade of sovereign pragmatism.

Two features of Orbán's defeat are particularly significant for the analysis. First, it demonstrates that even the most disciplined competitive authoritarian model cannot survive indefinitely - the demobilisation that extended his regime's lifespan also meant he lacked the mass-mobilisation infrastructure to defend against an electoral challenge once it materialised, replicating exactly the dynamic observed with Suharto's Indonesia (economic shock exposes the hollowness of demobilised control). Second, the failure of the Trump administration's intervention is analytically telling. Vice President Vance's visit to Budapest on 7 April 2026 and President Trump's personal endorsement of Orbán appear to have been electorally counterproductive - public frustration with the Iran war and its economic consequences made the MAGA brand toxic with Hungarian swing voters. The transatlantic network-war strategy documented in the 2025 NSS was tested in real

time in Hungary and failed. The MAGA project's key institutional node within the European Union has been removed by the very electoral mechanism that competitive authoritarianism preserves as its legitimising shell.

The analytically critical point is this: competitive authoritarian regimes represent the survival pathway that the Trump project would need to adopt to achieve long-term viability. They survive by operating within the shell of democratic institutions while hollowing them out gradually. They hold elections. They maintain judicial façades. They demobilise rather than mobilise. They calibrate confrontation rather than escalating it. In adaptive cycle terms, they occupy a shallower conservation phase - rigid enough to maintain control, flexible enough to absorb shocks - which is precisely the configuration associated with longer regime duration in the fascist dataset.

The MAGA project is structurally incapable of adopting this model. Its identity is constituted by permanent mobilisation, civilisational confrontation, and escalating overreach. The rallies, the grievance cycle, the enemy-of-the-day media ecosystem, the Great Replacement framing in the NSS, the simultaneous confrontation with domestic institutions and international allies - these are the defining features of the project, not incidental qualities that could be shed while retaining its core. MAGA cannot become Orbánism because Orbánism requires the patience, institutional gradualism, and strategic restraint that MAGA's ideological engine specifically rejects. And as Hungary's April 2026 election demonstrates, even Orbánism itself - the most disciplined competitive authoritarian model in the European dataset - ultimately could not survive the electoral mechanism it preserved as its legitimising shell.

The alliance between MAGA and the competitive authoritarian network - the Trump-Orbán-Putin axis documented in the NSS and in my book *Alt Reich* - is real and consequential. They share rhetoric, coordinate strategy, and reinforce each other's narratives. Orbán's praise for the NSS, the AfD's alignment with MAGA language, Putin's geopolitical interest in a weakened transatlantic alliance: these are genuine features of the current landscape. But they are building structurally different things - and the structures have different lifespans. Orbán built a durable electoral autocracy within the EU's institutional constraints and sustained it for sixteen years; it was nonetheless destroyed by its own electorate once his Russia alignment became electorally toxic. Putin is running a petro-state security apparatus now under acute stress from the Ukraine overreach. The Trump project is attempting to build a fascist mobilisation machine inside a federal democracy - a configuration that the historical dataset identifies as the fastest path to self-destruction. The loss of the Orbán node from this network is itself a significant structural blow: it removes the MAGA project's most important institutional foothold within the EU at exactly the moment the NSS strategy depends on cultivating resistance inside European democracies.

The competitive authoritarian comparator therefore strengthens rather than weakens the report's central finding. Regimes that adopt the demobilised, calibrated, institutionally patient model can survive for decades. Regimes that maintain fascist ideological intensity, permanent mobilisation, and escalating overreach cannot. The Trump project is attempting the latter while the structural environment demands the former.

## **6.5 Scenario analysis**

**Scenario A: Degradation and correction (historically most probable, timeline uncertain).** Historical analogues: Greek Junta, Antonescu, Suharto. The project's combination of high overreach, predatory institutional capture, and hostile external environment produces compounding dysfunction that triggers correction – but the timeline is less certain than a simple 'single-term rollback' prediction would suggest. The predatory capture of the federal government has already inflicted severe damage on state capacity, and the Supreme Court's enabling of unitary executive power has created structural precedents that will outlast this administration. The correction may come through electoral defeat (2026 mid-terms, 2028 presidential election), through an economic or security crisis that exposes the hollowness of cannibalised institutions (the Suharto pattern), or through elite defection as the costs of dysfunction accumulate on Republican-aligned constituencies. The historical dataset indicates that regimes with this FRLI profile do not survive long – but the specific mechanism and timing of correction cannot be predicted from the structural variables alone. What the data does indicate is that the predatory character of the capture accelerates the timeline relative to consolidating-capture regimes: a regime that is destroying its own institutional substrate is compounding its perturbation risk with every month it operates.

**Scenario B: Hybridisation and long tail (plausible, and potentially the most consequential).** Historical analogues: post-1945 neo-fascist movements (MSI, Front National); post-Orbán Hungary as an emerging case. The governing project is checked or removed, but the ideological infrastructure persists and may prove more durable than the governing project itself. A significant MAGA bloc remains embedded in the Republican Party, state governments, the judiciary (including Supreme Court precedents on unitary executive power), and the media-think-tank ecosystem. The structural damage inflicted during the predatory capture phase – the precedents set, the agencies destroyed, the civil service protections eliminated, the separation of powers weakened – creates a degraded institutional landscape that future authoritarian projects can exploit more easily. The 2025 NSS becomes a reference document for future far-right actors. In Europe, parties like the AfD treat the Trump years as validation. This scenario is particularly dangerous because it combines the removal of the most operationally chaotic elements of the current project with the persistence of the structural damage it has inflicted. The precedent that a president can fire independent agency heads at will, purge the civil service,

and illegally impound congressional appropriations – validated by Supreme Court rulings – permanently alters the constitutional equilibrium, regardless of who holds office next.

**Scenario C: Crisis-driven consolidation (low-to-moderate probability, high impact).** Historical analogue: a hybrid of Franco's crisis-leveraged consolidation and Putin's post-Beslan centralisation. A major external or domestic crisis – an economic shock from the Iran war and tariff regime, a security emergency, a pandemic in a gutted public health system – is leveraged to accelerate the transition from predatory to consolidating capture. Under emergency conditions, the administration shifts from destroying institutional capacity to redirecting what remains toward regime survival. This would require the MAGA project to do something it has thus far proven incapable of: governing with strategic discipline rather than ideological frenzy. The historical dataset suggests this transition is extremely difficult for movements with high ideological intensity and mass mobilisation – they cannot easily shift from revolutionary mode to administrative mode. However, the Supreme Court's systematic expansion of executive power has lowered the institutional barriers to this transition compared to any previous American administration. The probability remains low because the transition contradicts MAGA's constitutive identity, but it is not structurally impossible, and the institutional precedents being set are making it progressively easier for this or any future administration to attempt.

**Scenario D: Authoritarian persistence through institutional ruin (low probability, catastrophic impact).** This scenario is distinct from Scenario C. Rather than consolidation through competent crisis management, this pathway involves the regime maintaining power not because it has captured functioning institutions but because it has destroyed the institutional capacity that would otherwise constrain it. If the civil service is sufficiently purged, the independent agencies sufficiently gutted, the judiciary sufficiently captured, and the congressional power of the purse sufficiently neutralised, the regime may persist not through effective governance but through the absence of countervailing power – governing a degraded state through executive decree, oligarchic patronage networks, and the mobilisation of a loyal base. This is the kleptocratic trajectory that observers of post-Soviet systems have identified: a state that functions primarily as a vehicle for elite enrichment while basic services deteriorate. The historical fascist dataset offers no direct analogue because no fascist regime operated within a federal system with the structural depth of the United States. The competitive authoritarian dataset suggests that this model can persist for extended periods (Russia, Venezuela) – but at enormous cost to the population and with persistent vulnerability to the kind of economic shock or elite defection that eventually brought down Suharto. The probability is assessed as low because American federalism, an independent judiciary that retains significant capacity despite Supreme Court enabling of executive power, a pluralist media, and a population with deep democratic traditions create friction that this scenario requires overcoming. But the trajectory of events since January 2025 – the scale of the

federal workforce purge, the Supreme Court's expansion of executive power, the illegal seizure of the appropriations power, the oligarchic self-enrichment through regulatory destruction – has moved the structural environment closer to this scenario's preconditions than any previous assessment anticipated.

## 6.6 The structural mismatch: fascism in a release-phase system

A final observation connects the fascist lifecycle analysis to the broader planetary phase shift framework. As I argued in the *Foresight* paper and in *Phase Shift*, global industrial civilisation is in the release phase ( $\Omega$ ) of its adaptive cycle. The historical fascist regimes rose during the conservation phase of the previous civilisational cycle - a period of mature, rigid, but still-functional institutional infrastructure that fascist movements could capture and repurpose.

The Trump project faces a fundamentally different structural environment. It is attempting to impose a rigidity trap on a system already in release. The institutions it needs to capture are themselves degrading. The economic model it needs to sustain is itself under thermodynamic stress, as I documented through EROI analysis in *Failing States, Collapsing Systems*. The international order it needs to either dominate or accommodate is itself fragmenting. A rigidity-trap project launched during a release phase faces compounding headwinds: the system it is trying to freeze is already unfreezing.

The predatory capture dynamic identified in Section 5.1a adds a further dimension to this structural mismatch. Historical fascist regimes that rose during the conservation phase of the previous civilisational cycle could capture and repurpose functioning institutional infrastructure – the trains, the factories, the bureaucracies, the military-industrial complexes of mature industrial states. The Trump project is attempting to impose a rigidity trap on a system already in release, and it is doing so by destroying rather than capturing the institutional infrastructure it would need to sustain itself. It is cannibalising the state for oligarchic enrichment while the civilisational substrate that state was built to manage is itself degrading.

This produces a compounding vulnerability with no historical precedent. The regime is simultaneously: (a) locked into permanent mobilisation and escalating overreach by its ideological identity; (b) destroying the institutional competence it would need to manage the crises its overreach generates; (c) operating within a civilisational system whose energy-economic foundations are in structural decline, as I documented through EROI analysis in *Failing States, Collapsing Systems*; and (d) enriching a narrow oligarchic class whose interests are served by the destruction of public capacity rather than its preservation. Each of these dynamics reinforces the others. The overreach generates crises; the predatory capture eliminates the capacity to manage them; the civilisational release phase ensures that the crises will intensify regardless of policy; and the oligarchic extraction ensures that the

resources that might otherwise be redirected toward adaptation are siphoned into private accumulation.

The adaptive cycle framework predicts that this configuration – a rigidity trap built on institutional ruin during a release phase – will produce a faster and more chaotic breakdown than either the historical fascist dataset or the competitive authoritarian comparator would suggest in isolation. The damage inflicted in the interim, however, may prove more durable than the regime itself. Destroyed institutions, eliminated expertise, degraded public services, and weakened constitutional norms do not automatically reconstitute when the regime that destroyed them falls. The fire may burn itself out – but it leaves behind a landscape that will take a generation to restore.

## **7. Limitations and caveats**

The dataset is small (N=18), limiting statistical power. Non-parametric tests are appropriate but underpowered; the statistical results reported in Section 4 should be treated as corroborative evidence for qualitative findings, not standalone proof. The FRLI scoring was conducted by a single researcher using the operational criteria in Appendix A; inter-coder reliability has not been tested. The criteria are published in full to enable independent replication and scholarly challenge.

The WWII cluster means that a significant proportion of the dataset's variance is explained by one historical event. The endogeneity argument (fascism produces the wars) is strong but cannot be formally tested with this data. Post-WWII cases provide out-of-sample validation of the same structural patterns.

The exclusion of competitive authoritarian regimes (Russia, Turkey, Hungary, Venezuela) from the scored dataset is a deliberate analytical choice based on the structurally distinct character of these systems as classified in the comparative politics literature (Levitsky and Way, 2010). Their inclusion would conflate two different system types with different survivability dynamics. However, the boundary between fascist and competitive authoritarian systems is contested and can shift over time - a competitive authoritarian regime that radicalises its ideology and escalates its confrontations may cross the threshold into the fascist structural configuration, as Russia's post-2022 trajectory may illustrate. The analysis addresses these regimes as a comparator category in Section 6.4 rather than ignoring them, which the author considers more analytically honest than either excluding them silently or including them in a dataset built for a different system type.

The United States in 2025 is structurally unlike any previous case: a federal republic with deeply entrenched institutional checks, a nuclear-armed superpower, the global reserve currency issuer, and a society with a long democratic tradition. The historical patterns cannot mechanically predict its trajectory. What they can do is identify the structural configuration space within which the Trump project operates and assess whether that configuration has historically been associated with long or short regime duration.

The finding that fascist regimes are structurally brittle should not be mistaken for a counsel of complacency. Brittle systems can do enormous damage within their limited window. Nazi Germany lasted twelve years and killed tens of millions. The Arrow Cross lasted six months and oversaw the murder of tens of thousands. The finding is that fascist projects are structurally self-limiting - which is a different and more precise claim than saying they are harmless.

## 8. Conclusion

Every fascist regime that has ever existed is dead. The median lifespan is 8.5 years. More than half lasted less than a decade. The single strongest predictor of survival is institutional capture ( $p = 0.576$ ,  $p = 0.012$ ), and the sharpest divide in the dataset is between demobilised and non-demobilised regimes ( $p = 0.003$ ). High overreach functions as a survivability ceiling: no regime with an overreach score of 3 or above survived beyond 21 years, and once a regime commits to its peak overreach act, mean time to collapse is 2.9 years ( $N=7$ ).

The demobilisation paradox is the central finding: the only fascist-origin regimes that survived beyond two decades did so by ceasing to be operationally fascist. Fascism cannot survive as fascism. It is a rigidity trap that manufactures its own perturbation. Contemporary competitive authoritarian regimes - Russia, Turkey, Hungary, Venezuela - confirm the pattern from the other direction: authoritarian systems that adopt the demobilised, calibrated model achieve significantly longer lifespans, demonstrating that the fascist lifecycle is specific to the fascist structural configuration rather than a generic feature of all authoritarian rule.

Applied to Trump 2.0, the FRLI profile - high ideological intensity and overreach, significant but predatory institutional capture (3/5), hostile external environment – places the project in a structural configuration associated with poor survivability in the historical record, but with a critical qualification. The institutional capture achieved through the predatory model – the Supreme Court’s expansion of executive power, the mass purge of the civil service, the illegal seizure of congressional appropriations authority, the oligarchic cannibalisation of regulatory capacity – has inflicted structural damage to American democratic institutions that may outlast the regime that caused it. The competitive authoritarian survival model represents the pathway that could in theory extend the project’s lifespan - but it is structurally foreclosed to a movement constituted by permanent mobilisation and civilisational confrontation. MAGA cannot become Orbánism - and Orbánism itself has now been defeated electorally in Hungary, removing the MAGA project’s key EU institutional node and demonstrating that even the competitive authoritarian model offers no permanent refuge.

The most probable scenario remains degradation and correction driven by the compounding dysfunction of predatory capture, overreach, and hostile external environment – but the timeline is less certain than a simple single-term prediction would imply, and the damage already inflicted may prove more consequential than the regime’s own duration. The most dangerous scenario is not authoritarian lock-in through competent consolidation – which contradicts the MAGA project’s identity – but the persistence of a degraded institutional landscape in which future authoritarian projects can operate with fewer constraints. The precedents being set – that a president can purge the civil service for political loyalty, fire independent agency heads at will, ignore congressional appropriations, and enrich allied oligarchs

through the systematic destruction of their regulators – are structural changes to the American constitutional order that will require deliberate, sustained reconstruction to reverse. The Trump project is attempting to impose a fascist rigidity trap during a civilisational release phase, and it is doing so through predatory rather than consolidating capture – a configuration with no historical precedent and poor structural prognosis. The fascist lifecycle analysis suggests this project, like every one before it, carries within its own structure the mechanisms of its dissolution. The question is not only how much damage it does within the window it has, but how much of that damage proves irreversible – how deeply the institutional substrate is degraded before correction arrives. The fire is real. But the landscape it leaves behind will determine whether the seeds of reorganisation can take root or whether the ground has been salted.

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## Appendix A: FRLI operational scoring criteria

The following criteria define how each variable is scored from 0 to 5. Scores are assigned holistically based on the weight of evidence from the comparative politics literature; a regime need not meet every sub-criterion to receive a given score.

**Ideological intensity.** 0 = No fascist ideological content. 1 = Rhetorical nationalism without palingenetic or racialised elements. 2 = Nationalist authoritarianism with some fascist tropes (e.g. corporatism, anti-communism) but without systematic palingenetic vision. 3 = Substantial fascist ideology: palingenetic nationalism, cult of the leader, anti-liberal programme, but incomplete penetration of state and society. 4 = Pervasive fascist ideology across state institutions and public discourse, including racialised/civilisational threat narratives, but short of total societal saturation. 5 = Total ideological saturation: every aspect of state and society is defined by fascist doctrine (e.g. Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy).

**Institutional capture.** 0 = No institutional capture beyond electoral office-holding. 1 = Control of executive branch only; judiciary, civil service, military, and media remain independent. 2 = Partial capture: some institutions co-opted, others resisting. Active litigation and bureaucratic obstruction constrain the regime. 3 = Substantial capture: majority of major institutions aligned or co-opted, but pockets of independence remain (e.g. some judicial independence, some press freedom). 4 = Near-total capture: all major institutions aligned; opposition operates only underground or in exile. 5 = Total capture: single-party control of judiciary, military, civil service, media, and education (e.g. Nazi Germany after 1934).

**Elite coalition breadth.** 0 = No elite support beyond the regime's own cadres. 1 = Support from one elite sector only (e.g. military only). 2 = Support from two elite sectors, with significant opposition from others. 3 = Moderate coalition: three or more elite sectors aligned, but with visible fractures or conditional support. 4 = Broad coalition: military, business, church/religious establishment, and traditional elites aligned with the regime. 5 = Near-universal elite alignment across all major sectors.

**Mass mobilisation capacity.** 0 = No mobilisation infrastructure. 1 = Periodic rallies or events without permanent organisation. 2 = A media ecosystem and regular mass events, but no penetration of daily life. 3 = Significant mobilisation infrastructure: rallies, media networks, online organising, and some paramilitary or youth activity. 4 = Deep penetration: party organisations in workplaces, schools, and neighbourhoods; state-directed youth movements; paramilitary structures. 5 = Total-society mobilisation: every institution and social space is a site of political mobilisation (e.g. the Nazi system of Hitler Youth, KdF, DAF, party cells in every workplace).

**External environment permissiveness.** 0 = Active international hostility: major powers are containing, sanctioning, or counter-mobilising against the regime. 1 = Significant international opposition from core allies or major powers; regime's

international position is deteriorating. 2 = Mixed environment: some international support, some opposition; no consensus against the regime. 3 = Moderately permissive: major powers are appeasing, distracted, or divided; regime faces no concerted international opposition. 4 = Highly permissive: allied or sympathetic great powers; regime benefits from international support or indifference. 5 = Maximally permissive: the regime is part of a dominant international coalition or faces no significant external constraints.

**Expansionist overreach.** 0 = Deliberate strategic restraint; no territorial, military, or ideological expansion. 1 = Minor confrontations or limited territorial claims that do not threaten the international order. 2 = Moderate expansion: regional military operations or ideological confrontation with secondary powers. 3 = Significant overreach: military or ideological confrontation with major powers or core allies; multiple simultaneous confrontations. 4 = Major overreach: large-scale military expansionism or civilisational-struggle ideology targeting multiple adversaries simultaneously. 5 = Maximum overreach: full-scale expansionist war against the international order (e.g. Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, Japan's Pacific war).

**Succession mechanism.** 0 = No succession mechanism; regime identity is inseparable from the founding leader. 1 = Vague or informal succession arrangement (e.g. a designated heir without institutional backing). 2 = A formal succession mechanism exists but has not been tested and involves transition to a non-fascist successor arrangement. 3-5 = Theoretical scores for increasingly institutionalised succession; no regime in the dataset scores above 2.

**Economic model viability.** 0 = Complete dependence on war economy, external subsidy, or occupied-territory extraction; collapse is inevitable without ongoing military expansion. 1 = Economy is functional but fragile; dependent on autarky, commodity exports, or single-patron support. 2 = Economy generates some independent growth but has significant structural weaknesses (debt, autarky, labour repression). 3 = Economy is moderately diversified and capable of growth; vulnerabilities exist but are manageable in the medium term. 4 = Strong, diversified economy integrated into international markets. 5 = Fully self-sustaining economy with robust growth, diversified trade, and strong institutions.

## Appendix B: Full tabular dataset

Table B1 presents the complete dataset in a format suitable for replication and further analysis. All eighteen regimes are listed with start and end dates, duration, individual FRLI variable scores, total FRLI score, primary collapse mode, and whether the regime underwent deliberate demobilisation. This data can be exported to CSV or JSON format for quantitative analysis.

Regime	Year	Start	End	Duration (yrs)	Ideo	Inst	Elite	Mob	Ext	Over.	Succ.	Econ.	Total	Primary collapse mode	Demobilised?
Italy (Mussolini)	T1	1922	1943	21	5	5	4	5	3	5	0	2	29	War defeat + internal coup	No
Germany (Nazi)	T1	1933	1945	12	5	5	4	5	3	5	0	2	29	War defeat (total)	No
Spain (Franco)	T2	1939	1975	36	3	4	4	2	3	1	2	3	22	Negotiated transition (leader death)	Yes
Portugal (Salazar/Caetano)	T2	1933	1974	41	2	4	3	1	3	2	1	2	18	Military coup (Carnation Revolution)	Yes
Vichy France	T2	1940	1944	4	3	3	2	2	1	1	0	1	13	War defeat (Allied liberation)	No
Hungary (Horthy era)	T2	1920	1944	24	2	3	3	2	3	3	1	2	19	War defeat (German deposition + Soviet advance)	No

Hungary (Arrow Cross)	T 2	19 44	19 45	0. 5	5	3	1	4	1	4	0	0	18	War defeat (Soviet conquest)	No
Romania (Antonescu)	T 2	19 40	19 44	4	3	3	2	3	2	4	0	1	18	Internal coup (war-precipitated)	No
Croatia (NDH/Ustaše)	T 2	19 41	19 45	4	5	4	1	4	1	3	0	0	18	War defeat (Partisan + Allied)	No
Slovakia (Tiso)	T 2	19 39	19 45	6	3	3	2	2	1	1	0	1	13	War defeat (Soviet liberation)	No
Greece (Metaxas)	T 2	19 36	19 41	5	3	3	3	2	2	1	0	2	16	Leader death + Axis invasion	No
Austria (Dollfuss/Sc huschnigg)	T 2	19 33	19 38	5	3	3	3	2	2	0	1	2	16	Foreign annexation (Nazi Anschluss)	No
Brazil (Vargas Estado Novo)	T 2	19 37	19 45	8	2	3	3	2	2	0	0	2	14	Military pressure / forced resignation	No
Argentina (Perón 1st)	T 2	19 46	19 55	9	3	3	3	3	2	0	0	2	16	Military coup (Revolución Libertadora)	No

Japan (militarist)	T 2	19 31	19 45	14	4	4	3	4	2	5	0	2	24	War defeat (total; atomic bombs )	No
Chile (Pinochet)	T 2	19 73	19 90	17	2	4	3	1	3	0	1	3	17	Plebis cite / negoti ated transiti on	Yes
Greece (Junta)	T 2	19 67	19 74	7	2	3	2	1	2	2	0	1	13	Overre ach collap se (Cypru s)	No
Indonesia (Suharto)	T 2	19 66	19 98	32	2	4	4	2	4	1	0	3	20	Econo mic crisis + mass protest	Yes

Table B1: Complete regime dataset. All scores on a 0-5 scale. Total is the sum of eight variable scores (maximum 40). See Appendix A for scoring criteria.

### Appendix C: Scoring source notes by regime

This appendix documents the primary scholarly and historical sources used to assign each regime's FRLI scores, and notes any coding decisions that involved significant judgement.

**Italy (Mussolini) - FRLI 29/40.** Scored on the basis of Paxton (2004), Chapters 4-5 on the exercise of fascist power in Italy; Griffin (1991) on palingenetic ultranationalism as the definitional core of Italian Fascism; Payne (1995), Chapter 5 on the PNF's institutional structure. The ideological intensity score of 5 reflects the regime's role as the originator and paradigm case of fascism. Institutional capture scored 5 based on the 1925-26 'exceptional decrees' that dissolved opposition parties, established OVRA, and subordinated the judiciary to party oversight. Overreach scored 5 from 1935 (Abyssinia) onward. Economic viability scored 2 reflecting the regime's declining economic performance through the 1930s, increasing dependency on military spending, and failure of autarky. Duration counted to July 1943 (Grand Council vote); the Republic of Salò (1943-45) is excluded as a German puppet state without sovereign authority, consistent with Paxton's treatment.

**Germany (Nazi) - FRLI 29/40.** Scored on the basis of Paxton (2004), Chapters 4-6; Kershaw (2000) on the Führer principle and institutional structure of the Nazi state; Evans (2003, 2005, 2008) *Third Reich* trilogy for the regime's progression from seizure of power through total war. All scores mirror Italy except that Germany achieved its institutional capture faster (within 18 months versus 3-4 years for Italy) and its economic model, while generating full employment through rearmament, was structurally dependent on territorial expansion to service military-Keynesian debt (Tooze, 2006, *The Wages of Destruction*).

**Spain (Franco) - FRLI 22/40.** Scored primarily from Payne (1987), *The Franco Regime*; Preston (1993), *Franco*; and Linz (2000) on the distinction between totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. The ideological intensity score of 3 (reduced from the wartime peak of 4-5) reflects Franco's deliberate marginalisation of the Falange's revolutionary wing from the late 1940s onward. The demobilisation coding is based on the shift from mass Falangist mobilisation in the 1940s to technocratic Catholic governance (Opus Dei ministers) from the late 1950s. Overreach scored 1: Franco maintained colonial possessions but avoided major wars after 1939, critically refusing Hitler's entreaties at Hendaye (1940). Succession scored 2: Franco designated Juan Carlos as his successor through the 1969 succession law, but the succession was to a non-fascist monarchical arrangement.

**Portugal (Salazar/Caetano) - FRLI 18/40.** Scored from Pinto (2011), *The Nature of Fascism Revisited*, on the Estado Novo as a 'para-fascist' regime; Gallagher (1983) on Salazar's governance style. The low mass mobilisation score (1) reflects Salazar's deliberate anti-mobilisation posture - there were no mass rallies, no personality cult comparable to Mussolini, no revolutionary rhetoric. The overreach score of 2 reflects the colonial wars in Africa (Angola from 1961, Mozambique from 1964, Guinea-Bissau from 1963), which were the regime's ultimate undoing but were defensive (holding existing possessions) rather than expansionist. Duration counted to the Carnation Revolution of 25 April 1974. The transition from Salazar (incapacitated 1968) to Caetano is treated as continuity of the same regime.

**Hungary (Horthy era) - FRLI 19/40.** Classification follows Payne (1995), Chapter 12, and Rothschild (1974), *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars*. Horthy's regime is the most contested coding in the dataset. The ideological intensity score of 2 reflects its conservative-authoritarian rather than fascist character: Horthy suppressed the Arrow Cross, governed through traditional elites, and lacked a palingenetic vision. The score is elevated from 1 to 2 by the anti-Semitic legislation (numerus clausus 1920, tightened through 1938-39 anti-Jewish laws) and the regime's increasing alignment with Nazi Germany. The sensitivity analysis in Section 4.8 tests the robustness of findings to Horthy's exclusion.

**Hungary (Arrow Cross) - FRLI 18/40.** Scored from Braham (1981), *The Politics of Genocide*, on the Arrow Cross's radical programme; Ungváry (2005) on the siege of Budapest. The 6-month duration and extreme violence of the regime make it the

dataset's purest example of a high-ideology, low-capture, hostile-environment configuration producing instant collapse.

**Romania (Antonescu) - FRLI 18/40.** Scored from Deletant (2006), *Hitler's Forgotten Ally*. The collapse mode is coded as 'internal coup (war-precipitated)' to reflect the dual character of the August 1944 events: King Michael's coup was carried out by domestic elites (the royal household, opposition politicians, sympathetic military officers) but was triggered by the approaching Soviet army. Neither 'war defeat' nor 'internal coup' alone captures the dynamics.

**Croatia (NDH/Ustaše) - FRLI 18/40.** Scored from Tomasevich (2001), *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia*. The extremely low elite coalition breadth (1) reflects the regime's narrow base: the Croatian Peasant Party, by far the largest political force, did not support it; the Catholic Church's relationship was ambiguous; and the regime depended almost entirely on Axis military backing.

**Japan (militarist era) - FRLI 24/40.** Scored from Payne (1995), Chapter 14 on the debate over Japanese fascism; Dower (1986), *War Without Mercy*; and Barnhart (1987), *Japan Prepares for Total War*. The Tier 2 classification reflects the scholarly consensus that Japan's authoritarianism was structurally distinct from European fascism (no single mass party, military-institutional rather than movement-based), while sharing critical features (ultranationalist ideology, mass mobilisation, aggressive expansionism, war economy). The start date of 1931 is the most commonly used in the comparative literature; the sensitivity analysis tests the alternative dating from 1936.

**Vichy France - FRLI 13/40.** Scored from Paxton (1972), *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order*; Jackson (2001), *France: The Dark Years*. The relatively low scores reflect Vichy's character as a collaborationist regime imposed by defeat rather than arising from an indigenous fascist mass movement.

**Slovakia (Tiso) - FRLI 13/40.** Scored from Ward (2013), *Priest, Politician, Collaborator*. Tiso's clerical-fascist state combined Catholic corporatism with fascist trappings under complete German tutelage.

**Greece (Metaxas) - FRLI 16/40.** Scored from Vatikiotis (1998), *Popular Autocracy in Greece*. Metaxas modelled his regime on fascist aesthetics (youth movement, salute, censorship) but lacked a mass party and governed through royal authority.

**Austria (Dollfuss/Schuschnigg) - FRLI 16/40.** Scored from Edmondson (1978) and Kitchen (1980) on Austrofascism. The Ständestaat combined Catholic corporatism with anti-socialist and anti-Nazi authoritarianism - a regime fighting fascism and democracy simultaneously.

**Brazil (Vargas Estado Novo) - FRLI 14/40.** Scored from Levine (1998), *Father of the Poor? Vargas's corporatist nationalism drew on fascist models but was primarily*

a developmentalist project; the low ideological intensity score (2) reflects the absence of palingenetic or racialised elements.

**Argentina (Perón 1st) - FRLI 16/40.** Scored from Horowitz (2012) and Rock (1993) on Peronism's fascist influences. Perón admired Mussolini and adopted the leadership cult, mass rallies, and corporatist labour organisation, but his movement was fundamentally populist rather than ideologically fascist in Griffin's palingenetic sense.

**Chile (Pinochet) - FRLI 17/40.** Scored from Constable and Valenzuela (1991), *A Nation of Enemies*. The low ideological intensity (2) reflects Pinochet's essentially technocratic military dictatorship, lacking the revolutionary ultranationalism that defines fascism. The demobilisation coding reflects the Chicago Boys' economic programme and the regime's avoidance of mass political mobilisation.

**Greece (Junta) - FRLI 13/40.** Scored from Clogg (1972) and Woodhouse (1985) on the Greek military dictatorship. The low ideological intensity (2) and mass mobilisation (1) scores reflect a regime that was anti-communist and conservative-nationalist but lacked fascist revolutionary content.

**Indonesia (Suharto) - FRLI 20/40.** Scored from Elson (2001), *Suharto: A Political Biography*; and Aspinall (2005), *Opposing Suharto*. The high external permissiveness (4) reflects consistent US, Western, and regional support throughout the Cold War. The demobilisation coding reflects the regime's systematic depoliticisation of Indonesian society after the initial violence of 1965-66.

## Appendix D: Four-tier taxonomy - complete case list

This appendix lists all cases considered for the analysis, across all four tiers, with brief justification for tier placement. Tier 1 and Tier 2 cases form the analytical dataset (N=18). Tier 3 and Tier 4 cases are listed for completeness and to document the scope of the comparative framework.

### Tier 1 - Core fascist regimes (2 cases, both in dataset)

Italy (Mussolini, 1922-1943): paradigmatic fascist dictatorship; full Paxton cycle.  
Germany (Nazi, 1933-1945): paradigmatic fascist dictatorship; full Paxton cycle with racial-exterminationist dimension.

### Tier 2 - Para-fascist / fascistised authoritarian regimes (16 cases, all in dataset)

Spain (Franco, 1939-1975). Portugal (Salazar/Caetano, 1933-1974). Vichy France (1940-1944). Hungary (Horthy era, 1920-1944; borderline). Hungary (Arrow Cross, 1944-1945). Romania (Antonescu, 1940-1944). Croatia (NDH/Ustaše, 1941-1945). Slovakia (Tiso, 1939-1945). Greece (Metaxas, 1936-1941). Austria (Dollfuss/Schuschnigg, 1933-1938). Brazil (Vargas Estado Novo, 1937-1945). Argentina (Perón 1st presidency, 1946-1955). Japan (militarist era, 1931-1945; classification debated). Chile (Pinochet, 1973-1990). Greece (Military Junta, 1967-1974). Indonesia (Suharto, 1966-1998).

**Cases considered but not included:** Serbia (Nedić collaborationist regime, 1941-44): excluded due to pure puppet status with no autonomous policy capacity. Bulgaria (pro-Axis government, 1941-44): excluded as the monarchy retained significant autonomy and Bulgaria's fascist movement (Ratnik) was marginal. Paraguay (Stroessner, 1954-1989): considered but excluded as a personalist military dictatorship without significant fascist ideological content. South Africa (apartheid era, 1948-1994): exclusion based on scholarly consensus that apartheid was racial-supremacist authoritarianism of a structurally distinct type, though the Ossewabrandwag and Greyshirts in the 1930s-40s were Tier 3 fascist movements. Rhodesia (Smith regime, 1965-1979): racial minority rule without fascist ideological content.

### Tier 3 - Major fascist movements without state power (selected cases, not in dataset)

**United Kingdom:** British Union of Fascists (Mosley, 1932-1940). Black-shirted, anti-Semitic movement that peaked at approximately 50,000 members in 1934. Proscribed under Defence Regulation 18B in 1940. Mosley's post-war Union Movement attracted minimal support.

**France:** Action Française (Maurras; proto-fascist royalist movement, active from WWI through 1940s). Croix-de-Feu / Parti Social Français (de La Rocque; mass

veterans' movement, debatably fascist). Parti Populaire Français (Doriot, 1936-; outright fascist, collaborated with Nazis). Marcel Déat's Rassemblement National Populaire (collaborationist movement during Vichy).

**Romania:** Iron Guard / Legion of the Archangel Michael (Codreanu, then Sima). Romania's indigenous fascist mass movement, characterised by religious mysticism and extreme anti-Semitic violence. Briefly co-ruled with Antonescu (September 1940 - January 1941) before being violently suppressed. The Iron Guard's brief alliance with Antonescu overlaps with the Tier 2 Antonescu regime but the movement itself never held autonomous state power.

**United States:** German-American Bund (1930s; openly Nazi, peaked at approximately 25,000 members). Silver Legion of America (William Dudley Pelley; fascist-style movement). Father Coughlin's Christian Front. These movements were marginal in electoral terms and were suppressed or collapsed during WWII.

**Belgium:** Rexism (Léon Degrelle; won approximately 11% in 1936 elections; collaborated with Nazis during occupation; Degrelle fought on the Eastern Front in the SS).

**Norway:** Nasjonal Samling (Vidkun Quisling). Quisling's movement was electorally negligible before the German occupation (1940) but governed as a collaborationist administration. Quisling's name became a byword for treachery.

**Other European movements:** Netherlands (NSB under Mussert; collaborationist during occupation). Finland (Lapua Movement; anti-communist proto-fascist movement, suppressed 1932). Hungary (Arrow Cross as a movement, pre-October 1944; electorally significant from 1939). Denmark (DNSAP; marginal). Sweden (various small fascist groups, never significant). Ireland (Blueshirts under Eoin O'Duffy; briefly influential in 1930s, rapidly declined).

#### **Tier 4 - Post-1945 neo-fascist and successor movements (selected cases, not in dataset)**

**Italy:** MSI / Italian Social Movement (1946-1995). Founded by ex-Fascist officials; carried the torch of fascist nostalgia in postwar Italian democracy. Won 5-9% of the vote consistently. Transformed into Alleanza Nazionale in 1995 under Fini, formally renouncing fascism. Giorgia Meloni's Brothers of Italy (Fratelli d'Italia) traces organisational lineage to the MSI through AN.

**Germany and Austria:** Various proscribed neo-Nazi groups (Socialist Reich Party, banned 1952; NPD, repeatedly challenged in court). Contemporary: Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), classified by German domestic intelligence (BfV) as a suspected extremist organisation; identitarian movement.

**France:** Front National / Rassemblement National (Jean-Marie Le Pen, 1972-; Marine Le Pen from 2011). Scholars debate the extent of FN's fascist lineage; it

operates within democratic elections and formally disavows fascism while retaining ideological continuity with the radical right.

**Greece:** Golden Dawn (Chrysi Avgi). Openly neo-Nazi party with paramilitary structure; entered parliament in 2012 with approximately 7% of the vote; leadership convicted of running a criminal organisation in 2020.

**Neo-fascist terrorism and subcultures:** Italy's 'Years of Lead' (1960s-80s): neo-fascist groups (Ordine Nuovo, NAR) carried out terrorist bombings (Bologna station bombing, 1980: 85 killed). Germany: NSU (National Socialist Underground) carried out racist murders 2000-2007. Various international neo-Nazi networks (Atomwaffen Division, The Base, etc.) operate as Tier 4 formations in the post-2015 era.

**Contemporary transnational formations:** The network documented in Ahmed's *All Reich* - connecting elements of the MAGA movement, European identitarian and nationalist parties (AfD, Fidesz, sections of PiS, the identitarian movement), and transatlantic far-right think-tanks and media platforms - represents the contemporary Tier 4 formation most relevant to this report's analysis. The Trump 2.0 application in Section 6 addresses this formation directly.