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### **Title**

Getting Mad or Going Mad? Citizens, Scarcity and the Breakdown of Democracy in Interwar Europe

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In 1920, twenty-six out of twenty-eight European states were parliamentary democracies. By 1938, thirteen of these democracies had become dictatorships. This essay is about why these regimes broke down and about the role that ordinary citizens played in the breakdown process.

Questions about mass support for antidemocratic movements have been asked by students of fascism since the interwar years themselves. Many of our answers cast the ordinary citizen in an ignoble if not villainous role. The story that emerges repeatedly (though not universally) runs like this: citizens who are inexperienced in the use of democratic freedoms find themselves in new democracies during a time of economic scarcity. Democratically chosen leaders prove incapable of remedying the scarcity, but the untutored citizenry continues to overload the new regimes with excessive demands anyway. The gap between government performance and perceived scarcity continues to widen until finally, the citizenry turns toward extremist parties and against democracy itself. Though the emphases of each story-teller vary substantially, the moral is usually the same: If citizens experience severe material scarcities in new democracies, they don't just get mad, they go mad. They abandon the political center and actively support groups and movements that will destroy the democracy that gave them the freedom to make demands in the first place.

This tragic story has been documented with compelling evidence. Indeed, the story's basic logic seems so convincing that we have begun to hear it repeated in recent fearful forecasts about the voting public in Eastern Europe and Russia. Though there can be little doubt that economic dislocation did help to drive millions of ordinary people into the ranks of fascist movements in the interwar years, both the context in which the story unfolded and the dynamics of the story itself need to be more clearly specified.

It is wrong to reduce the role of ordinary people in all the failed democracies to a story of collective madness induced by scarcity. The rise of fascism and the fall of the interwar democracies are not synonymous processes. In fact, using the cases of fascist victory as a base for generalizations about the breakdown of democracy can be highly misleading. If we look beyond the cases of Italy and Germany to the whole set of ill-fated interwar democracies, we formulate very different answers to our opening questions. We learn that popular support for unambiguously anti-democratic parties varied greatly within the democracies that collapsed, and that the citizenry played a much more peripheral role in the dismantling of democracy than the fascist cases would lead us to believe. We also learn that economic performance failures are not consistently powerful predictors of either democracy's decline, or the growth of anti-democratic support among ordinary people. The evidence for this argument is taken from the study of the regimes listed on Table 1.

**Table 1. The Survival of Parliamentary Regimes in Europe's Interwar Years**

<b>Survivors-1</b>	<b>Casualties-2</b>	<b>First Post-war Election</b>	<b>Initiation of Authoritarian Regime</b>
Belgium	Austria	Feb. 1919	March 1933
Denmark	Bulgaria	August 1919	June 1923
Czechoslovakia*	Estonia	April 1919	March 1934
Finland*	Germany	Jan. 1919	Jan. 1933
France	Greece	Nov. 1926	August 1936
Ireland*	Italy	Nov. 1919	October 1922
Netherlands	Latvia	April 1920	May 1934
Norway	Lithuania	May 1920	Dec. 1926
United Kingdom	Poland	Jan. 1919	May 1926
Sweden	Portugal	March 1919	May 1926
Switzerland	Romania	Nov. 1919	Feb. 1938
	Spain	June 1931	July 1936
	Yugoslavia	Nov. 1920	Jan. 1929

\* : democracy founded after WWI

1 : smaller survivors, e.g. Iceland, have been eliminated.

2 : Hungary is left off the casualty list because it never succeeded in having free national elections.

### **Popular Support for Anti-democratic Parties**

Discussions of fascism in Italy and Germany bring to mind images of thousands of uniformed supporters parading past vast and cheering crowds. These visions, captured frequently on film, reflect an important aspect of the fascist reality. But a broad, comparative lens shows that only a small fraction of European adults were willing to pay the costs of formal membership in anti-democratic organizations of the right.<sup>1</sup> Before democracies were toppled and freedom of association was curtailed, Fascist parties--that is, parties which placed an enormous value on mobilization--succeeded in mobilizing only a small fraction of the citizenry.

The exception here is Germany. By the eve of the Weimar Republic's last free election, the Nazis had attracted slightly over one million members. This meant that one in every fifty adults had joined the movement but the figure has no parallel in any other European nation.<sup>2</sup> In Italy, party membership before the March on Rome (i.e., before the party had access to the spoils of office) reached only 332,000--less than 1 percent of the Italian population as a whole.<sup>3</sup> In Austria, on the eve of the Dollfuss takeover, less than 4 percent of the adult population was associated with either the Heimwehr or the Austrian Nazis. The comparable figure for Romania was under 2 percent.<sup>4</sup> These were probably the largest movements in Europe.

I use the word probably because of the ambiguities of the Spanish case and the difficulty of classifying the heterogeneous groups that eventually took up arms against the Republic in the Civil War. Since the Republican government was freely elected, we might argue that everyone who joined the Nationalist cause was fundamentally anti-democratic and this would amount to

nearly half the adult population. But comparing these figures to the figures for fascist membership cited above would mean equating the choice of party in peacetime with the choice of sides in a civil war, and this is highly problematic. If we consider only the membership of the CEDA--the collection of parties that supported Franco and the rebellious officers, we get a smaller but still substantial percentage of the population, but this would mean overlooking the distinction between disloyal and semi-loyal opposition. It is difficult to determine whether it is right to put the members of semi-loyal and disloyal groups in the same analytic category, but what we can conclude with certainty is that Spain's single explicitly fascist party--the Falange de las JONS--attracted very little support before the war broke out. Stanley Payne has concluded that the party had fewer than 10,000 adherents in 1936 and that it was "the smallest and the weakest of the independent forces in Spanish politics".<sup>5</sup> Given the choice between joining an unambiguously anti-democratic party like the Falange and a semi-loyal group like the CEDA, an overwhelming majority of Spaniards chose the latter.

Membership figures are hard to verify but looking across all the European cases, there is no obvious relationship between the formal size of fascist groups and the likelihood of democratic survival. Nations such as France and Belgium, where anti-democratic parties attracted a comparatively large percentage of the citizenry, weathered the interwar years with their democracies intact. Yet nations such as Portugal and Poland with comparatively weaker fascist groups collapsed into dictatorship.

We see the same pattern if we look at voting data. Given that most of the citizens who supported extremist movements were likely to avoid the costs of membership in the first place, votes are a more accurate indicator of overall movement support. By this measure, too, the anti-democratic right was weaker than the poor record of democracy would lead us to expect.

In Italy, vote support for the anti-democratic right was never close to majoritarian. The fascist party had 6 percent of the assembly seats at the time of the March on Rome. The total for all three of the parties that might have been considered anti-democratic was at most 12 percent.<sup>6</sup> In Germany, a near majority of the electorate did vote for anti-democratic parties on the eve of Hitler's rise to power, but we reach this conclusion only if we include votes for four anti-democratic parties of the right.<sup>7</sup> Not even in the German case do we find an authoritarian party voted into office with a majoritarian electoral mandate. Only a third of the German people actually voted for the Nazi party in Weimar's last free election. Fewer Germans were voting Nazi in this last election than in the previous contest some months before.

In none of other European states did fascist or other anti-democratic right-wing parties (individually or combined) come close to winning the loyalty of a majority of the electorate. The Nazi party was extraordinarily popular in the German case, but the conclusions we might reach from studying the collapse of Weimar cannot be extended to other regimes.

In a majority of regimes that broke down, only a small fraction of ordinary people used party membership or votes to petition for an anti-democratic regime change. This generalization probably holds for parties on the anti-democratic left as well.

Did mass actors exert other sorts of direct pressure? Were elites getting strong signals through other channels? We need careful event analysis to really know and this does not exist (to my knowledge).<sup>8</sup> The data we do have suggest that pressures from below were neither as direct nor as constant as one would expect. Strike rates rose in almost all these states in the aftermath of World War I. This was the time when the inspiration from the Bolshevik Revolution was having its greatest effects. But as Table 2 illustrates, strike activity was generally decreasing in the years prior to democratic collapse.

**Table 2. Industrial Disputes and the Rise of Dictatorship**

Country	Trend in # of strikes	Trend in # of strikers
Austria (1930-32)	Decline	Decline
Bulgaria	--	--
Estonia (1931-33)	Rise	Decline
Germany (1930-32)	Rise	Rise then decline
Greece	--	--
Italy (1919-1921)	Sharp decline after rise	Sharp decline after rise
Latvia	--	--
Lithuania	--	--
Poland (1923-25)	Decline	Decline
Portugal (1923-25)	Sharp decline after rise	--
Romania (1935-37)	Decline after rise	Decline
Spain (1933-35)	Decline*	--
Yugoslavia (1926-28)	Rise	Decline after rise

Note: The table presents the trends in strike rates in the two years prior to the regime change, as measured by the number of strikes and the number of strikers.

Sources: Brian R. Mitchell, *European Historical Abstracts 1750-1988*; Tonu Parming, *The Collapse of Liberal Democracy and the Rise of Authoritarianism in Estonia* (London: Sage Publications, 1975); Kathleen Schwartzman, *The Social Origins of Democratic Collapse* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1989); Juan Linz, "From Great Hopes to Civil War: The Breakdown of Democracy in Spain," in Linz and Stepan, eds., *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

\*: There is a sharp rise in 1936, before the outbreak of the Civil War.

There are still other means of pressuring elected officials; looking at three of these across survivor and casualty cases yielded some interesting results. The level of riots, general strikes, and anti-government demonstrations was high in all of the breakdown cases. This is not surprising. What is remarkable is that there is no statistically significant difference between democratic casualties and survivors on any of these measures.<sup>9</sup> General strikes, anti-government demonstrations and riots were no more common in the regimes that broke down than in the regimes that did not. These data need to be supplemented with case specific historical material,

but they certainly suggest that the citizens in the regimes that broke down were sending signals that did not differ too dramatically from those sent by citizens elsewhere.

### **The Specifics of Regime Breakdown**

When we look at the individual histories of each of the regimes that collapsed, it becomes clear that the citizenry often played a peripheral role in the breakdown of democratic government. With few exceptions, the interwar regimes broke down either because political elites deliberately chose to disassemble them--or because political elites unwittingly took actions that led to the regime's collapse. This argument is best sustained with a chronological review of the whole series of failed democracies. Chronological analysis is essential because political elites in different states paid careful attention to one another. What happened in a neighboring state was often analyzed as a model to be duplicated, a forecast of things to come--or a fate to be avoided. Elite actions can only be understood if put in a truly European context.

The interwar years would have been dramatically different if they had not begun with the Bolshevik Revolution. The successful leftist assault on the first elected government of Russia's new democracy proved inspirational for many and horrifying for many more. Was the Bolshevik victory to be duplicated throughout Europe?

The events in Hungary in 1919 suggested precisely this because there, too, armed leftists succeeded in toppling what was slated to be Hungary's first electoral democracy. A coalition of leftwing social democrats and communists assisted by thousands of armed soldiers making their way home from the Russian front succeeded in taking control of the Hungarian government shortly before free elections were even held.<sup>10</sup> The regime they established was replaced by a right-wing regime in a matter of months, so this was ultimately a failed revolution, but there many revolutionary attempts in other states. These attempts failed completely--and relatively quickly-- but they could always be constructed as proof of a constant threat and justification for pre-emptive actions of all sorts.

The hopes and fears inspired by the Bolshevik's success played an important role in the breakdown of Italian democracy in 1922.<sup>11</sup> The Italian citizenry was mobilized rapidly and comparatively densely into Red and anti-Red camps; there can be little doubt that the transition to dictatorship was greatly affected by the extra-parliamentary activity of both groups. The fact that the post-war democracy began not just with massive labor mobilizations, but with the seizures of factories and farmland as well, helps to explain why the democratic regime disintegrated in less than three full years: Mussolini was spectacularly successful in using the specter of Red Revolution as a means of mobilizing support for a counter-offensive.

Despite these events, it would be wrong to place the blame for the fall of Italian democracy with its ordinary citizens. As S.J. Woolf reminds us, the March on Rome was "unnecessary" because Mussolini was called to power "in a more or less constitutional manner" by the king himself.<sup>12</sup> As our previous discussion made clear, Mussolini had nothing close to a popular mandate. Instead, he gained power because the reigning political elite invited him to rule. The invitation process had two stages. In the first, Giolitti made the grave mistake of giving the Fascists an air of legitimacy by inviting the party onto the electoral lists of the National Block.<sup>13</sup> In the second and fatal stage, King Victor Emmanuel asked Mussolini to form a government.

The King's action was not a response to the petitions of the mobilized masses, but rather a reflection of the serious inadequacies of Italy's most powerful state officials. A close reading of

events forces us to recognize that many of Italy's politicians simply neglected their obligations when the battle lines were drawn. Giolliti, the liberal leader who had given the fascists an air of legitimacy in the first place, resigned from the government and simply stayed outside of Rome during the entire period of crisis. Facta, the Liberal leader who took his place, submitted the resignation of his Cabinet on the night of the infamous March on Rome--and simply went home to bed! Marshall Diaz, the nation's commander in chief, refused to commit his officers to the defense of the regime when the King asked whether he could depend on the military to repel Mussolini's advance.<sup>14</sup> Yet, the whole March on Rome was "a bluff" that could have easily been prevented had the armed forces tried to do so.<sup>15</sup> Throughout the interwar period, the deputies of the national assembly distinguished themselves by their absence during votes of confidence and key debates. A full 31 percent of all parliamentary deputies missed the vote of confidence in the last Facta government. The rate of absenteeism during the last years of Italy's democracy varied between 21 and 45 percent and increased steadily from February, 1922 until the regime collapsed.<sup>16</sup>

Political elites played an even more dominant role in the breakdown of democracy in Bulgaria in 1923. Free elections in 1919 had brought the peasant based Agrarian National Union to power and its leader, Stamboliski endeavored to promote the welfare of his constituency through a variety of progressive reforms. The redistribution of property was not a prominent item on Stamboliski's agenda because the nation's land tenure system was fairly egalitarian even before the peasant party came to power.<sup>17</sup> Thus, there were no spontaneous property seizures as there had been in Italy. But there were three threats of a different nature that triggered the assault on the elected government. The first was a threat to the military which emerged when Stamboliski railed against military adventurism, argued that the funds that went to the military could be better used elsewhere, and signed a treaty cutting the armed forces from 850,000 to 20,000 men. The enraged Bulgarian military elite formed a Military League which eventually engineered the breakdown through an armed coup. The coupmakers were backed by two other sets of elites. The first was a group centered around Bulgaria's King Boris, who was threatened by Stamboliski's unrestrained republicanism. The second was a heterogeneous set of opposition party politicians who found themselves shut out of power when the expansion of the franchise enabled a nation of peasants to elect a vibrant peasant party. The Bulgarian people themselves played a most peripheral role in the events leading to the breakdown of the regime. Indeed the immediate catalyst for the coup was a highly intellectualized parliamentary debate about orthography. Stamboliski sought to simplify Bulgaria's alphabet and spelling in order to facilitate a massive literacy campaign. Members of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences plus a range of conservative parties used the parliamentary debates on language policy to question Stamboliski's patriotism and to forge a dictatorial coalition from a diverse range of nationalist partners.<sup>18</sup> There was no mobilization around these language issues nor around the other principal issues that divided regime elites.<sup>19</sup>

The collapse of the Polish, Portuguese and Lithuanian democracies in 1926 was also very much the result of the incapacities and infighting of political elites. All three of these democracies were assaulted by factions of their own military who, for the most part, mustered popular support only after the seizure of power--if at all.

Poland's democracy fell in May of 1926 to military forces grouped around the charismatic character of Marshall Pilsudski. Pilsudski had become a national hero during Poland's struggle for independence and he is one of the few coupmakers in the interwar period who had a popular following before seizing power. Nevertheless, historians report that the 1926

coup was "the result of conflict in the army", and of conflict "between the civilian government and the army, especially Pilsudski himself".<sup>20</sup> The May Coup came as a surprise to the Polish people. It reportedly "shocked Poland to the core," precisely because the elected President and Government "retained the loyalty of the bulk of the army and most citizens".<sup>21</sup> Parties on the Left backed Pilsudski's coup after it was set in motion and the Socialist union that controlled the railways tipped the military balance in Pilsudski's favor by refusing to transport troops loyal to the government at a key moment during Pilsudski's assault. But there was no movement from below for the extraparliamentary ouster of the elected regime. Poland's peasantry and working class were "unmoved" by the "revolutionary appeals of communism";<sup>22</sup> and those who were attracted by the anti-democratic right probably felt represented by the reigning coalition anyway. Pilsudski did not seize power because of pressures from domestic forces at the base of society. In fact, he was "never greatly interested in the complexities of domestic politics." He was provoked into action by personal rivalries with government leaders and by what he saw as Poland's failure in foreign affairs.<sup>23</sup>

The breakdown of democracy in neighboring Lithuania was also the result of a military coup. There, as in Poland, the regime change was initiated by military officers who feared how a new, popularly elected government would deal with the armed forces and with foreign policy more generally. In Lithuania, the catalyst for the coup was the May, 1926 electoral victory of a moderately leftist coalition of Peasant Populists and Social Democrats. The Christian Democrats had dominated Lithuanian politics since the war's end, and conservatives in the military and in the society at large feared that the new government would immediately succumb to pressures from the neighboring Bolshevik government. The new government did little to allay these fears, for it fired key military officers, cut military spending and signed a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union.<sup>24</sup> Shortly after the pact was signed, a small group of military men and Nationalist politicians burst into a session of parliament and demanded control of the state. The elected government was so surprised that it offered no resistance.

The coup was not entirely a military affair for it was supported from its very beginning by civilians associated with the Nationalist Party. But this was not a movement party--as Mussolini's had been. It had never appeared in electoral contests until the year of the coup itself and had only won three of the nation's eighty legislative seats. It was a small, highly intellectualized group, headed by the Dean of the Social Sciences (!) at the University of Kaunas.<sup>25</sup> The citizenry of Lithuania were certainly not silent on the eve of the coup. The leftist regime had allowed the Polish minority the right to establish some Polish-speaking schools and this had stirred popular demonstrations against Polonization. The government had also allowed leftists of all sorts more freedom of assembly and speech. The communist party, which had been banned, made use of these new freedoms and became visible in public space again in marches and demonstrations.<sup>26</sup> This provoked Nationalist counter-marches but they seem to have been confined almost exclusively to small groups of university students--and not the mass of the citizenry.<sup>27</sup> With fewer than 22,000 industrial workers in the entire nation, the threat from a revolutionary proletariat on the left was minimal.<sup>28</sup> As Von Rauch aptly put it, "the army was the only power factor of any consequence."<sup>29</sup>

The breakdown of Portuguese democracy provides us with especially interesting material because Portugal is often categorized as one of the "most fascist" regimes of the interwar period.<sup>30</sup> This leads us to expect that the coup was the culmination of high levels of popular mobilization. Yet this breakdown, like so many others, was the result of a fairly small coup coalition based on a factionalized military. The coalition was composed of military leaders, small



conservative parties, social catholics, and fringe groups of integralists and fascists.<sup>31</sup> The coup was announced on May 28 in the northern city of Braga by General Gomes da Costa (a hero from the First World War).<sup>32</sup> He marched south to Lisbon with almost no military opposition and the elected government merely resigned. The whole process was so lacking in drama that the newspapers offered interviews with the general as he proceeded south. He emphasized that the movement was an "exclusively military one. Neither conservative nor radical" and that the armed forces had taken action only because "the majority " of the civilian politicians had shown themselves to be a "discredit to the country."<sup>33</sup>

There can be little doubt that the coup was welcomed by large sectors of Portuguese society. Large landowners had been suspicious of democracy from its beginning and industrialists had long complained of the democracy's inability to maintain order.<sup>34</sup> The legitimacy of the regime had waned considerably with the urban middle classes that had once been its base of support,<sup>35</sup> and even the working class seems to have been divided in its loyalties as illustrated by the fact that the General Confederation of Labor took no public position on the coup for five days.<sup>36</sup>

This said, we should not conclude that the breakdown of Portuguese democracy was actually brought on by public pressures or social movements. Costa Pinto reports that there were "no traces whatsoever" of rural mobilization "by the anti-republican reaction,"<sup>37</sup> and that "the only players" on the streets of urban Portugal in 1926 "were the military."<sup>38</sup> From 1925 on, right-wing attempts to organize militias were made "redundant" because "disorder prevailed" not on the "streets but within parliament and government."<sup>39</sup> Politically, there was little to fear from radical workers parties--or from left-wing mobilization in general.<sup>40</sup>

Fascism as a popular movement simply never took off. References to fascism or to the milder dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in neighboring Spain remained confined to "the Geographical Society." In Portugal as in so many other places ordinary people were reluctant to take direct action against a democratic regime.

The nation of Yugoslavia did not even exist when the Portuguese republic fell. It was called the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The fact that parliamentary government endured there until 1929 is remarkable because much of the "nation's" elected political elite showed little commitment to even the most rudimentary principles of democracy and civility. The regime's breakdown took the form of a coup led by King Alexander who acted independently of any political party in an effort to impose order on a system racked by instability and violence. Cabinets changed an average of twice a year, the Croat Peasant Party (one of the largest in the nation) simply refused to participate in parliamentary sessions for years, and political leaders stormed in and out of state buildings brandishing lethal weapons of all sorts.<sup>41</sup> During the last months of the regime a Serbian MP shot and killed five MPs from the Croat opposition on the floor of the parliament and escaped with only a light jail sentence.<sup>42</sup>

The King's intervention was generally "well received" at first. Even the liberal press ran the headline: "Only the Crown Can End the Crisis."<sup>43</sup> But here, as in so many cases, it is difficult to conclude that ordinary people had turned against democracy. We know that the supporters of terrorists "were few" in number and that these were overwhelmingly "university students and the bourgeoisie"--certainly not the ordinary citizens in a nation of peasants.<sup>44</sup> We also know that the voting public supported democratically oriented groups when given the opportunity to do so. When a progressive bloc of parties formed an electoral coalition to challenge the corrupt and divided ruling elite in 1924, they won by 300,000 votes.<sup>45</sup>

The breakdown of democracy in the Kingdom of the Serbs Croats and Slovenes was the last of the six transitions that precede the October 1929 stock market crash in New York. As we would expect, the economic depression that followed contributed to the atmosphere in which anti-democratic parties of all sorts could build support. There should be no doubt that popular support for parliamentary government waned in all the regimes that broke down in the 1930s; but here, too, we have to beware of blaming the regime change on an anti-democratic citizenry. With few exceptions none of these transitions bore a strong resemblance to the German case.

The breakdown of democracy in Austria in March of 1933 did resemble the German case in that anti-democratic forces were widely popular and intensely active before the transition to dictatorship. Austria was the birthplace of Germanic national socialism in the early part of the century;<sup>46</sup> when the depression hit, its deep roots gave rise to several fascist movements. Historians report that the fascist's call for "a new society found an enthusiastic echo among people at large...especially those whose position seemed hopeless."<sup>47</sup> There were plenty of hopeless citizens; by some measures, Austria's economic depression was the worst in Europe<sup>48</sup> Thus, the Austrian case is not wildly out of line with the "madness" argument with which we began. But even here, it is difficult to attribute responsibility for the collapse of Austrian democracy to the Austrian people themselves.

To begin with, the 1933 dictatorship was not established by the leader of a fascist party but by Engelbert Dollfuss, the leader of the Christian Social Party which had governed the First Republic almost continuously since it was established. The Christian Socials were a diverse group with a large pro-democratic wing. They normally governed with a Pan German Party, but when the Pan Germans refused to form a coalition government in 1932, Dollfuss invited the fascist Heimwehr to rule in coalition instead.<sup>49</sup> Here, as in all our other cases, fascists were simply invited to share power. They did not come to power on the crest of a popular mandate. Non-fascists simply handed them power to fill in an electoral coalition. The Heimwehr deputies "had next to no following among the voters." But this "mattered little" for "they held the balance of power in Parliament."<sup>50</sup> The Heimwehr also held control of a great many weapons--enough allegedly to equip an army of 500,000.<sup>51</sup> Dollfuss sought to use these weapons and the paramilitary units behind them to battle the socialists on his left and the Nazis on his right. The Austrian dictatorship thus became the first of several regimes that rationalized itself as a pre-emptive move against a more virulent form of right wing authoritarianism.

The threat from the Austrian Nazi party looked increasingly menacing in 1933. Local elections suggested that the Nazis had become Austria's third largest party. But close electoral analysis leads one to question whether the increase in Nazi support was the result of citizens turning to the extreme right as a result of the depression--or whether it was the result instead of the Nazi's ability to simply amalgamate the votes of nationalists and fascists whose support had been diffused among several different groups. Walter Simon's work has shown conclusively that most of the 1932 increase in Nazi votes in Vienna came from German nationalists who had previously voted for Schober's fusion ticket and from the Heimatblock (a far-right coalition) that ran in 1930 but not in 1932.<sup>52</sup> The overall picture is one of vote switching within a previously existing set of far-right groups rather than a crisis-induced change in mentality. The lack of a crisis-induced transformation of the electorate is further suggested by the fact that "Hitler's party was losing votes in established strongholds" at the very time that the party seemed to be gaining ground in new places.<sup>53</sup> In any case, none of the anti-democratic groups on the right "succeeded in winning the heartfelt support of anything like the majority of the Austrian population."<sup>54</sup> Dollfuss dismantled Austrian democracy less because of popular pressures than because he had

personally come to embrace a kind of clerico-corporatist fascism as a solution to Austria's problems. This was still a minority position in 1933. As late as February 1934, "indications abounded that the majority of conservative supporters were in favor of reconciliation with the Socialists."[55](#)

Estonian and Latvian democracies collapsed almost simultaneously in 1934. The breakdown of democracy in Estonia was precipitated by the rapid rise of an anti-democratic movement called the Veteran's League which formed just as the Depression began and built its support on the status anxieties of the urban middle class.[56](#) The immediate catalyst for the coup was a crisis over the national constitution. The document, written by a freely elected Constitutional Assembly in the early 1920s, had two unique features; it provided for no independent executive branch of government and it allowed citizens to introduce legislation through referenda. The Veteran's movement used the latter to introduce a major alteration of the constitution that provided for a strong, independently elected executive with substantial emergency powers. Much to the dismay of the parliamentary parties, the Veteran's referendum on the revised constitution was endorsed by 56 percent of the electorate.[57](#) When the movement won an absolute majority in key municipal elections in 1934, Konstantin Pats, the leader of the ruling Farmer's Party, engineered a coup. He quickly declared the Veteran's movement illegal, imprisoned its leaders and shortly afterward, suspended party politics altogether. His move was largely precipitated by the very quick emergence of the Veterans movement. So in this case, we might be justified in concluding that this breakdown was indeed the result of a popular movement. But the mild authoritarian regime that emerged was the fruit of an effort to stop--not endorse--a more oppressive form of government.

Sectors of the Estonian population certainly backed an anti-democratic movement but we do not have an accurate measure of how many people endorsed the movement's fascist goals and how many simply endorsed the emphasis on public order and a strong executive that the constitutional referendum provided. What we know is that at the time of the coup, the Estonian people chose a national assembly that was overwhelmingly democratic in its composition and that they made these choices long after the depression had begun to be felt.[58](#)

Latvia's regime change was similar to Estonia's. There, too, the depression swelled the ranks of extremist groups on the Right and the leader of the freely elected government engineered what he claimed to be a pre-emptive coup.[59](#) The move was taken by Prime Minister M. Ulmanis, "a handful of like-minded individuals" from his Peasant Union Party, and the Latvian Armed Forces.[60](#) Latvia's constitution had been modeled on the Weimar constitution and Ulmanis was concerned that his own parliament (with twenty-seven parties represented) might provide an opening for extremists on the far-right.[61](#) When he failed to shore up his executive power through standard legislative channels, he simply declared a state of siege. His first move was to ban all organizations of the extreme right but he eventually disbanded political parties of all sorts.

The largest anti-democratic group in Latvia in 1934 was the Thunder Cross. It provided a catalyst for the coup but it was far from a mass movement. Its supporters were almost exclusively university students and urban intellectuals with little or no support from rural people--in this largely agrarian state. With a peak membership of some 6,000 (.03 percent of the population) its power to shape events derived not from its popularity, or from its direct action, but from the international context of the time.[62](#) Ordinary Latvians played a peripheral role.

The breakdown of democracy in Spain in July of 1936 was profoundly affected by its international context. But there can be little doubt that domestic support for anti-democratic

movements was being widely expressed at the time that the transition to dictatorship began. The fact that the transition took the form of a civil war shows that the dynamic of this case is unique for it was in Spain--and only Spain--that so many were willing to take up arms against anti-democratic forces. How did this highly contested regime change come about?

The fall of Spanish democracy began with the election of the Popular Front Government in February of 1936. The Front's victory meant that the right/center-right coalition which had ruled Spain for two years would have to cede control of the government. As hordes of jubilant Popular Front supporters filled Spain's streets in celebration of the leftist victory, actors on the Right (including CEDA leader Gil Robles and Francisco Franco) began to lobby for the declaration of a state of siege and the nullification of the election's outcome. Much to their credit, the center-right Prime Minister and a number of Generals refused to violate the constitution. Power was duly devolved upon a government of left Republicans. Two years of "aggressive" right-wing government had left Spain's working masses "in a far from conciliatory mood." Anxious to compensate for lost time, industrial and rural workers became increasingly engaged in strikes and property seizures while political violence increased dramatically.<sup>63</sup> The Socialist Youth organization grew increasingly militant and eventually joined the Communist youth organization, while extreme right student groups grew accordingly.<sup>64</sup> The struggle for power "shifted from the Chamber of the Cortes to the street, the club, and the officers mess."<sup>65</sup>

It was a small group of officers who finally moved against the regime in what was initially known as the Generals' Revolt. They acted in tandem with Gil Robles--who had been working surreptitiously to organize civilian support for a military coup for many months. Thousands of Spaniards took up arms on the side of the Nationalists, but an equal number took up arms in defense of the republic. Thus the battle raged on for three devastating years.<sup>66</sup>

Ordinary people played a central role in the breakdown of Spanish democracy; but here, too, there are ambiguities and caveats that deserve emphasis. The most damaging public provocations--such as church burnings--were not the work of masses of people at all but of very small groups.<sup>67</sup> Statistics furnished by the Right itself imply that the mobilization might have been decreasing as the July coup approached; the highpoint of popular disorder was "the period right after the election rather than the late Spring."<sup>68</sup> The youth wings of the far right parties were generally "not involved in street fighting and terror" as their counterparts in Germany or Italy had been.<sup>69</sup> Finally, the divisive issues that really did have broad popular support, such as Catalan nationalism, were not a source of destabilization at the time the regime broke down. Catalonia was surprisingly quiet in 1936.<sup>70</sup> For all its popular support, the move against the Republic in Spain was still the work of a small sector of the Spanish Right. The numerical weakness of the original coup coalition is illustrated by the fact that only four out of sixteen Generals with national commands supported the Nationalist cause.<sup>71</sup> The highest officers in the Spanish Navy and Air Force opposed the coup as well.

The breakdown of parliamentary government in Greece took place in the month after the Spanish Civil War began. It was not a transition in which popular forces played a major role. The trigger for this change--as for so many others--was an electoral outcome that frightened the Right. The pivotal election held in January of 1936 left the Royalists with only a 2 seat parliamentary lead over the Republicans. For the first time in Greek parliamentary history, the balance of power was held by the Communist Party with 15 seats.<sup>72</sup> When the Communist Party mobilized an industrial strike campaign with clear political overtones, elite actors on the political Right began to panic. The key decisionmaker here (as in Italy and Bulgaria) was the monarch. The King simply invited General Metaxas, an open advocate of dictatorship, to assume the role

of Prime Minister.<sup>73</sup> The King acted "without hesitation or consultation."<sup>74</sup> In a lamentable display of either naivete or irresponsibility, the Greek parliament gave Metaxas an overwhelming vote of confidence in April and left for a five month summer recess!<sup>75</sup> Using rumors of a General Strike as a pretext for their actions, Metaxas and the King established what came to be known as the Twin Dictatorship in August 1936.<sup>76</sup>

The citizens of Greece were not completely silent in the months leading up to Metaxas' seizure of power. Strikes increased in number and social unrest led to a revolt in Thessaloniki in May. The army had to be called out after citizens rose up to protest the killing of twelve striking workers; but order was quickly restored. Overall, the threat decried so often by Metaxas was exaggerated. The vast majority of labor action was taken by Communist workers in the tobacco industry and this was heavily concentrated in Macedonia. The party was "practically insignificant among other workers" and in the countryside,<sup>77</sup> the traditional, clientelist parties prevailed. On the Right, Metaxas was hardly the charismatic leader of a mass movement. Before he was handed power in 1936, he had "no personal following" even in the army,<sup>78</sup> and his political party attracted only 3.9 percent of the vote. This was clearly a case of dictatorship by invitation and not by popular demand.

Romanian democracy was the last to fall in the interwar period. By 1938 its pivotal actors had nearly two decades of interwar history to learn from, so it is not surprising that this case would parallel others in several ways. Overall, though, it was an amalgam of various scenarios with no real duplicate. Romanian democracy differed from most of its contemporaries in that it was a two-party dominant system until the 1930s. The Liberal and Peasant Parties alternated in office in a system based heavily on clientelism but with relatively little of the policy paralysis that racked proportional representation systems elsewhere.

Between 1928 and 1930 three factors intervened to change the balance of forces. First, the National Peasant Party came to power in the 1928 elections and though it made a concerted effort to strengthen democratic institutions throughout the country, it was unable to make the practical policy changes that the onset of the 1929 depression required.<sup>79</sup> Second, the world depression caused an erosion of Peasant Party support and a fragmentation of the party system which worked to the advantage of the nascent far-right. Third, the situation was altered further in 1930 when Carol the II ascended the throne following the death of his father. Carol "made no secret of his disdain for parliamentary institutions" nor his contempt for the Peasant Party leader Maniu.<sup>80</sup> Since the Romanian Constitution of 1923 accorded the monarch the power to choose and dismiss cabinet members, the King's preferences were of great importance.

These preferences became painfully apparent in the mid-1930s as a ferociously anti-Semitic fascist organization called the Iron Guard began to attract a broad base of support. Carol opposed the organization and even backed its official dissolution in 1933, but allowed it to operate under another name hoping that it would destabilize what was left of Romanian democracy and thereby legitimate a royal dictatorship. The popularity of the Guardist organization exceeded Carol's expectations and became a direct threat to his plans. In the 1937 elections, it attracted over 15 percent of the vote and became the third largest party in parliament. In so doing, it deprived the Liberal Party, the King's favorite, of the votes it needed to command a majority of seats in the legislature. In "what was unquestionably an immediate reaction to the Guardist [electoral] successes"<sup>81</sup> the King established a preventive dictatorship. Fearing the Iron Guard's links to both the German and the Italian fascists, he appointed the right-wing nationalist Octavian Goga Prime Minister. Goga sought the establishment of a corporatist authoritarian state; but when National Peasant Party ministers opposed him, he quickly turned to fascists for

support. Fearing the establishment of a fascist dictatorship along German or Italian lines, Carol dismissed Goga's cabinet and swept away the institutions of the parliamentary system. He arrested all the major figures in the Iron Guard and charged its head with high treason.

The breakdown of Romanian democracy was very much the responsibility of the King himself, but there is no doubt that ordinary Romanians were attracted to anti-democratic groups as well. The authoritarian Christian League of National Defense eventually attracted around 9 percent of the vote and the Iron Guard increased its share of the popular vote from 1 percent to over 15 percent between 1931 and 1935.<sup>82</sup> Support for the early fascist movement was "substantial in academic circles,"<sup>83</sup> and party propagandists often found "responsive" and even "enthusiastic" receptions on their visits to rural villages.<sup>84</sup> Yet in this case, as in all our others, there are still open questions about the extent of truly anti-democratic feeling. The Iron Guard seems to have had extremely efficient means of intimidating village voters,<sup>85</sup> and the fact that the Peasant Party was willing to join the Guard in an electoral alliance to defeat the Liberals in 1937 probably led to a great deal of confusion about the party's real beliefs. The fact that King Carol failed in his own attempt to rally mass support for a royal dictatorship,<sup>86</sup> suggests that it was anti-semitism and not anti-parliamentarism that the Guard supporters found most appealing. These caveats aside, Romania was clearly a case in which the level of anti-democratic popular mobilization was relatively high.

Looking at the entire set of ill-fated democracies gives us a more accurate picture of the role that ordinary people played in the destruction of democratic regimes. I have not retold the well-known story of the fall of Weimar democracy but the twelve cases that have been discussed illustrate that popular support for the interwar transitions to dictatorship varied greatly. Some transitions were similar to Germany's in that they were accompanied by supportive mass movements; but in other cases, the regime change was almost wholly an elite affair. Table 3 gives an overview of the citizens' varied role. In virtually all our cases, anti-democratic leaders gained control of the state either because they were invited to rule by a King or President or because they seized power through military action.

**Table 3 The Role of the Citizenry in the Breakdown of Democracy**

Prominent	Peripheral
Austria	Bulgaria
Estonia	Greece
Italy	Latvia
Germany	Lithuania
Romania	Poland
Spain	Portugal
	Yugoslavia ?

Table 4 reminds us that even where sectors of civil society backed the demise of democracy, elites always delivered its final blows. In Italy, Germany, and Romania, anti-democratic leaders were simply handed power by an individual decisionmaker who had the option of devolving power on someone else. Despite the many glaring inadequacies of democratic government in the interwar years, Europe's citizens were usually loathe to take direct

action against it. Looking at the continent as a whole, we can conclude that ordinary Europeans had only a peripheral role in the demise of interwar democracies.

**Table 4 How Dictators Got Control of Democracies**

<b>An Invitation to Rule</b>	<b>A Seizure of Power</b>
Italy	Bulgaria
Germany	Portugal
Romania	Spain
Greece	Austria
	Lithuania
	Estonia
	Latvia

### **Alternative Explanations**

This brings us to the very difficult task of explaining the outcomes we have observed. The task is really two-fold for there are two sets of outcomes to puzzle us here. First we have to explain why some regimes broke down and others did not. Then we have to explain the varied role of popular anti-democratic support within the subset of democracies that broke down. For reasons of space (and lack of information) I will confine myself mostly to the first task.

The societal madness scenario contains a number of implicit explanatory hypotheses that provide useful starting points for our inquiry. The first has to do with experience. The scenario implies that citizens who are experienced with democracy will be less susceptible to anti-democratic appeals than those who are not. This idea is widely shared in the social sciences in general. Did the older interwar democracies have a greater chance of survival than the younger ones? It is difficult to sort the cases with precision because it is hard to state with certainty just when a particular country became democratic.<sup>87</sup> But newer democracies seem to be concentrated on the casualties list while older democracies are concentrated on the list of survivors. This is a helpful finding, but we cannot end the story here for there are three brand-new democracies that survived the interwar years: Finland, Ireland and Czechoslovakia. Moreover, the age of the new democracies in the casualty columns seems unrelated to the role that the citizenry played in the breakdown itself. Both the low and the high mobilization subsets contain cases of wholly new democratic systems and systems with some experience with electoral competition.

Are there other, more powerful explanations for the variations we have observed? The current literature on civil society would lead us to expect that the breakdown of democracy would be related to the structure of associational life. This seems plausible too. Linz argued sometime ago that fascist parties needed "unoccupied" political space to grow (and that this explained why fascist groups did not fare well where Catholic associations were already implanted).<sup>88</sup>

Does the density of civil society help us understand the fate of the interwar cases as a whole? This is a question that requires a separate research project, but even a cursory comparison of associational life across these cases suggests some serious limits to the civic density

hypothesis. First, it would be hard to argue that the democracies that survived had more densely organized civil societies than those that collapsed. There is a vast literature on the extraordinary density of organizational life in Weimar Germany,<sup>89</sup> and interwar Austria was said to have the most densely organized society in Europe.<sup>90</sup> Italian associational life was extensively developed in the north of the country (as Putnam has pointed out), but these are precisely the regions that were most susceptible to fascism. If we use civic density to explain the variation within the set of democracies that broke down, a curious pattern suggests itself. If density discouraged the expansion of anti-democratic forces, we would expect the democracies that fell amid high levels of anti-democratic mobilization to have the least densely developed civil societies in the set. Is this the case? The question requires much more detailed research but it seems that if a significant difference between these sets of cases exists, it runs in the opposite direction. The cases in which the citizenry mobilized for anti-democratic change most forcefully are the cases that seem to have the more densely developed civil societies. Civic density might indeed "matter" in helping us predict the potential for anti-democratic sentiment but its effects might be negative rather than positive.

How powerful are the more materialist explanations for the patterns of breakdown we have observed? The madness scenario certainly implies that economic scarcity is detrimental to support for democracy. What, if any, are the conditions under which economic scarcity has this effect? Are there some sorts of scarcity that matter more than others?

Virtually none of the democracies that broke down in the interwar years did so during an economic boom, and seven of these ill-fated regimes collapsed after the onset of the Great Depression. Yet systematic comparison suggests that economic crisis was neither a necessary nor a sufficient cause for democracy's collapse.

Table 5 uses Dirk Berg-Schlosser's index of economic crisis to assess the extent of the Depression in six of our casualty cases and in eight of the European democracies that survived.<sup>91</sup> Not surprisingly, the democracies that collapsed were generally harder hit by the depression than those that did not. However, the data show that the intensity of economic crisis varied considerably within both the survivor and casualty categories. Greek democracy broke down despite the fact that the depression had less effect there than in any country in the study. The intensity of the economic crises in Romania and Spain was also relatively low. Admittedly, all three of these countries had sizable agricultural sectors and the depression affected these economies differently; but this still leaves us with many open questions about what sorts of economic crises matter most.

Looking at the survivor category, we are left with explaining how democracy in Czechoslovakia managed to weather what (by these measures) was one of the three deepest economic crises in Europe. The Netherlands, Belgium and France present us with similar (though less dramatic) puzzles, because each of these states had deeper economic crises than most of the democracies that collapsed. Any composite index needs to be used with caution and supplemented with detailed country history; but it seems unlikely that the variation in our cases can be explained by looking at aggregate measures of economic crisis alone.

Are there more specific measures of economic crisis that might have more predictive value? It makes sense to look at the impact of both inflation and unemployment because these produce the scarcities that are felt most directly by the ordinary people who interest us.



**Table 5 Economic Crisis in Casualty and Survivor Regimes**

Survivors	Index	Casualties	Index
Sweden	1.13	Austria	-1.25
Finland	1.03	Germany	-1.60
Belgium	-0.42	Romania	0.09
Netherlands	-0.55	Estonia	-0.36
France	-0.27	Spain	-0.10
UK	1.17	Greece	1.68
Czechoslovakia	-1.43		
Ireland	0.09		

Source: Dirk Berg-Schlosser, "Crisis, Compromise, and Collapse." (High Crisis=Low Score)

Yet here, too, the scarcity-madness connection seems tenuous. Each of the four democracies that experienced hyperinflation collapsed, but only two of these (Poland and Portugal) collapsed during or immediately after the hyperinflationary episode itself. Significantly, neither of these regime changes were the fruit of mass movements against democracy. Both the Austrian and German democracies endured for ten years after they weathered horrendous hyperinflation. Anti-democratic movements were successful here, of course, but only long after the inflationary crisis had subsided. Citizens are more tolerant of hyperinflation than we might expect.

Most of the democracies that collapsed experienced no hyperinflation, though inflation rates were often rising at the time that the regime changed. Consumer prices were rising fairly rapidly in Bulgaria, and Romania when their regimes fell. But inflation was rising only slightly in Greece, and was decreasing very slightly in Italy.<sup>92</sup> Spanish inflation was dropping as well. Prices were declining when Austria, Germany, Estonia and Latvia fell to dictatorship. The depression helps explain this last fact but even if we separate our cases into those that fell before the depression and those that fell later, no clear association between inflation and regime change emerges. There is no consistent association between inflation and the rise in citizen support for anti-democratic groups.

Unemployment is a form of scarcity that has an even more profound impact on daily life. The trends depicted in Table 6 suggest that there is an association between the scarcity of jobs and the support for anti-democratic movements in Germany.

**Table 6 Unemployment and the Rise of the Nazi Vote**

Year	Unemployment	Vote	Year	Unemployment	Vote
1919	3.7	-	1928	8.4	2.6
1920	3.8	-	1930	15.3	18.3
1924	13.5	6.5	1932	30.1	37.3
1924	13.5	6.5	1932	30.1	37.3

Source: Thomas Mackie and Richard Rose.

**Table 7. Unemployment and Vote Support for Fascist and Communist Parties**

	Austria			Romania			Belgium			Czech.			Netherlands		
Years	Unemp.	Fascist Vote	Comm. Vote	Unemp.	Fascist Vote	Comm. Vote	Unemp.	Fascist Vote	Comm. Vote	Unemp.	Fascist Vote	Comm. Vote	Unemp.	Fascist Vote	Comm. Vote
1920	58	0.0	.9												
1921							11.5	3.0	0.0						
1922													11	0.0	1.8
1923	110	0.0	.7												
1925							2.4	3.9	1.6	49	12.6	13.1	8.1	0.0	1.2
1927	200	.7	.4												
1929							1.9	6.3	1.9	42	11.1	10.2	5.9	0.0	2.0
1930	243	9.2	.6												
1931				36	4.0	--									
1932				39	7.0	--	23.5	5.9	2.8						
1933				29	5.0+	--							26.9	.8	3.2
1935										686	29.8	10.3			
1936							16.8	18.6	6.1						
1937				11	25	--							26.9	4.4	3.4
1939							19.3	12.7	5.4						

Note: number of unemployed: in thousands for Austria, Romania and Czechoslovakia; in percentages for Belgium and the Netherlands.

Though this association is often discussed in the literature on Germany, it is difficult to determine whether this aspect of the German case is duplicated elsewhere. Though the literature on fascist movements in other countries is full of references to the role of the unemployed in extremist groups, I have been unable to locate reliable data on unemployment rates for most of the earlier casualty cases and many of even the largest right-wing extremist parties participated in so few national elections that comparisons of growth or decline are impossible. The data that are available correspond unevenly to the German pattern. These are presented in Table 7. The Austrian case comes closest to the German. The rise in support for the right-wing anti-democrats did rise with unemployment. (In local elections we see this very strongly.) The Czech case shows a correlation too, but the relationship in the Netherlands is questionable and in Belgium, non-existent. In Romania, the relationship breaks down completely. This relationship should be studied further with data for local elections but for national level elections, the association looks weak.

Whatever the connection between unemployment and affect for anti-democratic movements might be, we can be fairly sure that aggregate unemployment trends are not good predictors of democratic collapse. The peak unemployment rate for casualty democracies is only slightly higher than the rate for survivors. (26.8 percent vs. 24.4 percent) As the data in Table 8 illustrate, the overall level of unemployment was not significantly higher in the democracies that broke down. The average rise in unemployment was actually greater in the democracies that survived the interwar years than in those that fell. The scarcity of work may indeed matter more than other scarcities but it does not explain even half of our puzzle.

**Table 8. Average Percent Change in Unemployment: Survivors vs. Casualties 1928 and Peak of Economic Crisis**

<b>Survivors</b>		<b>Casualties</b>	
Ireland	30.8	Germany	21.7
Netherlands	27.1	Austria	18.9
Czechoslovakia	26.2	Estonia	16.5
France	15.0	Romania	15.8
Sweden	13.1	Spain	15.0
United Kingdom	11.3	Greece	5.0
Finland	11.1		
<b>Average</b>	19.2		15.5

Source: Adapted from Berg-Schlosser, "Crisis, Compromise, Collapse: Social and Political Reactions to the Great Depression in Europe," ECPR Joint Sessions paper, Madrid, April 19-21, 1994, pp. 13-14.

Is there an alternative "parsimonious" explanation? At one level, there might not be. Stanley Payne may be right in arguing that fascism had no single cause and there is no reason to expect that the much more varied processes we are attempting to analyze here would either.<sup>93</sup> Aspiring to some overarching predictive theory may be fruitless here. Kings, presidents and prime ministers have figured very prominently in our narrative and we shall never be able to predict their actions. Another glaring problem is the lack of information on many of the democracies that fell. (This problem is particularly acute in the East European countries.)

I have no pretensions to parsimony or to grand theory here, but I will close with a hunch that might someday be an alternative explanation. What seems to distinguish the casualties from the survivors in the interwar story is less the behavior of an actively anti-democratic public than the state's capacity to provide what might be called "civic order." Civic order exists when the interactions between societal actors are reasonably predictable, non-violent and governed by some rule of law. Social interactions--interactions between individuals and between groups--are always uncertain and often fraught with conflict. One of the state's principal functions is to minimize both the uncertainty and the conflict inherent in social life. This task becomes extremely difficult during times of economic crisis when the likelihood of conflict over scarce resources begins to rise.

States that have already established a sound institutional basis for providing civic order (that is, for facilitating group interactions in non-conflictual ways, and resolving and controlling the conflicts that do exist) are more likely to endure periods of economic crisis than those which have not. One of the reasons that virtually none of the older democracies in Europe collapsed was because their states had had the time to develop more effective institutions for facilitating civic order. We should recall that some of these older states, (e.g., Belgium and France) had vibrant and highly visible anti-democratic movements--but they also had the capacity to control these movements within the parameters of the parliamentary systems.<sup>94</sup> The madness scenario focuses on the citizen's experience with democracy, but the state's experience with disorder and the control of disorder may be more important.

Important, too, are the material resources at the disposal of the state. The maintenance of civic order has a cultural component (no doubt), but it also requires a material base. It requires funds for the public services that lie at the foundation of non-conflictual interactions; funds for communication systems, transportation networks and the maintenance of public spaces. Civic order also requires funds for the control and appeasement of groups that can generate conflict. Police services, social welfare programs, and unemployment insurance are good examples here. A professionalized judiciary and a functioning legal system are key to the maintenance of order, too, but these are costly also.

With these thoughts in mind, I hypothesized that one of the significant differences between the democracies that fell and the democracies that survived would be the capacity to tax and spend. This turned out to be true. If we look at government revenue and expenditure per capita across these states we get a statistically significant difference. ( $p=.028$ ) We also find a statistically significant difference in mail per capita. ( $p=.001$ ) This variable is more politically meaningful than it might initially seem. Mail flow tells us something about state capacity because the state is charged with its collection and delivery. Mail also tells us something about civil society. Barring the occasional letter bomb (?) mail is a good indicator of non-conflictual interaction across groups. The successful use of a mail system indicates that groups are communicating, business goes on as usual, and there is a semblance of orderly discourse.

The provision of civic order matters greatly because anti-democratic movements feed on fear. People in interwar Europe certainly had reasons to be fearful. These reasons went beyond the economic realm, where so many of us put our emphases. The fear of societal disorder may well have mattered more than the fear of economic disorder to ordinary people. There was a tremendous amount of lawlessness in interwar Europe and this deserves much more attention. Much of this lawlessness took the form of interpersonal violence. Table 9 shows that the level of interpersonal violence varied dramatically between the democracies that survived and those that

collapsed. None of the surviving democracies had higher levels of interpersonal violence than any of the democracies that broke down. The pattern holds for homicides, assaults and robberies.

**Table 9. Comparative Criminality in Survivor and Casualty Democracies**

<b>Type of Democracy</b>	<b>Homicide Rate per 100k</b>	<b>Assault Rate per 100k</b>	<b>Robbery Rate per 100k</b>
Survivors	2.19	32.6	8.0
Casualties	7.00	29.2	33.5

Notes: Survivors are Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Britain, Sweden. Switzerland. Casualties include Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, Poland and Portugal.

Source: Dane Archer and Rosemary Gartner, *Violence and Crime in Cross-National Perspective* (New Haven: Yale, 1984)

These crime statistics are just one indicator of the breakdown of civic order that preceded the collapse of all of these regimes. The longing for civic order was probably a constant across all the democracies in interwar Europe, but some had the capacity to maintain it and others did not. The dictators who got control of the failed democracies in the interwar years were surprisingly different on a long list of dimensions. They differed in their degrees of anti-semitism, their domestic policy, their foreign policy, their religiosity and their position on republicanism. What united them all, though, was their promise to restore order. This is ultimately how they all made their way to power--sometimes with a small group of conspirators and sometimes leading masses of ordinary people seeking order above all else.

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### Endnotes

A previous version was presented at the 1996 annual meetings of the American Political Science Association. This research was also presented at the Center for the Study of Democracy, UC Irvine, March 24, 1997. The author thanks Monica Bhattacharyya and Matt Webster for research assistance.

1. I define these as parties which publicly condone the violent defiance of elected governments. I confine most of my analysis here to right-wing anti-democratic groups because all the democratic regimes in my sample fell to the right.
2. M. Rainer Lepsius, "From Fragmented Party Democracy to Government by Emergency Decree and Nationalist Takeover: Germany" in J. Linz and A. Stepan, eds., *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 70.
3. Renzo de Felice. *Mussolini il Fascista*, vol 1. *La Conquista del Potere, 1921-1925* (Turin: Einaudi, 1966) pp. 8-11.
4. On Austria see Gerhard Botz, "Changing Patterns of Social Support for Austrian National Socialism" in Stein Larsen et. al. *Who Were the Fascists?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 214
5. Stanley Payne, *Falange* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), p. 81 and p. 279.
6. I give seat figures here because the parties were in a coalition. No vote figures are available.
7. These are the Nazis, the Hanoverian People's Party, the National People's Party and the Bavarian People's Party.
8. Like the work being done by Gregorz Ekiert and Jan Kubik for Eastern Europe or by Mark Beissinger for Russia.

9. The data come from ICPSR Study 7412 and were compiled by Arthur Banks in a Cross National Time Series running from 1815-1973. Matt Webster of Princeton University deserves thanks for assistance with these data. See the appendix for detailed statistics. (The respective p values for these three variables are 0.185, 0.593 and 0.241).
10. For more on the Kun regime and its aftermath, see Andrew Janos, *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary* (publisher); and C.A. Macartney, *Hungary: A Short History* (Chicago: Aldine, 1962).
11. Gramsci was optimistic in drawing a parallel between Nitti and Kerensky. Christopher Seton-Watson, *Italy from Liberalism to Fascism: 1870-1925* (London: Methuen & Co., 1967), p. 560.
12. S.J. Woolf, "Italy" in Woolf, ed., *European Fascism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), p. 39
13. The Block was a coalition of diverse parties united only in their opposition to socialism. It included the Liberals, Nationalists, Democrats and Social Reformists. Fascists were made to seem more respectable by their appearance on what was essentially a mainstream party list. See Farneti, "Social Conflict, Parliamentary Fragmentation, Institutional Shift, and the Rise of Fascism: Italy," in Linz and Stepan, eds., *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Europe*, p. 23.
14. For more details see Adrian Lyttleton, *The Fascist Seizure of Power* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973).
15. The characterization is Adrian Lyttleton's. The point about the military is made there and in S.J. Woolf, "Italy."
16. Farneti, "Social Conflict," pp. 30-31.
17. Hugh Seton-Watson. *Eastern Europe Between the Wars* 3rd ed. (Hamdon, CT: Archon Books, 1962), p. 243 writes that Bulgaria had a "healthier property structure in agriculture than any other state in Eastern Europe."
18. See Marin Pundeff, *Bulgaria in American Perspective*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 83.
19. For an outstanding study of Bulgaria see John D, Bell. *Peasants in Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).
20. Antony Polonsky, *Politics in Independent Poland: 1921-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), p. 128.
21. Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 124.
22. Hugh Seton-Watson, *Eastern Europe Between the Wars*, p. 160
23. Polonsky, *Politics in Independent Poland* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), p. 139.
24. Albertas Gerutis, *Lithuania: 700 Years* (New York: Maryland Books, 1969), p. 220.
25. Georg von Rauch, *The Baltic States* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1974), p. 120.
26. See Royal Institute of International Affairs, *The Baltic States* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938) for a good overview of the period and Leonas Sabaliunas, *Lithuania in Crisis: Nationalism to Communism, 1939-1940* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), p. 7. Smetona, the coupmaker who would rise to the presidency, describes the period as one in which "dark mobs" "insisted on a Bolshevik government." *ibid.*, p. 8.
27. Gerutis, *Lithuania*, p. 219.
28. Rauch, *The Baltic States*, p. 127.
29. Rauch, *The Baltic States*, p. 120.
30. Peter Merkl cites this common wisdom in a highly informative article in the Stein Larsen volume.
31. Antonio Costa Pinto, *Salazar's Dictatorship and European Fascism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 141.
32. H.V. Livermore, *A New History of Portugal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966) p. 330.
33. A.H. de Oliveira Marques, *Historia de Portugal* (Lisbon: Palas Editores, 1981), pp. 258-259.
34. Kathleen Schwartzman, *The Social Origins of Democratic Collapse* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas, 1989), pp. 37-39.
35. Oliveira Marques, *Historia de Portugal*, p. 256.
36. Schwartzman, *The Social Origins of Democratic Collapse*, p.43. The confederation eventually came out in opposition and called a general strike.

37. Costa Pinto, *Salazar=s Dictatorship*, p. 146.
38. Costa Pinto, *Salazar=s Dictatorship*, p. 135.
39. Costa Pinto, *Salazar=s Dictatorship*, p. 145.
40. Schwartzman, *The Social Origins of Democratic Collapse*, p. 183.
41. The figure on the cabinet turnover and most of the facts presented here are from R.W. Seton Watson and R.G.D. Laffan, "Yugoslavia Between the Wars," in Stephen Clissold, ed. *A Short History of Yugoslavia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 174.
42. Fred, Singleton, *A Short History of the Yugoslav Peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 150.
43. Seton-Watson and Laffan, "Yugoslavia between the Wars," pp. 174- 177.
44. Seton-Watson and Laffan, "Yugoslavia between the Wars," pp. 179.
45. This was a coalition of Democratic Agrarians, Slovenes and Moslems in the July 1924 election. Seton-Watson and Laffan, "Yugoslavia between the Wars," p. 172.
46. Stanley Payne, *A History of Fascism* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), p. 246.
47. Martin Kitchen, *The Coming of Austrian Fascism* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), p. 182.
48. Gordon Craig, *Europe Since 1815* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 597.
49. Payne, *A History of Fascism*, p. 182.
50. Walter Simon, "Democracy in the Shadow of Imposed Sovereignty," in Linz and Stepan, eds., *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*, p. 112.
51. Payne, *A History of Fascism*.
52. Payne, *A History of Fascism*, p. 109.
53. Payne, *A History of Fascism*, p. 110.
54. Bruce Pauley, "Nazis and Heimwehr Fascists: The Struggle for Supremacy in Austria, 1918-1938" in Stein Larsen et al., *Who Were the Fascists?*, p. 235.
55. Simon, "Democracy in the Shadow," p. 116.
56. Tonu Parming, *The Collapse of Liberal Democracy and the Rise of Authoritarianism in Estonia* (London: Sage Publications, 1975).
57. Parming, *The Collapse of Liberal Democracy*, p. 44.
58. Parming, *The Collapse of Liberal Democracy*, p. 17.
59. Alfred Bilmanis, *A History of Latvia* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 358.
60. Andrejs Plakans, *The Latvians: A Short History* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1995), p. 133.
61. Rauch reports that twelve of these parties had only one representative and only two had more than ten! Rauch, p. 146. It is significant that Ulmanis made an effort to reform the executive shortly after his visit to Hitler's Germany in the late Spring of 1933. See *ibid.*, p. 154.
62. Royal Institute, *The Baltic States*, pp. 54-55 gives a brief description of the other fringe groups including a small pro Nazi group among German speakers and an officers group on the Polish model. The restricted nature of all these groups is discussed in Rauch, especially p. 153.
63. Juan Linz, "From Great Hopes to Civil War: The Breakdown of Democracy in Spain," in Linz and Stepan, eds., *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*, p. 189; Preston, *CITE*, pp. 239, 253, 268-9.
64. Juan Linz, "From Great Hopes to Civil War: The Breakdown of Democracy in Spain," in Linz and Stepan, eds., *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*, p. 162; Raymond Carr, *Spain: 1808-1975* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 642.
65. Carr, *Spain: 1808-1975*, p. 640.
66. Carr writes that "enthusiasm was the characteristic of life on both sides in the early days of the civil war." *Ibid.*, p. 652.
67. Carr, *Spain: 1808-1975*, p. 607.
68. Linz, "From Great Hopes to Civil War," p. 192.

69. Linz, "From Great Hopes to Civil War," p. 192.
70. Carr, Spain: 1808-1975, p. 641.
71. Linz, "From Great Hopes to Civil War."
72. This was the outcome despite widespread intimidation of Republican voters. George Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic*, pp. 52-3; John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, *Modern Greece* (London: Ernest Benn, 1968), p. 157.
73. Metaxas had participated in a failed assault on the Venizelist state in October 1923 so his inclinations were well known. See Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic*, p. 30.
74. Campbell and Sherrard, *Modern Greece*, p. 159
75. Campbell and Sherrard, *Modern Greece*, pp. 158-9.
76. Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic*, pp. 54.
77. Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic*, pp. 148.
78. Campbell and Sherrard, *Modern Greece*, p. 162.
79. Keith Hitchens, *Rumania: 1866-1947* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), pp. 414-415.
80. Hitchens, *Rumania: 1866-1947*, p.378.
81. Stephen Fischer-Galati, "Fascism in Romania," in Peter Sugar, ed., *Native Fascism in the Scandinavian States*, p. 118.
82. Communists and anti-democratic parties on the left had little direct influence on political life even after the depression. Hitchens, *Rumania: 1866-1947*, pp. 397- 398..
83. Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 273-4.
84. Fischer-Galati, "Fascism in Romania," p. 116.
85. Mattei Dogan, "Romania" in Weiner and Ozbudun, *Competitive Elections in Developing Countries* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1987), p. 384.
86. Hitchens, *Rumania: 1866-1947*, p. 424.
87. The exclusion of women and illiterates from the electorate are just two of several factors which complicate the sorting task.
88. Linz, "Political Space and Fascism as a Latecomer" in Stein Larsen et al., *Who Wre the Fascists?*
89. See recent books by Peter Fritzsche and by Larry Jones for examples.
90. See Walter Simon; also Charles Gulick. *Austria from Hapsburg to Hitler* (Berekeley: University of California Press, 1948).
91. Dirk Berg-Schlosser, "Crisis, Compromise and Collapse: Social and Political Reactions to the Great Depression" (1994). Berg- Schlosser aggregated four indicators including changes in GDP per capita at constant prices, industrial production, exports, and rise of unemployment by means of a confirmatory factor analysis into a single "depression index". pp-13-14 The results were presented at the ECPR Workshops in Madrid, April 19-21, 1994.
92. The wholesale price index dropped fairly sharply in Italy in these years.
93. Payne, *A History of Fascism*, chs. 12-13.
94. France is a fascinating case here. Recall that a massive and violent ultra-right march on the Palais Bourbon forced the resignation of the Daladier government in 1934. Though the head of the Paris police was probably sympathetic to the right, the movement was quickly controlled even at the cost of fifteen lives. See Philippe Bernard and Henri Dubief. *The Decline of the Third Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).