Introduction

This book analyzes the transnational relationship between war veterans and fascism in interwar Europe.[1] For decades, historians have strived to explain why the European continent, only twenty years after a cataclysmic war of unprecedented murderous dimensions, became involved in a new, even more horrendous world conflict. Although there were important democratic experiences and remarkable advances in many facets of human life, the interwar period saw the progressive demolition of the peaceful order for which many people had hoped in the wake of the Great War. While at the beginning of 1919 democracies clearly dominated Europe, by June 1940, they were the exception to the rule. This eclipse of democracy, marked by violent conflicts and civil wars, cannot be understood without placing fascism at its centre. Fascism was a product of the First World War experience, and fascism can also be considered to have triggered the Second World War. In this scenario, explaining the links between fascism and war veterans, the men who were also a direct legacy of the Great War, remains crucial.

One can easily find an abundance of superficial evidence to suggest that First World War veterans were closely linked to the origins of fascism. For example, it is a truism to say that Hitler was just one among millions of soldiers demobilized from the defeated German army. Likewise, Mussolini had been a serviceman during the Great War. Historians have mentioned on innumerable occasions that paramilitary groups in the early post-war period, such as the Freikorps and the early Italian fascist movement, were composed of many former combatants. Furthermore, during the 1920s and 1930s, fascist movements in practically every European country rose to prominence with their members staging quasi-military parades, dressed in their uniforms and decked out in the medals they had usually obtained in the trenches. Militarism was a defining characteristic of fascism. And, seemingly, war and fascism walked hand

[1] In this book, *fascism* in lower case refers to the transnational phenomenon, and *Fascism* in upper case refers exclusively to the Italian original movement and regime.

in hand. Were these facts mere circumstantial coincidences, or do they reveal a substantial, essential connection between the fascist phenomenon and war veterans? A definitive response to this question remains, as yet, elusive.

This book aims to provide a new account of the highly complex relationship between veterans and fascism. By examining processes of transnationalization and the fascist permeation of veteran politics and by analyzing the cultural, sociological and political origins of fascism as well as its European expansion, this work aims to offer an interpretation of this phenomenon and to fill gaps in existing historical knowledge. Although much has been written about interwar veteran movements and the historiography on fascism is vast, only a limited number of works have dealt directly with their historical interconnections. Most of these studies have revolved around the controversial 'brutalization' thesis of historian George L. Mosse. Yet they have not reached any universally accepted interpretation. In the meantime, many facets of the relationship between veterans and fascism have been neglected.

War Veterans

This book is concerned with the interwar veterans or, in other words, with the history of veterans of industrialized warfare. In the modern era, as German military theorist Carl von Clausewitz put it,[2] participation in war became an initiation to politics. Since the French Revolution, military service had been closely connected with notions of citizenship, and participation in the defence of the nation began to be generously rewarded by the state. The adoption of universal military service, linked to the nationalization of the army, was a transnational process. However, an unresolved tension remained: whereas universal military service guaranteed the future political liberty of male citizens, it also implied their submission to a coercive system isolated from the wider society: the army.[3] Furthermore, during the nineteenth century, European armies embraced new roles, which also shaped the social and political functions of their veterans. Armed forces fought to expand and retain colonial empires, to further national unification processes and to resolve internal civil wars. The state authorities often charged the military with the maintenance of public order. In different countries, the state relied on

[2] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret), Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1984, p. 605.
[3] Thomas Hippler, *Citizens, Soldiers and National Armies. Military Service in France and Germany, 1789–1830*, London, Routledge, 2008.

the armed forces to repress working-class protests and to defend property.[4] Forced conscription became highly unpopular.[5] Thus, the figure of the soldier became associated with the defence of the establishment, with nationalist or imperial aggression and with coercion.[6]

It was in this context that ex-soldiers moved to create associations, as part of the wider emergent civil society. These organizations embodied the memory of national wars and performed functions of mutual assistance; they were also closely linked to the active military. In Italy, for instance, veteran patriotic groups from the wars of independence were influential.[7] And certain patriotic veteran associations, such as the Deutscher Kriegerbund (Kyffhäuserbund) in Wilhelmine Germany, became bulwarks of social conservatism and anti-socialism.[8] And yet, the number of former soldiers in proportion to the overall national population was miniscule, as was the weight of veterans in politics. This would drastically change in the advent of the First World War.

We may reasonably surmise that all veterans from across distinct periods share a set of common traits based on a comparable experience of combat.[9] Much can be learnt about the veterans of the interwar period by looking into the experiences of the soldiers of the Great War. However, if historians have spoken of a 'war generation', composed of young bourgeois men who volunteered and sometimes returned from war believing that they had become different and better individuals,[10] no unitary pattern of political response to the war experience can be identified. The war experience differed sharply according to the social class and background of the actors.[11] Although some historians believe that all

[4] John Gooch, *Army, State and Society in Italy, 1870–1915*, Houndmills, Macmillan, 1989; Anja Johansen, 'Violent Repression or Modern Strategies of Crowd Management? Soldiers as riot police in France and Germany, 1890–1914', *French History*, 15 (2001), pp. 400–20.
[5] Rafael Núñez Florencio, *Militarismo y antimilitarismo en España*, Madrid, CSIC, 1990.
[6] See, for example, Gérard de Puymége, *Chauvin, le soldat-laboureur: contribution à l'étude des nationalismes*, Paris, Gallimard, 1993.
[7] Marco Fincardi, 'I reduci risorgimentali veneti e friulani', *Italia contemporanea*, 222 (2001), pp. 79–83.
[8] Alex Hall, 'The War of Words: Anti-Socialist Offensives and Counter-Propaganda in Wilhelmine Germany 1890–1914', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 11, 2–3 (1976), pp. 11–42.
[9] Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *Combattre. Une anthropologie historique de la guerre moderne, XIXe–XXIe siècle*, Paris, Seuil, 2008; David A. Gerber (ed.), *Disabled Veterans in History*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2000.
[10] Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1979; Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Oxford University Press, 1975; Mario Isnenghi, *Il mito della Grande Guerra*, Bari, Laterza, 1970.
[11] See Richard Bessel, 'The Front Generation and the Politics of Weimar Germany', in Mark Roseman (ed.), *Generations in Conflict. Youth Revolt and Generation Formation in Germany, 1770–1968*, Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 121–36.

veterans share a set of characteristics that reflect the nature of their war experience,[12] it would be wrong to maintain that veterans also shared a common *political* instinct.

In addition, the very notion of the 'veteran' could embody significantly different meanings depending not only on the nation-state but also on the language. What was a war veteran? Even before the concept was officially defined by legislation, historical actors had already endowed it with implicit, subjective connotations that varied according to the language employed. It was not exactly the same to say, as in Britain, *ex-servicemen*, as it was to use the more aggressive word *combattenti*, as in Italy. Nor was it neutral to call them *Kriegsopfer* ('war victim') or *Frontkämpfer* ('front fighter'), as the Nazis sometimes did, instead of naming them *ehemalige Kriegsteilnehmer* (literally, 'former participants in war'). The explanations for such a variety of notions and meanings must be sought in the national and regional contexts that conditioned and shaped political struggles over the very definition of the symbol of the veteran, as we will see. In this book, the concept of 'veteran', most common in the United States, was the most unbiased term available to analyze this chapter of European history.

Despite the difficulty of defining veterans as a politically coherent and well-defined historical group, historiography on interwar veterans has often tried to discern their predominant political orientation. During the 1950s and 1960s, scholars often recalled the affinity of veteran associations with right-wing and fascist parties.[13] The paramilitary groups that emerged after the war, many of them composed of ex-combatants, were viewed as the 'vanguard of Nazism'.[14] Later, a developing historiography would revise this perception of veterans as potential fascists. German historians were aware that interwar veterans had created politically diverse associations.[15] In Italy, where the common idea of the veterans as potential fascists had remained alive, historian

[12] Eric J. Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat & Identity in World War I*, Cambridge University Press, 1979; Martin Crotty and Mark Edele, 'Total War and Entitlement: Towards a Global History of Veteran Privilege', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 59, 1 (2013), pp. 15–32.

[13] René Remond, 'Les anciens combattants et la politique', *Revue française de science politique*, 5ème année, 2 (1955), pp. 267–90; Graham Wootton, *The Politics of Influence. British Ex-Servicemen: Cabinet Decisions and Cultural Change (1917–57)*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963; Elliott Pennell Fagerberg, 'The "Anciens Combattants" and French Foreign Policy', unpublished PhD thesis, Université de Genève, 1966.

[14] Robert G. L. Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism: The Free Corps Movement in Postwar Germany 1918–1923*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1952.

[15] Volker R. Berghahn, *Der Stahlhelm. Bund der Frontsoldaten*, Düsseldorf, Droste, 1966; Alois Klotzbücher, 'Der politische Weg des Stahlhelm, Bund der Frontsoldaten in der

Giovanni Sabbatucci told the story of the ambitious, albeit failed, democratic project for a political 'renewal' of Italy (*rinnovamento*) that the veterans pursued during 1919–20.[16] Antoine Prost's exhaustive study of the French veteran movement argued that the French veterans, far from representing a fascist threat, had, in fact, constituted a barrier against the expansion of fascism in France.[17] During the 1970s, a set of studies on interwar veterans showed that no clear political orientation could be ascribed to them; veterans embraced not only rightist but also leftist causes, and different organizations within a single country were often political rivals. In the place of a general tendency to see the veteran groups as predominantly right wing and potentially fascist, these works produced a more nuanced picture.[18]

At the same time, the importance of veteran politics and ideologies in the origin of fascism has not been ignored, as important contributions to the study of Fascism and Nazism demonstrate. Emilio Gentile addressed the origins of fascism as a revolutionary and totalitarian ideology stemming from the First World War experience.[19] According to Gentile, *combattentismo*, a kind of rebellious instinct that characterized the returning veterans, was one of the crucial components of the fascist ideology. George L. Mosse argued that the revolutionary national-socialist ideology and *völkisch* nationalism acquired a mass basis only after the Great War and that veteran organizations (such as the Stahlhelm) had contributed to expanding such an ideology.[20] In his book,

Weimarer Republik. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der "Nationalen Opposition" 1918–1933', inaugural dissertation, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität zu Erlangen-Nürnberg, 1964; Karl Rohe, *Das Reichsbanner Schwarz Rot Gold: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Struktur der politischen Kampfverbaende zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik*, Düsseldorf, Droste, 1966; Kurt G. P. Schuster, *Der Rote Frontkämpferbund 1924–1929*, Düsseldorf, Droste, 1975; C. J. Elliot, 'The Kriegervereine and the Weimar Republic', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 10, 1 (1975), pp. 109–29; Ulrich Dunker, *Der Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten 1919–1938. Geschichte eines jüdischen Abwehrvereins*, Düsseldorf, Droste, 1977.

[16] Giovanni Sabbatucci, *I combattenti nel primo dopoguerra*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1974. See also Ferdinando Cordova, *Arditi e legionari Dannunziani*, Padua, Marsilio, 1969.

[17] Antoine Prost, *Les Anciens Combattants et la Societé Française 1914–1939*, 3 vols., Paris, Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1977; see also Antoine Prost, *In the Wake of War: The 'Anciens Combattants' and French Society*, Oxford, Berg, 1992. Cf. Chris Millington, *From Victory to Vichy: Veterans in Inter-war France*, Manchester University Press, 2012.

[18] Stephen R. Ward (ed.), *The War Generation: Veterans of the First World War*, Port Washington, NY, Kennikat Press, 1975.

[19] Emilio Gentile, *Le origine della ideologia fascista*, Bari, Laterza, 1975; see also Emilio Gentile, *Storia del partito fascista. 1919–1922: Movimento e milizia*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1989.

[20] George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, New York, Universal Library, 1964, pp. 254–7.

Fallen Soldiers, Mosse defined the interwar persistence of violence as the 'brutalization' of politics.[21] Mosse affirmed that the experience of trench warfare, with its daily confrontation with death, was the origin of a dehumanizing trivialization of violence during the interwar period, which ultimately led to genocide. The political right and, conspicuously, the war veterans appeared as the chief agents of the 'brutalization' of politics.

The ensuing debate around the 'brutalization' thesis continues to the present day. The notion of 'brutalization' has become an analytical tool for some historians to understand the violence of the interwar period. Works on the cultural history of war have argued that the Great War was the matrix of totalitarianism, pointing to the veterans as important conveyors of violence.[22] Other scholars, in contrast, are sceptical regarding the long-term destructive consequences of the Great War experience and even deny that such 'brutalization' ever existed.[23] They underline the fact that the French veterans, as Prost argued, remained committed to pacifism. Richard Bessel, who carefully analyzed the situation of Germany in the aftermath of the Great War, noted that the reintegration of front-line soldiers was effective and peaceful; only a tiny minority of them joined the mercenary Freikorps.[24] Benjamin Ziemann, indeed, has recently highlighted the importance of a republican, democratic culture among German veterans, maintaining that the war experience had, in fact, engendered pacifist sentiments among ex-combatants.[25]

Most recently, the concepts of 'cultural demobilization', 'cultures of victory' and 'cultures of defeat' have permitted historians to explain why the traumatic, violent war experiences, whilst being similar for all

[21] George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1990.

[22] Omer Bartov, *Mirrors of Destruction: War, Genocide, and Modern Identity*, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 16–22; Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *14–18, retrouver la Guerre*, Paris, Gallimard, 2000, pp. 313–14; Angelo Ventrone, *La seduzione totalitarian: Guerra, modernità, violenza politica (1914–1918)*, Rome, Donzelli, 2003; Enzo Traverso, *A ferro e fuoco : La guerra civile europea, 1914–1945*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2007; Alexander Mesching, *Der Wille zur Bewegung. Militärischer Traum und totalitäres Programm. Eine Mentalitätsgeschichte vom Ersten Weltkrieg zum Nationalsozialismus*, Bielefeld, Transcript, 2008.

[23] Dirk Schumann, 'Europa, der Erste Weltkrieg und die Nachkriegszeit: eine Kontinuität der Gewalt?', *Journal of Modern European History*, 1, 1 (2003), pp. 24–43; Antoine Prost, 'Les limites de la brutalisation : Tuer sur le front occidental, 1914–1918', *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 81 (2004), pp. 5–20.

[24] Richard Bessel, *Germany after the First World War*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993.

[25] Benjamin Ziemann, *War Experiences in Rural Germany 1914–1923*, Oxford, Berg, 2007, pp. 211–68; *id.*, *Contested Commemorations, Republican War Veterans and Weimar Political Culture*, Cambridge University Press, 2013.

combatants, had 'brutalizing' effects only in some countries.[26] By focusing on the processes of demobilization, historians have offered insights into the separate paths that the veterans of different countries walked after 1918. In Britain and France, the population in general, and veterans in particular, abandoned war mentalities and attitudes more easily than, for instance, in Germany or Italy.[27] In the latter countries, the circulation of post-war myths, such as the 'stab in the back' (*Dolchstoß*) and the 'mutilated victory', probably thwarted demobilization of the minds.[28] In Germany and Austria, counter-revolutionary paramilitary units included many veterans, particularly ex-officers, alongside younger nationalist students. Yet, rather than the war experience, it was defeat and revolution that catalyzed their violent reaction.[29] Post-war violence was the result of the collapse of state authority and of the political radicalization of many different social groups – not only the war veterans – as a consequence of military mobilization and demobilization.[30]

The case of Italy, victorious in 1918 but suffering from the 'brutalization' of politics, is crucial to understand the context in which Fascism was born. However, there are many gaps in this knowledge.[31] The prevalent interpretation says that the Italian liberal state and the political left failed to demobilize and welcome returning troops; therefore, some veterans turned into fascists or into supporters of D'Annunzio in Fiume, whilst the army officers' neutrality and obedience to the state weakened.[32] In the first part of this book, I will revise this interpretation by looking into

[26] John Horne (dir.), 'Démobilisations culturelles après la Grande Guerre', *14–18 Aujourd'hui, Today, Heute*, 5 (2002); Julia Eichenberg and John Paul Newman (eds.), *The Great War and Veterans' Internationalism*, New York, Palgrave, 2013.

[27] Bruno Cabanes, *La Victoire endeuillée : La sortie de guerre des soldats français (1918–1920)*, Paris, Seuil, 2004; Jon Lawrence, 'Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence, and Fear of Brutalization in Post-First World War Britain', *Journal of Modern History*, 75, 3 (2003), pp. 557–89; Adam R. Seipp, *The Ordeal of Peace. Demobilization and the Urban Experience in Britain and Germany, 1917–1921*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2009.

[28] Boris Barth, *Dolchstoßlegenden und politische Desintegration. Das Trauma der deutschen Niederlage im Ersten Weltkrieg 1914–1933*, Düsseldorf, Droste, 2003.

[29] Robert Gerwarth, 'The Central European Counter-Revolution: Paramilitary Violence in Germany, Austria and Hungary after the Great War', *Past and Present*, 200 (2008), pp. 175–209.

[30] Robert Gerwarth and John Horne (eds.), *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War*, Oxford University Press, 2012; Mark Edele and Robert Gerwarth (eds.), Special Issue: 'The Limits of Demobilization', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 50, 1 (2015).

[31] Giulia Albanese, 'Brutalizzazione e violenza alle origini del fascismo', *Studi Storici*, 55, 1 (2014), pp. 3–14.

[32] Marco Mondini, *La politica delle armi: Il ruolo dell'esercito nell'avvento del fascismo*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2006; Marco Mondini and Guri Schwarz, *Dalla guerra alla pace: Retoriche e pratiche della smobilitazione nell'Italia del Novecento*, Verona, Cierre edizioni/Istrevi, 2007, pp. 23–113.

demobilization from a transnational and cultural point of view. Beyond the paradoxes of the 'brutalization' paradigm, transnational perspectives are required to answer the questions of how, and to what extent, war veterans were connected to the new fascist ideas, movements and regimes of the interwar period.

Fascism

As a history of the European fascist movements and regimes, this book has a wider chronological and geographical scope than most works on post-war veteran demobilization. Examining the history of fascism in its relations with the veterans in interwar Europe requires transcending the nation-state frameworks that usually shape existing research on the topic,[33] as well as observing more than two decades of historical developments. By analyzing the many layers of the long-term historical relationship between veterans and fascism in a transnational perspective, this book addresses important gaps in knowledge and contributes to the new understanding of fascism as a transnational phenomenon.

Whereas the existing bibliography on fascism is truly immense, historians have only begun to understand how fascist symbols, myths and discourses about war were translated into social practice and politics. In particular, the relationship between veterans and fascism has not been sufficiently studied. Whereas many works on fascism have focused on assessing the presence of ex-combatants and soldiers within the movements,[34] few studies have taken the notion of the combatant as a cultural construct that was manipulated by the fascist movements and regimes.[35] However, scholars have stressed the seminal importance of the war

[33] Ángel Alcalde, *Los excombatientes franquistas. La cultura de guerra del fascismo español y la Delegación Nacional de Excombatientes (1936–1965)*, Zaragoza, Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza, 2014; Nils Löffelbein, *Ehrenbürger der Nation. Die Kriegsbeschädigten des Ersten Weltkriegs in Politik und Propaganda des Nationalsozialismus*, Essen, Klartext, 2013; Robert Weldon Whalen, *Bitter Wounds. German Victims of the Great War, 1914–1939*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1984; Deborah Cohen, *The War Come Home: Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914–1939*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001.

[34] Michael Mann, *Fascists*, Cambridge University Press, 2004; Sven Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde. Gewalt und Gemeinschaft im italienischen Squadrismus und in der deutschen SA*, Köln, Böhlau, 2002.

[35] Matthias Sprenger, *Landsknechte auf dem Weg ins Dritte Reich? Zu Genese und Wandel des Freikorpsmythos*, Paderborn, Ferdinand Schöning, 2008. See also Benjamin Ziemann, 'Die Konstruktion des Kriegsveteranen und die Symbolik seiner Erinnerung 1918–1933', in Jost Dülffer and Gerd Krumeich (eds.), *Der verlorene Frieden: Politik und Kriegskultur nach 1918*, Essen, Klartex-Verlag, 2002, pp. 101–18.

experience for fascism[36] and, in particular, for German National Socialism.[37] Yet, these works usually place themselves within the 'brutalization' debate[38] and seldom provide transnational and long-term perspectives. Reconstructing the history of fascist veteran discourses and organizations in interwar Europe is a task that remains to be done, and it is from a transnational perspective that we can attain new insights.

But what do I mean when I talk about fascism in this book? Currently, there is an increasing tendency to consider 'fascism' as a rather vague and contradictory category that historical actors used to pursue their objectives within a transnational context.[39] Following this trend, I assume as a premise the existence of a nonspecific *transnational* fascism phenomenon, in which different movements and regimes were involved, starting with Italian Fascism and German National Socialism. I do not intend, therefore, to take fascism as a static object or abstract category whose essential core should be identified. Fascist movements and regimes were never hermetically isolated from other authoritarian, para-fascist and counter-revolutionary political manifestations.[40] 'The category of fascism is the product of the actions, struggles and the self-identification of the political actors themselves,' as Michel Dobry has put it.[41] The best way to fully understand fascism, therefore, is to situate it within its historical context and rendering visible its evolution and diffusion throughout Europe.[42] We will observe fascism in action, as a fast-evolving and expanding process that, after its birth in Italy, took place fundamentally in the

[36] Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997, pp. 162–82; Philip Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915–1945* (2nd edn.), New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

[37] Gerd Krumeich (ed.), *Nationalsozialismus und Erster Weltkrieg*, Essen, Klartext, 2010; Thomas Kühne, *Kameradschaft. Die Soldaten des nationalsozialistischen Krieges und das 20. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006.

[38] Arndt Weinrich, *Der Weltkrieg als Erzieher. Jugend zwischen Weimarer Republik und Nationalsozialismus*, Essen, Klartext Verlag, 2013, pp. 21–5; Alessandro Salvador and Anders G. Kjøstvedt (eds.), *New Political Ideas in the Aftermath of the Great War*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, p. xiv.

[39] Kevin Passmore, 'L'historiographie du "fascisme" en France', *French Historical Studies*, 37, 3 (2014), pp. 466–99; Samuel Huston Goodfellow, 'Fascism as a Transnational Movement: The Case of Inter-War Alsace', *Contemporary European History*, 22, 1 (2013), pp. 87–106.

[40] Aristotle A. Kallis, '"Fascism", "Para-fascism" and "Fascistization": On the Similarities of Three Conceptual Categories', *European History Quarterly*, 33, 2 (2003), pp. 219–49.

[41] Michel Dobry, 'Desperately Seeking "Generic Fascism": Some Discordant Thoughts on the Academic Recycling of Indigenous Categories', in António Costa Pinto (ed.), *Rethinking the Nature of Fascism*, pp. 53–84; cf. Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, London, Printer Publishers, 1991.

[42] Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, New York, Knopf, 2004; Philip Morgan, *Fascism in Europe, 1919–1945*, London, Routledge, 2003.

transnational context of Europe during the interwar period. In short, this is a book on 'transnational fascism'.

Studying an ideology and a political movement such as fascism from a transnational point of view involves observing the 'multidirectional transfer' and circulation of 'ideas, information, resources'.[43] Transnational history looks 'beyond national boundaries and seek[s] to explore interconnections across borders', 'whether through individuals, non-national identities, and non-state actors, or in terms of objectives shared by people and communities regardless of their nationality'.[44] Works on 'transnational fascism', therefore, have focused on the interconnectedness, the contacts and sometimes the rivalries between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, leading to the entanglement of the two powers at the end of the 1930s. They have shown not only the similarities and the differences between both regimes but also their kinship, bonds and mutual influence. Fascist movements and regimes were simultaneously ultranationalist and transnational phenomena. And by focusing on connections and exchanges, historians have demonstrated the wide – even transatlantic – circulation of fascism during the interwar period.[45] It is now clear that during the 1920s, Italian Fascism became the model and the inspiration for different right-wing, nationalist and counter-revolutionary groups abroad.[46] But by 1934, Hitler had overtaken Mussolini as the lodestar of the European extreme right; the first attempts at cooperation and the fight for leadership between fascists and national socialists ended in the consolidation of National Socialism as the new model for European fascists and as the leading force of the Axis.[47] This strong interpenetration reveals the extent of the fascist phenomenon in interwar Europe and provides a glimpse into its complex 'nature'. The transnational perspective promises a redefinition of

[43] Martin Durham and Margaret Power (eds.), *New Perspectives on the Transnational Right*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 3; see also Sven Reichardt and Armin Nolzen (eds.), *Faschismus in Italien und Deutschland: Studien zu Transfer und Vergleich*, Göttingen, Wallstein, 2005.

[44] Akira Iriye, *Global and Transnational History: The Past, Present and Future*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 11 and 15.

[45] Federico Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism: Ideology, Violence, and the Sacred in Argentina and Italy, 1919–1945*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2010.

[46] Hans Woller, *Rom, 28. Oktober 1922. Die faschistische Herausforderung*, Munich, DTV, 1999, pp. 20–57; Christian Goeschel, 'Italia Docet? The Relationship between Italian Fascism and Nazism Revisited', *European History Quarterly*, 42 (2012), pp. 480–92.

[47] Arnd Bauerkämper, 'Transnational Fascism: Cross-Border Relations between Regimes and Movements in Europe, 1922–1939', *East Central Europe*, 37 (2010), pp. 214–46; see also Salvatore Garau, 'The Internationalisation of Italian Fascism in the Face of German National Socialism, and Its Impact on the British Union of Fascists', *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 15, 1 (2014), pp. 45–63.