

World War I and the Rise of Fascism in Italy: Evidence from *La Vittoria Mutilata*

Gianluca Russo*

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Abstract

One of the key steps that allowed Mussolini to become the Italian *Duce* was the victory in the 1924 national elections. I study the impact of World War I on Mussolini's electoral success. To gauge the effect of the war, I construct a measure of military casualties from the universe of Italian municipalities, which is matched to municipal level voting in the 1924 election. Controlling for the number of military drafted in an Italian municipality, variation in the share of casualties is induced by military events exogenous to municipality characteristics that could simultaneously affect support for Fascism. Using this conditional independence approach, I find that a higher share of casualties increases the vote share for Fascism. More than half of the increase in the vote share for Mussolini is matched by a decrease in the vote share of the Socialist party. I decompose the effect of the casualties rate by its intensity to show that the number of casualties interacted positively with the number of veterans back from the frontline. I interpret this as evidence that Fascist support was driven by municipalities where the high number of casualties was matched by veterans militarized and brutalized by the war experience.

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“It is better to live one day as a lion than 100 years as a sheep.”

Donald Trump on Twitter , 2016

1 Introduction

Much of what informs our debate over the recent surge of populism and extremism today dates back to the rise of Fascism in Europe in the early twentieth century. After the end of World War One (WWI), Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler leveraged the anger and frustration that accompanied the end of the conflict to seize power in Europe. How did it happen? Quite surprisingly, scholars have focused exclusively on the German case and did not directly investigate the link between World War One and the rise of Fascism.

In this paper I do exactly this: focusing on the rise of Mussolini to power, I investigate the impact of WWI on Mussolini’s consensus. To quantify the anger and frustration caused by the conflict, I rely on military death rates that I can consistently measure for all Italian municipalities, Italy’s finest administrative unit. There is no question over the salience of this measure for the Italian population or the Fascist party. WWI was the first large scale military conflict for modern Italy and as such it mobilized the entire country, no Italian municipality experienced zero casualties. The *sacrifice* of Italians during the conflict was also one of the staples of Mussolini’s propaganda. The term *Vittoria Mutilata* (mutilated victory) was coined after the war to indicate that despite winning the war, the rewards did not match the large costs paid in terms of human lives.¹ This rhetoric became soon one of the key points in the Fascist doctrine, which main effort was to discredit the pre war political elite. The old political establishment was labeled too weak and incapable to stand up to obtain the adequate compensations from the war for the Italian population.

I construct a novel dataset collapsing at the municipality level individual records from

¹The term was created by the poet Gabriele D’Annunzio. Although he never got officially involved with the Fascist power, his rhetoric had a very strong influence on Benito Mussolini and the first years of the movement.

the census of WWI military casualties (Provveditorato Generale dello Stato 1964). I match this information to data on conscriptions rates that I collected from secondary sources (Ministero della guerra 1927). I measure military death rates dividing the share of casualties over the total number of drafted men in a given municipality. To measure consensus for Mussolini, I rely on the vote shares that the Fascist coalition obtain during the 1924 national elections, the only election where Mussolini ran as head of the coalition. While already in power since 1922, and despite several efforts to secure a sounding victory in 1924, I argue that differences in vote shares between municipalities — not the overall level of consensus — are still informative of differences in consensus for the Fascist party between municipalities.

My identification strategy assumes that conditional on the number of conscripts in a given municipality, variation in military death rates is determined by military events on the frontline, exogenous to unobservable characteristics that could also affect the rise of Mussolini in the aftermath of the conflict. Historical recounts of the war and further robustness checks based on pre-war outcomes validate the plausibility of this assumption.

I find that conditionally on the same number of men conscripted, municipalities with a larger share of casualties displayed higher support for the Fascist coalition in the 1924 national elections. My analysis indicates that Mussolini's vote share increased by approximately three percentage points for a ten percentage point increase in the casualty rate. The magnitude of the effect is not large as an increase of ten points in the death rates is almost as large as going from the lowest to the average casualty rate that is twelve percentage points. However, this is not surprising because I focus on only one of the many dimensions through which WWI impacted the spread of the Fascist regime.

To paint a full picture on the effect of military deaths on the post war political outcomes, I use my baseline specification to investigate the impact of the war on the vote shares for the Socialist and Catholic party, the main rivals of the Fascist party. I find that the positive effect of war casualties on Mussolini's vote share comes mostly at the expenses of the Socialist party. The same increase in the share of casualties reduced the vote share for Socialists by

approximately 1.6 percentage points, slightly more than half of the increase that I find for the Fascist coalition. On a different note, military death rates had no effect on the consensus for the Catholic party. Larger military death rates were also responsible for the reduction in the turnout share, perhaps a mechanical effect due to the war and the fact that women were not allowed to vote until after World War Two.

How did war casualty rates affect the consensus for Mussolini? I provide evidence on two possible mechanisms that appear frequently in historical narratives. First, I show that the impact of the military death rates is maximized when it is accompanied by a sufficient amount of veterans returning from the frontline. As drafted minus casualties equal the number of veterans in a given municipality, I plot the average treatment effect of the casualty rate for municipalities that had a low, medium and high casualty rate. I find that the effect of WWI casualties follows an inverted U shape: it is maximized in the middle of the death rate distribution, when both casualties and veterans are present in sufficient number in a municipality. The effects are smaller for municipalities where few casualties interacted with many veterans or viceversa in municipalities where many casualties interacted with few veterans. On the one hand, in municipalities with few casualties war did not have a brutalizing effect because most of drafted men made it home alive. On the other hand, in municipalities with many casualties the number of veterans is too small to generate enough density and provide a starting basis to the fascist movement.

Second, one of the most influential historical hypothesis on the rise of Fascism in Italy argues that the political and economic instability that followed WWI increased the consensus of the Socialist and Communist party. Driven by the fear that Italy would follow the steps of USSR and turn into a Communist state, the political and industrial elite turned to Mussolini as the only other viable political party able to receive the consensus of the masses. I test directly the *red scare* hypothesis, using data from the 1921 national elections. I first look at the average effect of the casualty rate on the fascist vote share in 1924 across different sets of municipalities depending on the Socialist vote share they registered in 1921. I find that

municipalities with shares for Socialists that were above the median in 1921 are the ones with the highest estimated effect of war casualties on the share for Mussolini in 1924. The effect is almost twice as large the one I find in my baseline specification. Finally, I test for the interaction between the presence of casualties, veterans and the red scare hypothesis. I find that municipalities that in 1921 had above median shares for the Socialist party and had a dense enough number of veterans and casualties are driving my results. Taken together, these results suggest that post WWI Mussolini leveraged the war dissatisfactions and militarized veterans to turn highly unstable places, like those that voted for the socialist party, to vote for him.

This paper is related to at least two sets of literatures: contributions that study the determinants to the electoral success of Nazism and contributions analyzing the economic and political effects of demographic shocks caused by conflicts. A large literature has studied the electoral success of the Nazi party. In a seminal contribution, Adena et al. (2015), look at the effect of radio telecommunications on the surge of consensus towards Hitler's party. They are able to quantify how the shift in radio content affected support towards the Nazi party, before the establishment of the regime. In order to quantify support, they use electoral results from key parliamentary and presidential elections. This is not the only paper looking at electoral competition as measure of support for the Nazi party. In a recent contribution, Galofré-Vilà et al. (2017) use voting data to show that austerity measures adopted during the Weimar Republic, largely contributed to fuel the frustration among German voters. According to the authors, fiscal austerity has larger explanatory power than the previously hypothesized determinants: unemployment and super-inflation rates. Voigtländer and Voth (2014) use voting data to measure the political effects of large scale infrastructure projects like the *autobahn*. They demonstrate that by building the highway, Nazi leaders were able to signal to their voters the end of austerity and reward those constituency whom supported the party the most. In another contribution, voting data is used to disentangle social capital effects on the spread of Nazi consensus. Satyanath et al. (2017) combine data from lay

associationism across a set of German cities. The authors show that towns with denser associationism favored the entry into the ranks of the Nazi party and consequently had higher shares for the Nazi party. Jorg and Philipp (2017) link the Nazi electoral success to the role played by religious identity. They argue that the Catholic Church actively warned its followers against the Nazi regime. According to the authors the catholic one was the single group that resisted the most to the Nazi propaganda as measured by voting data. De Bromhead et al. (2013) take a cross country approach and ask whether the German case generalize. The authors show that economic downturn after WWI, quantified by change in GDP, is an important predictor of right wing electoral success. In their study, other qualifiers for the spread of political extremism is the experience of WWI as “Warring nations suffered catastrophic losses of men and material as well as domestic hardship” (p. 375). With respect to this large literature on Nazi Germany, my paper borrows the idea of using key electoral success of parties that intend to subvert the fundamental institutions of a democratic state. I use these voting data to give the first contribution on the first dictatorial regime of the twentieth century, Italian Fascism, and provide evidence on the effect of casualties that – to the best of my knowledge – it has not been analyzed before.

My contribution is also related to the strand of literature in economics and political science that analyzes the effect of war shocks. In a related contribution, Koenig (2015) studies the political effect of war participation in Germany. The author argues that veterans returning from the conflict undermined the democratic foundations of the Weimar Republic. His results, however, do not show evidence on the rise of the Nazi party, but rather on the political support for the German right wing party. Differently from this paper, I focus on the effect of casualties and their interaction (in a specific way I describe in the empirical strategy) with veterans and show that both played a role in the rise of the Fascist coalition. My empirical strategy can exploit a finer level of variation and it is suited for the uniqueness of the elections that brought Mussolini in power. Koenig (2015) is not the only paper that focuses on political fallouts of WWI in Europe. Berg et al. (2016) hypothesize that the army

became very politicized following WWI, and municipalities that had a military garrison in the intra-war period were more likely to observe an increase in the share of votes to the Swedish right wing party.

Other scholars have investigated the effect of war participation and war casualties in different contexts. A substantial literature looks at the effect of war casualties on the sex imbalance ratio, and its effect on labor market outcomes. Boehnke and Gay (2018) show that WWI in France allowed women to join the labor force. In a subsequent contribution, Gay (2018), shows that the temporary imbalance ratio had long run effects through the change in the beliefs of women in society. Also Abramitzky et al. (2011) look at the impact of WWI casualties on the gender imbalance in France, but focus their attention on marriage outcomes. According to the authors, after the war, men were less likely to marry women of lower social class and were more likely to marry in general. I augment this literature by quantifying the political effects of a permanent demographic shock.

The paper proceeds as follows: In section 2 I review the historical context. In section 3 I give details on the data collected. In section 4 I describe my empirical strategy. I show results in section 5. Finally, I conclude in section 6.

2 Historical Setting

2.1 Europe at War

World War One lasts approximately four years, from July 1914 to November 1918. The conflict was triggered by the assassination of the heir to the Austrian throne, Francis Ferdinand, by Gavrilo Princip, a Serbian-Bosnian separatist. The assassination originated a diplomatic crises between Austria and Serbia that escalated into war between the two countries. As Austria invaded the Kingdom of Serbia, the system of defensive alliances that split Europe at the time extended the conflict to the rest of the continent. Austria and Germany, the core of the *triple alliance* (Italy was the third member, but declared its neutrality at the start of

the conflict), opposed France, Britain and Russia, united under the *triple entente*. The roots of the conflict go deeper than the assassination of Francis Ferdinand. Throughout the 19th century, European leaders managed to maintain a tight balance of power in the old continent while focusing their expansionistic politics into the colonial race. These frictions eventually materialized into the blocks of alliances, which made increasingly likely the escalation to a large scale conflict (Robson 2007).

At the eve of the conflict Italy's political arena was mostly composed by four forces: the liberal party, the socialists, the catholic world and the nationalistic-conservative right. These same forces were split into *interventionists*, in favor of the war, and *neutralists*. The majority of the political forces, Liberals, Socialists and Catholics supported neutrality, while nationalists and a minority of the progressive left supported the entrance in the war on the side of Britain, France against their former allies. Following the wish of the majority, as the conflict breaks out, the liberal government declared the Italian neutrality.

There were mostly pragmatic considerations behind the neutrality choice. First, Italy was behind the rest of Europe in terms of armament and army organization. The country had just fought a small colonial war in Libia, that had shown all the limitation of its armaments. In addition, the army did not have a very successful record. Both politicians and high military ranks were doubtful about the discipline and fighting skills of Italians (Ceva 1999). Second, the status of the alliances foresaw the entrance of Italy on the side of Austria, which was its long-lasting enemy, since the first independence battles back in 1848.

In the ten months between the start of the conflict and the decision of Italy to join the war, the Italian political landscape experiences a large scale propaganda from part of the public opinion in favor of joining the conflict (Whittam 1977). The leitmotiv of the *interventionists* was the completion of the unification process, annexing the territories of Trento and Trieste still under the Austrian control. There were also some colonial and nationalistic considerations involved, as a neutral position would have reduced the political importance of Italy by the end of the conflict. A notable example of this faction is a young

Benito Mussolini, at that point an offshoot of the Socialist party (he had been expelled because of his support towards the conflict), and director of the journal-party *Il Popolo d'Italia* (The Italian People). His propaganda, together with other newspapers, and the political rallies in the squares have a crucial role in swaying the consensus of the masses. It is at this point that he starts building the new ideology that later on will lead to the constitution of the Fascist movement.

Finally, the halt to the German offense on the Marne convinced the Italian government that the German victory was not obvious at all and that the Italian input in the war could quickly swing the outcome in favor of the *entente*. On April 26 1915, Italy signs the – supposed to be – secret *Pact of London*, with the obligation to join the war within a month on the side of the *triple entente*, against its former allies. One month later, on May 24th 1915, the Italian troops were crossing the Austrian border.

2.2 The Italian Army in the Great War

[Figure 1 about here.]

During peacetime, the Italian army organized its troops across 94 regiments. Figure 1 sketch were the regiment fitted in the army structure. Each regiment was assigned to a headquarter with deposits for weaponry and uniforms. The headquarters were located across different towns over all the Italian territory. The army had its own geographic administrative unit called military districts. These partitioned Italy in approximately 90 districts at the eve of WWI. The army used military districts and regiment headquarters to organize drafting and training of manpower.

In the fifty years before the war, there were two contrasting views on the type of drafting to be adopted: national versus regional. Politicians and members of the government tended to support the national one. Their goal was to foster nation building through the formation of regionally diverse regiments. This view was opposed by the army who thought regionally

sourced regiments would be more efficiently trained and hence more effective in military operations. Regional drafting was also less expensive to form and move across the peninsula.

Before the start of the war and in the first stages of it, the politicians point of view prevailed, and Italy drafted men using the national system. This was organized in two steps: first, men arrived at their military district based on where they were born. Here they were told whether they were fit or unfit, mostly according to their height and the size of their chest. Each regiment was linked to a set of military districts from which they sourced men. These districts had to belong to different Italian macro-areas (North-West, North-East, Center, South-West and South-East), to create geographically heterogenous regiments. For example the 3rd infantry regiment (belonging to the *Piemonte* Brigade) had its headquarters in Messina, and was sourcing men from ten military districts located in different parts of the country: L'Aquila, Cagliari, Catania, Firenze, Lecce, Livorno, Mantova, Messina, Spoleto and Vicenza.² In the second step, men traveled from their military district to the location of their newly assigned regiment. Here they joined their comrades, were equipped and trained for war. It is evident from this description why the military thought the system was inefficient and costly. Indeed the system did not survive the war necessity for speedy enlistment of men, as it was substituted by regional drafting when the conflict turned into its bloodier phase.

At the start of the conflict, permanent units and men enlisted for training constituted approximately half of the estimated manpower needed. The other half had to be provided through calling older classes back into service. Overall the cohorts that served during the war at any point in time were those born from 1874 to 1899 (Ceva 1999). As the conflict progressed, in particular after summer 1916, the army emanated more directives to limit the use of national drafting. Hence the regionalization of the regiments became stronger as the conflict progressed. Full mobilization was completed in July 1915 entailing an army

²As figure 1 describes, one brigade was divided into two regiments. In figure A.2 in the appendix, I show the header of the booklet regarding the military operations of the Piemonte Brigade. This was split into the third and fourth infantry regiments and was sourcing men from the military districts described in the text. The Piemonte brigade header is an example of the booklet I am in the process of digitizing. These booklets provide information not only on the districts sourcing them, but also on the casualties suffered in every important battle during the conflict.

composed by 14 Army Corps, 35 Infantry divisions, 1 *Bersaglieri* division, 4 Cavalry division and 4 special *Alpini* groups. This amounted to a total of 31,037 officers and 1,058,000 troops (Ceva 1999). The ground troops were then complemented by the artillery, engineers and the sanitary services.

The timeline of the war operations on the Italian front can be divided in 3 parts (Whittam 1977). The first can be named “Salandra’s war” after the name of the Italian prime minister at the start of the conflict. This goes from the hopeful beginning of the war to the sour aftermath of the Austrian *Strafexpedition* (the first severe defeat of the Italian army) in the summer of 1916. The Italian establishment was optimistic to fight a “breve e sacra guerra” (a short and sacred war):³ a limited war to round off the independence campaigns from the 1860s. They were determined to avoid committing themselves to the *grande guerra* being waged by the other combatants. As the conflict went on, the government’s expectations proved illusory and anachronistic. The trench-lines transformed the conflict into a static and extremely costly one in terms of human lives. The second phase begins with the resignation of the Italian PM Salandra and the appointment of Boselli. In this part of the war the country realizes that the war could not be solved with a handful of operations and that a full mobilization also of the home front is necessary. The final phase starts with the defeat of Caporetto, the worst defeat in Italian military history. A new prime minister and Chief of Defense Staff are appointed (respectively Orlando and Armando Diaz). As Italy fought for survival, the government made more and more extravagant promises to the troops, workers and peasants. This led to a rapid, almost exotic growth of national consciousness. By the time of the armistice, wartime propaganda among soldiers and civilians had promoted a mood of restless expectancy which peacetime Italy was going to find hard to accommodate (Whittam 1977).

³Sacred because it involved finally unifying what was considered to be the Italian soil. With the words of the King Vittorio Emanuele III: “*For the conquest of national independence your fathers have fought on three occasions: finally achieve this will be your good fortune and your glory.*”

2.3 Political Aftermath

Origin of the *Vittoria Mutilata*

Despite winning the war, Italy's expectations for territorial gains were dashed. Few months before Italy joined the war on the side of France and United Kingdom, the *Pact of London*⁴ promised to deliver upon victory of the war, all the lands under the Austrian control that spoke Italian. This meant the control of the provinces of Trento, Trieste, the peninsula of Istria and the whole Dalmatia coastline. In the peace treaties (1919), concessions to Italy were far more modest.

The disappointment stemming from the peace treaties and the profound frustrations from the war experience led to the myth of the *Vittoria Mutilata* (Mutilated Victory). The term was coined by the poet Gabriele D'annunzio, who at the end of 1919 headed a small group of troops to the conquest of the town of Fiume, ethnically Italian, but put under the control of an international administration. D'annunzio was a hardcore supporter of the early fascist movement and its young leader, Benito Mussolini. There was a direct line between the experience of Fiume and the leader of the fascist movement. Mussolini himself, at the end of the peace treaties, had made the Vittoria Mutilata one of the warhorse of its movement political identity.

⁴The Pact of London was signed by Italy, France, UK and Russia on April 26 1915 and obliged Italy to declare war to Austria within a month from signing. The pact established that upon victory Italy would have gotten the region of Tyrol, up to the Alpine water divide at the Brenner Pass, which includes the modern-day Italian provinces of Trentino and South Tyrol; The entire Austrian Littoral, including Istria, the port of Trieste and the Cres-LoÅjinj archipelago, but without the island of Krk (Veglia) and the Hungarian port of Rijeka; the northern Dalmatia, including Zadar, Åibenik, and most of the Dalmatian islands, except Rab and Bra; the districts of Vipava, Idrija and Ilirska Bistrica in the Austrian Duchy of Carniola; The townships of Pontebba (Pontafel) and Malborghetto Valbruna (Malborgeth-Wolfsbach) in the Austrian Duchy of Carinthia; The ownership of the Dodecanese Islands and Lybia (held by Italy since 1912); The port of Vlore in Albania and a protectorate over Albania ("Italy should be entrusted with the task of representing the State of Albania in its relations with Foreign Powers"). Parts of the German colonies in Asia and Africa (in particular Eritrea and Somalia). In the event of the partition of Turkey, Italy "ought to obtain a just share of the Mediterranean region adjacent to the province of Adalia" (Toscano 1931). Out of this long list only the regions of Trentino, South Tyrol and the port of Trieste were conceded to the Italian Kingdom.

Casualties and Political Processing of the Conflict

In the aftermath of the war the political arena saw the decline of the old liberal elite (although still at the government), responsible for the war and, most importantly, unable to obtain the fair compensations promised. At the same time new parties saw an important increase in their electoral base. In particular the Socialists, the fascist movement and the Catholics, represented by the Popular Party (Lyttelton 2004). All of them were not held responsible for the war, however, their political take on it had important differences.

Right after the end of the conflict, all European countries started commemorating their war casualties, in an effort to make sense of it. In Italy, however the liberal government seemed much more reluctant to process the war. There are at least two reasons for it. First, the divisions on the decision to whether join the war or not re-surfaced within the old elite, leading to different views on how to handle the aftermath. Second, the new Fascist party, had put the war, and its glorification at the core of its identity. The episode of Fiume reinforced the fear that celebrating the war meant increasing Mussolini's popular support (Genovesi 2016).

While the liberal government had a passive stance towards publicly commemorating the conflict, from the bottom of the country rose the necessity of publicly processing the grief. It is the death of the masses the most fundamental experience of the war (George 1998) and its processing was left unattended. Mussolini was able to sense this need and made it a crucial point of his agenda (Genovesi 2016). His movement started glorifying the casualties, and labeled their sacrifice as the necessary step through the "*cleansing fire of the war*"⁵ that new Italians went through.

This aspect was the main difference between the fascists and the other actors in the political arena. Even though Socialists had been against the war and were not seen as responsible for the Mutilated Victory, they took an approach of condemnation towards the conflict. Hence, while the Fascism rhetoric was based on exalting the war but blaming the

⁵This quote has been attributed to the Italian poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, founder of Futurism.

elite unable to stand for the sacrifice that Italians had made, Socialists blamed both. Fascist propaganda was able to rationalize the conflict in the most effective way. It offered to the country a scapegoat for their sorrow, without deprecating the sacrifice of approximately six hundred thousand lives. Italy's unfortunate position was due to the inadequacy of the democratic government, as this was – according to Mussolini – “*unable to meet the greatness of Italy's fate*”.

The Rise of Mussolini to Power

Approximately six months after the end of the conflict a small group of interventionists, anarchist, nationalists and veterans, got together in Milan and founded the Fascist movement (Fasci di Combattimento). Its program was heterogenous but gathered around the nationalist propaganda of the mutilated victory. The movement organization was heavily inspired by the war experience, and its early phase was particularly urban and based on veterans (De Felice 1965).

The 1919 elections were characterized by the entry of the masses into politics and the triumph of the first two *mass parties*, the Popular party (the *Catholics* party) and the Socialist party.⁶ The fascist movement was still in its embryonic phase and participated only marginally to the 1919 elections, failing to get any seat in Parliament.

Despite the large share of consensus obtained in the 1919 elections by the new parties, the country did not find the political stability it needed. Both socialists and catholics were unable to apply their political agenda, and the country went through two years of profound instability called the red two-year-period (Il biennio rosso), characterized by squatting of agricultural land in the rural parts of the country. Squatters were close to the socialists movement, proclaiming the need for land redistribution to the masses. This created a class conflict among the conservative industrialists, and agrarian landowners against the – mostly rural – masses. The nature of the fascist movement in the early 1920s evolves to accomodate

⁶The 1919 elections, were the first one with universal male suffrage and proportional voting system.

the interests of the landowners and starts using its violent squads to repress socialists and populists in rural areas (De Felice 1965). The agrarian phase of the movement leads to a strong increase in the electoral base of the fascist movement. In 1921, the movement incorporates into a proper political party and runs for the 1921 national elections. The political climate in 1921 is characterized by the violence of the fascist squads against their rivals: socialists and catholics. The 1921 elections see the appointment of a prime minister from the Liberal party, while the seats are essentially equally split among three forces: Liberals, catholics and socialists (Lyttelton 2004). The Fascist party does not obtain great results in these elections either. Partially this is due to the fact that, despite the number of members had surged, the party was still not properly organized and ready to run across all the Italian territory. Hence, despite the intimidation, the Fascist party gains only two seats, one of which was held by Benito Mussolini.

Despite the small shares of votes, Mussolini's entrance in the Italian parliament signs an important step for the success of the Fascist party. This event mutates him from the head of violent movement into an institutionalized political actor. Mussolini's legitimization became fundamental when the Fascist leader decided to march on Rome to gain political power. During October 1922, the Italian liberal government was going through a political crises. The head of the Fascist party organized a march on the Italian capital to request the political power given to his party. On October 28th 1922 approximately fifty thousand fascist supporters marched on Rome. Despite the army was ready and organized to repress the march, the King refused to use it and instead assigned Mussolini as prime minister.

Despite being prime minister, Mussolini was still far from being the dictator he aspired to become. The political forces in the Italian Parliament still reflected the votes of the last elections in 1921, which limited his political agenda. The main accomplishment of the two years before the 1924 elections was the approval of a new electoral law that conferred a particularly strong majority premium to the party obtaining the highest share of votes. Even though violence and intimidation were still present in 1924, these were far more

modest than in 1921 (I further discuss the validity of the 1924 elections in the appendix). In particular the violence was organized by the hardcore part of the party, sometimes even against Mussolini's will. The fascist leader was aware that, in order to turn the Italian kingdom into a dictatorial state, he needed popular legitimization at least once. Of course it is impossible to know whether in absence of the large electoral share he obtained, he would have resorted to violence and electoral fraud. However, it was unnecessary, since on April 6th 1924 he was elected as Italian prime minister with a vote share close to sixty percent.

3 Data

3.1 Italian Military Casualties during WWI

The source for the Italian military casualties is the *Albo d'Oro* archive maintained by the *Institute for History and Resistance and Contemporary Society* (ISTORECO) with the support of the Italian Ministry of Defense (Provveditorato Generale dello Stato 1964).⁷ The *Albo d'Oro* list was conceived during the Fascist regime and was intended to honor the military deaths during WWI by recording several information on the identity and the military experience of the casualty (Fornasin 2017). The archive records information on first and last name, municipality of birth, military district of birth, regiment at moment of death, military unit (e.g. infantry rather than artillery) at moment of death, military rank at moment of death, date of birth and date of death. The list includes data on 529,025 fatalities. Although there is some uncertainty on the total number of deaths in the conflict, the *Albo d'Oro*'s total is in the range of the estimates postulated by historians and demographers.⁸ The casualty list allows me to create a military death rate at the municipality level, the smallest Italian administrative unit. Unfortunately, municipality of residence is not available, hence I rely on municipality of birth.

⁷The list is accessible at <http://www.cadutigrandeguerra.it/>

⁸Yet today, the total number of Italian casualties during WWI is a matter of controversy among historians. For more details on this see Fornasin (2017)

Migration, either internal or external can cause the mis-measurement of the casualty shock. At the turn of the century, Italy was, in relative terms, one of the countries with the largest migration rate, exporting approximately 1% of its population every year. For comparison, Ireland, exported just short of .7% of its population every year (Spitzer and Zimran 2014). What mitigates these concerns is the fact that most of the Italian migration is directed abroad, in particular to the United States. This reduces the possibility of casualty mis-allocation within the country. To address concerns relative to mis-measurement due to internal migration I am in the process of collecting information from the 1911 census to determine how many people resident in a district were born outside that district. I will use this information to check whether my main results hold true even after accounting for internal migration flows.

I define the casualty shock as the count of military casualties, divided by the number of men drafted in each municipality. I am able to construct a measure of drafted men decomposing the total at the district level using the number of males in each municipality. I describe the details of the decomposition in the appendix. In addition, I provide alternative measures for the denominator of the casualty shock: total male in military age, total male population and total population. All measures provide similar results.

During the war the Italian army mobilized a total of about 5 million men, approximately fifteen percent of its population. Table 1 shows the same statistics for the other major participants to the war.

[Table 1 about here.]

In figure 10 I map the average casualty shock and the share of drafted men over total male population at the province level.⁹ The share of fatalities shows a great deal of geographic variation, with provinces experiencing casualty rates on average from seven to twenty-one percent. On the other hand, the share of men drafted shows geographic clustering in the

⁹I rely on provinces for mapping because it is easier to observe over municipalities. However, all my analysis are carried at the municipality level, a much finer variation. For a map of the Italian municipalities today see figure A.1 in the Appendix.

north of the country, suggesting that provinces closer to the frontline experienced, on average, a more severe drafting rate. Both the proximity to the frontline and the presence of the army in the north of the country explain this feature. As the conflict progressed, it became relatively easier to conscript men in municipalities close to the frontline. This map suggests that the army did not draft randomly from different Italian provinces. My identification strategy acknowledge this fact by accounting for several factors related to drafting.

[Figure 2 about here.]

I complement data on WWI casualties with a host of controls related to the conflict and to the socio-economic condition of Italy in the early twentieth-century. Other war related controls I am able to recover are the average age at death for the fatalities, the share of officers versus troops dying in a given municipality and the share of volunteers per military district. I recover some demographics of the municipality such as the share of men in military age, male and female illiteracy and the average conscripts height at the provincial level, which serves as a proxy for local health from Spitzer and Zimran (2014). I am in the process of digitizing information on economic characteristics from the 1911 census at the district level. These include controls for economic inequality and the relevant types of occupations and economic activities. This will be useful to control for those economic activities relevant for exemptions to drafting. I show descriptive statistics for the variables available in table 2.

[Table 2 about here.]

3.2 Measuring Consensus for Fascism

I use the 1924 electoral share – votes casted for Fascism over total votes casted – for the parties sustaining Mussolini as measure of consensus for Fascism. Despite Mussolini ran for elections both in 1921 and 1924, I disregard data from 1921 elections for two reasons. First, historians (De Felice 1965) have highlighted the large presence of violence and intimidation

in 1921 elections that could possibly pollute the meaningfulness of the vote shares. Second, Mussolini runs for election within the liberal party, not the Fascist Party, and he is not candidate to prime minister. In 1924, he still runs in a big coalition with some forces from the old liberal elite in the so called *Listone*, but he is the designed prime minister candidate, making the interpretation of 1924 votes a more clear measure of consensus for his political program. In particular, I code the share for Mussolini as all the votes casted for the Fascist Party and the Ministerial Party (the *Listone*).¹⁰

[Figure 3 about here.]

The source of the data is the Italian Electoral Atlas (Corbetta and Piretti 2009) that collects national electoral data from national unification in 1861 until the early 2000s. Unfortunately all the election between WWI and the onset of Fascism present a large share of missing data. The map on the left side of figure 3 shows the share of municipality for each province that reports data on votes for fascism. Despite some areas in the south, with little or no data at all, all macro regions (North, Center, South and Islands) have some voting data. For the period between WWI and the rise of Fascism, the authors of the Electoral Atlas had to recover voting data from local newspapers in the Italian archives. In some cases these newspapers reported the voting information at the district level, making it impossible to recover voting data at the municipality level.

The share of votes casted for Fascism across all the available municipalities goes from the zero percent of the small town of *Graniti*, in the province of Messina, Sicily, to the hundred percent of *Mesola*, in the Romagna region. The average municipality had 62 of out of 100 electors voting for Mussolini. The percentages are indeed high. The 1924 elections were advertised by the government¹¹ as a sort of referendum in favor or against the idea of state promoted by the Fascist establishment. It is less unusual to see high share of consensus

¹⁰All the elections after WWI, 1919, 1921 and 1924 are characterized by instability and bursts of violence from all sides, but in particular from the fascist movement. In the data Appendix, I give more details on the validity of 1924 elections as measure of consensus.

¹¹The Prime Minister was already Mussolini. In section 2 I give details on how he managed to become PM without a proper election.

when the outcome, or the perceived one, is reduced to a in favor or against dichotomy. The particular nature of this electoral competition help explaining why the share in favor of Mussolini are higher than the usual shares for parties in other elections¹². The map on the right side of figure 3 shows the geographic variation of the average share for fascism at the provincial level. The map highlights that the core of the Fascist support was in the heart of the northern regions of Lombardia and Emilia as well as some parts of the South, i.e. the north of Puglia and some Sicilian provinces.

4 Empirical Strategy

I pose a linear relationship between the share of Fascist votes and the WWI casualty shock. In this model, drafting is most likely to be the first order confounder of the effect of WWI fatalities. Municipalities that drafted more men during the conflict could have had better military institutions that could have affected the rise of fascism independently of how many enlisted eventually died. This would be in line with the results found by Berg et al. (2016) and bias my results upward.

Hence, my approach is to include in the linear regression a set of controls that takes care of differences in the quantity and the type of men draft. In order to enhance a fair comparison across municipalities of different sizes, I standardize the number of casualties by the number of men drafted and I control for the share of men drafted out of the male population (same variable showed in figure 10). This should eliminate the immediate concern that differences in number of drafted men could drive the results on casualties.

However, in addition to the sheer quantitative aspect of drafting, other qualitative aspects could impact the type of casualties and the consensus for Mussolini simultaneously. These factors are related to the quality of the men drafted, their ability to follow order and perform in a military environment, their health, and the local army capacity of drafting those that

¹²Similar shares, albeit slightly smaller, were registered for the Nazi party. In the last free elections approximately 45% of the shares went to Hitler (should be noticed that the Nazi party ran alone to elections differently from Mussolini).

ought to serve. For example, it is possible that differences in loyalty, trust and social capital among different regions of the country¹³ could affect the zeal of following orders during the conflict, resulting possibly in lower or higher likelihood of dying. Differences in social capital could also have an impact on the rise of Fascism.

To attenuate these sources of bias, I include the province level dummies. Within provinces, municipalities are geographically clustered and particularly similar in terms of observables and unobservables. The usual concern on disparities between the North and the South of the country does not apply here, since we are comparing municipalities within their province. In addition I control for pre-war literacy rates. Following orders did not require literacy but most likely people that could not read were appointed in first line duties (Ceva 1999).

$$Fascist_m = \beta Cas_sh_m + \delta Draft_sh_m + \gamma X_m + \varepsilon_m \quad (1)$$

With this set up, my linear model – formulated in equation 1 – identifies the parameter of interest out of a conditional independence assumption: holding constant all the factors that went into drafting, the casualty shock is randomly determined by military events on the frontline orthogonal to unobservables of the municipality of origin.

A larger share of casualties translates into a low share of veterans that made it back alive, and does not allow me to study the two separately. Nevertheless, I use the casualty rate as my main independent variable because holding drafting constant I can argue for plausible exogenous variation, but not otherwise. The estimated coefficient attached to the casualty share identifies the marginal effect of the relative shares of casualties and veterans to the total of drafted. Veterans have been argued to be an important part of the picture for the rise of authoritarianism in the early twentieth century. For example, Koenig (2015) finds that more veterans have a positive impact on the share of right-wing conservative parties before the rise of Hitler. Hence, to get a sense of the importance of the interaction between veterans and casualties, I run my main specification across different sets of municipalities

¹³For a recent review of these differences see Cappelli (2017)

that experienced different levels of death rates. If the impact of casualties is magnified when they are matched by brutalized veterans back from the frontline, I expect to find larger estimates for municipalities in the middle of the casualty rate distribution.

5 Results

In this section I show the main result of the paper: larger WWI death rates led to higher vote shares for Mussolini in 1924 across Italian municipalities. The main loser in the electoral race was the Socialist party and the turnout rate reflected the loss of men in voting age due to the conflict. I provide evidence that these effects are magnified when both casualties and veterans are dense enough in a municipality.

[Figure 4 about here.]

Figure 4 plots the effect of WWI casualties on the share of votes for Mussolini, after partialing out the effect of the other covariates in my preferred specification. The magnitude of the coefficient is shown in column 4 of table 3. According to these results, WWI casualties had a positive and statistically significant effect on the vote share for Mussolini during the 1924 national election. An increase of ten percentage points in the share of casualties brings about a raise of slightly more than 3 percentage points in Mussolini's vote share. The effect is not very large. Ten percentage points increase is almost as large as going from the lowest level of casualties to the average death rate.

[Table 3 about here.]

Column 1 of table 3 shows the basic correlation coefficient between military death rates and votes shares for the Fascist party. Adding province dummies halves the coefficient in half. This suggests that factors like local army capacity of enlisting men across the peninsula were an important factor. Taking care of it, corrects for the upward bias due to the positive relationship between military capacity, which translates in better drafting capacity, and

its impact on fascism, as argued for example by Berg et al. (2016) and Koenig (2015). Controlling for the number of drafted, population size and other controls do not alter the coefficient in columns 3 and 4.

[Figure 5 about here.]

To test the robustness of the results, I replicate my analysis using alternative measures of military death rates using different denominators: total 1911 population, total male 1911 population, male population in military age as of 1911 and total male population between 10 and 45 years old in 1911. Figure 5 shows the fitted regression line after partialing out the same controls from equation 1. All the coefficients tell a similar story – higher military death rates boosted consensus for Fascism.

[Table 4 about here.]

In order to provide a more complete picture of where Fascism consensus came from, I regress the casualty rate on the share of the other two important parties at the time – catholics and socialists. I also test the impact of casualties on turnout. The results in table 4 show that municipalities that experienced a large casualty shock were less likely to vote for the Socialists and had a lower turnout rate. The share for Catholics was instead unaffected. This results are in line with the historical literature (Lyttelton 2004; De Felice 1965) that describes the Socialists as the big losers from the fascist success. The reduction in turnout might embed the loss of a large part of men in voting age.

[Figure 6 about here.]

[Figure 7 about here.]

[Figure 8 about here.]

5.1 Robustness Check Based on Pre-War Electoral Outcomes

In this subsection I provide details of a placebo test for the exogeneity of my casualty rate measure. If the effect of casualties share is indeed random, it should be orthogonal to political outcomes *before* the war. I resort to electoral data from Corbetta and Piretti (2009) to construct a set of political outcomes for the 1913 elections, one year before the start of WWI. Unfortunately, this data does not provide shares for all the parties at the municipality level. So I am unable to run the same specification I use for the post-war elections. I hence use a different strategy based on predicting the likelihood of electing a given party in each municipality conditional on the casualties share, and the set of other controls. I run four different regressions, where I predict the likelihood of electing either the liberal party, the catholic party, the socialist party or a classification with a group of other marginal parties.

Figure 9 shows the coefficients and their confidence intervals from this analysis. I cannot reject the null hypothesis of no effect at the highest level of significance in all regressions. This results are suggestive that the measure constructed is truly exogenous to unobservables in municipalities that are related to voting patterns before and after the war. These results are not completely robust to other level of significance. However, for no party both specifications comfortably reject the null of no effect.

[Figure 9 about here.]

[Figure 10 about here.]

6 Conclusion and Next Steps

In this paper, I have explored the effects of WWI on the rise of Benito Mussolini as Italian Duce. I constructed a measure of war intensity using the count of casualties in each municipalities. Then I digitized drafting data to properly standardize casualties for the population

at risk. Comparing across Italian towns, I find that WWI casualties had a positive impact on the vote share for Fascism. War casualties also correlated negatively with the share for Socialists, suggesting some socialist voters might have switched to support the Fascist Party in 1924. Other important parties like the Popular Party – representative of the catholics – was not affected by war casualties. Turnout declined in towns hit harder by the conflict, providing evidence that the demographic shock might have reduced the population able to vote in the aftermath of the conflict. Despite showing a clearly relevant root for the rise of Fascism in Europe, I documented that WWI casualties were not decisive. Given the size of the vote share for the Fascist coalition, Mussolini would likely to have won anyway.

These effects are not driven by pre-existing municipality-specific political orientation, as the casualty share constructed using WWI data, cannot systematically predict pre war political outcomes. The historical literature also suggests that it is unlikely the army had the capacity to send men from municipality perceived as inferior, into sectors of the front-line of more or less importance. This grounds the assumption that whatever happened on the frontline was not related to the unobservables characteristics of sending municipalities correlated with voting patterns.

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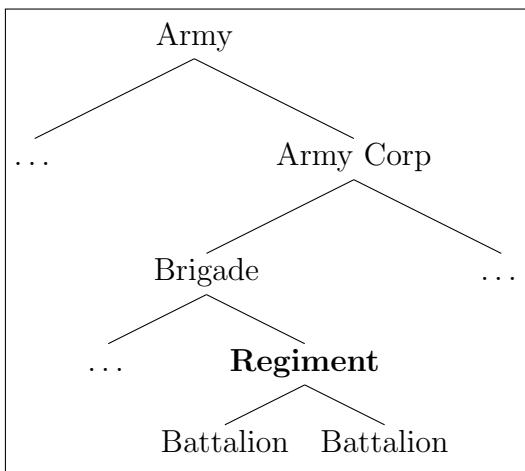


Figure 1: Structure of the Italian Army During WWI

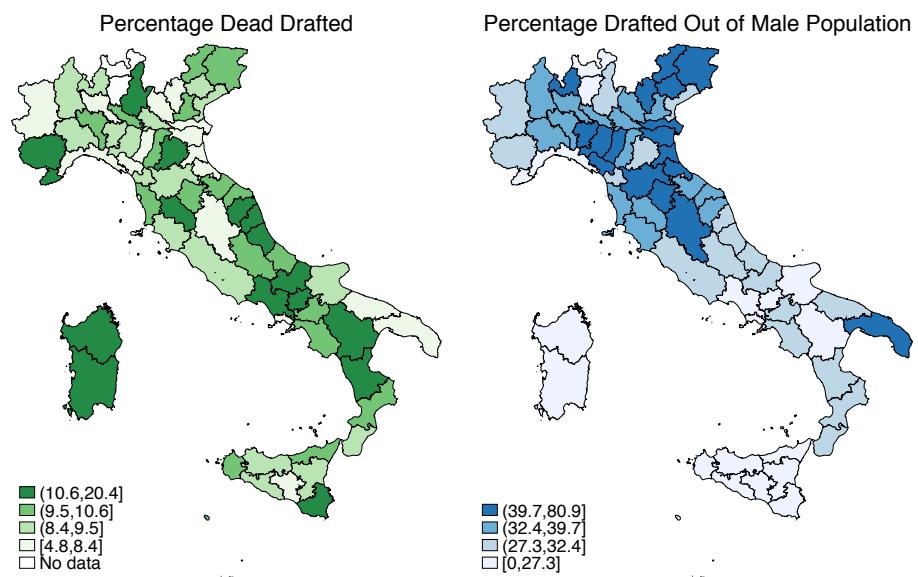


Figure 2: Casualties Share and Share Drafted over Male Population at the Province Level.

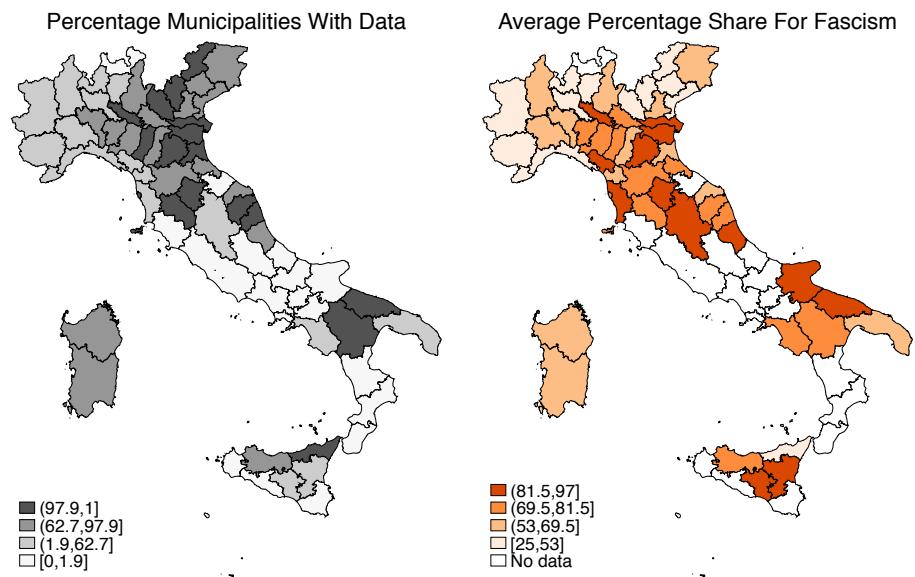


Figure 3: Share of Municipalities With non Missing Information Within a Province and Average Vote Share for the Fascist Coalition at the Province Level.

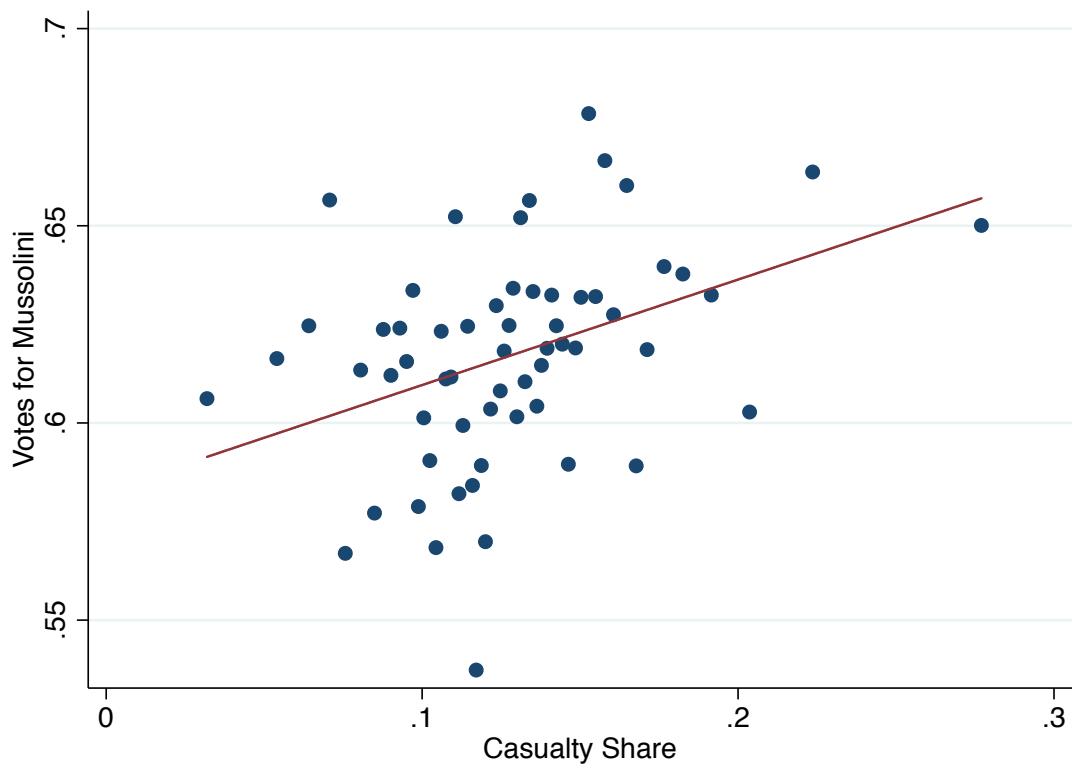


Figure 4: More Casualties increase the Vote Share for Fascism

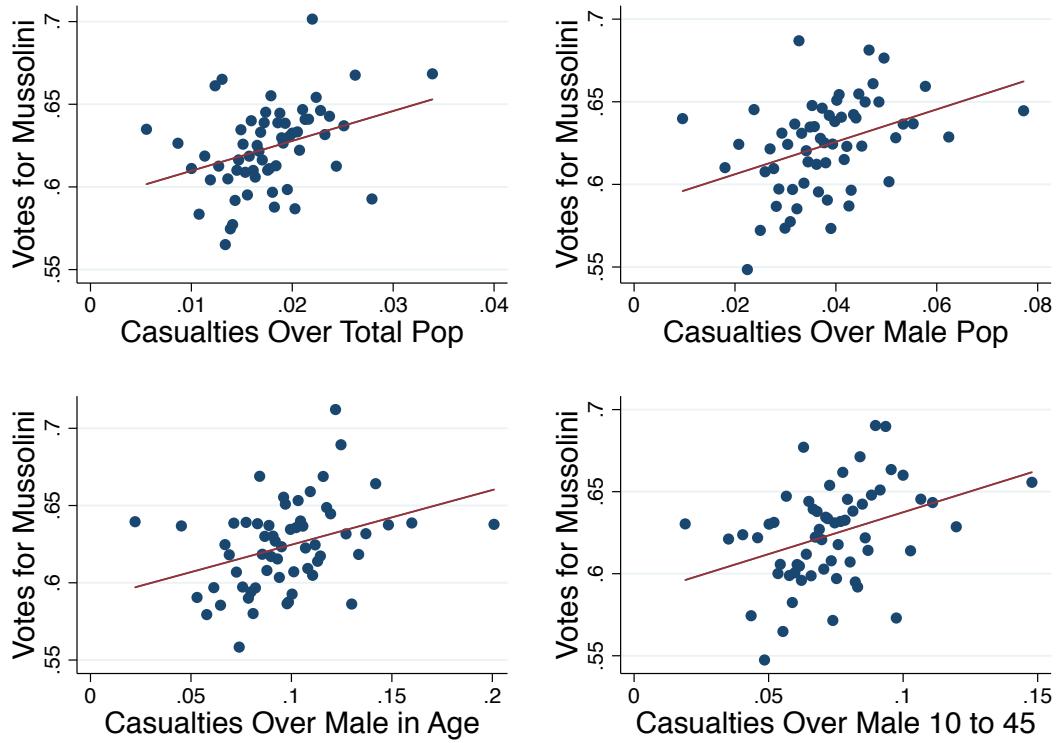


Figure 5: Different Measures of Military Death Rates Tell a Similar Story. I replicate my analysis using alternative measures of military death rates using different denominators: total 1911 population, total male 1911 population, male population in military age as of 1911 and total male population between 10 and 45 years old in 1911.

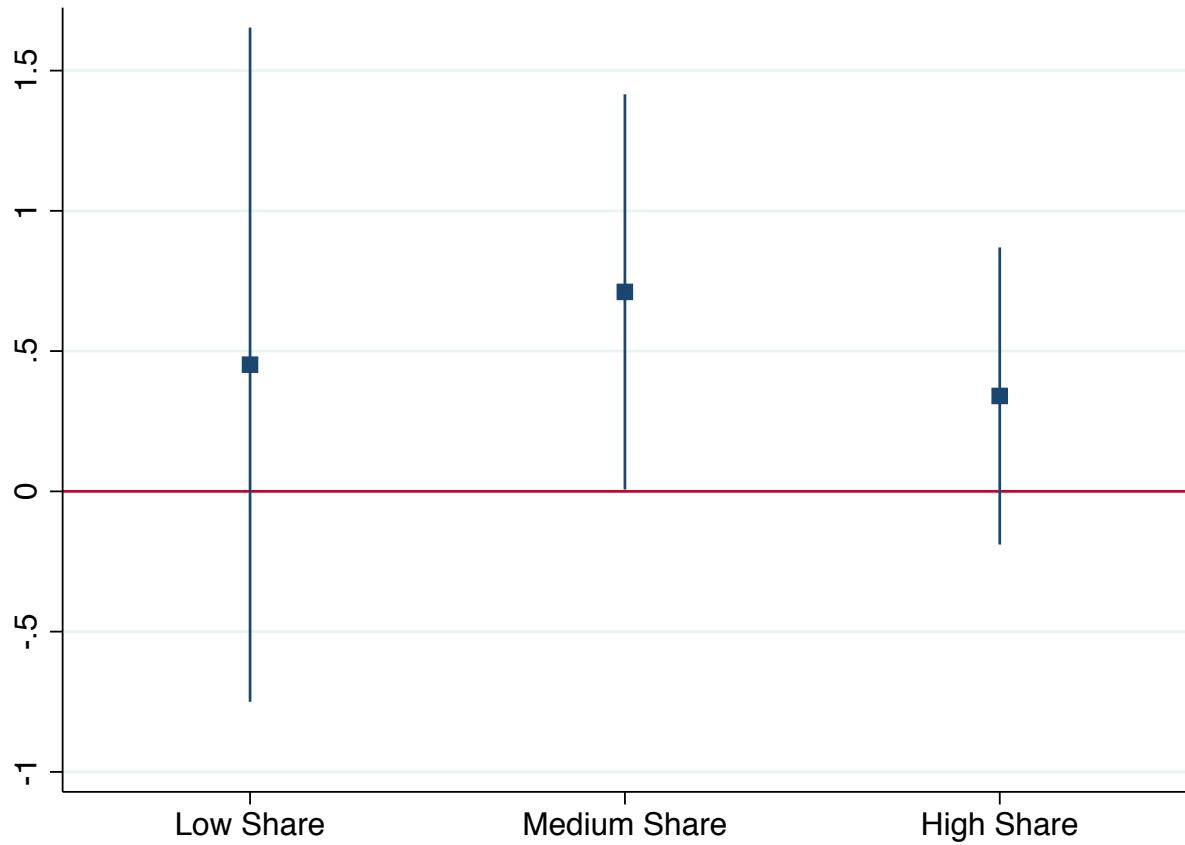


Figure 6: Estimated Effect of Military Death Rates on Fascist Vote Share in 1924, Coefficients Plotted by Low Medium and High levels of Casualty Rates Was in a Municipality. The effect of casualty rates on the vote share for Fascism is magnified in municipalities that had a large enough number of both casualties and veterans.

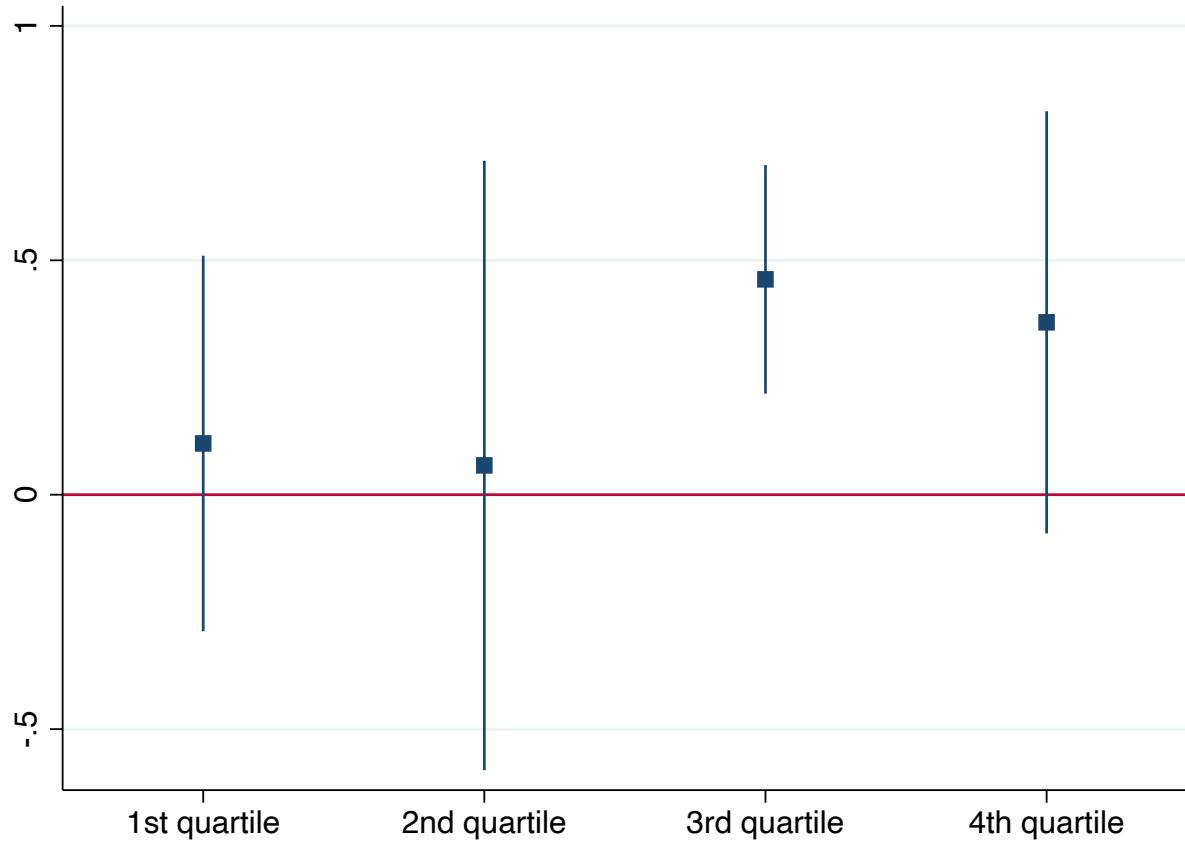
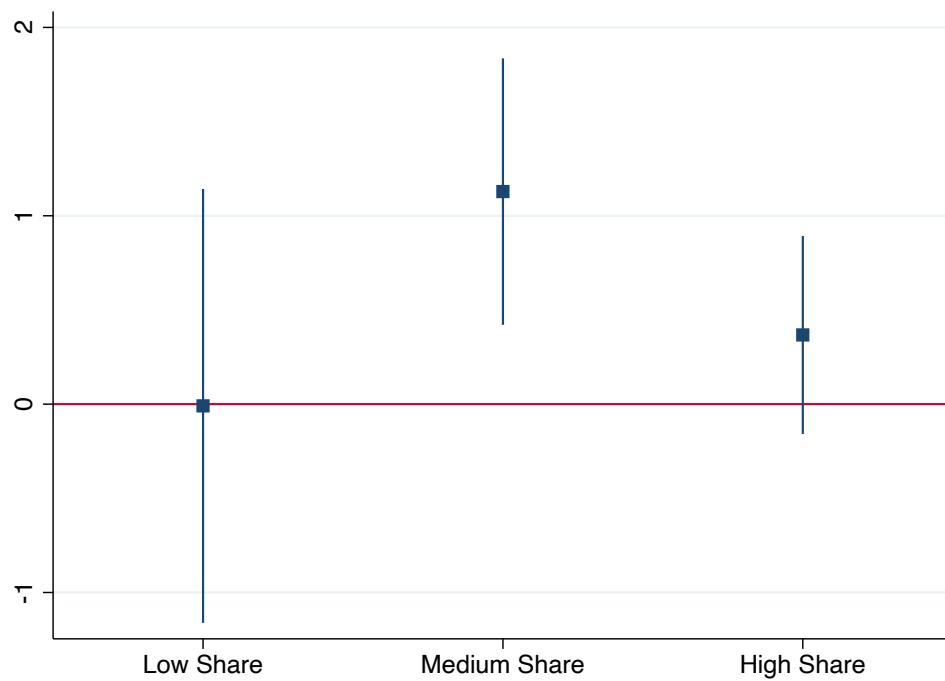
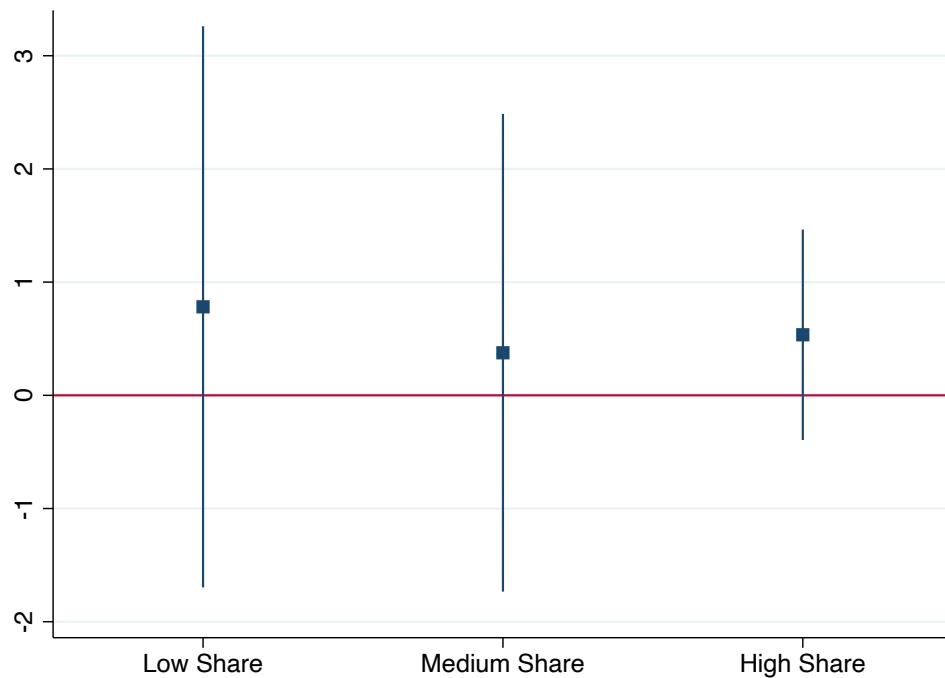


Figure 7: Estimated Effect of Military Death Rates on Fascist Vote Share in 1924 by the Vote Shares for Socialism in 1921 Elections. The effect of casualty rates on Fascism is driven by municipalities that had above median vote shares for Socialism in 1921.



(a) Municipalities with Above the Median Shares for the Socialist Party in 1921



(b) Municipalities with Below the Median Shares for the Socialist Party in 1921

Figure 8: Estimated Effect of Military Death Rates on Fascist Vote Share in 1924 by the Vote Shares for Socialism in 1921 Elections and by the Intensity of Military Death Rates. The inverted U shape in the estimated effect of the casualty share is present only in municipalities that in 1921 had shares for socialism that were above the median.

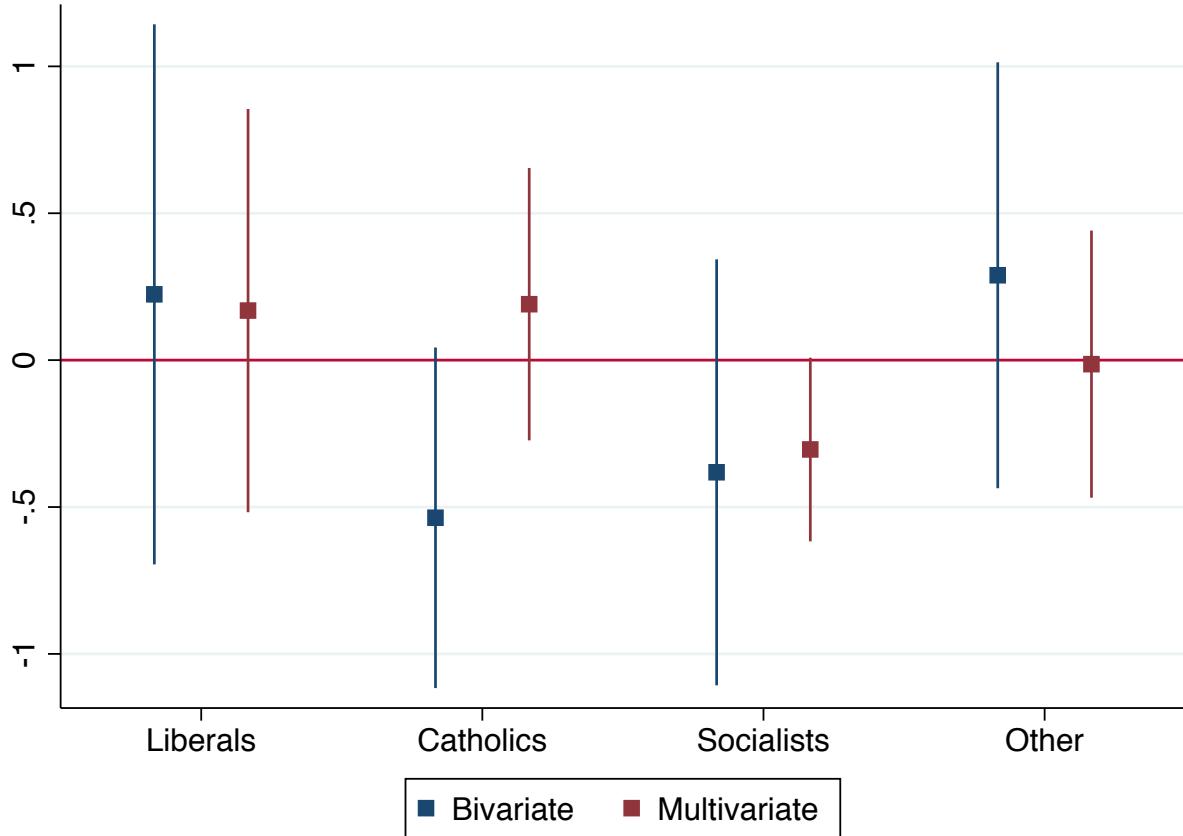


Figure 9: Casualties Do Not Systematically Predict Party of Winning MP Before the War

Note: Data for this exercise comes from the elections of the members to the Italian Parliament (MP) in 1913. The outcome variable is a dummy equal to one if the candidate belonged to any of the four political affiliations: Liberals, Catholics (Partito Popolare), Socialists or Other (Partito Democratico Costituzionale), the four major parties in 1913 elections. Coefficients plotted come from two separate regressions, both with clustered standard errors at the province level. The Multivariate regression contains all the controls I include in any other full specification. The source of the data is Corbetta and Piretti (2009).

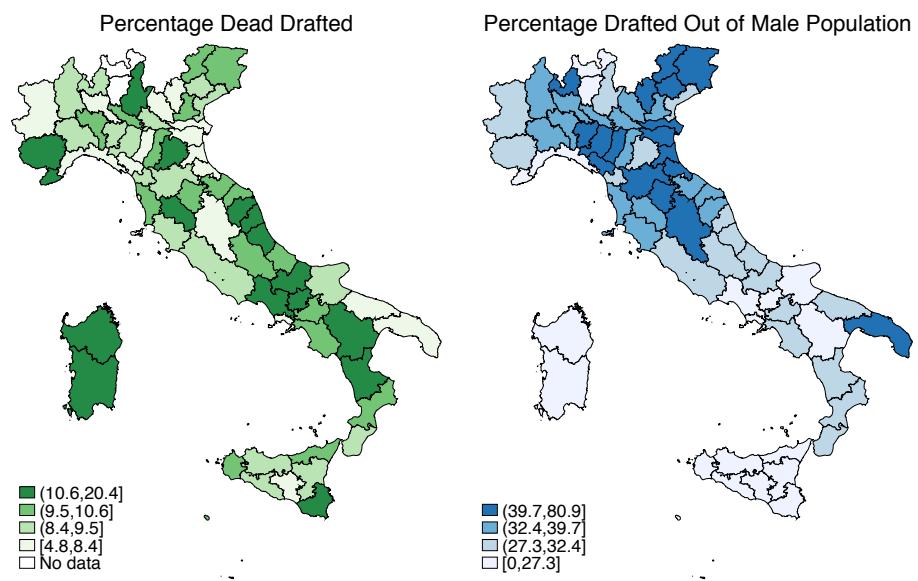


Figure 10: Casualties Share and Share Drafted over Male Population at the Province Level.

Table 1: WWI Troops Mobilized and Casualties in Europe.

	Entente Powers			Central Powers	
	Italy	UK	France	Germany	Austria
Mobilized	5,615,000	8,904,467	8,410,000	11,000,000	7,800,000
As % of population	15.8 %	19.6%	21.6%	16.9 %	15.1%
Military Deaths	542,481	744,000	1,150,000	1,800,000	1,016,200
As % of population	1.6 %	1.63%	2.9%	2.7%	1.9%

Source: Clodfelter (2008)

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	S.d.	Median	Min	Max
Casualty Share	0.12	0.05	0.11	0.00	0.52
Drafted Share	0.32	0.10	0.33	0.00	0.76
Age at Death	26.44	1.82	26.39	20.75	39.00
Troop Casualties Share	0.83	0.12	0.86	0.25	1.00
Fascism Share	0.62	0.25	0.65	0.00	1.00
Socialist Share	0.11	0.12	0.07	0.00	0.75
Turnout Share	0.44	0.13	0.45	0.00	1.00
Man Military Age Share	0.20	0.03	0.20	0.02	0.49
Illiterate Share	0.33	0.24	0.26	0.00	0.95
Tot population	5,328	18,773	2,674	263	699,275

Note: Sample size is equal to 3453. *Age at Death* is the average age at death in a municipality, *Troop Casualty Share* is the share of casualties that died while being a private soldier (soldato semplice).

Table 3: Higher Casualty share increases votes for Fascism

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Casualty Share	0.688*** (0.224)	0.338*** (0.091)	0.320*** (0.099)	0.332*** (0.096)
Drafted (000s)			-0.002 (0.002)	0.013 (0.010)
Population (000s)				-0.002 (0.001)
Province Dummy	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes
Mean dep. var.	0.628	0.628	0.628	0.628
Observations	3306	3306	3268	3268
R ²	0.021	0.419	0.420	0.421

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Note: Standard Errors in parenthesis clustered at the province level. Controls include average age at death, the share of non-official casualties, the share of male illiterate and the average height.

Table 4: More Casualties Reduce the Share for Socialists

	Socialists (1)	Catholics (2)	Turnout (3)
Casualty Share	-0.162** (0.068)	0.037 (0.066)	-0.337* (0.200)
Province Dummy	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean dep. var.	0.112	0.130	0.424
Observations	3087	3087	3088
R ²	0.462	0.466	0.108

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Note: Each column shows results for a different outcome variable: vote share for Socialists, vote share for Catholics, Turnout rate. Standard Errors in parenthesis clustered at the province level. Controls include average age at death, the share of non-official casualties, the share of male illiterate, and the average height.

A Appendix

Tables and Figures Appendix

[Table 5 about here.]

[Figure 11 about here.]

[Figure 12 about here.]

[Figure 13 about here.]

Data Appendix

Data Reliability

The bulk of the data comes from official publications of the Italian Kingdom. This mitigates concerns over data quality as the data collection was a centralized effort. The main publications of interest were the Census (where its finest unit of observation is the municipality), electoral results tables, recently digitized by Corbetta and Piretti (2009) and the casualty list (Provveditorato Generale dello Stato 1964). Relevant years for the Census are 1911, 1921 and 1931 while for the electoral information are 1913, 1921 and 1924. Some of the data was digitized by the author, other was available at the ISTAT website (ISTAT 2017), other was kindly shared by fellow researchers.

Census Data. The only concern with data quality on the census is related to the 1921 wave (Fornasin 2017). According to ISTAT (ISTAT 1931) in the 1921 census, the size of population was artificially increased in some municipalities, in an effort to hide the effects of WWI and outmigration. ISTAT addressed this issue in 1931 publishing a corrected version

of the population figures at the district level. Overall the Italian population was artificially inflated by approximately 900 thousands units. For the large part this inflation took place in the Southern provinces. To make sure that the results in the paper are robust to this issue, I collected the 1931 data correction (ISTAT 1931), and re-adjusted 1921 population figures based on 1931 district information.

Electoral Data. There are usually two types of concerns regarding the validity of electoral data. One is the surge of frauds that take place at the electoral poll, such as votes miscounting. The second one has to do with political intimidation implemented to sway consent in a direction or another. In post-WWI Italy the second one seems to prevail over the first one (De Felice 1965). In this period, the Italian political landscape is characterized by large scale violence enacted by different actors, mostly the new Fascist party and the Socialists. This is especially true for the 1921 parliamentary elections. However, the political climate in 1924 is slightly different. With the entrance of the fascist party in the Italian parliament in 1921, Mussolini strategy changes dramatically. According to De Felice (1965) Mussolini realizes that, in order to consolidate his power, he needs to convince the country that the violent nature of fascism, its revolutionary face, was only temporary. The impetus of the first years of the movement is fading away and so it is the interest of the masses in an ideology that calls for a continuous state of emergency. The new priority becomes a fresh electoral law and new elections that could finally consecrate him as uncontested leader of the country. Mussolini's intent was twofold: obtaining the consensus within the system, not outside, and marginalize the most hardcore fascists in his party (De Felice 1965). This is because, differently from the 1921 elections, where the Fascist party was still quite marginal in the political landscape, in 1924 Mussolini considers violence and unsettlement, a problem rather than a resource to use against the opposition. According to him the elections should have been “as calm as possible” as any burst of violence would have been “counterproductive”. His intent notwithstanding, violence did not disappear completely.

There exist records of assassinations, violent intimidations or forced disband of unwanted political rallies. Importantly, however, it was a different type of violence. First, it was mostly directed to the hard core faction of his party (De Felice 1965). This was part of the transformation that Mussolini intended for himself as new *Dux* and used the tensions rising from the new elections to consolidate the position of the Fascist party around him. Second, the violence was far from being systematically organized. It became the result of local initiatives, disentangled from a centralized design, as it had been previously. In fact, as mentioned, Mussolini not only actively tried to urge his party's subalterns to avoid any act of violence against the opposition, but went further recommending prefects (in his role of prime minister) to keep the highest alert against any political disorder. For example in the January of 1924, during the electoral campaign, Mussolini telegraphed Turin's prefect to make sure that the exponents of the opposition could hold the political rally as scheduled, that it was "a mistake" to forbid it. Same in Naples where he explicitly made sure that the leader of socialist democratic party could hold his conference and "to avoid the concentration of fascist around the rally, because pointless". Finally, even according to Giovanni Giolitti, prominent figure of the old liberal elite, the validity of Mussolini's success in the electoral race had to be considered "incontestable". Given this discussion, I believe that violence and intimidation cannot undermine the validity of the information embedded in the voting share obtained by the electoral list headed by Mussolini in 1924.

Imputation of men drafted at the municipality level. Data on draftees is available at the military district level. There are 90 military districts in Italy during WWI. Each municipality belongs to only one military district. The imputation process for $Draft_m$ assumes that each municipality contributes to the total number of draftees for the district in the same way its male population contributes to the total number of men in the district:

$$Draft_m = \frac{male_m}{male_d} \cdot Draft_d.$$

This results in a good approximation for two reasons. First, the Italian army during WWI had a very egalitarian drafting system drafting as many men as possible from the cohorts of interest. Second, It is likely that within military districts, the share of males in the age groups relevant for drafting are very similar. For robustness I replicate the same decomposition using the share of males in each municipality that are in the age cohort 15 to 45, according to the regional total (the information of men in this age category is available only at a very aggregate level). This measure does not show significant differences from the measure using the total number of males.

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Figure A.1: Map of Italian Municipalities Today

BRIGATA PIEMONTE

(3^o E 4^o FANTERIA)

Sede dei reggimenti in pace : 3^o Fanteria, Messina — 4^o Fanteria, Catania.

*Distretti di reclutamento : Aquila, Cagliari, Catania, Firenze, Lecce, Liverno, Mantova,
Messina, Spoleto, Vicenza*

Figure A.2: The Piemonte Brigade booklet describes regiments provenience

Note: Picture taken from the brigades booklets describing the name of the brigade, the regiments associated with it – third and fourth infantry – the regiments headquarters (*sede dei reggimenti*) – Messina and Catania – the the districts sourcing those regiments (*Distretti di reclutamento*).



925
Salerno, li 10 - 3 - 1923

PREFETTURA DI SALERNO

N. 757 — Div.

Risposta a N. del 192

N. — Div.

OGGETTO

Positano -
Costituzione sezione Fascista

Allegati N.

Salerno Tip. Cav. A. Volpe & Figli

A Positano, comune di questo circondario, si è costituita una sezione fascista con enquo numero di soci.

Della sezione, che ha per segretario politico il tg. Wite Garibaldi Alberto, ex sottotenente di Milizia Territoriale, ha limitatissima importanza politica e dispone di una squadra d'azione di 14 uomini.

Il Prefetto
(Giuseppe Liraqua)
Magr

DR.

Ministero dell'Interno
Direzione Generale della P.I.
Narra

Figure A.3: Even in the beautiful tiny town of Positano there was a local section of the Fascist party with 14 members.

Table A.1: Different Measures of Casualties tell the same Story

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Cas over Male 10-45	0.487*** (0.169)			
Cas over Tot Pop		1.481* (0.865)		
cas_over_m_pop			0.894*** (0.314)	
Cas over Eligible Male				0.377*** (0.134)
Province Dummy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean dep. var.	0.622	0.622	0.622	0.622
Observations	3438	3438	3438	3438
R ²	0.432	0.431	0.432	0.432

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Note: Standard Errors in parenthesis clustered at the province level.