

INTRODUCTION



Paradoxically, the twentieth century was a time when Europe and its balance, nature and identity were at the heart of European intellectual reflection and public debate. I say paradoxically because increasingly broad discussion of the topic of Europe was accompanied by the continent gradually yet irreversibly losing its centrality and importance: the result of the globalization of economics and logistics dating back to the end of the previous century, the upheaval that followed the First World War and the subsequent shift in the global balance of power.¹ Confusion and fear, particularly among the intellectual and political elite, in the face of what felt like Europe's dying days, led to a widespread, almost all-encompassing debate seeking a way to overcome the crisis in Europe and European culture. The discussion, which involved different sides of the political argument and opposing ideologies, continued throughout the century, particularly in the wake of the First World War, though with some important contributions dating back to the beginning of the conflict.²

Without ever becoming a tangible political or economic reality – with the possible exception of the Nazi occupation of the continent between 1940 and 1942 – the topic of Europe made a deep impression on the old continent's political and cultural thinking in the first half of the twentieth century.³ The decades between the two world wars (1919–39) bore witness to perhaps the most fervent discussions about the crisis in Europe and the need to overhaul it, and politicians and intellectuals alike developed various plans for federations and confederations or forms of European supranationalism. Over 600 books and journal articles were dedicated to the idea of European unification, not to mention myriad newspaper articles on the subject.⁴

This vast wealth of experiences and reflection provided an important legacy to draw on after 1945, when economic and political plans for

European reconstruction and integration⁵ began to take shape following the tragic experience of the Second World War, triggered by the totalitarian Fascist and Nazi regimes' pursuit of power and expansionist goals.⁶ The desire to end the threat of imperialism, resulting from the nationalist and absolutist view of the state advocated by Fascism and Nazism, led to a profound rethinking of relations between the countries of Europe, and to the development and gradual implementation of (multiple) plans for a supranational union, with European states signing away at least some, or certain parts, of their economic, monetary and political sovereignty.⁷ Naturally, it was the new international political and economic conditions that emerged at the end of the war that enabled the plan for European integration to be implemented, albeit gradually: from the role played by the United States in Europe, starting with the Marshall Plan, to the Cold War and the resulting need to 'defend' the West from the Soviet threat, and the need to integrate Germany into the continent while also keeping it in check.⁸ Despite the difficulties and delays, a lack of understanding on the part of certain political forces and the stubborn endurance of nationalist perspectives and interests, from the 1950s a supranational organization began to take shape, initially focused predominantly on functional and economic issues, and later political and monetary concerns too.⁹

When the debate on Europe returned during the post-Second World War unification process, it took on different characteristics from the period following the First World War.

In the first half of the twentieth century, reflections on Europe had crossed disciplines, involving historians, politicians, poets, geographers, academics and philosophers, while after 1945 the debate took on a more 'specialist' character, in part reserved to scholars of international relations or European integration. This is not the place to investigate the reasons for this development, but one aspect that certainly played a part was the fact that Europe went from something purely theoretical and speculative in the prewar years to playing a more tangible, operational role, predominantly economic and functionalist in nature, and so requiring more technical and specialist knowledge than it had in the past. Significantly, however, these ideas are being challenged in the latest historical reflections on the process of European integration.¹⁰

In addition, the dominant, overpowering context of the Cold War contributed to the European unification process being conducted from an eminently Western perspective, with Europe identified with the West – both geographically and politically¹¹ – and general alignment with the liberal-democratic bloc, in opposition to communist Europe. It is unsurprising that a European integration process that was seen to stem from the bipolar global conflict and that sought to cement the values of the

liberal-democratic and capitalist West¹² did not particularly inspire many left-leaning intellectuals or politicians.¹³

The debate on Europe in the interwar period was marked not only by a breadth of voices but also by the contribution of thinkers from differing and opposing ideological and political standpoints: conservatives, progressives, nationalists, liberals and democrats.¹⁴ It goes without saying that these movements did not enjoy equal fortune after the Second World War, both in the short and longer term, and from both a political and historiographical perspective. Certain plans, like Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi's Paneuropa and the ideas of Aristide Briand and Jacques Maritain, and the proposals made during the Resistance by groups or individuals representing liberal-democratic or socialist thinking, were revisited in the postwar period,¹⁵ both academically and – at least in part – in practice. Meanwhile, historians have only recently begun to study and analyse other ideas that have long been sidelined politically.¹⁶

These include, for example, the proposals for a union or European confederation, or the concept of *Mitteleuropa* developed in 1920s Nazi Germany, which have only returned to the centre of historians' and political scientists' attention in recent decades, perhaps in response to the rise of nationalist movements.¹⁷ The emergence of new historiographical perspectives has shone a light on the continuity between the periods after the First and Second World Wars, giving greater weight to the caesura of 1917–18 than to 1945, and so once more seeing both the process of European integration and certain aspects of decolonialization and Europe's policies towards the former African colonies as part of a long-term development, with some differences, but equally plenty that remained unchanged.¹⁸

The contrast between the fate of the plans for a new Europe drawn up by Nazi ideologues and those devised by intellectuals or individuals representing Fascism has been particularly stark. Both regimes developed a supranational vision on a European or even extra-European and intercontinental level, albeit with a highly nationalistic and autocratic view of the state, the implementation of which was dependent on a plan of conquest and rule. Although both regimes were understandably banned from the public political debate and the process of European integration after the Second World War, the Nazi new European order nevertheless immediately caught the interest of historians, while the plans for a Fascist Europe remained at the margins of historical research, at least until recent decades. The military and political supremacy of the German Reich, corroborated by the invasions and military victories of 1940–43, imposed the vision of a new European order with Nazi Germany at its helm upon the continent,¹⁹ while the defeats suffered by Fascist Italy, which initially tried to fight a parallel war, before being forced to seek the assistance of its stronger ally, relegated

Italian plans for a new Fascist Europe, derailed by the events of the war, to the periphery of the Axis powers' policies. Even during the Nazi occupation of continental Europe, the Fascist regime did not manage to turn its plans for Europe into anything tangible or operational, despite frequently scaling them back in light of how the conflict was progressing and the orders of the Nazi high command.²⁰ Moreover, the Reich consistently marginalized the Fascist plans, not considering them worthy of much attention, particularly once the war had highlighted the regime's weakness.²¹

The vast gulf between the positions of the two regimes and the results they achieved seems to have been reproduced historiographically: historians have dedicated significant attention to the topic of the new Nazi order, albeit with differing viewpoints that have undoubtedly changed over the decades,²² while showing little interest overall in the Fascist plans for Europe.

In the first few decades after the war, scholars generally presented the Nazis' plans for a new Europe as unreliable and trivial,²³ treating them as propaganda tools designed to mask the regime's thirst for power.²⁴ As a result, it was perhaps only right-leaning historians that highlighted Nazism's genuine aspirations for the continent.²⁵

More recent scholarship, less concerned about the ideological and political repercussions of its judgements due to the authors' greater distance from the war and the experiences of the Nazi and Fascist dictatorships, has acknowledged that the Nazi plans actually contained substantial supranational thinking and a supranational organizational network based on economic, monetary and racial attributes, partly rooted in the ethno-nationalist *völkisch* movement, within an overall view of 'modernity' seen purely as an interpretive category, rather than in evaluative or moral terms.²⁶

Conversely, both Italian and international historians have paid scant regard to the Fascist plans for a new European order. When they have been investigated, the work has mostly stemmed from the interest of individual scholars, sometimes in fields only indirectly related to history, focused more on the history of political thinking,²⁷ or as part of a wider overview of Fascism, in which the Fascist Party's ideas for a new order were peripheral to the focus of the research.²⁸ In other cases, the Fascist vision of Europe was used as an approach to studying the regime's occupation policies during the Second World War,²⁹ and so centred more on the practical military and organizational elements of occupying territory than the long-term goals, which could only have been implemented following victory in the conflict.³⁰ More recent studies on the Rome-Berlin Axis have also mainly analysed the (undeniable) influence of German geopolitics on the Axis' cultural policies.³¹ There has therefore been discussion of a German Europe, a French Europe – from figures including Julien Benda

and Aristide Briand – and a Ventotene Europe – from people including Eugenio Coloni and Altiero Spinelli – but the features and aims of the planned Fascist Europe remain largely unresearched, although recent studies reveal stirrings of interest in the topic.³²

Despite their fragility and limited grounding in the political and economic reality of Fascist Italy, the vast number of plans for a new European order, incorporating (in the broadest sense) economic, political, social and organizational perspectives, are worthy of both scientific and historical investigation. They demonstrate the values, aspirations and world views of the political, cultural and scientific elite, which partially coincided or at least intersected with the Fascist ruling class, and offer insight into Fascist intellectuals' response to and interpretation of the shared, unanimous perception of a Europe in crisis. Furthermore, some philosophers and scholars who began thinking about Europe under Fascism continued their reflections in the new political climate following the Second World War, including Carlo Curcio and – more successfully – Gonzague de Reynold,³³ which lends itself to a comparison of developments between the post-First World War and post-Second World War periods. Equally, certain concepts worked on or developed as part of Fascist thinking, including most notably the idea of a unified Eurafrika, had supporters and theorists, albeit from a different angle, after the war, until at least the mid-1950s, especially in France.³⁴

Most importantly, examining how these plans developed over time enables one to reconstruct the evolution of the relationship between Italy and Germany, between Italy and its other allies in the Axis, and by extension between these countries and Germany, allowing one to relive the gradual shift in Fascist thinking from a Fascist Europe to a Europe of the Axis Powers, as the alliances changed in the mid to late 1930s. The conflict and tension between the two regimes, which remained dormant in peacetime but grew during the war, although they were concealed to protect the enemy and minor allies' illusion of a united Axis, were predominantly expressed through this channel: the battle for dominance in Europe following victory in the war. And as the German leadership was paying increasing attention to what Italy was writing about the new Europe, seeking any signals of dissent or criticism, as the military outlook became more pessimistic, especially for Italy, the Fascist regime responded by devoting ever more attention to the question, including stirring up some short-term political controversy.³⁵

This book focuses on the plans for Europe developed by Fascist Italy from the early 1930s onwards, which differed in many respects from the Europe the Nazi Führung aspired to. It follows their evolution over the years, and particularly during the conflict, when the military setbacks profoundly changed Italy's relationship with Germany and its other allies. These plans were also part of a wider and more fragmented reflection on Europe that

developed in the period after the First World War, which Italian Fascism was able to look at and draw upon in its plans, in part thanks to the network of transnational contacts it had been assembling since the 1920s.

While the new Nazi order in large part corresponded to the occupation policy the regime conducted in Europe between 1941 and 1945, the Reich's thoughts on the future of Europe were limited to select circles, and went silent during the war.³⁶ Meanwhile, the Fascists made copious, fine-tuned plans for Europe in the 1930s and throughout the war, inversely proportional to the reach and success they had both politically and in the eyes of historians.

I have accrued many debts of gratitude while writing this book, which is the result of a long and complex period of research, and I am grateful to the many people – colleagues and friends alike – who have advised, guided and supported me. While I cannot thank them all, I would at least like to mention Simona Colarizi and Antonio Varsori, who read the manuscript and whose suggestions and critiques helped me to hone the text; Carlo Fumian for the advice he so generously gave me, and, last but not least, Arnd Bauerkämper, who over the years has enabled me to tackle the topic of the new Fascist order multiple times, through conferences and other forms of collaboration. Finally, I would like to thank the Institut für Zeitgeschichte in Munich, and particularly its former director Horst Möller and current director Andreas Wirsching, for inviting me to be a visiting fellow on several occasions, which allowed me to conduct research in the archive and make use of the institute's extraordinary library.

This book is dedicated to my teacher, Angelo Ventura, recalling his words: 'It is only once you reach the end of a piece of work that you understand how it should have been done.'

Notes

1. Mazower, *Le ombre dell'Europa*, 9–15; Davies, *Storia d'Europa*, 1005–8; Kershaw, *Höllensturz: Europa 1914 bis 1949*, 13–19; Fumian, *Verso una società planetaria*.
2. Naumann, *Mitteleuropa*. Translated by Gino Luzzatto and published in Italy in 1918, it was recently rereleased (in 2018) by the Aragno publishing house in Turin, with the same translation.
3. Berti, *Crisi della civiltà liberale*, 133–65.
4. Chabot, *L'Idée d'Europe unie*, 13 (footnote).
5. Dumoulin and Stelandre, *L'idée européenne*; Conze, *Das Europa der Deutschen*, 292–96; Petricioli and Cherubini, *Pour la paix en Europe*; Lipgens, *European Integration*. On the 'cultural' limits to the process of constructing Europe: Hansen and Jonsson, *Eurafrica*.
6. Cattaruzza, Dyroff and Langewiesche, *Territorial Revisionism*.

7. For a comprehensive view, see Calandri, Guasconi and Ranieri, *Storia politica e economica*.
8. For wider context, see Leffler and Westad, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*; Romero, *Storia della guerra fredda*; D'Ottavio, *L'Europa dei tedeschi*.
9. For an overview, see Varsori, *Storia internazionale*, 145–80 and idem, *Il Patto di Bruxelles*; Gilbert, *Storia politica*.
10. On the emergence of new approaches to studying the process of European integration, see D'Ottavio, 'New Narratives', 99–132.
11. Kott, '“European” Integration', 112–16, and particularly 112–13.
12. Ferry, *L'Europe*; Ellwood, *L'Europa ricostruita* and idem, 'What Winning Stories Teach' 111–27; but see also Milward, *The European Rescue*.
13. Hewitson and D'Auria, *Europe in Crisis*, and in particular Vermeiren, 'Rudolf Pannwitz and the German Idea of Europe', 149. Regarding the position taken, for example, by the Italian Communist Party and the parliamentary debate around the Treaty of Rome in 1957, see Cruciani, 'La ratifica dei Trattati di Roma' and especially the speech by Giancarlo Pajetta, in *Atti Parlamentari, Camera dei Deputati*, 22 July 1957, 34518–28. See also Galante, *La politica del PCI*; Maggiorani, *Comunisti italiani*; Maggiorani and Ferrari, *L'Europa da Togliatti a Berlinguer*.
14. Voyelle, 'Histoire de l'Idée européenne', 348–53.
15. The first things to come to mind are, of course, the Ventotene Manifesto and/or figures like Altiero Spinelli and Eugenio Colorni; see Heyde, *De l'esprit de la Résistance*. See also, for example, Papini, *L'apporto del personalismo*; Viotto, *De Gasperi e Maritain*; Dumoulin, *Plans des temps de guerre*.
16. Conze, 'Per l'Europa'; Brunn, *Die Europäische Einigung*, 28. See also Soutou, *Europa!*, 11–19.
17. As well as Conze, *Das Europa der Deutschen*, see also, for example, Elvert, *Mitteleuropa!*. The aforementioned recent rerelease of Naumann's book is significant. See also my article, Fioravanzo, *Europa, Occidente, stato nazionale*.
18. See the conclusions drawn by Hewitson and D'Auria, *Europe in Crisis*, 324 and Hansen and Jonsson, *Eurafrica*, 24–27, 40–43 and 239–58, particularly 254.
19. Lund, *Working for the New Order*.
20. Fonzi, *Oltre i confini*.
21. It is, however, interesting to note that the Reich paid growing attention to Fascism's reflections on Europe as the war progressed, despite having absolutely no intention of implementing them. See Chapter 4.
22. Maier et al., *Die Errichtung der Hegemonie*; Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR, *Deutschland im zweiten Weltkrieg*: the topic of the Nazi new European order is tackled systematically in each of this work's volumes, which provide a chronological reconstruction of events related to Nazi Germany in the Second World War, while making only a few cursory mentions of the Fascist new European order. See Durand, *Il nuovo ordine europeo*; Collotti, *Europa nazista*; Natoli, 'Profilo del Nuovo Ordine Europeo', 42–66; Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, to cite but a few of the contemporary scholars who have worked on the new Nazi order. Notably, even in De Grazia and Luzzatto, *Dizionario del Fascismo* and Milza et al., *Dizionario dei fascismi*, the entry 'nuovo ordine europeo' (new European order) refers exclusively to Nazi Germany. The same applies to Dafinger and Pohl, *A New Nationalist Europe under Hitler*.
23. For an annotated review of Germany historiography on the new European order and how the concept has evolved from the postwar period to the present day, see Fonzi, 'Il Nuovo Ordine Europeo', 101–19 and idem, 'Nazionalsocialismo e nuovo ordine europeo', 313–66; also Frei, 'Volksgemeinschaft', 107–28. Similarly, Lutz

- Klinkhammer denies that the Nazis had a distinct plan for (Western and Eastern) Europe separate from its concrete occupation policies. See his entry for 'nuovo ordine europeo' in De Grazia and Luzzatto, *Dizionario del Fascismo*, 245.
24. See, for example, Hildebrand, *Das vergangene Reich*, 778, which describes it as if it were a cunning trick.
 25. Neulen, *Europa und das Dritte Reich* and idem, *Eurofascismo e la seconda guerra mondiale*.
 26. Strippel, *NS-Volkstumspolitik*; Aly, *Hitlers Volksstaat*; Fonzi, *La moneta nel grande spazio*. On the concept of modernity, see Gumbrecht, 'Modern, Modernität, Moderne', 93–131; Pathak, *Modernity, Globalization and Identity*; Frisby, 'Modernità'. Dafinger, 'Speaking Nazi-European' supports the theory that the Nazis made substantial plans for a new Europe. See also idem, 'Review of: "Das völkische Europa"'.
 27. This is true, for instance, of the almost pioneering essay by Dino Cofrancesco, 'Il mito europeo', 5–45; Ledeen, *L'Internazionale fascista*. See, however, Cuzzi, *L'internazionale delle camicie nere* and idem, *Antieuropa*.
 28. De Felice, *Mussolini l'alleato: L'Italia in guerra 1940–1943: Dalla guerra 'breve' alla guerra lunga* and idem, *Mussolini l'alleato: L'Italia in guerra 1940–1943: Crisi e agonia del regime*. See also, Emilio Gentile's works, particularly *La Grande Italia*, 193–225.
 29. Rodogno, *Il nuovo ordine mediterraneo*.
 30. I will take the liberty, if I may, of directing readers to Fioravanzo, 'Idee e progetti italiani' and idem, 'Die Europakonzeptionen'.
 31. Bassoni, *Haushofer e l'Asse Roma–Berlino*.
 32. Greiner, *Wege nach Europa*, 179–90; for the Italian perspective, see the recently published Soutou, *Europa!* and Bianco, *Mussolini e il 'nuovo ordine'*. Renzo De Felice's opinion that 'to date there have been no studies on Italy's military aims and, more generally, how the Italians saw the postwar "new order" and Fascist Italy's theoretical place and role in it, and on which [Mussolini] acted to counteract the Nazi plans and cement his vision, or at least carve out his own space within it' to some extent still applies. See De Felice, *Mussolini l'alleato: L'Italia in guerra 1940–1943: Dalla guerra 'breve' alla guerra lunga*, 133.
 33. For information on both scholars, see Chapter 2.
 34. Moser, *Europäische Integration*.
 35. See Vivarelli, *Fascismo e Storia d'Italia*, 151–53.
 36. De Grazia and Luzzatto, *Dizionario del Fascismo*, 245; Greiner, *Wege nach Europa*, 182.