

## **How significant was the first Industrial Revolution for European history?**

The first Industrial Revolution is the catalyst for all ensuing European history. The impact of the first Industrial Revolution was pervasive and led to new social, economic, and political ideologies.

When the Industrial Revolution first hit Britain in the early 1800s (and other parts of Western Europe a few decades later) it brought about unparalleled change. The advent of the factory system brought people together in cities, as more and more people left the countryside. The need for markets as well as the advent of steam power (in the 1820s) led to infrastructural reforms—railways, roads, and canals—that expanded urban networks even further and concentrated populations that had previously been dispersed. As people came together in cities, they separated into groups demarcated by economic difference. The proletariat, the working class, grew beneath bourgeois society.

The growth of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat inspired new political forms. The bourgeoisie, especially in Britain, pushed for liberalism. Liberalism, the idea that each person is responsible for themselves and has the right to work to elevate their social status was motivated by the bourgeoisie's desire for political enfranchisement commensurate with their economic influence. Those like Thomas Macaulay noted the strength of the middle class and its desire to ascend and its power to do so. Under their pressure, the constitutional monarchy in Britain granted several reforms including the Great Reform Act of 1832 (which expanded voting rights—though still limited to approximately one fifth of adult white males) and the Reform Act of 1867.

Liberal movements existed outside of Britain, but they did not gain much traction. For instance, the September Laws of 1834 repressed speech and press freedoms in France and the French Second Republic (1848) was quickly toppled. However, the first Industrial Revolution also prompted the rise of socialist ideology as outlined by Marx and Engels. They argued that the socioeconomic structure that emerged from the first Industrial Revolution (i.e., capitalism) was repressive to the proletariat. They argued that eventually the proletariat would revolt when exploitation became unbearable. This would later give rise to communism (in the Leninist form) in Russia and eventually state controlled communism would appear in Eastern Europe as well.

The first Industrial Revolution generated the need for overseas colonies, as both a source of raw materials and as markets. As European states established overseas colonies, they generated nationalist competition (and, eventually, the First World War).

When considered in total, the first Industrial Revolution permitted the emergence of an entirely new political spectrum. Without industrialization, there would never have been enough power to truly overcome the feudal, autocratic structures of early modern Europe. It created motivations for imperialism and heightened already tense rivalries. The impact of the first Industrial Revolution, then—socially, economically, and politically—extends to this very day.

**How was *either* Fascism or Nazism a continuation of existing developments in European politics, culture, and society? In what ways was it revolutionary?**

While it was certainly a new ideology, fascism took many of its ideas from existing European ideas and expanded on them. Because of this, fascism was not “revolutionary.” However, the key differences between fascist ideas and those it expanded upon illustrate that fascism was unlike any other ideology.

A key political ideology upon which fascism continued was communism. Fascism stressed the importance of working toward a common good, but that good was the nation. Marx and Engels had stressed that people should work for the good of the common man in their *Communist Manifesto*. Marx and Engels also stressed a classless society, whereas Mussolini said fascism transcends material relations (they are unimportant, but they still exist). Marx and Engels said that power would eventually lie with the proletariat, but Mussolini said that giving power to the majority simply because they were the majority would demean fascism. Power should rest in the strongest, to lead the people. Thus while fascism and communism both emphasize working toward a common goal, there are also differences that show fascism to be unique.

Fascism also built on nationalism. In Italy, Mazzini stressed unity among the people. He believed the people would rise and create the nation. While Mazzini’s is a bottom-up nationalism (from the people), Mussolini’s was top-down, beginning with the state and its leader and then filtered down to the people.

The idea of one leader is itself an old idea of autocracy. Mussolini believed it was modern and revolutionary because the leader was the strongest willed—it wasn’t an issue of “divine right.” He was “elected” by his will. This idea was likely influenced by Nietzsche’s superman theory, stressing the obligation of the strongest to lead the people.

Another existing European ideal was the role of men and women in society. After the war, men returned and resumed their position in society. Women were gradually pushed from the work force and again expected to stay home and be good wives and mothers. Mussolini took this to an extreme, stressing that in fascist society men and women must sacrifice all selfish desires for the sake of the nation. Men must be strong and unafraid of violence while women were expected to stay home, serve their husbands, and make babies (future soldiers). Mussolini took existing ideas about the family and made them more extreme.

Fascism clearly borrowed from existing European politics, culture, and society. However, it altered those ideas and made them fit the fascist model of a nation led by one strong man. Though this was not revolutionary, it certainly created new and different ideas about the nation and people.