
European Fascism: The Unfinished Handbook

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R. J. B. Bosworth, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), £27.50 (pb), 626 pp. ISBN 0199594783.

Bernard Bruneteau, *Le Totalitarisme: Origines d'un concept, genèse d'un débat, 1930–1942* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2010), 38€ (pb), 491 pp., ISBN 978–2204092081.

Dylan Riley, *The Civic Foundations of Fascism in Europe: Italy, Spain and Romania, 1870–1945* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), €41.99 (hb), 258 pp. ISBN 0801894271.

Fascism continues to fascinate scholars within the social sciences, perhaps as much as communism, that other great non-democratic ‘-ism’ of the twentieth century. The topic also seems to be of continuing interest to the student and commercial book markets. In some cases bland repetition is the norm, but the pressure from commercial publishers often results in some excellent syntheses, even if based on secondary material, and that is not to mention the biography genre, which is always attentive to charismatic leaders and dictators — the more cruel the better. Moreover, the already voluminous academic literature on contemporary dictatorships often returns to the fascist and dictatorial regimes of the inter-war period.¹ It is therefore only natural that Fascism should be incorporated in a series of handbooks published by Oxford University Press.

During the past twenty years the comparative study of Fascism has concentrated increasingly on its ideological and cultural dimensions. When in 1969 the British historian Stuart Woolf published *The Nature of Fascism*, a balance of the main research tendencies concerning Fascism, the situation within the social sciences was very different: indeed, so much so that a simple description of his main headings highlights the difference.² The first part of the book's four sections was dominated by a blend of theories of totalitarianism and modernisation; in the second some Marxist ‘class’

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¹ However, most only include the dictatorships established after 1945. For an overview of this literature in ‘text-book’ form see Natasha Ezrow and Erica Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships: Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and their Leaders* (London: Continuum, 2011).

² Stuart Woolf, ed., *The Nature of Fascism* (New York: Random House, 1969).

determinisms were very much present; the third part, which contains Tim Mason's brilliant essay 'The Primacy of Politics: Politics and Economics in National Socialist Germany', was much more nuanced; while the fourth part was dominated by George L. Mosse's pioneering 'Fascism and Culture'. The division between historians and political scientists was clearer then than it is today; however, the main turning point of the last decade was the cultural turn in fascist studies, which has helped refine earlier approaches and inspired new research.

During recent decades, the historiography of Fascism has integrated contributions from political science, such as the 'totalitarian-authoritarian' binomial that invaded national and comparative research and which partially erased the 'para-Marxist economicist' approach dominant during the 1970s, without doing justice to the many perspectives on the autonomy of ideology in political and cultural change. Of course, many of the changes are also limited to reflect the impact of new social science paradigms and the emergence of more culturalist interpretations. But this 'new' culturalist 'consensus' on generic Fascism 'left many historians cold', to quote Roger Eatwell, and some of the cleavages are still present. However, the emergence of new themes for research, such as those of symbolic and political mobilisation, violence and genocide, gender or the relationship between Fascism and religion, has been important. As Adrian Lyttelton recently noted, 'the greatest advance (over recent decades) has certainly come from taking fascist values and ideology seriously'.³ New analytical models, such as 'political religion' were at the forefront for a short while.⁴

Although historians dominate current research on Fascism, it is clear they will continue to be influenced by other social science disciplines in the future. Indeed, Juan J. Linz may very well be the political scientist who has left the greatest mark on the historiography of Fascism and dictatorships, and Michael Mann's *Fascists* represented a welcome return from the best traditions of comparative historical sociology towards the analysis of Fascism and its role in the crises and collapse of democracy.⁵

On the other hand, the 'big world' of twentieth-century dictatorships has again become an important field of study. Some of the inter-war authoritarian political institutions expanded across the world following the end of the Second World War and as we shall see below — as another '-ism' of ideologies, political movements and regimes — comparison should not be confined simply to the phenomena that have been labelled 'fascist'. Some contemporaries of Fascism had already realised that some of the institutions created by the inter-war dictatorships could perhaps be durable. As the committed early-twentieth-century observer, Romanian academic

³ Adrian Lyttelton, 'Concluding remarks', in Antonio Costa Pinto, ed., *Rethinking the Nature of Fascism* (London: Palgrave, 2011), 272.

⁴ For a defence of the political religion concept in the study of political history, see Emilio Gentile, *Politics as a Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), and for the study of Fascism, see Roger Griffin, ed., *Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion* (London: Routledge, 2006). See also David D. Roberts, 'Political Religion' and the Totalitarian Departures of Inter-war Europe: On the Uses and Disadvantages of an Analytical Category' and the reply of Carl Levy, 'Frustrated of Islington', *Contemporary European History*, 18 (2009), 381–414 and 415–18.

⁵ Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

and politically authoritarian Mihail Manoilescu noted, ‘of all the political and social creations of our century — which for the historian began in 1918 — there are two that have in a definitive way enriched humanity’s patrimony. . . : corporatism and the single party’.⁶ Manoilescu dedicated a study to each of these political institutions in 1936 without knowing some aspects of the former would be long-lasting and that the latter would become one of the most durable political instruments of contemporary dictatorships.⁷

In recent years the social science literature has returned to the question of the factors leading to the survival or downfall of the dictatorships and dictators: the construction of legitimacy, the regimes’ capacity to distribute resources, divisions within the power coalitions, the political institutions of the dictatorships, their capacity for survival and the cost-benefit analysis of rebellion.⁸ On the other hand, the survival (and appearance) of several dictatorships after the end of the Cold War and, particularly, the increasing complexity of their institutions, has led to a new field of study into the hybrid nature of many contemporary political regimes that were already present in the political landscape of the ‘era of Fascism’.⁹

A handbook without concepts or historiography

Compared with the careful structure of many other books in this series, the *Oxford Handbook of Fascism*, edited by the historian Richard Bosworth, is one of the sloppiest. Readers will be surprised to note this handbook has no conceptual or thematic entries. Ironically, while the articles are generally of good quality, without the guiding hand of the editor they tend to steer their own course. The first part of the book, ‘Ideas and Formative Experience’, consists of four chapters: the first dealing with the ideological origins of Fascism, which is followed by two chapters dealing with the First World War and one chapter looking at the post-war period. There is no chapter on the interpretations of Fascism, nor is there a comparative empirical examination of fascist parties in inter-war Europe. Moreover, almost all of the themes are ‘sliced up’ by country. The only exception in this first part is Kevin Passmore’s chapter on the ideological origins of Fascism before 1914, which offers a solid critique of theories of political religion on the roots of Fascism, and a strong defence of the heterogeneity of the origins of fascist ideology, which he considers to be an ‘agglomeration of ideas taken from very different sources’ (p. 29).

The second part, ‘The First Fascist Nation’, could be an excellent text-book anthology on Italian Fascism and published independently. Comprising fourteen

⁶ Mihail Manoilescu, *Le Parti Unique: Institution Politique des Regime Nouveaux* (Paris: Les Oeuvres Françaises, 1936), viii.

⁷ Mihail Manoilescu, *Le Siècle du Corporatisme* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1934).

⁸ Jannifer Gandhi, *Political Institutions under Dictatorships* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Erica Frantz and Natasha Ezrow, *The Politics of Dictatorships: Institutions and Outcomes in Authoritarian Regimes* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2011).

⁹ See Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

chapters, it is the book's *pièce de résistance*. In the main they are excellent chapters addressing a wide variety of themes, from *squadrismo* to the intellectuals, from corporatism to Catholicism, and from peasants to women. As a specialist on the Italian case, the editor was able to call on the services of several Italian historians and Italianists who could bring clarity to the subject. Nevertheless, there remains a lack of coherence among even these chapters. Some discuss only Italian Fascism (*Squadrism, Culture, Peasants, Corporatism, Women, Repression, War*), while others discuss Italian Fascism largely in comparison with Nazi Germany (Catholicism, Propaganda and Youth, Mussolini as Dictator). Nazism, the godfather of the fascist family, has no independent presence in this book, and is addressed in three comparative chapters on the Italian experience (State and Society, Race, Diplomacy and War).

The fourth part, entitled 'Others', is the most curious since it consists of one thematic chapter on communism and ten more on national experiences. As we know, organising works such as this by country can be unhelpful. If there is no accompanying explanation of the selection of cases and of the criteria for the choices made (relative importance of the particular fascist movement, fascist and non-fascist regimes, governments of occupation, or any other reason), it is difficult to know why some countries are included while others are not. In this book the United Kingdom is included: but why Britain's Mosley rather than Plínio Salgado's Ação Integralista Brasileira, the most important fascist movement in Latin America? The Netherlands are included: why not Norway, where a fascist movement was in power under German occupation? Croatia is there: but why not Tiso's Slovakia? Japan: why not Argentina? Austria under Dollfuss: why not the Portuguese New State under Salazar? When there is no comparative methodology and no framework within which to select cases, chance seems to dominate and the final result suffers. Even more curious, however, is the divergence of themes and chronology between each chapter. Some, such as those on Spain and Austria, necessarily examine local fascist movements during the first phase of Francoism (until 1945) and of the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg regime, while others, such as the chapters on France and Romania, concentrate on movements rather than regimes. However, while the majority of the chapters are national case studies that end in 1945, others continue until the end of the twentieth century. The chapters on the Netherlands, Hungary, and Yugoslavia and its successor states also address the neo-fascist movements of the 1980s and 1990s, with the latter developing the theme of relations between Fascism and Franjo Tudjman's Croatia and Milosevic's Serbia.

In part five, entitled 'Reflection and legacies', we finally encounter the book's saving grace, Robert O. Paxton's chapter 'Comparisons and Definitions', which, because his questions could (and probably should) have shaped the entire handbook, perhaps ought to have been the introduction. The handbook then concludes with two chapters on Fascism's legacy and the question of neo-Fascism.

Bosworth acknowledges that, as editor, he was 'self-consciously a weak dictator' (p. 3). As an anonymous reviewer once remarked in relation to a manuscript submitted by this writer: 'Essay collections by diverse authors are always awkward creatures: they normally suffer from too diffuse a focus, and their component essays are almost

invariably uneven in quality'. While not necessarily agreeing with this opinion, since such collections are often the best means of presenting the results of collective research, this reviewer suggests that this handbook is no exception.

In the introduction, the editor dedicates his attention to those who appear to be his pet 'historiographical enemies': the historians Emilio Gentile, Roger Griffin 'and their supporters' (p. 5). The importance of these historians should not be underplayed, as they have produced excellent work on this theme, but it is strange that after fifty years of academic studies on Fascism, only a critique of the theory of political religion is worthy of being highlighted in the introduction to a handbook on Fascism.¹⁰ Barrington Moore, George L. Mosse, Stuart Woolf, Juan J. Linz, Stanley Payne, Zeev Sternhell, Hans Mommsen, Michael Mann and many other major scholars of Fascism are absent.¹¹ The main theoretical schools, from the Marxist-oriented to 'totalitarianism', are deemed unworthy of space in the introduction.

Theories of totalitarianism: The vision of contemporaries

For those who do not find what they are looking for in this handbook concerning the origins of the uses of the concept of totalitarianism, the excellent *Le Totalitarisme: Origines d'un concept, genèse d'un débat, 1930–1942*, edited by Bernard Bruneteau, is well worth reading. During the Cold War, rivers of ink were spilled in academic and political tomes comparing Fascism and communism, and placing them in the same dictatorship typology. However, even before the Second World War – indeed from the end of the 1920s – there was a pre-history of the use of the concept that, as Hannah Arendt noted, has resisted the passage of time very well. It is the intellectual journey of this concept that Bruneteau takes us on in this anthology of texts from the 1930s. Following an erudite general introduction, the editor presents a carefully chosen selection of texts that are always accompanied by a biography of the authors.

We know that even before Mussolini and the fascist philosopher Giovanni Gentile had consecrated the term, another Italian, Giovanni Amendola, had already used it. From his exile in London, in 1926 Don Luigi Sturzo, leader of the Catholic Partito Popolare, developed the foundations of a liberal theory of totalitarianism applied to Fascism and communism.¹² It was a decisive decade for the concept until the first book on the topic, Franz Borkenau's *The Totalitarian Enemy* (1940).¹³ Along with other ex-Marxists and former Communists, Borkenau was one of

¹⁰ According to the editor, this group promoted their ideas in the academic journal *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, but Emilio Gentile had left the journal several years before, while the journal also changed editors, focus and even its title.

¹¹ For two excellent anthologies introducing these authors and the main interpretations since the 1960s, see Aristotle Kallis, ed., *The Fascist Reader* (London: Routledge, 2004) and Constantin Iordachi, ed., *Comparative Fascist Studies: New Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2009).

¹² See Michael Schafer, 'Luigi Sturzo as Theorist of Totalitarianism', in Hans Maier, ed., *Totalitarianism and Political Religion: Concepts for the Comparison of Dictatorships* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 22–31.

¹³ Franz Borkenau, *The Totalitarian Enemy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1940).

the best analysts of the phenomenon back in the 1930s, defining it as different forms of 'revolutionary autocracies' (p. 401). Moreover, the comparative method of studying these dictatorships developed at a precocious rate within academic circles.

In the United States, George H. Sabine was quick to group single-party dictatorships under the same category in his entry 'State' in the *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* (1934),¹⁴ and that is without mentioning either Hans Kelsen or Hermann Kantorowicz. Before Ernst Fraenkel developed his theory of the dual state in *National Socialism* in 1941, Kelsen had already made this duality the basis of his party dictatorship typology in an article in the London School of Economics journal *Politica* (pp. 354–66).¹⁵

By revisiting the origins of the use of the concept of totalitarianism, years before its instrumental codification during the Cold War, Bruneteau's anthology allows us to confirm Hannah Arendt's thesis that the visions of her contemporaries during the 1930s, 'would seriously resist the test of time' (p. 6). The number of times the concept is used in the *Oxford Handbook of Fascism* is a clear illustration of this.

Fascism and civil society: Gramsci versus Tocqueville and Barrington Moore

At least since Tocqueville, the density and mobilisation of civil society is supposed to have produced vibrant liberal democracies; however, for some time research has shown civil society moving in many different directions, and not always towards democracy.¹⁶ In his book, *The Civic Foundations of Fascism in Europe*, the sociologist Dylan Riley investigates the relationship between the density of civil society and regime types in early-twentieth-century Europe. He asks why it was that in countries such as Italy, Spain and Romania (the cases studied in the book), each of which had liberal parliamentary institutions at the end of the nineteenth century, the intense wave of associational growth favoured the implantation of fascist regimes rather than democracy.

What is missing from the *Oxford Handbook on Fascism* is present in a large dose in Riley's book: theories and classics from the social sciences, with the bonus of the rediscovery of Antonio Gramsci. The author does not reject Tocqueville, although he quotes Gramsci and his concept of 'hegemonic politic', which he uses to explain the paradox of the cases in which some vibrant civil societies produced Fascism.¹⁷

For Riley, the consequences of associational development for regime outcomes depend on the presence or absence of 'hegemonic politics': where it led to Fascism

¹⁴ George H. Sabine, 'State', in *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* (New York: Macmillan, 1934).

¹⁵ Ernst Fraenkel, *The Dual State* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1941).

¹⁶ See Nancy Bermeo and Philip Nord, eds, *Civil Society before Democracy: Lessons from Nineteenth-Century History* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000).

¹⁷ On Gramsci and Fascism see David D. Roberts, 'Reconsidering Gramsci's interpretation of Fascism', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 16, 2 (2011), 239–55.

it was 'because it preceded rather than followed the establishment of strong political organisations (hegemonic politics) among both dominant classes and non-elites' (p. 2). That is, the development of voluntary associations tends to promote democracy, but in the absence of adequate political institutions 'this democratic demand assumed a paradoxically anti-liberal and authoritarian form: a technocratic rejection of politics as such. Fascist movements and regimes grew up out of this general crisis of politics' (p. 2). Although he does not make explicit use of the Mossean concept of the 'nationalisation of the masses', Riley comes close to it when he says the fascist project was concerned with making the modern state more representative of the nation than was possible with liberal parliamentary institutions (p. 11).¹⁸ Fascist regimes, he writes, not only claimed popular legitimacy, they constructed institutions conceived specifically as alternatives to electoral democracy. As another reviewer wrote, 'while agreeing that Fascism was profoundly anti-liberal, he shows that its ideological core rested on claims of being more representative of the modern nation than the factional liberal democratic status quo'.¹⁹ The most interesting of Riley's conclusions, then, seems to be that he stresses that, rather than a high degree of polarisation between the Left and the Right, it was 'the absence of well-structured parties (that) lend great plausibility to the fascist critique of liberalism' (p. 211).

Riley finds three varieties of Fascism in Italy, Spain and Romania: 'party Fascism' in Italy, where the 'nation was understood as a political project' and the party a 'pedagogical institution' to nationalise the masses; 'traditional Fascism' in Spain, where 'the nation was to be represented through the family, the monarchy and the Church'; and 'statist Fascism' in Romania, which was based neither on a political party nor in pre-existing institutions that supposedly embodied the nation, but which 'instead sought to constitute the nation through organisation' (p. 21).

The book's main argument is an interesting and well-documented fact: the absence of well-structured parties gave fascists great plausibility in relation to their criticism of liberalism and its 'political class'; however, the usefulness of reinventing the concepts of 'democracy' and 'dictatorship' and Riley's redefinition of Fascism as 'authoritarian democracy' rather than a type of dictatorship is not convincing, and neither is the tripartite 'traditionalist-statist-party' typology. While the former is a conceptual problem — he does not use a procedural definition of democracy — the latter is more empirically confusing since for Riley the outcome is Fascism regardless of the different types of regimes-versus-movements dynamics in the three cases studied. Nevertheless, his main argument remains persuasive. As Jeffrey Kopstein notes, in Italy a fascist party could draw on an independently organised civil society, while in Spain fascists drew on traditional and Catholic associations and in Romania civic life was always guided by the state and therefore fascist rulers drew on state institutions and state-created associations for their support.²⁰

¹⁸ See G. L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1975).

¹⁹ Cornel Ban's review, *Journal of Politics*, 73, 2 (2011), 501.

²⁰ See Jeffrey Kopstein's review, *Perspectives on Politics*, 9, 1 (2011), 205–6.

Fascist Italy revisited

In his chapter in the *Handbook* dedicated to Italy, Riley defines Italian Fascism as ‘a symbiosis of party and state’, with the most obvious indication of this being ‘the growth of a massive parallel administration separate from the ministerial bureaucracy’ (p. 61). This more recent line of research on Italian Fascism is partially adopted by several of the contributors to the *Handbook*. Since Italy represents half of the book, it is worth developing some of the themes. While some of the articles may be little more than summaries, others are research articles in a very true sense. As Paxton notes, ‘how fascist dictators exercised their power is a fruitful matter for comparison’, and the ‘polycratic image of fascist rule, proposed for Nazi Germany, is also appropriate for Mussolini’s rule’ (pp. 558, 561). Italian Fascism pioneered a style of rule and a set of institutions — personalisation, single-party and corporatism — that were to inspire many other dictatorships. However, most recent research has noted that the tensions between political institutions controlled by the single party, the state and para-state were a trademark of fascist regimes.

In his chapter on the role of Mussolini in the fascist dictatorship, the editor of the *Handbook* uses the old ‘strong *versus* weak dictator’ debate on the role of Hitler to analyse the place of Mussolini in the fascist political system.²¹ Bosworth emphasises that ‘the key to Mussolini’s new form of tyranny was its basis on ideas’ (p. 367); however, with the consolidation of the regime, in the balance between repression and loyalty, Il Duce was undoubtedly a ‘strong dictator’. Thus, one conclusion deserving attention from a comparative perspective is that in the Italian case ‘the dictator’s authority was enhanced by the useful division between the Fascist Party and the Italian state’ (p. 270).²² As another historian of Italian Fascism noted, ‘Mussolini’s authority was established on the basis a complex system of rivalries between different agencies’.²³ The dictator’s rule was always based on this balance, which — as several of the chapters illustrate — was not always stable. It is therefore interesting to note how the most recent research into the Italian fascist regime, following in the wake of Ernst Fraenkel’s work, tends to highlight the ‘polycratic’ elements of Mussolini’s dictatorship. In one of the few comparative chapters, Gustavo Corni finds parallels between the Nazi and the Fascist regimes ‘in their proliferation of centres of authority or of organisms, that often — with considerable inefficiency — drift into conflict with each other’ (p. 287). The youth organisations and the implantation of the corporatist system are also good illustrations of this.

²¹ On the more recent shifts of the German debate on Nazism see Hans Mommsen, ‘Changing Historical Perspectives on the Nazi Dictatorship’, *European Review*, 17, 1 (2009), 73–80.

²² See Guido Melis, ed., *Lo Stato negli Anni Trenta: Istituzione e regimi fascisti in Europa* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2008) and especially, Loreto Di Nucci, *Lo Stato-partito del Fascismo: Genesi, evoluzione e crisi, 1919–1943* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009).

²³ Didier Musiedlak, ‘Mussolini, Charisma, and Decision-Making’, in Pinto, ed., *Ruling Elites and Decision-Making in Fascist-Era Dictatorships* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 14. See also his excellent short biography, *Mussolini* (Paris: Presses de Science Po, 2004).

Despite the vast academic literature on Italian corporatism, whether dealing with its leading ideologues or with its institutions, little is known about ‘how corporative institutions operated in practice’ (p. 156). Philip Morgan’s chapter is an intelligent and informed introduction to the process of establishing the corporatist system that, along with other reforms, was also ‘hindered by long-running inter-ministerial disputes over areas of jurisdiction and competence’ (p. 158). Nevertheless, by the end of the 1930s, among interest and political representation organisations, Italian Fascism had a significant set of corporatist bodies and, with the establishment of the Fascist and Corporatist Chamber (Camera dei Fasci e delle Corporazioni) that replaced parliament, Mussolini’s regime came close to the corporatist model of political representation and interest organisation.²⁴

The analysis of the type of repression becomes more complex if we use the binomial classification ‘authoritarianism-totalitarianism’. For Mauro Canali, the evidence of fascist repression’s explicit tendency to become genuinely totalitarian is its ‘willingness to use any form of violence to wipe out every obstacle to its acquisition of complete and unchallenged power’ (p. 226). However, while he has written an excellent study of Italian Fascism’s political police, Canali does not explain what distinguishes types of repression in totalitarianism and authoritarianism.²⁵ To put it another way, what is specifically totalitarian in the political repression of Italian Fascism? It is certainly not in its quantitative dimension. Where Canali does see it is in the ‘criminal violence against the opposition’ (p. 226), which is not much to distinguish it from other dictatorships, such as Francoism in Europe, and the Latin American regimes of Péron and Vargas, which are usually less associated with the totalitarian paradigm.

In the world of Fascism with adjectives?

‘Para-Fascism’, ‘semi-Fascism’, ‘clerico-Fascism’, ‘fascistised’ and other adjectives have been used and abused in the historiography, albeit with some justification.²⁶ In fact, as a regime type, the fascist regime concept has travelled neither far nor well, even within Europe, a fact demonstrated in several of the chapters containing national case studies.

In her excellent chapter on Fascism and Francoism in Spain, Mary Vincent holds up the mirror to an interpretative debate that has been repeated by other historiographies, because it was in relation to Franco’s regime that the political scientist Juan Linz developed his ideal-type of ‘authoritarian regime’ that for many

²⁴ See Alessio Gagliardi, *Il corporativismo fascista* (Bari: Laterza, 2010) and the excellent study of para-state organisations associated with interest organisations, Jean-Yves Dormagen, *Logiques du fascisme: L’état totalitaire en Italie* (Paris: Fayard, 2007).

²⁵ Mauro Canali, *Le spie del regime* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004).

²⁶ For an explicit use of these definitions see, for example, Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Pinder, 1991); Andrew Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World. The Politics of the Borderlands from Pre- to Postcommunism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Mathew Feldman and Marius Turda with Tudor Georgescu, eds, *Clerical Fascism in Inter-war Europe* (London: Routledge, 2008).

decades was an essential reference in the study of dictatorships.²⁷ Albeit with slightly different contours, the discussions about the nature of the Vichy regime in France, Salazar's Portugal and Dollfuss-Schuschnigg's Austria, dominated by the authoritarian-fascist binomial, can be invoked here.²⁸ In the case of Spain, where a civil war followed a failed military coup, a small fascist party – which in the meantime became the apparently dominant partner in the regime's new single party – a particular section of the military elite, a personalised leadership, and 'fascistised' segments of the Catholic and monarchist radical Right, together formed a political regime that Vincent believes to be a typical example of an old concept: 'to call Francoism "fascistised" may be to state the obvious, but it is a far closer approximation of its natures than either "authoritarian" or "fascist"' (p. 379). The same tensions have characterised the debates on the nature of French fascist movements and some of the classificatory ambiguities surrounding the French radical Right during the 1930s, particularly La Rocque's Croix de Feu and the Vichy regime itself, although Joan Tumblett's analysis is much faster.²⁹

Austria is clearly another borderline case in which several fascist movements and the institutionalisation of the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg dictatorship fuelled a parallel debate that was also based in the Fascism-authoritarianism binomial, as explained by Corinna Peniston-Bird. However, where Austria and Dollfuss are presented as being avowedly transnational is in the area of corporatism. The author acknowledges this 'third way' also found support in Portugal, Poland and Spain, and differentiates the Austrian Catholic corporate state from 'earlier fascist corporatist structures in Italy and (to a much lesser extent) Germany' (p. 448). In the Austrian case this was the mortar that cemented the important convergence between Dollfuss and the native fascist movement, the *Heimwehr*. However, the most important comparative dimension relates to the adoption of corporatist institutions, not only the forced integration of interest organisation but also through the adoption of a type of 'organic' political representation as an alternative to liberal democracy, and which extended beyond the four dictatorships cited here and which, in one form or another, created institutions that were inspired both by Catholic and fascist corporatist theory.

²⁷ See Juan Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2000).

²⁸ For more on these historiographical debates, see Thomas Jeffrey Miley, 'Franquism as Authoritarianism: Juan Linz and his Critics', *Politics, Religion and Ideology*, 12, 1 (2011), 27–50; Brian Jenkins, ed., *France in the Era of Fascism: Essays on the French Authoritarian Right* (New York: Berghahn, 2005); Michel Dobry, ed., *Le mythe de l'allergie française au fascisme* (Paris: Albin Michel), António Costa Pinto, *Salazar's New State and European Fascism* (New York: SSM-Columbia University Press, 1996); Paul Pasteur, "Austrofascisme" ou Régime Autoritaire Corporatiste Chrétien?, in Catherine Horel, Traian Sandu and Fritz Taubert, eds, *La Périphérie du fascisme: Le cas de l'Europe centrale entre les deux guerres* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005), 111–22. For an overview of the research and debates on Fascism in central and Eastern Europe, both in conceptual and empirical terms, see Constantin Iordachi, 'Fascism in Inter-war East Central and Southeast Europe: Towards a New Transnational Research Agenda', *East Central Europe*, 37 (2010), 161–213.

²⁹ See Robert Soucy, *French Fascism: The Second Wave, 1933–1939* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995) and Albert Kéchichian, *Les Croix à L'Âge des Fascismes: Travail, Famille, Patrie* (Paris: Champ Vallon, 2006).

As the author of the chapter on Japan correctly notes, 'history is littered with ambiguity and discomfort when relativism is seen to threaten the integrity of a concept' and that of Fascism, as it is used by several of the authors in the *Handbook*, slips up in some cases (p. 528). We already know that Japan challenges the classificatory rationale and use of the fascist regime concept; however, the same is also true of the regimes neighbouring Nazi Germany. The late Mark Pittaway, author of the chapter on Hungary, defines Horthy's inter-war regime(s) as being examples of 'oligarchic liberalism' or 'authoritarian liberalism', in which 'the fascist movements in the 1930s existed in a symbiotic relationship with the structures and patterns of social support for the dominant inter-war regime' (p. 380). In fact, until the 1940s and the coming to dominance of the Arrow Cross Party, Hungary was a typical example of a 'hybrid regime' in which formal democratic institutions existed and were widely perceived to be the primary means of gaining power. Pluralism is present, 'but in which the incumbents' abuse of the state puts them at a significant advantage vis-à-vis their opponents'.³⁰

It is time to conclude with Robert O. Paxton's 'Comparisons and Definitions', since, although he briefly restates some of the points of his book *Anatomy of Fascism*, his is by far the only chapter to design a comparative framework in this *Handbook*.³¹ Paxton begins with the classic question: 'Why does Fascism take root and succeed in some parts of Europe and not in others?' (p. 548). While just some of the chapters in the *Handbook* analyse the answers provided by the social sciences, the truth is they are various and for all theoretical and disciplinary tastes. From Barrington Moore to Juan Linz and Michael Mann the options are many; however, the choice of these last two (and of Paxton) is the most rewarding: to 'concentrate on the short-term preconditions for Fascism: the particular crises in which fascist movements found space to grow and, in some cases, reach power' (p. 552). A second analytical axis is more often cited than studied: 'how did fascist dictators exercise their power?' (p. 558) and here we must agree some old versions of the theories of totalitarianism are 'blind to the most interesting questions', mainly because they reinforce the myth of the all-powerful dictator, and downplay the ruler's relations with elites, social groups, institutions and civil society.

For Paxton and the large majority of researchers in this area, 'despite their national variations, fascist movements and regimes share a sufficient number of common elements to sustain a general definition', but he advise us to avoid the 'misleading static image of the phenomenon' or the search for a 'general essence of Fascism' (p. 549). In fact, there are important aspects of the empirical development of Fascism that are analytically interesting without having much to do with 'Fascism' as such.

³⁰ Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*.

³¹ Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York, NY: Knopf, 2004).

European Fascism: A new research agenda?

The comparative study of European Fascism, whether as a movement or as a form of political regime, has undergone a remarkable empirical development, albeit with important conceptual limitations. We today have at our disposal a significant number of monographs and comparative studies on inter-war fascist movements, even although the fluidity of the radical Right during the inter-war period has at times lead to the appearance of a classificatory ‘essentialism’ that is only interesting when operationalised. In this respect, or rather, in the comparative analysis of the conditions conducive to the ascendancy of fascist movements in Europe, Michael Mann’s opus continues to be the most interesting operational reference produced in the past few years.

A second limitation, apparent in several of the chapters in the *Handbook of Fascism*, it is the intuitive and dysfunctional use of the concept of totalitarianism. It is interesting to note that after more than sixty years of use, its adoption by historians, initially with many reservations, is still not generally operationalised.³² However, the most important challenge will be the chronological and thematic enlargement of the comparison.

Italian Fascism and German National Socialism provided powerful institutional and political inspiration for other regimes, their types of leadership, institutions and operating methods already encapsulated the dominant models of the twentieth-century dictatorship at least in three domains: personalised leadership, the single or dominant party, and the ‘technico-consultative’ political institutions. The dictatorships associated with Fascism during the first half of the twentieth century were personalised dictatorships. It is interesting to see that even in those regimes that were institutionalised following military coups, military dictatorships gave birth to personalist regimes. The personalisation of leadership in dictatorial regimes became a dominant characteristic. More than half of twentieth-century dictatorships ‘initiated by the military, parties or a combination of the two had been partly or fully personalised within three years of the initial seizure of power’.³³ However, autocrats need institutions and elites to govern, and the role these played is often underestimated given the increased centralisation of decision-making to the dictators. To avoid seeing their legitimacy undermined and their authority usurped, dictators need to co-opt elites and either create or adapt institutions that are the locus of negotiation and, sometimes, decision-making.³⁴ On the other hand, as Amos Perlmutter noted, no

³² An excellent analysis of the relations between Fascism, authoritarianism and totalitarianism is Juan J. Linz, *Fascismo, Autoritarismo, Totalitarismo: Connessioni e differenze* (Roma: Ideazione, 2003).

³³ Barbara Geddes, ‘Stages of Development in Authoritarian Regimes’, in Vladimir Tismaneanu, Marc Morjé Howard and Rudra Sill, eds, *World Order after Leninism* (Seattle, WA: The University of Washington Press, 2006), 164.

³⁴ In relation to the Italian fascist regime, see Goffredo Adinolfi, ‘Political Elite and Decision-Making in Mussolini’s Italy’, in Pinto, ed., *Ruling Elites*, 19–54.

dictatorship can survive politically without the critical support of modern elites — bureaucrats, managers, technocrats and the armed forces.³⁵

The fascist regimes were also the first ideological one-party dictatorships located on the right of the European political spectrum, and their development—alongside the consolidation of the first communist dictatorship—decisively marked the typologies of dictatorial regimes. While Friedrich and Brzezinski recognised that the single party played a more modest role within the fascist regimes than it did within their communist peers, part of the classification debate about European Fascism and the theories of totalitarianism ‘deformed’ their role, often without any empirical support.³⁶ The inherent dilemma in the transformation of the single party as the dictatorship’s ‘ruling institution’ into the leader’s ‘instrument of rule’ is somewhat different in right-wing dictatorships than in their socialist equivalents.³⁷ In the dictatorships associated with Fascism, the single party was not the regime’s ‘ruling institution’: rather, it was one of many.

Many civilian rulers do not have a ‘ready-made organisation upon which to rely’, and to counteract that precarious position civilian dictators tend to have their own type of organisation.³⁸ During the inter-war period some fascist movements emerged either as rivals to or unstable partners in the single or dominant party, and often as inhibitors to their formation, making the institutionalisation of the regimes more difficult for the dictatorial candidates. However, the relationship between the dictators and their parties, particularly in those that existed prior to the taking of power, is certainly very complex. For example, Italian Fascism seems to provide a good illustration of the thesis that ‘where a party organisation has developed prior to the seizure (of power) in which able lieutenants have made their careers, possibly developed regional bases of support and command the loyalty of men who fought under them, party members also have greater ability to constrain and, if necessary, replace leaders’.³⁹ The centre of decision-making is also very different across the dictatorships. As many case studies have shown, ‘to mitigate the threat posed by elites, dictators frequently establish inner sanctums where real decisions are made and potential rivals are kept under close scrutiny’.⁴⁰

We can classify this investigation as the symbol of a ‘new institutionalist’ turn in the study of dictatorships, reassessing their previously neglected dimensions, such as decision-making, their constitutions, courts, and interests associations, or nominally democratic institutions, such as legislatures, parties and elections, which are most

³⁵ Amos Perlmutter, *Modern Authoritarianism: A Comparative Institutional Analysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 11.

³⁶ See Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956).

³⁷ See Paul Brooker, *Twentieth-Century Dictatorships: The Ideological One-Party States* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 9–10.

³⁸ Gandhi, *Political Institutions*, 29.

³⁹ Geddes, ‘Stages of Development’, 164.

⁴⁰ Gandhi, *Political Institutions*, 20.

typically integral to a dictatorial regime.⁴¹ The number of dictatorships has expanded so much since the Second World War that it is perhaps time to update our analytical tools in the light of the great variety of regimes and their ‘universals’. In fact, it may be time, as Michel Dobry recently wrote, to ‘bring the category or concept of Fascism back home’: in other words, to ‘think in relational terms’, and to use the comparative method seriously, leading to the ‘methodological normalisation of these phenomena’.⁴²

⁴¹ See Andeas Schiedler, ‘The New Institutionalism in the Study of Authoritarian Regimes’, *Working Paper N. 215*, 2009, CIDE, Mexico DF. For an overview of a ‘rational choice’ approach to the study of dictatorships see Ronald Wintrobe, ‘Dictatorship: Analytical Approaches’, in Carles Boix and Susan Stokes, eds, *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 363–94.

⁴² See Michel Dobry, ‘Desperately Seeking “Generic Fascism”: Some Discordant Thoughts on the Academic Recycling of Indigenous Categories’, in Pinto, ed., *Rethinking*, 53–84.