

# THE CONCEPT OF TOTALITARIANISM AND ITS CHANGES IN THE COURSE OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

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The term “totalitarianism” was coined in Italy by the opposition against Mussolini’s fascist dictatorship and used as a catchword in order to point out its novel nature. A second line of tradition aiming at conceptualizing the term was a consequence

of German social democratic forces taking issue with Lenin's bolshevist kind of dictatorship. From the mid-1930s onwards, the term came to be used in comparative analyses of fascism, national socialism, and communism. The classical definition of the concept of totalitarianism was then proposed by Carl J. Friedrich, who devised a paradigmatic list of criteria in 1953, whereas Hannah Arendt offered a rather historical-philosophical approach. Both explanations have in common that they assess mass terror as a central factor, which means that, strictly speaking, developments in the Soviet Union after Stalin's death are not covered. More recent definitions emphasize, however, the absolute preeminence of politics and total control as principal features of totalitarian rule. This makes it possible to distinguish between modern dictatorships based on ideology and authoritarian dictatorships.