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# Fascism, National Socialism and Conservatives in Europe, 1914–1945: Issues for Comparativists

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CARL LEVY

The history of fascism suddenly seems all too contemporary. National populism, ‘post’-fascism, ethnic cleansing and concentration camps in the former Yugoslavia have reawakened publishers and the reading public to its enduring relevance. I shall not be examining all the recent general works on fascism.<sup>1</sup> The field of comparative fascism is immense, so for the sake of time and comprehension, I will limit most of my comments chronologically and geographically to Europe between 1914 and 1945.

First, I will address the issues of defining the fascist minimum. I will then discuss movements and regimes, using two fields that lend themselves to comparative treatment: (i) the relationship between fascists and conservatives; and (ii) The relationship between fascists and National Socialists.

The work which follows forms part of a broader enquiry. In this article I will limit my discussion to the two topics listed above, but what links these to other related questions concerning the nature of the Holocaust and of totalitarianism are the issues of uniqueness and comparability. The tensions between these two terms have generated passionate responses that have transcended innocent questions of

I would like to thank the anonymous reader, Professor Dick Geary and Dr Jonathan Morris for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article. This article was completed before the following works were published: Richard Bosworth, *The Italian Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of Mussolini and Fascism* (London: Arnold, 1998) and Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889–1936: Hubris* (London, Allen Lane, 1998).

<sup>1</sup> Two general surveys not covered in this article are Roger Eatwell, *Fascism* (London: Chatto, 1995) and Walter Laqueur, *Fascism: Past, Present and Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). Some of the leading early works are Eugen Weber, *Varieties of Fascism* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1964); Hans Rogger and Eugen Weber, eds., *The European Right* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966); Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism: Action Française, Italian Fascism and National Socialism* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1965); Stuart Woolf, ed., *European Fascism* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968 (and new edn.: *Fascism in Europe* (London: Methuen, 1981)); Walter Laqueur (ed.), *Fascism. A Reader's Guide* (London: Wildwood House, 1976); Renzo De Felice, *Interpretations of Fascism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977); S. U. Larsen, B. Hagtvæt and J. P. Myklebust, eds., *Who Were the Fascists? Social Roots of European Fascism* (Bergen: Scandinavian University Press, 1980); Stanley Payne, *Fascism: Comparison and Definition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980); D. Mühlberger, ed., *The Social Basis of European Fascist Movements* (London: Croom Helm, 1987); Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Routledge, 1993).

correct methodology. Thus the degree to which fascism is associated with the traditional right might either normalise fascism or demonise the traditional right. If the biological racism of the Nazis is said to have set them apart from other fascists this too might normalise the latter as closer kin to authoritarian or traditional conservatives, while identifying Nazi Germany as a uniquely wicked regime whose monstrous crimes cannot be compared with either any contemporaneous or indeed historical form of despotism. On the other hand (and this leads on to issues that will be discussed in a future article), is the Holocaust a unique result of the particular biological racist exterminationism of the Nazis, or do the older themes of European Christian anti-Semitism and the newer themes of post-1914 ethno-nationalist ethnic cleansing (Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey and Poland) link the Nazis' project to other European political cultures? Questions concerning the uniqueness of Nazi political culture addressed in this article also anticipate questions posed in future work. Was the attempted genocide of European Jewry a unique event in history?<sup>2</sup> Or is genocide, like war, a horrible but rather common feature of human history? When framed in this context comparative studies of the Holocaust do not restrict themselves to examples found in Europe between 1914 and 1945. However, an innocent comparative exercise became charged with meaning when a group of conservative German historians during the *Historikerstreit* (historians' dispute) seemed to make this into an exercise in the normalisation of modern Germany and also the exculpation of the specific crimes of specific Germans by understanding them through a broader context.<sup>3</sup> The revival of the concept of totalitarianism at this juncture was important.<sup>4</sup> And after the collapse of communism Russian historians embraced this concept even more fervently than their German counterparts. In this respect, Nazism might not necessarily be unique. The Holocaust, Stalinist collectivisation and the Gulag were all of a piece. But at this point we have returned full circle to comparisons between conservatism and fascism which will be

<sup>2</sup> An excellent historical sociology of European ethnic cleansing is found in Rogers Brubaker's recent work. See, *Nationalism Reframed. Nationalism and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Part II of this monograph is especially interesting. Here Brubaker compares the earlier episodes of ethnic cleansing between 1919 and 1945 with those after 1989.

For the comparability of the Holocaust with other episodes of genocide see, Alan S. Rosenbaum, ed., *Is the Holocaust Unique? Perspectives on Comparative Genocide* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> Charles S. Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, the Holocaust and German Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); Richard J. Evans, *In Hitler's Shadow: West German Historians and the Attempt to Escape from the Nazi Past* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1989); Richard J. Bosworth, *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima: History Writing and the Second World War 1945–1990* (London: Routledge, 1993); Ian Buruma, *Wages of Guilt. Memories of War in Germany and Japan* (London: Vintage, 1995); Stefan Berger, 'Historians and Nation-Building in Germany after Reunification', *Past and Present*, no. 148 (1995), 187–222; Omer Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst. The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), chs. 3–6; Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory. The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Abbott Gleason, *Totalitarianism. The Inner History of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Mark Von Hagen, 'Stalinism and the Politics of Post-Soviet History', in Ian Kershaw and Moshe Lewin, eds., *Stalinism and Nazism. Dictatorships in Comparison* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 285–310; Herf, *Divided Memory*.

addressed in this article. In classical portrayals of totalitarianism, Nazism and Stalinism are comparable because, unlike other fascisms or authoritarianisms, they are said to possess a fundamental drive to obliterate civil society, Christianity (and other organised religions) and a free economy. The good conservative attributes of decency and the rule of law, respect for traditional values and natural hierarchies, private property and the market, and organised religion are smashed by the party-state. But what if the boundaries between conservative virtue and the mobilised madness of totalitarian evil are not so clearly drawn? In any case, is the comparative study of evil an appropriate concern of historians and social scientists? One of the best comparativists, Michael Mann, seems to think so. Evil in this respect is not the eternal companion of the human condition. In a recent comparison of fascism, Nazism and Stalinism, Mann announces his intentions to analyse evil within 'a precise twentieth-century social location and structure'.<sup>5</sup> With this in mind, I will turn to the prerequisite of all comparative investigation, the definition of terms.

### I. The fascist minimum

Since fascism is not merely an intellectual idea but has taken shape through movements and regimes, the definition of a fascist minimum is necessarily restricted by the constraints of history and geography. In this regard the two most comprehensive scholars of fascism – Roger Griffin and Stanley Payne<sup>6</sup> – disagree over the historical periodisation of fascism. Payne insists that pre-1945 fascism is distinctive from modern neo- or 'post'-fascism; Griffin, I feel quite rightly, is less fastidious about drawing neat boundaries. A perusal of the writings of Russian nationalists of the 1990s (found in his excellent Oxford Reader) is frighteningly persuasive.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, Zeev Sternhell and associates' contention that fascism was already fully formed in pre-1914 France, and perhaps in Italy, is not convincing.<sup>8</sup> Their treatment is far too disembodied from real social movements, institutions and politicians. They tend to exaggerate the consistency and coherence of a variety of pamphlets, monographs and newspaper articles. The search for the

<sup>5</sup> Michael Mann, 'The Contradictions of Continuous Revolution', in Kershaw and Lewin, eds., *Stalinism and Nazism*, 138.

<sup>6</sup> Their latest contributions will dominate much of this article. See Roger Griffin, ed., *Fascism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) and Stanley Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914–1945* (London: UCL Press, 1996). I will also discuss at length Mark Neocleous's short, but helpful, *Fascism* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> Griffin, *Fascism*, 387–9. For good overviews of neo-fascism and right-wing populism in post-1945 Europe see Hans-Georg Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994); Luciano Cheles, Ronnie Ferguson and Michalina Vaughan, eds., *The Far Right in Western and Eastern Europe* (London: Longman, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Zeev Sternhell with Mario Sznajder and Maia Asheri, trans. David Maisel, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). Also see A. James Gregor, *Young Mussolini and the Intellectual Origins of Fascism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); David D. Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition in Italian Fascism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979); Paul Masgaj, *Action Française and Revolutionary Syndicalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979). The most balanced account of the ideological origins of Italian Fascism is still Emilio Gentile, *Le origini dell'ideologia fascista* (Bari: Laterza, 1975).

essence of fascism in pre-1914 syndicalist or Sorelian thought reduces the analysis of the phenomenon to ‘a labelling exercise’.<sup>9</sup>

Fascism received its nourishment from the European civil war which convulsed the continent from 1914 to 1945. I, however, have used the initial date 1914 rather than 1917 in order to differentiate myself from Ernst Nolte’s and Renzo De Felice’s suggestion that fascism was merely the *fratello nemico* (‘brother-enemy’) of bolshevism.<sup>10</sup> As we shall see, the experience of the Great War rather than merely its outcomes (which include the revolutions in Germany, Hungary and Russia) is central to the formation of the post-1918 radical right. Moreover, the pithy definitions of fascism by Griffin (‘fascism is a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism’<sup>11</sup>) or Payne (‘a form of revolutionary ultra-nationalism for national rebirth that is based on a primarily vitalist philosophy, is structured on extreme elitism, mass mobilisation, and the *Führerprinzip*, positively values violence as end as well as means and tends to normatise war and/or military values’<sup>12</sup>) imply that in our post-communist world fascism, or its descendants, might thrive. But even before 1945, fascism was by no means merely a crude and vigorous movement of anti-communism. In my conclusion I will return to the comparability of ‘classic fascism’ and the neo- or post-fascism of our own times.

I shall not refer to possible fascist movements or regimes outside Europe. Stanley Payne is quite right to restrict his definition of fascism to movements arising in response to the birth of mass parliamentary democracy and therefore necessarily requiring the mass mobilisation of followers. Fascism should not be used as a shorthand for many types of nationalist and post-colonial dictatorships the world has witnessed since the Second World War.<sup>13</sup> However, Peronism in Argentina, integralism in Brazil or South African Afrikaans radicalism are close enough in filiation and social context to be suggestive hybrids.<sup>14</sup> Equally, the contentious issue

<sup>9</sup> Robert O. Paxton, ‘Radicals’, *New York Review of Books*, 23 June 1994, 53.

Works which place the pre-1914 origins of fascism within the conservative or populist Right include: Arno J. Mayer, *Dynamics of Counterrevolution in Europe, 1870–1956* (New York: Harper Row, 1971); Alexander De Grand, *The Italian National Association and the Rise of Fascism* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1978); Geoffrey Eley, *Reshaping the German Right. Radical Nationalism and Political Change after Bismarck* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980); Eley, *From Unification to Nazism* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1990).

Other works stress the role of modernism in the intellectual origins of fascism. See Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (New York: Bantam Press, 1989); Walter Adamson, *Avant-Garde Florence. From Modernism to Fascism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> Renzo De Felice, *Intervista sul fascismo* (Bari: Laterza, 1975); Ernst Nolte, *Der europäische Bürgerkrieg, 1917–1945: Nationalsozialismus und Bolschewismus* (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1987). For a good summary of the era see Paul Preston, ‘The Great Civil War: European Politics, 1914–1945’, in Tim Blanning, ed., *The Oxford History of Contemporary Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 148–81.

<sup>11</sup> Griffin, *The Nature*, 2.

<sup>12</sup> Payne, *A History*, 14.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 328–54.

<sup>14</sup> Griffin, *Fascism*, 228–37. A forthcoming volume edited by Griffin and S. U. Larsen (*Was there*

of whether or not the Japanese experienced fascism will not be addressed. But here I think Stanley Payne is not too fastidious: without a mass ideological party, a charismatic secular leader ('the figurehead' Emperor was a living god) or a domestic system of regime secret police and concentration camps, Japanese imperialist militarism was *sui generis*.<sup>15</sup>

Griffin's and Payne's previously mentioned transhistorical definitions of fascism are very helpful, but the contextualisation of fascist ideology within the specifics of the inter-war period serve my purpose in what follows.

Fascism, Payne reminds us, is founded on the three negations: anti-liberalism, anti-communism and anti-conservatism.<sup>16</sup> Contemporary liberalism was associated with the Wilsonian settlement of 1919, generating mass support for the nationalist and populist right in Germany, Italy and Hungary. The connection between revisionist powers and early fascism is well known. However, the postwar settlements also served the extreme right in certain 'sated' powers. The extreme right in Romania or Poland attacked the conservative 'establishment' for pandering to the newly acquired 'alien' Germans, Jews, Ukrainians or Hungarians. In central and eastern Europe fascism is the most radical advocate of the fulfilment of irredentist demands, the radical revision of national boundaries and the creation of new empires. Fascism finds notable support in the border regions of Italy with Yugoslavia, the border regions of Germany and Polish Silesia and the Czech Sudetenland or the Finnish borders with Soviet Karelia. Mussolini invoked the dream of a new Roman Empire,<sup>17</sup> Hitler a racial empire in eastern Europe but there

*Fascism outside Europe?*) promises to add to our knowledge of this controversial area of study. Also see the remarks by Eric Hobsbawm in his *Age of Extremes. The Short Twentieth Century 1914–1991* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994), 131–5.

<sup>15</sup> Payne, *A History*, 328–37 (esp. 336). On the other hand, the Nazis themselves recognised that the 'traditional' (in many respects a late-nineteenth century 'tradition') leader worship of the Japanese was impressive. As Ian Buruma notes:

In Hitler's Germany, Japan was admired for having achieved, instinctively, what German Nazism aspired to. In the words of one Albrecht Fürst von Urach, a Nazi propagandist, Japanese emperor worship was 'the most unique fusion in the world of state form, state consciousness, and religious fanaticism.' Fanaticism was, of course, a positive word in the Nazi lexicon. Reading Nazi books on Japan, one might think that German propagandists wished to instil in the German people, through propaganda, a culture like the one that was handed down by the Japanese by their ancient gods.

See Buruma, *Wages of Guilt*, 35.

The Japanese invasion of China resulted in the deaths of at least 6 million Chinese. See Rudolph J. Rummel, *Democide. Nazi Genocide and Mass Murder* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1992), 20. The Japanese ran a notorious series of camps in Manchuria where they engaged in experiments in biological warfare with prisoners of war, political prisoners and kidnapped civilians. See Sheldon H. Harris, *Factories of Death. Japanese Biological Warfare 1932–45 and the American Cover-Up* (London: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>16</sup> Payne, *A History*, 7.

<sup>17</sup> See the very good summaries by Philip Morgan, *Italian Fascism 1919–1945* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), 131–72, and John Whittam, *Fascist Italy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 101–36. And specifically on the myth of Rome, see Romke Visser, 'Fascist Doctrine and the Cult of Romanità', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (1992), 5–22 and Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle. The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 90–5.

were also the fascist advocates of a Greater Hungary, Greater Romania and Greater Croatia, whose cross-cutting objectives are untangled by Payne.<sup>18</sup>

Liberalism is not only associated with the ‘pollution of national cultures’ and weak-willed foreign policy, it is equally seen as an agent in the collapse of morals and discipline during the social upheaval of the war and postwar periods, fears recently charted for Germany by Richard Bessel.<sup>19</sup> It is well-known that anti-communism and anti-socialism are essential components of interwar fascism. The threats to property rights posed by communism and by social democratic welfare policies are underlined in fascist propaganda, but equally important are the potent metaphysical and psychological fears unleashed by the chaos of war and its aftermath.

If the defence of property rights seems to assimilate them to the authoritarian traditionalist right, fascists are inherently suspicious of the old guard. Those who are active in the old ‘tired’ parliamentary game are pictured as yesterday’s men: they can no longer defend the spiritual and material interests of the nation.<sup>20</sup> Fascists have a more common touch, and are at ease with the needs of mass political campaigning. They are also prepared to substitute the older structures of government with their variation on the theme of the party-state.

This willingness to create ‘a new nationalist state based not merely on traditional principles and models’ is accompanied by an ideological intention (which is not always completely borne out in reality) to create a ‘new kind of regulated, multiclass, integrated national economic structure’,<sup>21</sup> usually defined as national corporativist, national socialist or national syndicalist. Indeed, for Stanley Payne this is one of the chief discriminating variables which set fascists apart from authoritarian or traditional conservatives, while the burden of Sternhell’s argument rests on the uniqueness of fascism grounded in the ideologies of pre-1914 national syndicalism or socialism that appear located in neither the right nor the left.<sup>22</sup> It is precisely this aspect of the fascist programme which many conservative businessmen, industrialists and agrarians viewed with a good deal of distrust. But one of the first things Mussolini and Hitler did was purge those socialistic elements within their movements which seemed intent on carrying out to the letter this ‘second revolution’.

Recent work has given us a clearer idea of precisely how Hitler’s or Mussolini’s regimes modified German and Italian capitalism. In his latest collection of essays, Richard Overy demonstrates that by the second half of the 1930s the Nazi state directed German capitalism but still allowed profits to flow into the bank accounts

<sup>18</sup> Two excellent surveys of Nazi Germany are Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship*, 3rd edn (London: Edward Arnold, 1993) and Klaus P. Fischer, *Nazi Germany: A New History* (London: Constable, 1995).

<sup>19</sup> Payne, *A History*, 391–7. For a sociological analysis of ethnic cleansing and empire building in central and eastern Europe during the interwar period, see Brubaker, *Nationalism*.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Bessel, *Germany after the First World War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

<sup>21</sup> This is captured in many of Griffin’s excerpts from interwar European fascist writing. See *Fascism*, 172–226.

<sup>22</sup> Payne, *A History*, 7.

<sup>22</sup> Zeev Sternhell, *Neither Right nor Left: Fascist Ideology in France*, trans. David Maisel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

of industrialists.<sup>23</sup> In my own recent assessment of how far Italian fascism modernised indigenous capitalism, I have argued that the modes of state intervention were largely the product of ad hoc remedies in the face of the slump. Family-controlled big business was allowed to shape the parameters of this state bail-out, and, as Franklin Adler has recently demonstrated, defeat Rossoni and the corporative experiment.<sup>24</sup> In his excellent survey of the fascist style in Italy and Germany, Alexander De Grand argues that while the state sector was intimately associated and compromised with the Nazi regime and its leading personalities, Italian state intervention, although used to mobilise for war, was a product of the emergency caused by the slump and survived largely intact after 1945 because it did not become a participant in an empire of slave labour and death camps.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi argues that Mussolini's programme of autarchy could use the spiritual aspects of corporativist ideology to promote Italian self-sufficiency. Thus Mussolini, she argues, 'needed to circumvent the contradiction of attacking the bourgeoisie on moral grounds while cultivating it as an economic asset. He needed to reconcile the divergent programmes of assailing consumption and spurring a market economy'.<sup>26</sup> But as Jonathan Morris has shown, when in the 1930s small shopkeepers seemed to threaten the artificially low 'political' price of bread and thereby threaten social peace, Mussolini invoked the radical social rhetoric of the *biennio rosso* (the 'red biennium' of 1919–20 – the two years of radical unrest which followed the First World War) and attacked his erstwhile allies as parasites.<sup>27</sup> And although Mussolini turned to anti-Semitism after 1938, in Nazi Germany parasitical, unhealthy capitalism was 'Jewish capitalism'.

If national syndicalism or socialism contributed something to the fascist minimum, it was not as consistent anti-capitalism but in the form of a radical anti-rationalist state of mind. As Mark Neocleous shows in his lively short introduction to fascism, fundamental to fascist ideology was its voluntarism: fascists could accomplish great deeds through sheer will-power.<sup>28</sup> This is usually associated with the attempt to create a new secular or pagan culture.

There has been much written about fascism as a new 'political religion', most notably by Emilio Gentile, whose major contribution is now in English, and also evident by the contributions of a group of cultural historians in a recent issue of the *Journal of Contemporary History*.<sup>29</sup> It is certainly the case that fascism carved out a

<sup>23</sup> Richard J. Overy, *War and Economy in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 12–19.

<sup>24</sup> Carl Levy, 'From Fascism to "post-Fascists": Italian Roads to Modernity', in Richard Bessel, ed., *Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. Comparisons and Contrasts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 172–4; Franklin Hugh Adler, *Italian Industrialists from Liberalism to Fascism. The Political Development of the Industrial Bourgeoisie, 1906–1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>25</sup> Alexander J. De Grand, *Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. The 'Fascist' Style of Rule* (London: Routledge, 1995), 50.

<sup>26</sup> Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*, 129.

<sup>27</sup> Jonathan Morris, 'Retailing, Fascism and the Origins of the Social Protection of Shopkeepers in Italy', *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 5, no. 3 (1996), pp. 285–318.

<sup>28</sup> Neocleous, *Fascism*, 4, 9, 11; Payne, *A History*, 7.

<sup>29</sup> Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996);

unique niche that differentiated it from the authoritarian right by emphasising this aspect of its ideology. It is also true, as Gentile shows in the case of Italian Fascism, that the regime adapted aspects of the Roman Catholic Church's language, representations and organisations of indoctrination for its own project. But I have always felt uneasy about the term 'political religion'. It is certainly true that many secular movements besides fascism, such as socialism, have used the legacy and living example of Christianity but this is a rather trivial finding. The Enlightenment and even the Scientific Revolution relied upon religious metaphors and feelings. The secular world evolved and lived in close proximity to religion. Furthermore, the historically dominant Judeo-Christian tradition in Europe is associated with the concept of mortal transcendence and the belief in the existence of a supernatural being, which tends to limit the possible divine attributes of very mortal dictators. Indeed, the question of succession after Hitler and Mussolini died became a serious if delicate issue for both regimes.<sup>30</sup>

Even in other areas of the world, where transcendence is not important, such as in Japanese Shintoism, the relationship between a putative fascism and religion is fraught with difficulties. Indeed, it was precisely because the emperor of Japan was seen to be a god and not a secular leader that experts discount the notion of Japanese fascism. Although, ironically, the chief philosopher of Italian Fascism and the promoter of totalitarianism, Giovanni Gentile, pointed to Japanese Shintoism as an excellent example of the political mysticism he urged on Italy.<sup>31</sup> With the exception of the Romanian Iron Guard, whose declared political aim was to save the souls of all living, dead and yet-to-be-born Romanians for the nation (!), European fascism was a secular and scientific belief system.<sup>32</sup> Restating Adorno, much of fascist

'The Aesthetics of Fascism', ed. Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (1996).

<sup>30</sup> I am not using the term 'transcendence' in the sense that Nolte does in *Three Faces of Fascism*, where he employs it to mean that acceptance of secular modernity. See the excerpt reproduced in Griffin, *Fascism*, 297–8.

Griffin is also very good on drawing boundaries between Fascist ideology and organised religion. See pp. 5–6:

Such phenomena have often led specialists to use religious terminology in the analysis of fascism, claiming that it is a 'secular', 'civic', 'lay', or 'political' religion', replete with 'millenarian' or 'eschatological' energies. Such phrases are in order only so long as it is borne in mind that fascism sets out to operate in human society through human agency and within human history. It thus lacks a genuine metaphysical dimension and is the utter antithesis and destroyer of genuine religious faith. Its compulsive use of the religious language of sacrifice, belief, resurrection, redemption, spirit, and its attacks on scepticism, doubt, materialism, consumerism, hedonism as signs of moral decay are to be understood as the hallmarks of a modern political ideology seeking to offer a panacea to the malaise and anomie of contemporary society. They do not signify a literal regression to an earlier age of religious certainties (in which the nation as the focus of populist energies and the concept of the State as the creator of an ideal society did not exist).

For the question of succession in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany see respectively Paolo Pombeni, *Demagogia e Tirannide. Uno studio sulla forma-partito del fascismo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1984) and Hans Mommsen, 'Cumulative Radicalisation and Progressive Self-Destruction as the Structural Determinants of the Nazi Dictatorship', in Kershaw and Lewin, *Stalinism and Nazism*, 80–1.

<sup>31</sup> Emilio Gentile, 'La nazione del fascismo. Alle origini della crisi dello Stato nazionale in Italia', *Storia Contemporanea*, Vol. 24, no. 6 (1993), 857–8.

<sup>32</sup> Payne is very good on Romanian fascism. See, *A History*, 277–89. Griffin presents excerpts of some of the more bizarre manifestos of the Iron Guard, see *Fascism*, 222. The aim of the movement was

ideology was a perversion of the legacy of the Enlightenment. As Payne notes, Hitler's murderous combination of anthropological and biological racism could have happened only in the secular twentieth century.<sup>33</sup> However, the connections between science, pseudo-science and Christianity in twentieth-century culture meant that the message and imagery could be traced directly back to the pre-secular world. Thus for Saul Friedländer Hitler's 'redemptive anti-Semitism' combined a 'modern' fear of racial degeneration with a religious belief in the redemption of the *Volk* through the extermination of the Jew.<sup>34</sup> In the case of Italian Fascism, Mabel Berezin highlights the link between Fascist ideology and the 'Italian social iterations of the institutions of church and family'.<sup>35</sup> But this close association with family and church, especially during the totalitarian mobilisation for war in the late 1930s and early 1940s, was not without problems. She shows that Fascist ceremonies and holidays were typically and suspiciously located near traditional Catholic holidays. Nevertheless, this resulted not in an osmosis between the 'religion of Fascism' and Catholicism, but in a conflict over the limited quantity of 'ritual time' since the mundane issue of paying workers for both sorts of holidays might not be possible. And without paid holidays, workers might not be guaranteed to attend Fascist spectacles.<sup>36</sup> Thus the Italian Fascists could rely upon certain aspects of traditional Catholic life in Italy, but, Berezin concludes, 'as Allied bombs fell along with the regime, fascist identity revealed itself as highly contingent'.<sup>37</sup>

If 'political religion' is an unacceptable oxymoron, Paul Brooker's concept of fraternalism might at first sight be more useful. He measures the degree to which fraternal politics were fostered by the cultural and social organisations of the regimes in Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and imperial Japan. He arrives at the paradoxical conclusion that the fraternal politics of the youth, women, workers or leisure organisations of the Fascist and Nazi regimes could not match the robustness of traditional Japanese structures of social control at the village level that allowed the non-fascist imperial Japanese to create the most effective national community regime!<sup>38</sup> In Italy, and even in Germany, the Christian churches could serve as a counter-community, but of course this did not prevent clerical fascists in central and

to save the souls from 'all the Romanians, living or dead, who have lived on this soil since the beginning of our history, and who will live on it in the remotest future'. Further:

There will come a time when all the peoples of the earth will fight their way through to this final resurrection, all the peoples with their dead leaders. Then each people will be given a special place before the throne of God. This final act, this overwhelming moment, this resurrection of the dead, is the highest and most sublime goal which a people can aspire to. A people is thus an entity whose life continues beyond the earth!

<sup>33</sup> Payne, *A History*, 202–3.

<sup>34</sup> Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and The Jews. Volume I. The Years of Persecution 1933–39* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1997), 87.

<sup>35</sup> Mabel Berezin, *Making the Fascist Self. The Political Culture of Interwar Italy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), 248.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

<sup>38</sup> Paul Brooker, *The Faces of Fraternalism. Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Imperial Japan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 289–315 (esp. 314).

eastern Europe or Mussolini's regime from partially assimilating to fascism the traditionalist reactionary culture of the Catholic, Lutheran or Orthodox churches.

Martin Conway's excellent cross-national comparison of Catholic politics in Europe between 1918 and 1945 shows that by the 1930s the anti-liberal, anti-communist and corporatist ideals of political Catholicism and the mass base of discontented rural Catholics drew many in this world close to secular fascism.<sup>39</sup> While the preferred models were Dollfuss's Austria or Salazar's Portugal, rather than Mussolini's Italy or Hitler's Germany, Catholic politics helped undermine the legitimacy of liberal democracy in Republican Spain, Weimar Germany and postwar Austria even before more secular fascist competitors seized their opportunities. So if German Catholics feared the Bismarckian, secular and pagan overtones of the Nazi movement, they also grew disenchanted with the Weimar establishment. In both Germany and Italy traditionalist currents in Catholic and Protestant culture endorsed authoritarian and anti-communist regimes and lent their contingent but not their ideological support to secular regimes.

In any case, whatever the effectiveness of Fascist and Nazi national community regimes, paganism or the rural utopias associated with them sat uneasily with the praise of a new efficient technological state of experts invoked by some Italian and German fascists. Mass mobilisation for war needed to accomplish imperial projects required the industrialisation rather than the ruralisation of society. It has been argued by Gregor for Italy and Zitelmann and others for Germany that modernisation was a key component of fascist ideology and that modernisation was the basis for the economic and social policies of both regimes.<sup>40</sup> But whatever the forms of modernisation experienced by the 'Aryan' working class in Germany caused by Nazi policy, they were the unintended effects of rationalisation, mobilisation and war. The culture of quality work and the flexible skilled worker started under Weimar and continued on through to the Federal Republic. In any case, by 1944 there were more than 7 million foreign forced labourers in the Reich. As Ulrich Herbert notes, racialism and 'extermination through work' might be seen as the end-products of Nazi 'rationalisation'.<sup>41</sup> And if the German working class in the Federal Republic of Germany was less class-conscious and further from its old pre-Nazi 'Red' subculture, Tobias Abse has shown that Fascist social engineering in Italy did not destroy an alternative socialist and communist working-class political culture.<sup>42</sup> Finally, as De Grand and others have noted, the imperatives of fascist

<sup>39</sup> Martin Conway, *Catholic Politics in Europe 1918–1945* (London: Routledge, 1997).

<sup>40</sup> I evaluate Gregor in Levy, 'From Fascists'. Mark Roseman evaluates Zitelmann and other advocates of the modernisation thesis in 'National Socialism and Modernisation', Bessel, *Fascist Italy*, 197–229.

<sup>41</sup> Ulrich Herbert, 'Labour and Extermination: Economic Interest and the Primacy of *Weltanschauung* in National Socialism', *Past and Present*, no. 138 (1993), 144–95; *Hitler's Foreign Workers. Enforced Foreign Labour in Germany Under the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). For working-class cultures in Germany, see the excellent review of the literature by Mary Nolan, 'Work, Gender and Everyday Life: Reflections on Continuity, Normality and Agency in Twentieth-Century Germany', in Kershaw and Lewin, *Stalinism and Nazism*, 311–42.

<sup>42</sup> Tobias Abse, 'Italian Workers and Italian Fascism', in Bessel, *Fascist Italy*, 40–60.

mobilisation for war seemed to contradict the fascist ideal of a masculine society in which women produced healthy children and remained at home, but here too this was more evident in industrialised Germany than in peasant Italy. However, even if fewer women worked in industry in Italy than in Germany, as David Horn and Carl Ipsen have shown, Italy was sufficiently modernised to be unaffected by Mussolini's demographic campaigns. Italian family size started to shrink before Fascism, continued through the *ventennio* and on to the postwar era.<sup>43</sup>

Undoubtedly, through their style and organisation, fascists created a unique niche within the authoritarian right. Their emphasis on the mass meeting, set uniforms and salutes was, as Payne shows, not uniquely fascist, although Mussolini and Hitler excelled at the intricate deployment of 'political choreography'.<sup>44</sup> Along with the exaltation of violence and masculinity came the stress on youth and the changing or battle of the generations. This was particularly important for the generation too young to have experienced the comradeship of the trenches but swayed by the romantic imagery with which fascists wooed the 'betrayed' soldiers.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, was the emphasis on 'an authoritarian, charismatic, personal style of command'. The leader principle was essential: the Hitler myth and the Mussolini myth were important in the movement and regime phases of fascism.<sup>46</sup> The undisputed leader, De Grand reminds us, could negotiate with right-wing rivals before the seizure of power and could exercise unique power after, by playing off traditional elements of the bureaucracy against the party.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Both Griffin and Payne stress the 'masculinity' of fascist ideology. See especially Griffin, *Fascism*, 7; Payne, *A History*, 13. The unintended effects of industrial mobilisation for war are stressed by De Grand in *Fascist Italy*, 57–63. The most up-to-date accounts of women under fascism are Gabriele Czarnowski, 'The Value of Marriage for *Volksgemeinschaft*: Policies towards Women and Marriage under National Socialism', and Perry R. Willson, 'Women in Fascist Italy', in Bessel, *Fascist Italy*, 61–77; 78–93. Also see Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

For comprehensive accounts of Mussolini's demographic campaign see David G. Horn, *Social Bodies: Science, Reproduction, and Italian Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) and Carl Ipsen, *Dictating Demography: The Problem of Population in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>44</sup> Falasca-Zamponi and Berezin (*Making the Fascist Self*) have stressed the important part that symbols, myths and spectacle played in developing a unique fascist identity in Italy. But as Falasca-Zamponi adds, Italian Fascism 'developed much in advance of National Socialism and presented a model for Hitler's own elaboration of political style' (*Fascist Spectacle*, 7).

<sup>45</sup> Richard Bessel makes two important points concerning the German case:

1. Most war veterans were not members of Nazi or right-wing front organisations.
2. Young men in the early 1930s recruited into the Nazi movement were attracted by the myths and style of the earlier front generation pioneers of the 1920s. See his excellent chapter, Richard Bessel, 'The "Front Generation" and the Politics of Weimar Germany', in Mark Roseman, ed., *Generations in Conflict. Youth Movements and Generation Formation in Germany 1770–1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). For the Italian case see Bruno Wanrooij, 'The Rise and Fall of Italian Fascism as a Generational Revolt,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 22, no. 3 (1987), 401–18.

<sup>46</sup> Payne, *A History*, 7. Ian Kershaw has examined the Hitler myth in detail see, *The 'Hitler Myth': Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987). For Italy see Luisa Passerini, *Mussolini immaginario. Storia di una biografia 1915–1939* (Bari: Laterza, 1991) and most comprehensively Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*, ch. 2: 'Mussolini the Myth', 42–88.

<sup>47</sup> De Grand, *Fascist Italy*, 14–37.

Before the seizure of power, Hitler, Larry Jones and Henry Asby Turner have recently shown us, could effectively manipulate rivals such as Hugenberg and von Papen, and afterward the internal chaos of the Third Reich was probably used by Hitler to his own personal advantage, while if Mussolini, as De Grand, Morgan and Whittam show, was equally effective at outmanoeuvring Facta, Giolitti or Salandra, he had less virgin bureaucratic or real territory to exploit to heighten his power because he relied on Rocco and the Nationalists to construct the regime and he was less successful in establishing a durable empire in order to experiment in an unhindered form of Fascism.<sup>48</sup> And Mussolini never created the same band of little middle-management and provincial 'Führers' who anticipated and outbid Hitler in enforcing the most extreme of his commands. As Ian Kershaw has noted, 'working towards the Führer' deepened Hitler's charisma but also allowed the apparent chaos of the Third Reich's bureaucracy efficiently to carry out his plans.<sup>49</sup> It is in this context that one can now understand the extraordinary fact that Eichmann probably never met Hitler and only met Himmler on three occasions.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, Falasca-Zamponi argues that Mussolini as the 'leader-artist' and *Dux* of the Regime became the pivot around which Fascist ideology, spectacle and policy revolved.<sup>51</sup>

The respective roles of Mussolini and Hitler in the movement and regime phases of their parties' histories is also quite different. As Emilio Gentile has demonstrated in his massive history of the Partito Nazionale Fascista, Mussolini used the examples and successes of D'Annunzio and the victories of the squads in the Po Valley to help him in his ascent to power. In other words, in the movement phase Fascism existed autonomously and in tension with Mussolini and he established the party to tame

<sup>48</sup> Larry Eugen Jones, 'The Greatest Stupidity of My Life: Alfred Hugenberg and the Formation of the Hitler Cabinet, January 1933', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 27, no. 1 (1992), 63–87; Henry Asby Turner Jr., *Hitler's Thirty Days to Power: January 1933* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1996); De Grand, *Fascist Italy*; Morgan, *Italian Fascism*, 40–78; Whittam, *Fascist Italy*, 41–57.

Hitler's role is summarised in two excellent short biographies, see Ian Kershaw, *Hitler* (London: Longman, 1991) and Dick Geary, *Hitler* (London: Routledge, 1993).

We still await a new concise biography of Mussolini. But see Denis Mack Smith, *Mussolini* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1981) and more recently Martin Blinkhorn, *Mussolini and Fascist Italy*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1994). For an evaluation of Renzo De Felice's seven-volume biography of Mussolini see MacGregor Knox, 'The Fascist Regime, its Foreign Policy and its Wars: An "Anti-Anti-Fascist Orthodoxy?"', *Contemporary European History*, vol. 4, no. 3 (1995), 347–65, and Carl Levy, 'Historians and the "First Republic": Italy Fifty Years After 1945', in Stefan Berger, Mark Donovan and Kevin Passmore, eds., *Writing National Histories. Western Europe since 1800* (London: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>49</sup> Ian Kershaw, '"Working towards the Führer": Reflections on the Nature of the Hitler Dictatorship', in Kershaw and Lewin, *Stalinism*, 88–106.

<sup>50</sup> William D. Rubinstein, *The Myth of Rescue. Why the Democracies Could Not Have Saved More Jews From the Nazis* (London: Routledge, 1997), 74.

<sup>51</sup> Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*, 64:

The regime suffered from a personalistic ruling style that underplayed the belief in fascist principles and values in favour of the cult of the leader. Faith in Mussolini became the substitute for belief in fascism. Within this context, the myth of Mussolini acquired even more importance. But the myth was not a facade. The actual dominance of the Duce and his attempt to centralise power reinforced the extent and force of his myth – a myth that had allowed Mussolini to achieve power in the first place. Reality and representation fed upon each other.

the movement, whereas Hitler shaped the Nazi Party much earlier in the movement phase before the seizure of power.<sup>52</sup>

Mussolini, of course, was a national figure before 1918. A young socialist iconoclast, editor of *Avanti!*, leading the challenge to the PSI (Socialist Party) hierarchy and a leading organiser of the Red Week of 1914, his fame contrasted sharply to the absolute obscurity of Hitler before the early 1920s and Hitler's complete separation from the political culture of pre-1914 European socialism.

Whatever the respective differences of each leader, it would be very difficult to imagine Nazism and Fascism without Hitler and Mussolini. For instance, in the most recent literature on the Holocaust, both Friedländer and William Rubinstein seem to have become extreme intentionalists. They argue that although Nazi ideology and Nazi science prepared the way for the Final Solution, without the obsessive willpower of Hitler the murderous enterprise might have been limited or never have happened. Friedländer argues that Hitler's elimination of conservatives in the economic management of the Reich and in the army allowed him to unfold his most radical ideas about dealing with the 'Jewish question'.<sup>53</sup> Rubinstein demonstrates that Himmler's attempt to trade in 1944 with the Allies 1 million Jews for 10,000 trucks was a non-starter because Hitler had not been informed and would never have agreed if Himmler had had the courage to broach the subject.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, he argues that if Hitler had died in 1933 and had been replaced by Göring or another leading Nazi, there probably would never have been a Holocaust.<sup>55</sup> It is also hard to imagine the same trajectory for Italian Fascism if, for instance, Mussolini had stood down for another leading figure during the Matteotti affair of 1924. It is a sobering thought that with all the recent wonderfully written social histories of both movements and regimes, a particular individual at a specific moment could be the crucial explanatory factor.

This attempt to define a fascist minimum is qualified by the historical peculiarities of national cases. Indeed, one of the most paradoxical aspects of defining a fascist minimum is the importance of the uniquely national myth of rebirth. If each fascism is necessarily unique to its historical culture, there cannot by definition be a generic form of fascism.<sup>56</sup> However, I would agree with Michael Mann's recent attempt to place fascism within the broader field of 'nation-statism'. Mann argues that there have been two 'great types of modern social ideology: that analysing society in terms of classes and that analysing it in terms of nation-states'. He continues: 'A strong nation-state provided the order, indeed the moral basis, of society. That is what I mean by "nation-statism"'.<sup>57</sup> Conservative authoritarians and fascists might differ about the degree to which popular mobilisation was necessary to achieve their

<sup>52</sup> Emilio Gentile, *Storia del Partito Fascista 1919–1922: Movimento e Milizia* (Bari: Laterza, 1989).

<sup>53</sup> Friedländer, *Nazi Germany*, 41–72.

<sup>54</sup> Rubinstein, *The Myth*, 200–3.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>56</sup> The most telling critique of generic fascism is by Gilbert Allardyce. An excerpt of this is found in Griffin, *Fascism*, 301–2.

<sup>57</sup> Mann, 'The Contradictions', 140.

shared goals, 'but they all believed moral order was to be imposed on the world by some degree of fusion of nation and state'.<sup>58</sup> In this respect Mann transforms fascism into a generic form of nation-statism. The most extreme and revolutionary form of nation-statism was Nazism but it was in the same field as other fascisms and authoritarian nation-statisms of the social Catholic or militarist varieties.

In the following section I will try to tease out the differences in this field. We have already seen how, ideologically, fascists tried to create an identifiably new political space in Italy and Germany. However, the exact relationship between fascists and conservatives needs closer examination. War and biological racism may be key discriminating variables, but I hope to show that the relationship between them and the radicalisation of regimes is more difficult to ascertain than is usually presumed.

## II. Fascists and conservatives

A useful starting point in assessing the exact relationship between fascists and conservatives is Paul Preston's reissued volume of essays in which he compares the Italian, German and Spanish cases.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, the nature of the relationship between fascists and conservatives was also globally explored in a pioneering volume of essays edited by Martin Blinkhorn several years ago.<sup>60</sup> Here the German, Italian and Spanish cases are supplemented by those of Austria, Romania, Greece, Portugal, France and Britain. A summary of this book's findings still serves as a very good comparative overview of the fascist/conservative relationship elsewhere in Europe, and can be placed alongside Payne's more recent work.

It is only in Italy and Germany that fascists came to power completely under their own steam through a combination of violence and participation in elections. Indeed, Italian Fascism relied on its conservative and liberal allies in 1921 and, later, on unfair elections. The Nazis were far more successful in relatively fair elections but were losing votes by November 1932. Elsewhere, fascists relied on the national military (Spain) or the direct or indirect influence of Nazi Germany.

As the biographer of Franco, Preston has a special interest in the relationship between fascists and conservatives. In his biography he dismissed the idea that since Franco's Nationalists absorbed and disciplined the Falange, the regime in the 1940s was in some way not a fascist dictatorship, but merely an authoritarian regime. He shows that in the 1940s Franco's regime had the full trappings of fascism. Not only did tens of thousands perish in front of firing squads, Franco was much more keen than previously thought on entering the war fully on Hitler's side, at least until 1942.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>59</sup> Paul Preston, *The Politics of Revenge. Fascism and the Military in Twentieth-century Spain* (London: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>60</sup> Martin Blinkhorn, ed., *Fascists and Conservatives* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1990).

<sup>61</sup> Paul Preston, *Franco* (London: HarperCollins, 1993; Fontana Press, 1995), 343–481 (cited from latter).

In the essays, which are more openly comparative and sociologically engaged than his biography, he draws out comparisons between army and party in Spain, Germany and Italy. If the Italian army was subservient to Mussolini and the party, it resisted any fascistisation, and the party militia was quickly assimilated into the state apparatus. In Germany, Hitler achieved control of the army by 1938–39 and his party militia, the SS, created a state within the state. Indeed, as De Grand shows in his study of the fascist style, the Duce's Achilles heel was precisely his failure to create an independent source of power and terror separate from the traditional forces of law and order. In Spain, it was the army under Franco which merged the traditional authoritarians of the CEDA (Spanish Confederation of Autonomous Rights) and the Carlists with the Falange.<sup>62</sup>

In all three national cases he examines, Preston notes the similarities in the social basis for mass anti-democratic conservatism from which fascism drew its sustenance.<sup>63</sup> There were deep structural problems within the economies of all three nations, particularly with regard to the modernisation of agriculture. This approach had also been developed by another comparativist who included examples from Scandinavia. The late Gregory Luebbert argued that right-wing authoritarian regimes were more likely to emerge in areas of Europe where the liberal or socialist left had not formed an effective alliance with the discontented countryside. Thus worker/farmer or liberal/farmer alliances in the 1920s and early 1930s, built on a shared belief in the rules of democratic constitutional parliamentarianism already established before 1914, held off the extreme right in Scandinavia (with the partial exception of Finland), but discontented agrarians and their clients formed the first mass base for the fascists in Germany and Italy.<sup>64</sup> In the latter two cases, Preston noted in the previously cited essays how the old order was entrenched in certain key areas of power, but also challenged by the liberalisation of politics and culture. This was a particularly complex affair in Germany. As the late Detlev Peukert argued, the crisis of Weimar was a crisis of modernity not underdevelopment, yet more recently Shelley Baranowski, advancing themes found in Preston and Luebbert, has shown the importance of the role of the Junkers in extreme right-wing politics and within the policy-making bureaucracy of the Weimar Republic.<sup>65</sup> Their dual roles in populist politics and elite policymaking therefore contributed to the erosion of the democratic constitutional state before Hitler's drive to power from 1930 to 1933.

External shocks are also important for Preston's comparisons. All three nations in his study experience a psychosis of defeat: Germany in the Great War; Italy in its 'mutilated victory' and Spain in the loss of an empire in 1898 and in the defeats by

<sup>62</sup> Preston, *The Politics*, xv.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 3–29.

<sup>64</sup> Gregory M. Luebbert, *Liberalism, Fascism or Social Democracy. Social Class and the Political Origins of Regimes in Interwar Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Ulf Lindström, *Fascism in Scandinavia* (Stockholm: Universitetsförlaget, 1985); David Kirby, *The Baltic World 1772–1993. Europe's Northern Periphery in an Age of Change* (London: Longman, 1995), 317–33.

<sup>65</sup> Detlev J. K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), 270–1; Shelley Baranowski, 'East Elbian Landed Elites and Germany's Turn to Fascism: The *Sonderweg* Controversy Revisited', *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 26, no. 2 (1996), 209–40.

the Riff in Morocco in the 1920s. All three countries develop intellectual movements of the right endorsing elitism, regeneration through national values and the myths of ancient national greatness: Spanish regenerationism (although its importance seems to be discounted by Payne), Italian nationalism and Weimar Germany's populist right.<sup>66</sup>

But when regimes were established in Spain and Italy the party/movement made allowances for a greater number of conservative and authoritarian institutions to remain autonomous. In Spain there was a tolerance for monarchists and Opus Dei and other Catholic organisations. Italy, De Grand notes, retained a constitutionally independent army, monarchy and senate, which eventually unseated Mussolini in 1943. Whereas Mussolini and Franco to varying degrees tried to establish a corporative state, Hitler merely formed a Labour Front and the factory community.<sup>67</sup>

On the key differences between Mussolini's and Hitler's regimes on the one hand, and Franco's on the other, was Mussolini's and Hitler's decision to engage in full-scale international war. In his path-breaking works of the early 1980s, MacGregor Knox noted how Mussolini's decision to enter the war in 1940 was partially motivated by his fear of an overly dominant Germany, partially to do with his jealousy of Hitler's stunning victories but also to do with decisions to use the dialectic of war to radicalise his regime. War would settle accounts with the conservatives just as Hitler Nazified the Wehrmacht and to a certain extent the German private economy.<sup>68</sup>

But the Italian Fascist regime failed its ultimate test. In more recent work Knox has demonstrated that it was the failure of Italian war-fighting capacity which destroyed Mussolini, and as De Grand, Morgan and Whittam show, inter-service rivalries were one of the most serious weaknesses of Mussolini's armed forces. Although there were fewer desertions by Italian soldiers in the Second World War than in the First, and far fewer courts martial leading to executions, the unity of home and battle fronts was decisively broken in 1943: by contrast the Germans deepened the effectiveness of this linkage precisely at this juncture.<sup>69</sup>

Failure to commit it to full-scale entry in the war saved Franco's regime, but the evidence we glean from Preston's biography suggests that Franco's decision was a product of chance rather than cold logic. Franco was prepared to scavenge for a

<sup>66</sup> Preston, *The Politics*, 13–14; Payne, *The History*, 252–3.

<sup>67</sup> De Grand, *Fascist Italy*, 40–5.

<sup>68</sup> MacGregor Knox, *Mussolini Unleashed, 1939–1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); MacGregor Knox, 'Conquest, Foreign and Domestic in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany', *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 56, no. 1 (1984), 1–57.

The only objection I have to De Grand's excellent comparative treatment (*Fascist Italy*) is that he ends in 1939. De Grand evaluates the totalitarian potential of Mussolini's regime in Alexander De Grand, '"Cracks in the Façade": The Failure of Fascist Totalitarianism in Italy (1935/1939)', *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 21, no. 4 (1991), 515–35.

<sup>69</sup> MacGregor Knox, 'Expansionist Zeal, Fighting Power, and Staying Power in the Italian and German Dictatorships', in Bessel, *Fascist Italy*, 113–33; Morgan, *Italian Fascism*, 176; Whittam, *Fascist Italy*, 122. For Payne's rather more respectful evaluation of Italian military morale during the Second World War, see *The History*, 389.

greater Spanish empire in the Maghreb and through dominance over Portugal in the Iberian peninsula. But he was reluctant to have German troops in Spain to assist in an assault on Gibraltar. Hitler was quite prepared to turn Spain into a German agrarian satellite but did not want to alienate either Italy or Pétain's France by granting Franco too much territory in Africa. Besides, with Italy's disastrous Greek campaign in mind, he feared that the seizure of Gibraltar would be off-set by the British seizure of the Canary Islands or intervention via Portugal. In the end Franco sent his Blue Division to Russia and remained a supply base and moral supporter of the Third Reich to the bitter end, even as he bought food from the United States.<sup>70</sup>

In prewar Europe conservatives had the upper hand outside Germany, Italy and, with qualifications, Spain. Elsewhere, authoritarian regimes used fascist services and bases of support, but when differences arose they were violently suppressed. The Portuguese dictator Salazar repressed a fascist and syndicalist *fronde* in the 1930s.<sup>71</sup> In the Baltic states, the radical right or fascist movements of the League of Veterans (Estonia), the Thunder Cross (Latvia) and the Iron Wolf (Lithuania) were suppressed by the personal dictatorships of the 'founding fathers' (respectively, Päts, Ulmanis and Semtona). 'Their ideological world,' David Kirby writes, 'was based on a sentimental and idealised image of a sturdy, patriotic and patriarchal peasantry, a far cry from the dreams of racist power and conquest which inspired Hitler.'<sup>72</sup> Something similar might have happened in Poland, in which the government of the authoritarian Colonels would have suppressed the openly fascist *Falanga* and OZN (Camp of National Unity) and returned the country to a recast Pilsudski-type dictatorship, but Hitler's tanks intervened to impose an altogether more brutal settlement of accounts.<sup>73</sup>

In most cases Hitler preferred to deal with authoritarian dictators rather than their messianic fascist competitors. Hitler and Antonescu seemed to have an excellent personal relationship, and it was the Führer himself who suggested rough methods against the Iron Guard.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, Hitler had little time for the Republic of Salò's attacks on the bourgeoisie. He did not understand Mussolini's socialisation programme, and the Germans in northern Italy encouraged businessmen to disregard the Republic's directives.<sup>75</sup> As Payne notes, Hitler only endorsed Pavelić's Ustasha government in Croatia when the more traditionally conservative Peasant

<sup>70</sup> Preston, *Franco*, 348–9, 354–6, 360–73, 378–9, 385–7, 393–4, 398, 414, 425, 439.

<sup>71</sup> Payne, *A History*, 312–17. For the unique Portuguese case see António Costa Pinto, *Salazar's Dictatorship and European Fascism. Problems of Interpretation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

Salazar's *Estado Novo* was based on a concept of organicist national regeneration stressing corporative Catholic ideology and the myths of Portuguese identity based upon the Christian reconquest of Portugal and its empire in Africa. Portugal was pictured as a small European state but a significant global player. In this respect, although Salazar inherited the nationalist resentment towards the British who threatened Angola before 1914, during the 1930s Salazar was concerned that German or Italian expansion outside Europe might be a greater threat to the African empire.

<sup>72</sup> Kirby, *The Baltic World*, 326.

<sup>73</sup> Payne, *A History*, 322–3.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 395–6.

<sup>75</sup> Richard Lamb, *War in Italy 1943–1945. A Brutal Story* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), 277–81; Payne, *A History*, 413–14.

Party refused to volunteer its services. Hitler dealt with clerical extremists of the Tišo government in Slovakia rather than the more radical Hlinka Guard. Still unprepared to challenge the European status quo in 1934, he allowed Dollfuss to suppress the Austrian Nazis in 1934 but later endorsed them and the Sudeten Nazis in order to annex their territories to the Reich. He was happy to have Admiral Horthy's Hungarian regime as an ally even though he had suppressed a variety of fascist competitors, but once Hungary sued for peace in 1944, he supported a coup by the Arrow Cross.<sup>76</sup> The only other exception is Spain, where it seemed that Hitler toyed for a while with supporting a Falange putsch against Franco when he tired of the general's haggling.<sup>77</sup>

This copious evidence has been used by Payne to highlight the significant difference between fascism, radical authoritarianism and traditionalist conservatism. But it can also be used to reinforce the unity of the ideological field of Mann's 'nation-statism'. Thus, Hitler's German nationalism determined his choice of partner. In most cases he chose the more convenient traditionalist authoritarian conservatives because they served the interests of the German nation-state. But if he felt stymied he chose the radical right-wing competitor, as the support for the Falange putsch indicates. Nevertheless, in most of Europe he chose from a limited field of possibilities. In this respect the examples of quasi-democratic Finland and Denmark are anomalous. And if he was prepared to engage in subversion or aggression against certain authoritarian conservative regimes, this still does not discredit the notion of 'generic fascism' or a broader 'nation-statism'. Whatever the merits of a recent fashionable thesis, that liberal democracies do not make war on each other, this generalisation would certainly not hold for regimes harking from other ideological families. No one argues, for example, that China and Vietnam in 1979 were not Marxist-Leninist regimes because they fought a short, sharp war in that year.

The relationship between fascists and conservatives in the major democracies is a more nuanced affair. The French case is instructive, but it is far from clear to what extent pre-war French fascism existed as a going concern.

Payne supports the general consensus that the leading personnel in the leagues and the parties of the extreme right were not openly fascist until the establishment of the Vichy regime, and even here many former 'fascists' supported the Resistance or were reluctant to cooperate too closely with the Nazis.<sup>78</sup> However, there are still two ways to reinstate the significance of French fascism, and these fit neatly into our discussion of the relationship between fascism and conservatism. First, it has been argued that even if fascist parties and movements were unsuccessful in the pre-war

<sup>76</sup> Payne, *The History*, 406–7 (for Croatia), 403–4 (for Slovakia), 245–52 (for Austria), 310 (for the Sudeten Germans), 415–20 (for Hungary).

<sup>77</sup> Preston, *Franco*, 462–3.

<sup>78</sup> Payne, *The History*, 291–9. For the example of Georges Valois who travelled from fascism to the French Resistance and death in a German concentration camp, see A. Douglas, *From Fascism to Libertarian Communism: Georges Valois against the French Republic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

period, fascist arguments had permeated mainstream political discourse.<sup>79</sup> Secondly, Robert Soucy contends that the Croix de Feu, its successor the PSF (Parti social français – the largest political party in France in 1938) and the PPF (Parti populaire français) attracted younger conservatives to their ranks, and looked more favourably on Mussolinian Fascism rather than Hitler's National Socialism because the Italian variant left conservatives with more autonomy than its radical German cousin, and perhaps melded more easily with the resurgence of Catholic traditionalism detected in France during the 1930s.<sup>80</sup> The major bonds for French authoritarian conservatives and fascists were, Soucy argues, anti-Marxism, anti-liberalism and the fear of cosmopolitanism which only became openly anti-Semitic after the election of Léon Blum. Soucy's approach seems to be endorsed by a discriminating observer of French political ideologies, Sudhir Hazareesingh. Although he would like to draw boundaries between secular and revolutionary fascism and the traditionalist, conservative and clerical authoritarian right, he too, detects important similarities between the conservative right and the fascists of the 1930s.<sup>81</sup>

Just like their fascist counterparts in Italy and Germany, they calibrated violence or the threat of violence according to the needs of electoral campaigns. But since democracy was far better established in France, it would have been suicidal to show too much of an anti-constitutional hand. In France the traditional conservatives openly supported the fascist and para-fascist leagues during the Cartel des Gauches in the 1920s and the Popular Front in the 1930s, but equally drew limits on how far they were prepared to go. When traditional conservatives won power in the inter-war period, the French fascist movements and parties lost support. And as Richard Vinen has shown, when the Vichy regime took power in 1940, there was no need to neuter the labour legislation of the Popular Front because it had already been done by the intervening conservative governments of the Third Republic.<sup>82</sup> The fall of France generated a groundswell of conservative support for the Vichy solution because at first conservatives feared that social radicalism would seize Paris just as it had in 1870–71: better the Germans than a return of the Communards. During the period 1940–44 the various collaborationist parties of the right and the former left had mixed

<sup>79</sup> Sternhell, *Neither*, 1–31.

<sup>80</sup> Robert J. Soucy, 'French Fascism and the Croix de Feu: A Dissenting Interpretation', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 26, no. 1 (1991), 159–88. Also see his two histories of French fascism: *French Fascism: The First Wave, 1924–1933* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986) and *French Fascism: The Second Wave, 1933–1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). The fascist nature of the Croix de Feu and the PSF has been underlined by Kevin Passmore's local study of Lyon: see *From Liberalism to Fascism. The Right in a French Province, 1918–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Robert Paxton has also studied a fascist mass movement in rural France: see *French Peasant Fascism. Henry Dorges' Greenshirts and the Crisis of French Agriculture, 1929–1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

For French Catholic traditionalism in the 1930s, see Conway, *Catholic Politics*, 72.

<sup>81</sup> Sudhir Hazareesingh, *Political Traditions in Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 144. Also see J. Austin, 'The Conservative Right and the Far Right in France: the Search for Power, 1933–1944', in Blinkhorn, *Fascists*.

<sup>82</sup> Richard Vinen, *The Politics of French Business 1935–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 116–37.

fortunes. But Philippe Burrin reminds us that the total numbers (if one includes the *Milice*) were 250,000 members, the same as the socialist SFIO (Section française de l'international Ouvrière) at the time of the Popular Front in the mid-1930s.<sup>83</sup>

Both the Italian and French cases demonstrate the importance of war for the fortunes of fascist and authoritarian movements. War destroyed constitutional legality in France and allowed for the revival of fascism under a new dispensation; in Italy the old monarchical constitution at hand allowed for the transfer of power to conservative elites in 1943. But in established democracies (such as France before 1939), the transgression of constitutional politics was harmful to fascist movements and limited or delayed the penetration of the conservative right. This is also illustrated in the British case. Here Lord Rothermere and other Tories supported Mosley but abandoned him when he resorted to violence. In any case, the hegemonic strength of the Conservative Party, the weakness of the extreme left, the lack of a socially unstable rural population, the lack of conflict between traditionalist Christianity and the secular state and the relatively democratic attitudes of employers left little political or social space for fascism to flourish.<sup>84</sup> The defeat of France allowed a coalition of fascists and authoritarians to come to power. What would have happened if Hitler had successfully landed in England is an open question. But we do have a study of the Channel Islands under occupation. Admittedly, one cannot extrapolate too greatly from this case study but the account is compelling, not least the photographs of bobbies protecting the progress of German dignitaries through traffic. More disturbing is the full cooperation granted the Germans in the governance of the islands which included the deportation of Jews to their deaths and deaths of 2,000–3,000 slave labourers brought from the continent to construct fortifications on Alderney. The myth of British distinctiveness, as Madeline Bunting writes in her sobering account, is weakening its hold.<sup>85</sup>

In the previous passages I have emphasised the historical contextualisation of conjectural events when examining the relationship between fascists and conservatives. This approach seems to enforce Stanley Payne's and Roger Griffin's intricate categorisation of the right, the extreme right and the fascist right. But these comparative approaches can be overly nominalistic. Although their work is grounded in a wealth of historical material, there is a tendency for them to erect a firewall between pure fascism and varieties of the traditional right.<sup>86</sup> This flies in the

<sup>83</sup> Philippe Burrin, *Living with Defeat. France under the German Occupation, 1940–1944* (London: Arnold, 1996), 49–50; 440.

In the spring of 1944 the Italian Resistance and the Salò Republic had equal numbers of Italians in the field. See Levy, 'Historians'.

<sup>84</sup> Richard Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain: A History 1918–1985* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987); John Stevenson, 'Conservatism and the Failure of Fascism in Inter-War Britain', in Blinkhorn, *Fascists*.

<sup>85</sup> Madeline Bunting, *The Model Occupation. The Channel Islands under German Rule 1940–1945* (London: HarperCollins, 1995).

<sup>86</sup> For Payne's typologies of movements and regimes, see *A History*, 14–19; 465–70; Griffin's short definition of fascism (p. 000 above) is very helpful, but he can sometimes limit discussion by employing it too literally. For example, in his 'Introduction to the Reader', he states that the Croix de Feu has been left out because it lacked 'a genuine, radical, palingenetic thrust' (p. 10). At the same time writings

face of the social and political texture of inter-war Europe. In this regard, a survey of sociological and psephological studies of European fascism provides a firm structural basis for Mann's more inclusive field of nation-statism.<sup>87</sup>

It is now accepted that German National Socialism used the familiar Weimar conception of a *Volksgemeinschaft* (national community) as a catch-all to recruit nationalist, socialist and some communist working-class support. But the concept of the national community was largely the property of the nationalist non-Nazi populist right. As Conan Fischer argues, the failure of the Social Democrats to endorse a democratic patriotic conception of the national community probably lost them votes and support as the Great Slump undermined Weimar's welfare state.<sup>88</sup> Elsewhere the support for the fascists from the working class might arise through default. If in Hungary the Arrow Cross won large-scale support amongst the working classes of Budapest and the mining districts in 1939, this was partly because the Communists were banned and the Social Democrats hamstrung by the authoritarian regime of Admiral Horthy. Fascist populism had little competition on the left because the authoritarians did not allow it.<sup>89</sup> Similarly, the earliest survey of Fascist Party membership in Italy seems to demonstrate a large representation of farm workers, but in this case the former members of the red peasants' and landless labourers' leagues had no alternative but to join Fascist replacements once their *capilega* (leaders of the local leagues) were killed or driven away by the Fascist *squadristi*.<sup>90</sup>

Younger generations of traditionally conservative anti-Semitic middle-class students and professionals in Romania and Hungary were also important in mass fascist movements.<sup>91</sup> Adrian Lyttelton demonstrates how the public sphere of Italian

from the Ustasha are excluded because, although palingenetic, it pursued 'the separate goal of creating a new nation, and not rejuvenating an existing nation-state' (p. 10).

<sup>87</sup> For the best overviews, see Larsen *et al.*, *Who Were the Fascists?* and Mühlberger, *The Social Basis*.

<sup>88</sup> Conan Fischer's latest survey of the sociology and psephology of Nazism is the most comprehensive and reader-friendly account. It has the virtue of summarising the latest material in English and German: see *The Rise of the Nazis* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 30–1, 37–41, 61, 63, 89, 92–3, 95, 97–101, 107–17, 125. A more detailed account by experts can be found in Conan Fischer, ed., *The Working Class and the Rise of National Socialism* (Providence: Berghahn, 1996).

William Brustein (*The Social Origins of the Nazi Party 1925–1933* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996)) argues that Weimar's welfare state created a stratum of upwardly mobile and less class-conscious workers attracted to the catch-all politics of the Nazi Party. He exaggerates the factor of rational choice in determining working-class support and underestimates the embeddedness of the racial discourse of Nazi propaganda. It might well be that Hitler toned down his own anti-Semitism in the early 1930s, but his closest circle kept up the pressure in the Party press (see, Friedländer, *The Nazis*, 103–4).

Earlier studies included: Richard F. Hamilton, *Who Voted for Hitler?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); Thomas Childers, *The Nazi Voter: The Social Foundations of Fascism in Germany, 1919–1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983); D. Mühlberger, *Hitler's Followers* (London: Routledge, 1991).

<sup>89</sup> M. Lackó, 'The Social Basis of Hungarian Fascism: the Arrow Cross', in Larsen *et al.*, *Who Were the Fascists?*.

<sup>90</sup> For discussions of the social composition of Italian Fascism, see Levy, 'From Fascists', 170, and Marco Revelli, 'Italy', in Mühlberger, *The Social Basis*, 9–19.

<sup>91</sup> Mária M. Kovács, *Liberal Professions and Illiberal Politics. Hungary from the Habsburgs to the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Payne, *A History*, 277–89; Zvi Yavetz, 'An Eyewitness Note: Reflections on the Rumanian Iron Guard', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 26, nos. 3–4 (1991), 597–610.

bourgeois society was receptive to the Fascist dispensation, though from Jonathan Morris we learn that shopkeepers may have been far less significant than has been traditionally assumed.<sup>92</sup>

Elsewhere conservative clerical influence was crucial. The Catholic base of the CEDA and the Carlists is undeniable in Spain, and priests and seminary students made their peace with the Falange.<sup>93</sup> Catholicism was not unimportant for the Belgian Rexists, even if Martin Conway has shown that Degrelle's movement had limited support in the 1930s.<sup>94</sup> Croatian fascism can almost be described as a dictatorship of priests; however, in Slovakia the reactionary clerical Tišo government lived in an uneasy relationship with the Hlinka Guard. In Finland the extreme right was noticeably successful in attracting Lutheran pastors from the south-western and western parts of the country, farmers in Dissenting communities and university students.<sup>95</sup>

Therefore, sociological evidence shows that generational changeover, the permeation of fascist ideas and style into the older generation of the traditional right and the effect of right-wing conservative populism on other strata in society have to be taken into account when evaluating the impact of Mussolinian and Hitlerian models of fascism in their own countries and in the rest of Europe.<sup>96</sup>

### **III. Fascists and National Socialists**

If the sociological evidence therefore indicates a solid basis for the relationship between fascists and conservatives, the well-known differentiation between Nazism and other fascisms and radical conservatisms has equally to be queried. It has often been said that Nazism was an extreme authoritarian nationalist movement that surpassed all other fascist or conservative nationalist movements due to its violence and biological/racial radicalism. It has been argued that its *völkisch* ideology and its idea of a *Volksgemeinschaft* set it apart from all others. The recent work by Burleigh and Wippermann, and the conclusions drawn by Bessel in his edited collection, certainly increase the persuasiveness of this argument.<sup>97</sup> This has been particularly

<sup>92</sup> Adrian Lyttelton, 'The "Crisis of Bourgeois Society" and the Origins of Fascism', in Bessel, *Fascist Italy*, 12–22, and Morris, 'Retailing, Fascism and the Origins'; *The Political Economy of Shopkeeping in Milan, 1886–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>93</sup> Martin Blinkhorn, 'The Iberian States', in Mühlberger, *The Social Basis*.

<sup>94</sup> Martin Conway, 'The Extreme Right in Inter-War Francophone Belgium: Explanations of a Failure', *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 26, no. 2 (1996), 267–92; *Collaboration in Belgium: Léon Degrelle and the Rexist Movement 1940–1944* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

<sup>95</sup> Y. Jelinek, 'Clergy and Fascism: the Hlinka Party in Slovakia and the Croatian Ustasha Movement', in Larsen et al., *Who Were the Fascists?*, 363–78; R. Vigo, 'Eastern Europe' and H. Poulsen, 'The Nordic States', in Mühlberger, *The Social Basis*; Kirby, *The Baltic World*, 323–5.

Roger Griffin presents an exhaustive survey of the relationship between Christian denominations and European fascism. See his 'Fascism' in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Politics* (Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly Books, 1998).

<sup>96</sup> For an excellent overview of the generation effect, see Peter H. Merkl, 'Comparing Fascist Movements', in Larsen et al., *Who Were the Fascists?*, 732–83.

<sup>97</sup> Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Bessel, *Fascist Italy*, 1–11.

noted in reference to Italian Fascism. Italian Fascism talked about the new man: it was dynamic. The Nazis insisted that civilisations were rooted in blood and soil. Only the Aryan race could hope to build the national utopia.<sup>98</sup>

This differentiation, however, is now being questioned. It is generally argued that the leadership of the Republic of Salò (the Fascist Social Republic), according to Richard Lamb's recent account, was reluctant to carry out the Final Solution.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, Burleigh shows that the only gas chambers established on Italian soil at Trieste were improvised by the veterans of the Nazis' euthanasia programme (that nursery of the means and personnel of mass extermination).<sup>100</sup> Earlier Michaelis, Steinberg, Zuccotti and Carpi demonstrated how, unlike their counterparts in the Wehrmacht, the Italian army protected Jews from the Final Solution in its zones of occupation in the Balkans, France and Tunisia.<sup>101</sup> However, others have noted an anti-Semitic streak in Mussolini's discourse from at least 1918. This anti-Semitism grew in the 1930s as he noted the roles of Jews in the French Popular Front government and the connections between Jews in the clandestine Italian opposition and the French left. The Rosselli brothers, leading activists in *Giustizia e Libertà*, were murdered in France by Cagoulards at Mussolini's behest. But perhaps more importantly, racial social policy was placed on the agenda after the conquest and then planned colonisation of Abyssinia. Differentiation of a conquered people in Africa in turn led to racial discourse against the Jews of Italy. Therefore, Mussolini's adoption of anti-Semitic legislation at the time of his alliance with Hitler was not merely a cynical exercise to gain his respect. Indeed, the drafting of the Italian laws was overseen by Mussolini and their contents were stricter than similar laws in eastern Europe or even in Nazi Germany itself. Only in comparison to the Nazis' later genocide does Italian policy seem 'liberal'. And while the Italian people showed little enthusiasm for the racial laws, they were perhaps more enthusiastic about the segregation and elimination of Jews from public life than was previously believed.<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, if the Italian army protected Jews outside Italy before 1943, questions have now been raised as to the extent to which Mussolini and his Republic of Salò helped save the Jews in their own territories. While it is quite true that the percentage of Italian Jews which perished during the Holocaust was lower

<sup>98</sup> Renzo De Felice, *Le Fascisme: Un Totalitarisme à l'Italienne?* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation National des Sciences Politiques, 1988); De Felice, *Intervista*.

<sup>99</sup> Lamb, *War in Italy*, 34–55.

<sup>100</sup> Michael Burleigh, *Death and Deliverance. 'Euthanasia' in Germany c.1900–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 234.

<sup>101</sup> Meir Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978); Susan Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust. Persecution, Rescue and Survival* (New York: Basic Books, 1987); Jonathan Steinberg, *All or Nothing. The Axis and the Holocaust, 1941–43* (London: Routledge, 1991); Daniele Carpi, *Between Mussolini and Hitler. The Jews and the Italian Authorities in France and Tunisia* (Boston: Brandeis University Press, 1994).

<sup>102</sup> Joel Blatt, 'The Battle of Turin, 1933–36: Carlo Rosselli, 'Giustizia e Libertà', OVRA and the Origins of Mussolini's Antisemitic Campaign', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, Vol. 1, no. 1 (1995), 22–57; Michele Sarfatti, *Mussolini contro gli ebrei; cronaca dell'elaborazione delle leggi del 1938* (Turin: Silvio Zamani editore, 1994); Enzo Collotti and Lutz Klinkhammer, *Il fascismo e l'Italia in guerra: Una conversazione fra storia e storiografia* (Rome: Edizioni Ediesse, 1996).

than in France, nevertheless, the leading historian of Nazi/Salò relations, Lutz Klinkhammer, argues that Mussolini could have saved many more Jews because the German ambassador Rahn was more powerful than the SS and he was little concerned with this policy.<sup>103</sup> In any case, even if we accept that Mussolini was reluctant to carry out the Final Solution, Hitler recognised him as his guide and soulmate, and as Michaelis has pointed out, did not lose any respect for Mussolini even though he exercised a more lenient treatment of the Jews. Hitler acknowledged the ideological debt Nazism owed to Italian Fascism. For Hitler, Mussolini was the pioneer.<sup>104</sup>

Therefore, if the Italians were not full-time subscribers to what Daniel Goldhagen has called 'eliminationist anti-Semitism', Italian Fascism developed racist discourse and practice even before 1939.<sup>105</sup> Where perhaps the Italians differ from the Germans is their attitude towards Nazi eugenic social and public policy. In a cross-national comparative study of population politics in twentieth-century Europe and North America, Maria Sophia Quine demonstrates that the Nazi concepts and policies of 'selective breeding', 'racial cleansing', sterilisation and euthanasia were not present in Fascist Italy. In Europe, the Nazi policy was already being enunciated before their accession to power in 1933. This policy was unique because hereditarian rather than environmentalist beliefs predominated. Medicine could therefore be used to wipe out hereditary 'defective' human beings rather than act as an aid to more effective social welfare for the entire population. In democratic France and Fascist Italy the primacy of Catholic culture prevented eugenacists from endorsing the more radical methods carried out in Nazi Germany, although it should be borne in mind that some of these radical methods, such as sterilisation, were used widely in the US and Sweden.<sup>106</sup>

To conclude this discussion, I will address the one final trump card that the advocates of the uniqueness of Nazism and the 'normality' of Italian Fascism always play. It has been argued that the differences between the role of the state in Nazi and Italian Fascist thought is irrefutable proof of their incomparability. Italian Fascism emphasised the role of the ethical state as the vehicle whereby the Italian people could be imbued with a nationalist spirit and thereby offset the cosmopolitan spiritual counter-community of Catholicism. In Nazism, it appears that 'the concept

<sup>103</sup> Lutz Klinkhammer, *L'occupazione tedesca in Italia 1943–1945* (Turin: Bollati–Boringhieri, 1993).

<sup>104</sup> Meir Michaelis, 'Fascism, Totalitarianism and the Holocaust: Reflections on the Current Interpretations of National Socialist Antisemitism', *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 19, no. 1 (1989), 85–103.

<sup>105</sup> Daniel J. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners. Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1996).

<sup>106</sup> Maria Sophia Quine, *Population Politics in Twentieth-Century Europe* (London: Routledge, 1996).

A scandal broke out Sweden in the summer of 1997 over the forced sterilisation of between 50,000 and 60,000 female 'defectives' and 'travellers' in Sweden by social democratic governments (the peak years were 1945–47!). Similar policies were carried out by the Norwegian (who targeted Saami people ('Lapps')) and Danish governments. The policies in Sweden were not stopped until 1975. See articles in the Stockholm daily, *Dagens Nyheter* (especially 22 Aug. 1997, 23 Aug. 1997, 27 Sept. 1997). I would like to thank Dr Elias Berg of Stockholm University (emeritus) for some of the references concerning the Swedish scandal.

of the state is diametrically opposite to the Italian Fascist one'.<sup>107</sup> For the Germans the German *Volk*, the *Kulturnation*, is more important than the *Staatsnation*. But this difference may be more apparent than real. Nazism, Neocleous contends, underlines the importance of the state by arguing that only through the control of the German state can the Nazis save the German *Volk* from racial degeneration. 'Nazism,' he concludes, 'thus consolidates the centrality of nationalism to fascism by rationalising the territoriality of some species on the natural basis of the nation-state. In Nazism the nation becomes a unit filled with blood.'<sup>108</sup>

What we have seen, therefore, is that the relationship between Nazism and Italian Fascism was far more complicated than has been presumed in much of the literature. Certainly, the Nazis were far more extreme in their biological racism, but this should not be used to obscure the definite links between the usage by both of a racial discourse and a racist public policy that fed on a shared form of extreme xenophobic nationalism.

Elsewhere in Europe, Nazi themes were present in local fascisms. Hungarian and Finnish fascists felt themselves master races grounded in biological determinism, destined to rule over nearby Slavic peoples. The Hungarians even developed a pagan cult called Turanianism (although the eccentric leader of the Arrow Cross, Ferenc Szálasi, accused the Nazis of being influenced by 'Jewish' doctrines because of their insistence on selecting the Germans as a Chosen People!).<sup>109</sup> In Spain, the emphasis on a biological racism was perhaps at one remove, and if a direct revival of the early modern concept of the 'purity of blood' was avoided, the linkages are clear enough. Preston notes that Franco's personal anti-Semitism was stoked by his intense fear and loathing of the freemasons.<sup>110</sup> But it is also true that 7500 Jews found refuge in Spain during the Second World War and that Spanish consular officials saved Jews with Spanish passports during the clearing out of the Jews from Salonika.<sup>111</sup> However, one of the central myths of Spanish fascism and authoritarian conservatism was the notion of *Hispanidad*, which emphasised the necessity for a return to Spain's divine mission in the world, as exemplified 'in the values of the Catholic kings and the Inquisition of the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries and a centralised, hierarchical state'.<sup>112</sup> Thus the 'anti-España' of anarchists, socialists, freemasons and regionalists would have to be purged from the nation's body. Further afield affinities with European developments can be noted. Japanese imperialism was imbued with a heavy dose of biological racial radicalism. Ian Buruma has demonstrated that the Japanese extreme right has always been enamoured of German *völkisch* ideology, and that unlike the Federal Republic of

<sup>107</sup> Neocleous, *Fascism*, 25.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>109</sup> M. Rintala, 'Finland', in Rogger and Weber, *The European Right*; Payne, *A History*, 271–3.

<sup>110</sup> Preston, *Franco*, 330, 347, 597–8.

<sup>111</sup> Rubinstein, *The Myth of Rescue*, 146; Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece. The Experience of Occupation, 1941–44* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 256–61.

<sup>112</sup> Mann, 'The Contradictions', 141.

Germany in the postwar era, Japanese ethnic-nationalist ideology remained and remains embarrassingly widespread in mainstream political and intellectual life.<sup>113</sup>

In this section I have summarised the relationship between fascism and conservatism on the one hand, and fascism and Nazism, on the other. I have used the two poles of interpretation represented by Mann's concept of nation-statism and Griffin's and Payne's insistence on stressing the fine-tooth comb differentiations one finds between varieties of fascism, conservatism and authoritarianism. Griffin and Payne are at their strongest in fine-tuning their respective fascist minima by placing specific movements and regimes within their particular historical and social contexts. Mann's approach find its validity by invoking the sociological evidence of supporters of types of nation-statism, but also in the deeper cultural norms that all types of nation-statism shared. To conclude this discussion, I will examine these deeper cultural norms that are represented in certain defining historical moments for most nation-statists.

First, both Nazism and other fascisms shared a crude social Darwinism which applied 'biological and pseudo-biological categories to the social realm'.<sup>114</sup> Secondly, a 'fetishisation of the body and the aesthetics of physical perfection and stylish virility are specific to fascism and the fascist political projects'.<sup>115</sup> And this 'focus on the health and virility of the collective body necessarily leads to an equally powerful obsession with the sickness of the nation'.<sup>116</sup> Therefore the enemy toxins of the nation's collective body - Jews, Bolsheviks or freemasons - threatened its health. The cure for this 'illness' could be political repression, negative eugenics or complete biological extermination. The Nazis proceeded from one to the other; other regimes were more haphazard in their approach. And if the Nazis and fascists are social Darwinians, they assume 'that in a truly natural society the universal war

<sup>113</sup> Buruma, *Wages of Guilt*, 7–10.

<sup>114</sup> Neocleous, *Fascism*, 75.

Recently Mike Hawkins (*Social Darwinism in European and American Thought, 1860–1945. Nature as Model and Nature as Threat* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 272–91) has insisted that Nazism is different from Italian Fascism precisely because it, rather than Italian Fascism, was fundamentally social Darwinist. Hawkins argues that Italian Fascism was based on a mixture of Hegelian, Sorelian, Nietzschean and Bergsonian ideas that had little in common with the Nazism's biological racist determinism.

I disagree with his reading. First, as Hawkins admits, his sample of Italian Fascist writings is quite limited. Secondly, the connections between the nation's body, race and demography is amply demonstrated in the new literature on Fascism (Horn, *Social Bodies*; Ipsen, *Dictating Demography*; Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*). Thirdly, Mussolini was more of a racist than Hawkins seems to admit (see Sarfatti, *Mussolini*). Finally, his definition of social Darwinism seems to exclude the nation-statist approach used by Nationalist and Fascist imperialists who argue their case by mixing geopolitics with social Darwinian theories, namely, the need for young 'proletarian' Italy to overcome the decrepit plutocracies. See Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*, 40:

Fascism's critique of mediocrity and egalitarianism found a solution in the affirmation of heterogeneity at a broader level. Conflict was transferred to war among states. And Mussolini fully adopted the nationalists' division between "proletarian" and "plutocratic" nations. Class struggle, which needed to be avoided in domestic politics, became the main category of interpretation of a country's international relations. Whereas the "masses" should not fight within Italy, Mussolini foresaw the possibility of transforming them in "virile" warriors in the world arena.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

will destroy everything sickly, weak or diseased'.<sup>117</sup> The therapeutic effects upon the nation of a cleansing civil war therefore is recognised by fascists and Nazis. Once this civil war is won by the 'healthy elements', international war – the next stage in their therapeutic course – requires the further reorganisation of the national body. International war can only occur if the nation possesses a modern industrial economy capable of sustaining modern industrialised warfare.

It is precisely here – in the discussion of modern warfare – that the linkages between Nazism, fascism and conservative revolutionaries become apparent. The writings of the Italian Nationalists (and Futurists)<sup>118</sup> and such German conservative revolutionaries as Jünger are central to the Nazi and fascist interpretation of modern warfare. It is at this crucial juncture that De Felice's differentiation between retrogressive Nazism and modern Italian Fascism falls down. Neocleous has suggested an ingenious solution by applying Jeffrey Herf's concept of reactionary modernism.<sup>119</sup> Reactionary modernism is the Janus-faced ideology that can transcend De Felice's differentiation. Neocleous explains:

Expressing a commitment to *both* modernity *and* a mythicised past, fascism is both modern and reactionary, and it is as a form of reactionary modernism that fascism reveals its role as the culmination of the conservative revolution.<sup>120</sup>

In post-1918 Europe the conservative revolutionaries crafted their reactionary modernism by invoking the centrality of the Great War. The Great War revealed to the conservative revolutionaries what Bartov calls the central factor in the history of war: 'the persistent tension between the image of personal heroism on the battlefield and the reality of mass, anonymous slaughter'.<sup>121</sup> With the fascists and Nazis they shared the image of the trench community of warriors and producers. But the conservative revolutionaries shaped the 'post-1918 conceptualisation of industrial extermination', that was 'also meant to redress the balance upset by the first bout of mechanical killing by means of a massive cleansing operation that would eliminate the threat of genetic degeneration'.<sup>122</sup> As I insisted at the beginning of this article, it

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>118</sup> For the Italian case, see Mario Isnenghi, *Il mito della grande guerra da Marinetti a Malaparte* (Bari: Laterza, 1970).

<sup>119</sup> Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>120</sup> Neocleous, *Fascism*, 60. For the broader context see Eksteins, *Rites of Spring* and Adamson, *Avant-Garde Florence*.

Roger Griffin describes Italian Fascism as an 'alternative modernity': see 'The Sacred Synthesis: The Ideological Cohesion of Fascist Cultural Policy', *Modern Italy*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1998), 5–23. Whereas Mabel Berezin defined Italian Fascism as a competing model of modernity that was 'nonrational but not irrational' (*Making the Fascist Self*, 245). I am happy with Herf's, Griffin's or Berezin's definitions. They all agree with Berezin's assertion that fascism 'repudiated the split between the public and private self, the core of liberal democracy' (*Making the Fascist Self*, 245).

<sup>121</sup> Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst*, 5.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 5. And the Great War also was central to the regeneration of the nation. Thus Falasca-Zamponi writes

If sacrifice, blood and regeneration had been the characteristic features of World War I, they also became the identifying traits of the fascists, thus reaffirming more strongly the ideal link between fascism and the war. (*Fascist Spectacle*, 35)

was the lessons and images of the Great War, not merely the threats posed by international communism, domestic radicalism or the great disorders of territorial reordering, inflation and depression that forged the fascist and Nazi synthesis. But it was also the spectacular politics of Mussolini's and Hitler's regimes which drove them to war. 'War,' Falasca-Zamponi writes, 'constituted the ultimate piece of fascism's aesthetic puzzle, the necessary concluding event in the historical project of the regime.'<sup>123</sup>

Another common strand shared by fascists, Nazis and conservative authoritarians was a proclivity towards anti-Semitism. Indeed, one way of investigating the uniqueness or otherwise of the Nazis' anti-Semitism is to analyse the participation of Europeans in the Holocaust. But that will have to await another occasion.

#### IV. Conclusion

This article addressed the issue of the comparability and uniqueness of Nazism, fascism and authoritarian conservatism in Europe between 1914 and 1945. In so doing I first discussed the viability of a minimal definition of fascism. But I also expressed doubts whether fascism as such died in 1945. One way of addressing this issue is comparing the relationship between conservatism and neofascism or the radical right in Europe after 1945. In this respect Diethelm Prowe's recent contribution to this journal provides a useful series of benchmarks to measure the comparability and the degree of individuality of the two epochs.<sup>124</sup>

Differences are obvious. Whatever the problems the western European economy has encountered since 1973, the inhabitants of its countries have experienced an economic prosperity and welfare provision beyond the wildest dreams of Europeans before 1939. The extent to which the radical right has fed directly off the problems of unemployment in the 1980s and 1990s is open to debate. If southern Italy and parts of suburban France may be examples that seem to fit the unemployment model, prosperous Austria, Bavaria and Norway do not. With the end of the Cold War aspects of the Atlantic Alliance, European integration and the process of globalisation are ripe for radical right exploitation. The decline of the communist left in France and the discrediting of social democracy in Austria also saw some transfer of support by working-class voters to the National Front of Jean-Marie Le Pen and the Freedom Party of Jörg Haider respectively. But in the long run successful European integration may in fact weaken the potential further growth of the radical right beyond a current level of some 15 per cent to circa 30 per cent of the electorate. But if circumstances do allow for breakthroughs for Le Pen or Haider, for instance, these would never-

Many Europeans drew less extreme and more peaceful conclusions from the experience of the Great War: see Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>123</sup> Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*, 148.

<sup>124</sup> Diethelm Prowe, "'Classic' Fascism and the New Radical Right in Western Europe: Comparisons and Contrasts', *Contemporary European History*, vol. 3, no. 3 (1994), 289–313.

theless reveal the radically different context of politics in Europe compared with the interwar period. The drive for new empires within Europe and abroad now seems inconceivable and would be met by derision if they became a chief plank of a radical right party in today's western Europe. While anti-Semitism (particularly in the guise of Holocaust denial) is widespread amongst the stalwarts of the radical right, the focus is now on the threat to European culture presented by the descendants of labour migrants or asylum seekers from former colonies and elsewhere. The rhetoric and policies of the extreme right have had an influence far outside their electoral strength on mainstream discourse and national public policy relating to migration and naturalisation. There has been a noted correlation between the success of conservative politics in western Europe in the 1980s and early 1990s and the instrumentalisation of the fears of 'swamping' originally invoked by the extreme right.<sup>125</sup>

More potent of course is the cultural threat of Islam. In fact, the creation of multicultural societies in western Europe has probably made most of the population increasingly more tolerant. The electoral mobilisation of ethnic minorities in certain countries and the acceptance of a 'rights culture' based on the European Convention on Human Rights, the case law of the European Union and the Geneva Convention of 1951 makes it more difficult for even the most opportunist mainstream politician to endorse the arguments of the extreme right without disavowing the international apparatus of human rights obligations crafted by liberal democracies during the Cold War.<sup>126</sup> On the other hand, the Jews in pre-war Europe were members of one 'alien' but long-standing culture with deep religious resonance in the fundamental belief systems of traditionalist anti-liberal democratic Christian Europe.

In this respect most of the benign factors listed above are not present in eastern Europe or the former Soviet Union. The most extreme forms of nation-stateism (state-enforced ethnic cleansing and attempted genocide) appeared once again in former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. The Roma and Sinti (the Gypsies) have become the target of state-sanctioned persecution and lynch mob justice in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania. And a final not-yet-mentioned factor – the stability and legitimacy of universal suffrage-based parliamentary democracy – is threatened by both traditionalist authoritarian conservatives (and outright fascists) and ex-Marxist-Leninist opportunists. This factor – the normalcy and legitimacy of mass parliamentary democracy – is a given for western Europe. And here the radical right has come to realise that the vast majority of the population accepts its permanence. Indeed, it is precisely this which has led a minority of the radical right

<sup>125</sup> Dietrich Thränhardt, 'The Political Uses of Xenophobia in England, France and Germany', in Emek M. Uçarer and Ronald J. Puchala, eds., *Immigration into Western Societies. Problems and Policies* (London, Pinter, 1997), 175–94.

<sup>126</sup> Carl Levy, 'Asylum Seekers, Refugees and the Future of Citizenship in the European Union', in Alice Bloch and Carl Levy, eds., *Refugees, Citizenship and Social Policy in Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).

to terrorism and guerrilla action so as to awaken the populace from its apparent democratic torpor.

Now it is quite true that on the fringes of the democratic upsurge of democratic conservatism in France, Italy, Germany and Britain during the 1980s and early 1990s a distinctly anti-democratic New Right did arise that resurrected the major themes of reactionary modernism. And when the democratic conservative right faltered or failed to endorse this revived programme once in power, especially since its economic neo-liberalism encouraged globalisation and thereby the extreme right's nightmare of 'the pluralisation, bastardisation and cross-fertilisation of cultures',<sup>127</sup> the extreme right and the democratic conservatives became keen competitors for the same electorate. Le Pen and Gianfranco Fini of the Italian Alleanza Nazionale have certainly benefited from transfusions of voters from the democratic conservative right. However, these ideas and political developments are placed within a completely different political and social context from the interwar period. As Prowe notes, interwar fascism developed in the context of 'authoritarian, national and frequently aristocratic conservatism'.<sup>128</sup> But the democratisation of western European society, accompanied by European integration, industrialisation and urbanisation have largely eliminated that 'aristocratic-authoritarian component' from the milieux of the west European radical right of the 1990s. Furthermore, the rise of catch-all democratic conservative parties of Catholics<sup>129</sup> and Protestants in Italy and Germany, and the liberalisation of both faiths in the 1950s or 1960s, undermined the importance of traditionalist Christianity as a source of support for the west European extreme right at the end of the twentieth century. To that extent the relationships between fascists and conservatives observed in the interwar period are not comparable with the relationship between the radical right and the democratic conservatives today in western Europe. But the reality and future potential growth for new hybrid forms of nation-statism are still very much present further east.

<sup>127</sup> Griffin, 'The Sacred Synthesis', 20.

<sup>128</sup> Prowe, '“Classic Fascism”', 309.

Although there were certainly aristocratic elements in the Italian neofascist right and within the 'second state' of the entire postwar period. See, Levy, 'From Fascism'.

<sup>129</sup> Conway sees the decisive rupture in Catholic politics not during the Resistance or the immediate postwar era but during the liberal 1960s of Pope John XXIII (*Catholic Politics*, 98).