

paid employment and the limited and unevenly distributed resources for social policies continue to be major obstacles to becoming a mother in Italy today.

The variety of sources, approaches and interpretations presented by the contributors makes this volume stimulating reading. Although the challenging task of holding together this diversity of theoretical frameworks and methods is noticeable at times, this book is an unmissable text for all those interested in gender, family ties and Italian culture.

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Fascist Warfare, 1922–1945: Aggression, Occupation, Annihilation, edited by MIGUEL ALONSO, ALAN KRAMER, JAVIER RODRIGO, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, 338 pages, €85.59, ISBN 978-3-030-27647-8, 978-3-030-27648-5 (eBook).

The authors of this book focus on the ‘interpretative potential or analytical capacity’ of the concept of ‘fascist warfare’ (p. 2), which they identify as ‘war waged by states or armed forces that were fascist by self-definition or which oriented themselves by the example of fascist states and armed forces’ (p. 3). This broad definition permits the inclusion of Japan within the analytical framework. On the home front, fascist warfare availed itself of a command economy, a terrorist surveillance, and massive propaganda, to secure total mobilisation. It was contingent, being applied in specific times and places and, finally, it did not necessarily use modern technology but was based on ‘modern ideologies’ which, in turn, were the product of modern societies.

Fascist Warfare is organised in 11 chapters, comprising comparative studies aimed at pinpointing the common features of fascist warfare, together with essays focused on individual case studies. In the opening chapter, Alan Kramer traces the origins of fascist warfare to the First World War and its aftermath, to colonial warfare and to Clausewitzian annihilation warfare. Fascist warfare was not restricted to military campaigns, as it targeted ‘social, political, and ethnic collectives’ and ideologies (p. 25). It consequently had an unprecedented genocidal potential and fascists saw in it an instrument to change politics, economy and society as a whole.

Sven Reichardt argues, in the second chapter, that the Italo-Ethiopian War of 1935–6, the Spanish Civil War and Japan’s invasion of China transformed fascist warfare into a global phenomenon. Highlighting the reciprocal influence that the three powers had on one another, Reichardt considers a ‘symmetrical comparison’ with the war waged by the Allies, in order to assess the differences (p. 65). In the third chapter, Miguel Alonso studies the Spanish Civil War, successfully demonstrating that rebel violence cannot be understood simply as ‘military necessity’. To Franco’s forces ‘violence constituted the transformative element’ with which they could create Spain anew (p. 75). This meant that fascist warfare had a ‘contingent nature’: violence was used depending on the shifting military and political circumstances. Therefore, the Spanish Civil War was not ‘a fascist war in its entirety’ (p. 89).

Comparing the Spanish Civil War with the ‘four-way war’ in Northern Italy, in 1943–5, in the fourth chapter, Javier Rodrigo states that fascist war is intermingled with civil war. While ‘there is no single model of fascist warfare’, Rodrigo argues that the ‘violent national purification’ for which civil wars are fought fits with fascist ‘ideological constructs’ (p. 114). The fifth chapter,

by Amedeo Osti Guerrazzi, analyses the Italian, German and Japanese cultures of total annihilation. Osti Guerrazzi wonders whether fascist warfare can be distinguished by ‘the extreme radicalization of strategy and tactics’ common to all armies engaging guerrilla forces (pp. 119–20). The three Axis powers had a history of extremely violent colonial campaigns but what set fascist warfare apart is that the official government policy was to wage ‘an ideologically framed war of counter-insurgency conducted by colonial methods’ (p. 135).

Nicolas G. Virtue compares Italian military violence towards civilians in African colonies and in the Balkans, in the sixth chapter. Fascist military thinking, being part of the regime’s ‘reactionary modernism’ (p. 143), toyed with technology to define the ideal type of fascist warfare. Nonetheless ‘there is little indication’ that Italian generals acted because of ideological precepts and their use of terror and technology was both contingent and coherent with their colonial warfare experience (p. 147). Takuma Melber’s seventh chapter highlights Japanese Imperial Army officers’ fascination with the German ‘lightning war’ or blitzkrieg (p. 173), and how its study influenced the planning for the Malayan campaign, which culminated in the Sook Ching Massacre. General Yamashita Tomoyuki was instrumental in spreading the ‘German lightning war strategy’ though he dealt brutally with the Chinese population in Malaya according to the Japanese army’s own methods. Japanese officers who used concepts like ‘living space’ in their private conversations, were inspired by German warfare, and exported their ‘China experience’ to south-east Asia, make for a striking comparison between Japanese and German violent occupational tactics (p. 187). Using a cultural approach for the eighth chapter, Daniel Hedinger sees in the blitzkrieg the mythical ‘fascist style of warfare’ (p. 196). To the Japanese, lightning war was achieved through transnational cooperation between Europe’s fascist powers, and its success triggered the fascistisation of Japanese society (p. 214).

Jeff Rutherford emphasises in the ninth chapter how the ‘Third Reich viewed war as a means to create a racially-based empire’ (p. 222), departing from Imperial Germany’s war doctrines. Rutherford then studies the differences between the Polish campaign and the war against the Soviet Union. The determination with which the German Army waged total war and the state’s desire to fight a fascist war resulted in ‘extremely destructive violence’ which set the ‘German variant of fascist war’ apart (p. 235). Lovro Kralj’s tenth chapter focuses on how paramilitarism and nation-statism come into conflict after a fascist movement seizes power. He demonstrates his point by reconstructing the relationship between the ‘wild Ustashe’ and Pavelić’s Independent State of Croatia, where fascist paramilitaries were never subjugated. In the final chapter, Franziska Anna Zaugg analyses the Italian and German attempts to recruit Albanian units. Both Germans and Italians tried to exploit interethnic tensions. The difference between fascist warfare and traditional warfare meant that ethnic and political conflicts in Albania could not produce a ‘genuinely fascist or Nazi warfare’. On the contrary, ‘traditional loyalties and pre-modern patterns of violence’ prevailed (p. 285).

This edited collection is a useful tool to understand the way in which war, politics, ideologies, and military institutions influenced one another, both domestically and internationally. The concept of ‘fascist warfare’ still needs further scrutiny, but this collection follows the right path, linking military history to the latest historiography of fascism.

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