

A Fascist Decade of War? The Impact of the Italian Wars on the International Stage, 1935-45

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From the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 through to the waning months of the Second World War in 1945, Fascist Italy was at war. This decade of war comprised an uninterrupted stretch of military and political engagements in which Italian military forces were involved in Abyssinia, Spain, Albania, France, Greece, Soviet Union, North Africa and the Middle East. It concluded with Italy itself being transformed into a military theatre, with the dramatic fall of the Fascist regime and political transition under the aegis of foreign occupation.¹ On 6 to 7 September 2016, forty-seven scholars from fifteen countries convened at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow to discuss the latest developments in military, political and diplomatic studies on Fascist Italy between 1935 and 1945. This volume brings together contributions from fourteen of the speakers.

The main contention of this volume is that the significance of Fascist Italy in the Second World War and the years leading up to it was distinct and unique. Because Italy only entered the Second World War in June 1940, and was then subjected to a series of stark defeats, it has often been perceived as being on the periphery of the conflict. The role and impact of Italy as the junior

partner to Germany in shaping the character of the war has consequently often been underestimated by historians.² While there has been extensive historical examination of the role of Nazi Germany in exacerbating the international tensions that led to war and on the nature of Nazi warfare and occupations during the Second World War, much of the existing scholarship confines the role played by Italy to the margins. The distinct role of Fascist Italy has been mostly the subject of a largely separate historical debate, often scarcely integrated within the broader international context and seldom available to an English-speaking readership.

Building upon the work of scholars who have rejected Germanocentric perspectives in the analysis of the lead-up to the Second World War, the contributors to this volume argue in favour of the centrality of the Mediterranean in the period between 1935 and 1945.³ The disintegration of the international community and the weakening of the League of Nations' powers of intervention were first put in motion in response to the actions of Fascist Italy; only then did they spread outwards across the continent and beyond.⁴

One of the elements of innovation in this book is its periodisation. The contributions in this volume operate within a chronological framework that considers the 1935-1945 decade as a functional historical unit, in which long-established Fascist policy and ideology finally came to full fruition, albeit unsuccessfully. This volume challenges the periodisation and the military focus proposed by previous historians by adopting a broader thematic approach across a ten-year period that includes the period after the Italian surrender of September 1943. In contrast with Giorgio Rochat's attempts to frame his examination of Italy's war experience between 1935 and 1943, this volume explores the political, ideological and military reasons for the

prolonged period of conflict.⁵ Moreover, whereas Rochat's analysis concludes in 1943, this volume suggests the need to incorporate the developments of 1944 and 1945, which saw much of Italy under occupation and at war.⁶ Indeed, as the creation of the Italian Social Republic (RSI) showed, Fascism did not suddenly evaporate with the fall of Mussolini in July 1943 or with the Italian surrender in September 1943. We also offer a different perspective to that suggested by Simon Ball, who sees Libyan independence in 1951 as marking the real end of a Fascist policy of challenging British hegemony in the Mediterranean that began in 1935.⁷ The starting-point of our periodisation is more aligned with the interpretation put forward by Robert Mallett, who suggests that May 1935 marked a significant shift in aligning Italian policy with Nazi Germany, leading directly to the Second World War.⁸

These two elements – a longer chronology and a broader thematic scope of investigation – allow the contributors to further consider additional aspects in the analysis of Italy's role in the development of the European crisis before and during the Second World War. This volume suggests that Italy was one of the principal causes of the new climate of instability that, developing from the mid-1930s, gave rise to the European conflict in 1939. Furthermore, Italy played a decisive role in expanding the scope of the war by bringing the European conflict into the Mediterranean theatre, which in turn became critically important for the development of the strategies of Britain, France and the United States, as well as to the overall outcome of the Second World War and the global postwar order.

Consequently, one of the distinguishing features of the analytical framework being proposed in this volume is the suggestion that 1935 marked a critical turning-point and shaping factor in the

lead-up to the Second World War. Drawing from an expanding body of work on the topic, contributors suggest that Italy played a primary role in the creation of a weak and precarious European balance.⁹ While many histories of this period see the Spanish Civil War as the decisive turning-point in the breakdown of international relations that eventually led to the outbreak of war in 1939, we argue that the Abyssinian crisis of 1935 gave rise to a new international landscape. The key elements that were to characterise the Fascist decade of war were in place during the Abyssinia crisis, while the diplomatic fallout caused Rome to move more decisively towards rapprochement with Berlin, accelerating the militarisation of Italian society.

The decision to intervene in Abyssinia therefore triggered a chain reaction that made the conflict in Spain part of an existing continental trend, while accelerating the deterioration of relations between the non-allied powers in Europe. Domestically and internationally, in the aftermath of the Abyssinian crisis, the Fascist regime turned to develop a more ideologically cohesive programme, attempting to create the foundations of a totalitarian society. As the ideology of the Fascist regime became clearer and more manifest, so it brought graver consequences for Italy, Europe and the wider world. Refocusing upon the role and impact of Italy in the war provides us with a more nuanced understanding of the Second World War and of the factors that shaped its character.

The Fascist wars are considered here from the military to the cultural dimensions, from the diplomatic to the political, adopting a dual perspective. The Italian angle considers the ways in which Fascist policy, strategy and ideology made this decade of war a by-product of the consolidation of the regime. The international angle, on the other hand, seeks to evaluate how

Fascist regional challenges affected the policies, strategies and ideologies of other countries. The contributors to this edited collection revisit and challenge traditional military histories of this period by exploring violence, propaganda, perceptions, ideology, empire, race and occupation, engaging with new methodological approaches. By engaging critically with the book's main arguments, the authors highlight the wide international connections that shaped Italian conduct between 1935 and 1945, while engaging with Italian – as well as international – scholarship and providing a necessary update on the state of the field for an English-speaking readership.

Outline

This volume's contributions are framed within a contention that Fascist Italy's role and its impact upon the late interwar period and the Second World War can be better understood through the analysis of five key elements that led to the development of a decade of war between 1935 and 1945. These elements, which define the sections into which the volume is structured, comprise the weakening of the system of international relations; the formulation and implementation of a strong imperialistic ideology; the development of an innovative Fascist warfare; the adoption of a signature use of violence; and the use of propaganda. Each chapter explores the major themes that have emerged in the recent scholarship on Italy at war: from the colonial inspiration to the relevance of a Fascist ideology, from the outward projection of images of power to the occupation policies, the authors update the state of the research, connecting their field with the most recent international historiography.

In line with the overall objectives of this volume, the first section focuses on the international dimensions of the decade of war, exploring not just the foreign policy of the Italian Fascist government, but how some of the key international players engaged with the regime. By focusing their attention outwards upon the international ramifications of Fascist policies and engagements and by looking at other international players' responses to Italian actions, the first four authors suggest that the Fascist decade of war represented a complex, sometimes inconsistent, shaping influence upon the conflicts being played out across the European, Mediterranean and global stages. In this sense, the volume adopts a different approach to that taken by Emanuele Sica and Richard Carrier in their edited volume on Italy and the Second World War, which seeks to explore the conflict 'through the lens of Italian soldiers and civilians, and of populations occupied by the Italian army', incorporating a range of perspectives from high politics to history 'from below'.¹⁰

In his chapter on the international significance of the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935, Steven Morewood suggests that the episode represented a missed opportunity for the British to thwart Fascist aggression. Dismissing the episode as a minor colonial war, the British government failed to capitalise on its military advantage, and in so doing, bolstered Mussolini's ambitions. The crisis over Abyssinia has tended to be downplayed in favour of an emphasis upon the remilitarisation of the Rhineland in 1936 and the Munich crisis of 1938. Yet, as Morewood observes, it fundamentally altered the strategic balance in the Mediterranean.

Andrew Buchanan also sees the 1935 Abyssinian crisis as a critical turning-point, transforming the American approach towards Italy. Washington began to see Italy in terms of an aggressor,

shifting its perceptions of Mussolini's government as it moved towards closer alignment with Germany. At the same time, American popular opinion of Fascist Italy began to change as well. From the end of the First World War, Buchanan argues, American elites had sought to incorporate Italy into a Wilsonian liberal capitalist international order and to use it as a bulwark against the threat posed by Communism. That policy scarcely changed with the Italian entry into the war in 1940, nor did the long-term American aim of hegemony in the Mediterranean region.

Analysing the relations between Italy and Spain during Fascism's republican epilogue between 1943 and 1945, Andrea Ungari argues that Franco's policy continued to be shaped in part by an ongoing gratitude for Italian Fascist intervention in the Spanish Civil War. Focusing upon the attempts by the RSI to form a coherent and independent foreign policy, Ungari highlights how the loyalty of many Italian diplomats in Spain lay with the royal government rather than the RSI. Mussolini's tribulations were further aggravated by the Spanish government's unwillingness to commit itself to either of the sides in play. Ultimately, Ungari concludes, Mussolini failed to make the RSI an autonomous international player and never managed to restore in full Italian Fascist relations with Spain.

Marco Maria Aterrano examines British policy towards Italy following the armistice of September 1943. On one level, Aterrano observes, the British government returned to a position similar to that of the pre-1935 period, no longer regarding Italy as a threat in the Mediterranean. On another, however, London engaged in what has sometimes been regarded as a 'vindictive' approach that stood in contrast with Washington's more benevolent policy. Harold Macmillan, Resident Minister in the Mediterranean, led the development of more progressive British policy

that helped engineer a change in British and Allied policy so that Italy would be treated as a friendly cobelligerent.

Moving from the international stage to the field of battle, the second section asks whether and to what extent it might be argued that there was a distinctive Fascist way of waging war. The four chapters examine the specificities of the Italian Fascist conflicts, looking at the centrality of ideas of war within Italian Fascist ideology. In contrast with Alan Kramer, who suggests that Fascist warfare eliminated the distinction between combatants and non-combatants, the chapters in this section focus more on the ideological intentions of the Fascist regime, rather than on its actual achievements.¹¹ With the militarisation of society being a core aim of the Fascist regime, the Italian involvement in the Second World War was the logical and in some respects inevitable result of its ideological trajectory.¹²

How far this can be characterised as Fascist might, however, appear to be contested by continuities with the pre-Fascist era. Indeed, while the regime's vision of empire drew influences from classical Rome, there were continuities with the liberal colonialism of the late nineteenth century as well. The violent repression of Libya in 1922, moreover, predated Fascism, and drew upon notions of Italian 'racial superiority'.¹³ The Fascist regime also reasserted liberal Italy's irredentist territorial claims. As Roberta Pergher has highlighted, at the heart of Fascist ideology on empire were tensions with Fascist visions of the Italian nation. Mussolini found himself having to balance his ambition for a racially and culturally cohesive nation with his desire to gain new territories populated by diverse peoples.¹⁴

The second section of this volume also looks at the Fascist regime's use of violence. The chapters explore the escalation of violence that characterised Fascist military campaigns, zooming in on the Spanish Civil War, the Italian occupation of Albania, the defence of the Eastern African Empire and Italian participation in the resistance movement in Greece.

Within the framework of the Fascist decade of war, Javier Rodrigo explores Italian intervention in the Spanish Civil War as a turning-point for Italian Fascist ambitions in Europe and the Mediterranean, sealing the connection between the regime's visions of war and violence.

Rodrigo argues that while concern that a lack of intervention would leave Spain under German influence and the desire to limit support for the Popular Front were core considerations, Mussolini was also driven by the desire to control maritime traffic in the western Mediterranean to lay the foundations for Fascist supremacy. Developments in Spain, concludes Rodrigo, showcase the 'inseparable relation between Fascism and war, between expansion, penetration and violence, obedience, combat and belief'.

Turning to the relatively neglected subject of the Italian invasion of Albania, Valentina Villa suggests that while the military incursion of April 1939 marked the real beginning of the Second World War for Italy, the Italian action was long in preparation, beginning with the Fascist regime's efforts to increase its economic, political and cultural influence in the region in the 1920s. By the time the invasion took place, Villa argues that Albania was a *de facto* Italian colony. Ciano was a pivotal figure in persuading Mussolini to annex Albania, but the wider European situation played a part as well. Hitler's decision to invade Czechoslovakia without consulting Mussolini led the Italian leader to believe that Italy must act to counterbalance

German expansion. Fascist Italy's seizure of Albania was to be its final military victory, but it was to prove a hollow one.

In his chapter on British perceptions of the Italian army at war, Andrew Stewart notes a lack of balance in historical assessments of military performance, especially in the campaign between Italy and Britain in Italian East Africa. The same was true in the 1930s, Stewart observes, as British representations of Italy and the Italian army were shaped by racial prejudices and by the press in particular. Colonial stereotypes also informed the way that British officers evaluated the Italians' conduct in war, leading to an unjustly harsh assessment of their collective performance in East Africa. Drawing from a variety of sources that include magazines, pictures and military records, Stewart concludes that the Italian war in the region was hampered by poor strategic planning and incompetence, rather than the lack of bravery depicted in British representations of the African campaign.

Detailing the Italian participation in the Greek resistance after the September 1943 armistice, Ioannis Nioutsikos draws our attention to the role individual political and ethical choices played in transnational fighting during the Second World War. Nioutsikos highlights how this case study can be situated within a wider European civil war, with Italians in Greece confronting the same moral dilemmas as Italians in Italy. Indeed, combatants were engaged in three connected conflicts: a liberation struggle, a civil conflict and a revolutionary struggle. What bound them together was a common opposition to Fascism. They were thus engaged in a transnational war of liberation against the German occupying forces, a revolutionary struggle against royalist forces and rival resistance groups and a civil war against Italian Fascists.

Focusing on the ideological dimension of the Italian military campaigns, the third section seeks to explore the relevance of Fascism's expansionist beliefs in bringing about the 1935-1945 decade of war. The four authors in this section analyse the racial dimensions of Italian policies in this period. Dealing with anti-Semitism and drawing comparisons between Fascist policies in relation to France, the Balkans and Africa, they tackle issues related to propaganda policies both in the Italian Navy and through the air waves across the Eastern Mediterranean.

Historians have long debated the significance of ideology in Mussolini's foreign policy. One of the leading historians of Fascist Italy and a contributor to this volume, MacGregor Knox, has been at the forefront of the argument that ideology drove Mussolini's imperialist ambitions and his alliance with Nazi Germany. For Knox, war against the western powers was to be the prelude to a deeper internal Fascist revolution within Italy itself.¹⁵ On the other side of the argument, Renzo De Felice has suggested that Mussolini was driven by little more than pragmatism, not taking a definitive position on Fascist Italy's international alignments until the spring of 1940.¹⁶ Taking the middle ground, H. James Burgwyn and Christian Goeschel have suggested that it was not so much ideology driving the *Duce's* actions as ambition, arguing that while Mussolini and Hitler had much in common in their quest for a new order, contempt for liberal democracy and use of political violence, ideological affinities did not make their alliance inevitable.¹⁷

Our contention is not merely that the Italian involvement in the war fundamentally shaped its character, but that Italian Fascism showed a distinct ideological influence as well. The Abyssinian war was a Fascist enterprise, driven by ideological notions of empire and race.¹⁸ It

marked, arguably, the apogee of consensus about the regime.¹⁹ In this respect, our volume engages with notions of an ideological ‘civil war’ in Europe advanced by some scholars. Historians such as Enzo Traverso, Eric Hobsbawm, Ernst Nolte and François Furet have suggested that the years 1914-45 should be conceived in terms of a struggle between Fascism and Communism, Fascism against the resistance, and anti-Fascism and revolution against counterrevolution.²⁰ Within the wider continental conflict were local civil wars, Traverso suggests, including not just the Spanish Civil War but the Second World War itself.²¹ Fascist Italy, led by a strong ideological drive, was a major player in this context.

In his chapter on navalism and empire, Fabio De Ninno shifts our attention towards the role played by the Italian navy in shaping the Fascist decade of war. He suggests that the Regia Marina acted as a ‘think tank’, influencing Fascist ideological notions of the need for vital space and the militarisation of society. Indeed, De Ninno argues, the Italian navy’s geopolitical vision served as source of inspiration for Mussolini’s conception of the Mediterranean as a ‘trap’, thwarting Italian expansionist ambitions and pushing the regime towards war.

Dealing with the colonial heritage in Italian military practices in the Balkans, Nicolas Virtue examines the debate over whether there were symmetries between the actions of the Italian army in Africa and Europe, drawing upon the theoretical frameworks of transfer history. Comparing the policies and attitudes that fuelled mass violence, he highlights the differing contexts of Africa and Europe and their places in the Fascist vision of a racial hierarchy. Virtue suggests that there was a complex process in which military and political elites transferred knowledge between the Ethiopian and Yugoslavian experiences, but that their actions were shaped by structural factors

and circumstances. He finds little evidence of a distinct colonial mentality that transferred across to Yugoslavia, arguing that Italian military culture helps explain the linkages in Fascist violence.

Turning to the Fascist role in the persecution of the Jews, Luca Fenoglio looks at the Italian zone of occupation in France. Drawing upon comparative genocide scholarship, he explores the question of whether anti-Semitic theories led inexorably to the extermination of the Jews. The Italian occupation in France brought into sharp relief the divergences between German and Italian policies on the Jews. The Fascist regime did not see dealing with the 'Jewish question' as being critical to the success of its ideological vision. Rather, Fenoglio highlights the pragmatic nature of Italian policy that was adjusted to fit political and military needs.

Focusing upon the significance that Fascist ideology ascribed to propaganda, Arturo Marzano's chapter looks at how the Fascist regime sought to project its values outwards through Radio Bari's broadcasts to Arab populations. Marzano observes that Italian broadcasts were characterised by levels of anti-Semitism comparable with Radio Berlin and an exaggerated triumphalism that presented the war as if an Axis victory was inevitable. In response, between 1940 and 1943, Marzano finds that Arab audiences switched over either to the BBC or to Radio Berlin. A reduction in the levels of cultural output, the perceived objectivity of the BBC or the greater zeal of Berlin left listener figures to Radio Bari languishing.

In the final section of the volume, two of the leading historians of Fascist Italy and the Second World War, MacGregor Knox and Nicola Labanca, offer some broader reflections on the Fascist

experience between 1935 and 1945, on its public and private memory and on the evolution of its historiographical narrative.

Placing the Fascist decade of war in a longer-term perspective, Knox reminds us that war was far from being a new experience for united Italy. While he notes that the wars which began in 1935 were qualitatively different to those which had come before, Knox also identifies elements of continuity. At the heart of the imperatives driving Italy to engage in war was the realisation that territorial unification had brought neither great power status nor succeeded in uniting the country. The Fascist regime sought to harness war as a means of pursuing its totalitarian ambitions of a fascistised Italian 'race' that had been toughened by the experiences of war. It was only with the events of 1943 to 1945 that Italy was able to break free from the myths which had lain at the heart of unification and which the Fascist regime had radicalised through violence.

In his wide-ranging overview of the historiography on Italy's role in the Second World War and the state of the field more broadly, Nicola Labanca re-evaluates the relevance Fascist Italy had in the shaping of the Second World War. Despite many global studies barely mentioning the role played by Fascist Italy, Labanca observes that the war would not have been possible without its sequence of destabilising actions before 1939. Italy played a key role in the breakdown of the international system in the 1930s and Hitler would not have been able to carry out his policies as ambitiously and swiftly as he did without the support of other Fascist governments. However, Labanca suggests that the relative neglect of Italy's role may change as new generations of scholars trained in transnational and international methodologies begin to shape the field. It is

with this in mind that this volume proposes a new approach towards the role of Italy in shaping a Fascist decade of war between 1935 and 1945.

¹ Studies on the end of the war, the fall of Fascism and the liberation of Italy have included: David Ellwood, *Italy 1943-45* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1985); Philip Morgan, *The Fall of Mussolini: Italy, Italians and the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Rick Atkinson, *The Day of Battle: the War in Sicily and Italy, 1943-44* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2008).

² Some of the major publications on the Second World War in Europe have included: Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso Books, 1998); Richard Vinen, *A History in Fragments. Europe in the Twentieth Century* (London: Little Brown, 2000); Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe* (London: Allen Lane, 2008); Ian Kershaw, *To Hell and Back: Europe 1914-1949* (London: Allen Lane, 2015). The international tensions of the 1930s continue to be debated by scholars, with new studies including: Robert Boyce and Joseph Maiolo, *The Origins of World War Two: The Debate Continues* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003). Edited collections on this subject have included: Peter Liddle, John Bourne and Ian Whitehead (eds.), *The Great World War 1914-45* (London: HarperCollins, 2000) and Robert Gerwarth (ed.), *Twisted Paths, Europe 1914-45* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). The complexity of international rivalries, ideological clashes and domestic upheaval in this period is such that it continues to generate fresh interpretations and debates, such as that advanced in Enzo Traverso, *Fire and Blood: The European Civil War, 1914-1945* (London: Verso, 2016).

³ As part of a broader historiographical shift away from a Germanocentric and European focus towards a more global understanding of this period, several studies have explored the significance of the conflict over the Mediterranean region. These have included Reynolds M. Salerno, *Vital Crossroads: Mediterranean Origins of the Second World War, 1935-1940* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); Douglas Porch, *The Path to Victory: the Mediterranean Theater in World War II* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2004); Andrew Buchanan, *American Grand Strategy in the Mediterranean During World War II*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Carlo D'Este, *World War II in the Mediterranean, 1942-1945* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin, 1990). However, none of these studies have focused specifically upon the important impact of Italian actions before and during the Second World War.

⁴ Fascist Italy's role in international affairs during the 1930s is the subject of numerous publications. These have included: H. James Burgwyn, *Italian Foreign Policy in the Interwar Period 1918-1940* (Westport: Praeger, 1997); John Gooch, *Mussolini and his Generals: The Armed Forces and Fascist Foreign Policy, 1922-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); MacGregor Knox, *Mussolini Unleashed, 1939-1941: Politics and Strategy in Fascist Italy's Last War* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Robert Mallett, *Mussolini and the Origins of the Second World War, 1933-1940* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003). Focusing upon the ideological dimensions of Fascist Italy's policies is: Aristotle Kallis, *Fascist Ideology: Territory and Expansionism in Italy and Germany, 1922-45* (London: Routledge, 2000).

⁵ Giorgio Rochat, *Le guerre italiane 1935-1943. Dall'impero d'Etiopia alla disfatta* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 2005).

⁶ See, for instance: David W. Ellwood, *Italy 1943-1945* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1985); James Holland, *Italy's Sorrow: A Year of War, 1944-1945* (London: Harper Press, 2008) and Roderick Bailey, *Target: Italy: The Secret War against Mussolini, 1940-1943* (London: Faber & Faber, 2014).

⁷ Simon Ball, *The Bitter Sea: The Struggle for Mastery in the Mediterranean, 1935-1949* (London: Harper Press, 2009), 322-3.

⁸ Robert Mallett, *Mussolini in Ethiopia, 1919-1935: The Origins of Fascist Italy's African War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 158.

⁹ In a recent article, Scianna aptly defines the Italian intervention in Abyssinia as a 'prelude to total war', Bastian Matteo Scianna 'A Prelude to Total War? The Abyssinian War (1935-36) in the eyes of Foreign Military Observers', in *International Journal of Military History and Historiography* 38 (2018), 5-33.

¹⁰ Emanuele Sica and Richard Carrier (eds), *Italy and the Second World War: Alternative Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 1. Recent studies on the Italian occupations in Europe, such as Davide Rodogno, *Fascism's European Empire: Italian Occupation During the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Emanuele Sica, *Mussolini's Army in the Riviera: Italy's Occupation of France* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016); Amedeo Osti Guerrazzi, *The Italian Army in Slovenia: Strategies of Antipartisan Repression, 1941-1943*, trans. Elizabeth Burke and Anthony Majanlahti, (New York: Palgrave, 2013) have explored the significance of violence and race in Fascist occupation policies.

¹¹ Alan Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 329.

¹² For a recent historiographical reflection on Fascist Italy and the World War see Gianluca Fiocco, 'Guerra fascista e guerra italiana (1940-1943)', in *Studi Storici*, 55:1 (2014), 271-285, where an insufficient dialogue between histories of Fascism and histories of war is denounced. On this point also see Rochat, *Le guerre italiane*, XIV.

¹³ John Gooch, 'Re-conquest and Suppression: Fascist Italy's Pacification of Libya and Ethiopia, 1922-39', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28:6 (2005), 1005-32.

¹⁴ Roberta Pergher, *Mussolini's Nation-Empire: Sovereignty and Settlement in Italy's Borderlands, 1922-1943* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 244-50.

¹⁵ MacGregor Knox, 'The Fascist Regime, its Foreign Policy and its Wars: An Anti-Anti-Fascist Orthodoxy?', *Contemporary European History* 4:3 (1995), 346-365. See also MacGregor Knox, *Hitler's Italian Allies: Royal Armed Forces, Fascist Regime, and the War of 1940-1943* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

¹⁶ See Renzo De Felice's eight-volume biography of the Duce, specifically *Mussolini il duce. Vol. I: Gli anni del consenso, 1929-1936* (Turin: Einaudi, 1974), *Mussolini il duce. Vol. II: Lo stato totalitario 1936-1940* (Turin: Einaudi, 1981), and *Mussolini l'alleato. Vol. I. L'Italia in guerra, 1940-1943. Tomo I: Dalla guerra "breve" alla guerra lunga* (Turin: Einaudi, 1990).

¹⁷ H. James Burgwyn, *Mussolini Warlord. Failed Dreams of Empire, 1940-1943* (New York: Enigma Books, 2012); Christian Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler: The Forging of a Fascist Alliance* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018)

¹⁸ The Italian invasion of Abyssinia and the Fascist regime's approach to colonial rule in Africa have been the subject of several recent books. These have included: Massimiliano Fiore, *Anglo-Italian Relations in the Middle East, 1922-1940* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010); Bruce Strang (ed.), *Collision of Empires: Italy's Invasion of Ethiopia and its International Impact* (London: Routledge, 2016).

¹⁹ For an overview on popular opinion in Fascist Italy see, among others, Paul Corner (ed.), *Popular Opinion in Totalitarian Regimes: Fascism, Nazism, Communism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) and Christopher Duggan, *Fascist Voices: An Intimate History of Mussolini's Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

²⁰ See for a starting point on the debate Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: 1914-1991* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), and François Furet and Ernst Nolte, *Fascism and Communism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

²¹ Traverso, *Fire and Blood*, 1-44.