

Universal Fascism and its Global Legacy. Italy's and Japan's Entangled History in the Early 1930s

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Abstract

In the early 1930s, fascism emerged as a global phenomenon. In Europe, Mussolini's Italy was the driving force behind this development, whereas in Asia the center of gravity lay in the Japanese Empire. But the relationship between Japan and the mother country of fascism, Italy, in the interwar period has been hardly examined. The following article thus focuses on the process of interaction and exchange between these two countries. Moreover, the question of Japanese fascism has previously been discussed from a comparative perspective and thereby generally with a Eurocentric bias. In contrast, this article adopts a transnational approach. Thus, the question under consideration is not whether Japan 'correctly' adopted Italian Fascism, so to speak, but rather the extent to which Japan was involved in the process of fascism's globalization. I will show that the pattern of influence in the early 1930s was certainly not limited to a single West-East direction and that fascism cannot be understood as a merely European phenomenon. This article begins by describing the rise and fall of universal fascism in the period from 1932 to 1934 from a global perspective. It secondly explores the legacies of fascism's global moment and its consequences for the subsequent formation of the Tokyo-Rome-Berlin Axis when, following the end of an utopian phase, a more 'realistic' phase of global fascist politics began, with all its fatal consequences.

Keywords

Fascism; Italy; Japan; global history; Axis powers; interwar period; transnational fascism

Introduction

While the English-speaking world may have reached some kind of a new consensus regarding fascism, from a global perspective this has yet to materialize.¹

¹ Roger Griffin, 'The Primacy of Culture: The Current Growth (Or Manufacture) of Consensus within Fascist Studies,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 37 (2002): 21–43. Concerning the spread of the consensus on fascism in global terms see especially page 25.

Imperial Japan is the perfect example of this. On the one hand, English-language comparative fascism research has repeatedly found that the concept is not applicable for this Far Eastern country.² Moreover, western experts on Japanese history have long struggled to see interwar Japan as a fascist country.³ The latter view has begun to change,⁴ but these findings have had almost no impact on international fascism research or on studies of the interwar period and the Second World War. On the other hand, a fascism paradigm prevailed for an extended period in Japan itself. For many Japanese historians – and not just the long-dominant Marxist school – Imperial Japan in the period between the ‘Manchurian Incident’ and Hiroshima was fascist.⁵ This certainty has now largely dissipated, and the thesis of an authoritarian ‘emperor-system-fascism’ or a ‘fascism from above’ has been called into question. However, the problem certainly remains present in internal Japanese debates. In East Asia, historians have increasingly begun to discuss Japanese fascism against a background of internal mobilization, total war and violence.⁶ From this perspective, the issue of whether Imperial Japan may be termed fascist has lost none of its virulence. In view of these disparate and mutually distant research contexts, there is certainly no question of a global consensus.

As a result Japan has a somewhat paradoxical status in international research on fascism: central and yet also peripheral and marginalized. The latter is true in that comparative fascism research scarcely considers the country, and frequently deals with it in just a few passages; on the other hand, it is

² See for example Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 336; or Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 153-154.

³ Peter Duus and Daniel I. Okimoto, ‘Comment: Fascism and the History of Pre-War Japan: The Failure of a Concept,’ *The Journal of Asian Studies* 39 (1979): 65-76.

⁴ As examples how the concept of fascism is used for Japan see Andrew Gordon, *Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Harry D. Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Janis Mimura, *Planning for Empire: Reform Bureaucrats and the Japanese Wartime State* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011) and Francesco Gatti, *Il fascismo giapponese* (Milano: F. Angeli, 1983).

⁵ This article follows the Japanese practice of writing a person's last name followed by their first name. Ōuchi Tsutomu, *Fashizumu e no michi: Nihon no rekishi* 24 (Tokyo: Chūōkōron shinsha, 2006 (1967)); Nakamura Kikuo, *Ten'nōsei fashizumu ron* (Tokyo: Harashobō, 1967); and Ikeda Jun, *Nihon fashizumu taisei shiron* (Tokyo: Azekurashobō, 1997). Most influential have been the writings of Maruyama Masao published just after the war, see Sekiya Noboru, ‘Fashizumu to shimin shakai,’ in *Maruyama Masao ron: Shutaiteki sakui, fashizumu, shimin shakai*, ed. Kobayashi Masaya (Tokyo: Tōkyō daigaku shuppankai, 2003).

⁶ Tino Schölz, ‘Faschismuskonzepte in der japanischen Zeitgeschichtsforschung,’ in *Geschichtswissenschaft in Japan: Themen, Ansätze und Theorien*, ed. Sebastian Conrad, Hans Martin Krämer and Tino Schölz (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 107-134, especially 133-134. See also Yamanouchi Yasushi, Narita Ryūichi and Victor Koschmann, *Total War and ‘Modernization’* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

central in the sense that almost no work on fascism makes do without references to Japan.⁷ The case of Imperial Japan is compelling for reasons which are easy to justify: in view of the history of the Tokyo-Rome-Berlin Axis and the war in East Asia, the Japanese Empire is the most significant non-European case study for a global history of fascism in the 1930s and early 1940s. However, the Japanese case is a challenging one, as it presents a whole series of unsettling questions for a global history of fascism. For example: in which ways was East Asia a part of fascism's globalization in the early 1930s? How was Japan's radicalization in the 1930s connected to European fascism? And last but not least, what was the role of the war in East Asia in fascism's globalization?

However, to date these questions have scarcely been asked. This mainly has to do with the fact that when fascism research has addressed Japan, it has done so from a comparative perspective.⁸ It has generally adopted a European model for its examination of East Asia and considered its suitability. This approach is often as Eurocentric as it is normative and has rightly been criticized as such.⁹ It is also ahistorical. As the following article will show, the process of influence in the early 1930s was certainly not limited to a single West-East direction.

Thus, this article reverses the question. It is not a case of whether Japan correctly adopted fascism, but rather to what extent 1930s Japan was part of the history of fascism's globalization. The question is: what difference does it make if one sees fascism as a transnational project, inquires into the relevant linkages, examines the issue from a non-European perspective and includes Japanese source materials – in other words, if one considers a history of transfers and entanglements? This perspective has recently been adopted for other non-European case studies – such as India – but not for Japan, the most important protagonist in Asia.¹⁰ In particular, the relationship between Japan and the mother country of fascism, Italy, in the interwar period has been hardly

⁷ As examples of the place of Japanese fascism in western studies see Victoria de Grazia and Sergio Luzzatto, *Dizionario del fascismo* (Torino: Einaudi, 2002–2003), especially the article 'Giappone' written by Tessa Morris-Suzuki as well as Payne, *A History of Fascism* and Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*.

⁸ For a comparative perspective see Gregory James Kasza, 'Fascism from Below? A Comparative Perspective on the Japanese Right, 1931–1936,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 19 (1984): 607–629; Yamaguchi Yasushi, *Fashizumu* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2006); Hans Martin Krämer, 'Faschismus in Japan: Anmerkungen zu einem für den internationalen Vergleich tauglichen Faschismusbegriff,' *Sozial Geschichte: Zeitschrift für historische Analyse des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts* 20 (2005): 6–32.

⁹ Gordon, *Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan*, 334.

¹⁰ For a literature survey on the Indian and Arab cases see Maria Framke, 'Encounters with Fascism and National Socialism in non-European Regions,' *South Asia Chronicle* 2 (2012): 350–374.

examined.¹¹ The following article thus focuses on the process of these two countries' interaction during the early 1930s. Its first section shows how efforts to export fascist ideologies – in the words of fascism's protagonists, to universalize it – must be seen as a global moment during the years 1932–1934.¹² A second section discusses how, after the project of universal fascism had proven utopian, the legacy of this global moment influenced the formation of the Axis in the period thereafter.

Universal fascism's global moment: the years 1932 and 1933

Mussolini's ambitions to export Fascism

The early 1930s saw a globalization of fascist ideologies. The reasons for this are manifold, complex and transnational. As I shall show, they cannot be limited to a single country and still less to individual protagonists. However, it is clear that Fascist Italy played a pioneering role.

Mussolini had long maintained that fascism was not exportable and had insisted on its *italianità*. But in retrospective he adopted a quite different tone: 'Between 1929 and today [March 1934], fascism has evolved from an Italian phenomenon to a universal one.'¹³ Mussolini thus accepted a development which had not originated with him. Looking back over the past five years, he adopted it. What had happened? At the end of the first decade of Fascist rule in Italy, some people – including members of Mussolini's regime such as Arnaldo Mussolini and Giuseppe Bottai – had begun to speak of international

¹¹ The most important exception here is Reto Hofmann, 'The Fascist Reflection: Japan and Italy, 1919–1950,' (PhD diss., Columbia University 2010). A diplomatic history can be found in Valdo Ferretti, *Il Giappone e la politica estera italiana, 1935–41* (Milano: Giuffrè, 1995); and Paul W. Frey, *Faschistische Fernostpolitik: Italien, China und die Entstehung des weltpolitischen Dreieckes Rom-Berlin-Tokio* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1997); as well as Ishida Ken, 'The German-Japanese-Italian Axis as Seen from Fascist Italy,' in *Japan and Germany: Two Latecomers to the World Stage, 1890–1945*: Volume II, ed. Kudo Akira, Erich Pauer and Tajima Nobuo (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2009), 262–301.

¹² For the concept of global moments see Sebastian Conrad and Dominic Sachsenmaier, 'Introduction,' in *Competing Visions of World Order: Global Moments and Movements, 1880s–1930s* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 1–25. In the following, the terms 'universal fascism' and 'universalization of fascism' are used to characterize contemporary attempts to export fascism and to use it as an international political instrument. The Italian Fascists themselves defined their programme as universal, since they shunned the communist-shaped concept of internationalization; the project of universalizing fascism naturally proved utopian in many respects; by way of differentiation, in the following the terms globalization, globality and global will be used wherever actual transnational and intercontinental processes and trends can be identified from a historical perspective.

¹³ Benito Mussolini, *Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini, XXVI* (Florence: La Fenice, 1958), 185.

ambitions for fascism. Mussolini himself had long been sceptical of such an idea. As late as March 1932, in an interview with a German newspaper he emphasized that fascism could never be exported to any other country.¹⁴ Yet a change of heart followed. On October 25 of the same year he announced on Milan's Cathedral Square: 'In a decade Europe will be fascist!'¹⁵ At the same time, he began to refer to the twentieth century as the century of fascism. The October issue of the party's organ *Gerarchia* [Hierarchy] was entitled the 'universal mission of Rome' – for Mussolini, this was a mission which entailed uniting the Occident with the Orient, on a spiritual and moral level in particular.¹⁶

This new, exportable fascism was to serve as a model for other countries.¹⁷ With Mussolini's blessing foreign fascist parties were to be supported, so as to encourage the ideology's breakthrough initially in Europe and thereafter the world over. This realignment had also an impact at the institutional level. A *Centro di studi internazionali sul fascismo* [Centre for international fascist studies] was established in Lausanne. In mid-1933 the *Comitati d'Azione per l'Universalità di Roma* [CAUR; Committees of Action for the Universality of Rome] was established. In the following year, this body organized the international *Congresso Fascista* [Fascist Congress] in Montreux. And propaganda support was provided through government organs such as *Gerarchia*, *Critica Fascista*, *Ottobre* or *L'Antieuropa*. Historians see this realignment at the beginning of the 1930s as so fundamental for the country and the regime that they refer to a new phase of fascism.¹⁸

This ideological reorientation can be attributed to a whole series of factors, both internal and external in nature. Internally, by the end of the 1920s the regime had consolidated itself but the promised fascist revolution had stalled. With the onset of the world economic crisis, it became apparent that the regime was not able to follow through on its plans of reforming Italian society.¹⁹ A younger generation of fascists began to ask for change. Given the

¹⁴ Quoted in Marco Cuzzi, *L'internazionale delle camicie nere: I Caur 1933-1939* (Milano: Ugo Mursia, 2005), 56.

¹⁵ Benito Mussolini, *Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini, XXV* (Florence: La Fenice, 1958), 148.

¹⁶ Benito Mussolini, 'La missione universale di Roma,' *Gerarchia* 12 (1932): 801-809.

¹⁷ See for example Giovanni Selvi, 'Fermentazione fascista nel mondo,' *Gerarchia* 15 (1935): 567-582, here especially 568.

¹⁸ Marco Cuzzi, *Antieuropa: Il fascismo universale di Mussolini* (Milano: M & B Publishing, 2006), 57. See also Michael Arthur Ledeen, *Universal Fascism: The Theory and Practice of the Fascist International, 1928-1936* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1972) and Beate Scholz, 'Italienischer Faschismus als "Export"-Artikel (1927-1935): Ideologische und organisatorische Ansätze zur Verbreitung des Faschismus im Ausland' (PhD diss., University of Trier, 2001).

¹⁹ Alan Cassels, 'Mussolini and the Myth of Rome,' in *The Origins of the Second World War Reconsidered: A.J.P. Taylor and the Historians*, ed. Gordon Martel (London: Routledge 1999), 57-74, here 61.

nature of the regime, the only thing left to them was to demand international expansion. Since domestic reforms had proved to be an utopia, the universalization of the ideology was an escapist impulse. Historians have interpreted this development as a revolt against the Duce and his regime.²⁰ If this was actually the case, then the regime had rapidly and successfully swallowed the revolt while lending itself fresh revolutionary trappings. It was surely also crucial that in 1932 the regime's leaders were looking to take stock of the first decade and were seeking a new thrust for the second decade of fascist rule. For many of them, universalizing fascism also meant new projects, challenges and adventures.

These internal factors were accompanied by a whole series of external ones. One trigger was the world economic crisis. Far from signifying the 'end of globalization' – as is frequently maintained²¹ – the Great Depression certainly impelled globalization at other levels: including the universalization of fascism, to name but one. This was also associated with, and marked a response to, pan-European movements in connection with the League of Nations. However, Italian research has mainly linked this development to the rise of the National Socialists in Germany. In this context the universalization of fascism was even seen as a kind of *Brennero ideologico* against Nazism.²² This interpretation is not new. Also German contemporaries already emphasized such a reading: 'From the very start, fascism bore the embryo of the idea of a new Imperium Romanum. . . . However, realization of the fascist and Roman imperial idea began only with the unification of the north through the Third Reich,' the journal *Die Tat* [The Deed, or The Action] asserted in 1934.²³ However, such a reading sees the Italians as overly passive and overestimates the German influence. Mussolini's conversion to universal fascism had already taken place in 1932 and thus prior to Hitler's seizure of power. The movement of universal fascism was by no means a passive reaction to events in the north and instead reveals the Italian Fascists' own designs for change. This becomes clear if one looks beyond Europe – and toward East Asia especially. Universal fascism was by no means limited to Europe, as one might easily believe from the research literature. It was instead directly associated with the regime's imperial projects, which mainly focused on a non-European context and would ultimately

²⁰) Ledeen, *Universal Fascism*, XVIII–XX.

²¹) See for example Harold James, *The End of Globalization: Lessons from the Great Depression* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

²²) *Brennero ideologico* describes an ideological Italian bulwark against Germany and the Nazis and is named after Brennero, a municipality near Bolzano in the North of Italy. Cuzzi, *L'internazionale delle camicie nere*, 15. See also Cassels, 'Mussolini and the Myth of Rome,' 61. For a contemporary perspective on the conflict between Fascism and National Socialism see for example Selvi, 'Fermentazione fascista nel mondo,' 579–581.

²³) Giseler Wirsing, 'Europa nach Marseille,' *Die Tat* 26 (1934): 561–577, here 563.

leave their mark on the second decade of fascist rule. In relation to the universalization of fascism Mussolini consistently emphasized that Italy's goals lay in Asia and Africa.²⁴ In this context, Italy naturally increasingly focused on East Asia.²⁵ However, these European developments could never have achieved their global impact if East Asia had not been undergoing fundamental change at the same time. Following the so-called Manchurian Incident a separate centre of gravity arose, which is essential to any understanding of the history of fascism's universalization.

The Manchuria Crisis and Japan's fascism boom

In Japan, Italy's efforts to globalize fascism were noted immediately, and met with a generally warm response. For the daily newspaper *Ōsaka Mainichi Shimbun*, 'fascism [was] a new global reality' already in early 1932.²⁶ Moreover, records in the Japanese archives confirm that news of Mussolini's speeches in October 1932 – in which he proclaimed the universalization of fascism – arrived in Tokyo just a few days later.²⁷ But it was not only the officials of the Japanese foreign ministry who were well informed of fascism's new global ambitions. 'The fascist storm which first appeared in Milan has now seized the entire world'.²⁸ These were the first few words of a book published in 1933 with the title *Fascism and the Future of the Japanese Empire*. The reference to Milan is somewhat ambiguous: on the one hand, it may refer to Mussolini's key speech of October of the previous year, while on the other Milan may be more generally interpreted as the origin of the regime. However, the use of this metaphor of a 'storm' in connection with the universalization of fascism was certainly not an isolated instance.²⁹ Alternatively, fascism was frequently referred to as a global current.³⁰ In this light, Italian Fascism's global ambitions met with a rapid and often enthusiastic response in Japan.

However, this is likely attributable less to the international effectiveness of fascist propaganda than to the situation in Japan itself. The occupation of Manchuria, without any immediate difficulties, in late 1931 had triggered

²⁴ Mussolini, *Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXVI, 191.

²⁵ Visible in the Historical Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, see for example Archivio Storico Ministero Degli Affari Esteri [ASMAE], Affari Politici [AP], Giappone, Busta 5 (1933).

²⁶ *Ōsaka Mainichi Shimbun*, January 7, 1932, quoted in ASMAE, AP, Giappone, Busta 3, 'Fascismo Giapponese'.

²⁷ See Japan Center for Asian Historical Records – National Archives of Japan, reference code B02032302100, available at <http://www.jacar.go.jp>, accessed May 25, 2013.

²⁸ Hōjō Tominosuke, *Fassho to kōkoku no shōrai* (Tokyo: Kinnōrenmei Honbu, 1933), without page numbers, introduction.

²⁹ Date Ryūjō, *Fassho no arashi* (Tokyo: Meiji toshoshuppan kyōkai, 1932).

³⁰ Tsuda Mitsuzō, *Nihon fassho no gensei: Kaisetsu hihan oyobi kensetsu riron* (Tokyo: Gunji kyōikusha 1933), 1.

euphoria among much of the Japanese population. However, fear and uncertainty increased amid serious fighting in Shanghai at the start of the new year, leading to international criticism of Japan's behaviour. Meanwhile the League of Nations established a committee of inquiry in East Asia.³¹ Soon, leaving the League of Nations seemed the only feasible path for Japan. In this context, turning to fascism was an obvious step to escape international isolation.

Japanese commentators went a crucial step further. For them, the 'Manchurian Incident' was itself a product of an authentically Japanese form of fascism.³² 'The forces that brought about the Manchurian Incident are the same forces that have favoured the rise of fascistic clamours which have taken the institutional form of "National Socialism",' wrote a professor by the name of Masui in early 1932 in *The Japan Times & Mail*. And he added: 'The one should not be considered as the cause or effect of the other, for both have come from the same genetic forces.'³³

Thus the Manchuria crisis provided the background for fascism's mutation into a political fashion in Japan. 'No topic is more popularly and more heatedly discussed in Japanese periodicals today than is fascism,' the above-mentioned article asserted.³⁴ Masui was right in relation to the press: for example, one of Japan's foremost magazines, *Chūō Kōron*, which was a central organ for intellectual debates in this period, published many articles discussing different aspects of fascism as well as Mussolini's achievements in Italy.³⁵ Specialist journals such as *Gaikō Jihō*, the leading magazine for foreign policy issues, were also unable to resist this trend. It is interesting to note that this magazine had already published a key article on this issue in July 1932 – some months before Mussolini's speech in Milan.³⁶ This shows that fascism was already widely discussed in Japan even before Mussolini had embarked on his campaign for its universalization. Accordingly, Japan's heightened interest in fascism ultimately reflects domestic political trends. As Japanese commentators correctly recognized, this was triggered by the conflict over Manchuria and the dispute with the League of Nations.

³¹ Concerning the reactions of the Japanese public to the Manchurian crisis see Sandra Wilson, *The Manchurian Crisis and Japanese Society, 1931-33* (London: Routledge, 2002).

³² See for example *Ōsaka Mainichi Shimbun*, January 7, 1932. For the connection between the Manchurian Crisis and fascism see also Imanaka Tsugimaro, 'Fassho no ninshiki to taisaku,' *Gaikō Jihō* 63 (1932): 108-117, here especially 117.

³³ L. G. Masui, 'The Rise of "National Socialism" in Japan,' *The Japan Times & Mail*, January 31, 1932. A copy of the article can be found in ASMAE, AP, Giappone, Busta 3, 'Fascismo Giapponese'.

³⁴ L. G. Masui, 'The Rise of "National Socialism" in Japan'.

³⁵ See for example Uchida Shigetaka, 'Fasshisuto dokusai to demokurashī no shōrai,' *Chūō Kōron* 48 (1933): 59-70; or Sakisaka Itsurō, 'Fashizumu keizaigaku,' *Chūō Kōron* 48 (1933): 28-37. The word 'fassho' became so popular that authors even used it as titles for their fictional stories. For example Tokunaga Sunao, 'Fassho,' *Chūō Kōron* 47 (1932): 1-56.

³⁶ Imanaka, 'Fassho no ninshiki to taisaku'.

To be sure, Italian Fascism had already undergone an initial examination in the 1920s, although this mainly related to a fascination with the personality of the Duce.³⁷ Moreover, the first books which presented Italian Fascism to a Japanese readership had already appeared in the 1920s.³⁸ But the post-1931 boom assumed entirely new dimensions. And it is scarcely a coincidence that the first translation of *Mein Kampf* was published in 1932.³⁹ Numerical proof can also be adduced for increased Japanese interest in the aftermath of the Manchuria Crisis. In 1932 the *Asahi Shimbun* – one of the country's leading newspapers – published seventy-two articles featuring the word *fassho* (at the time, this was the most frequent translation for the term fascism, alongside *fashizumu*); one year earlier, the word had appeared on only six occasions.⁴⁰ The term featured even more frequently that same year in Japan's second major daily newspaper, the *Yomiuri Shimbun*. Here too, a similar quantum leap is evident in relation to 1931.⁴¹ The fascism boom was also soon reflected on the book market: according to the national library's database, seventeen titles appeared in 1932 which explicitly referred to fascism, and almost twice as many did so in the following year.⁴²

Such figures do not in themselves tell us anything about the nature of the huge growth of interest in fascism in 1932 and 1933. While previous publications presented European fascisms as a phenomenon which was alien, publications now generally referred to contemporary developments in Japan. The central questions were whether Japan would soon turn fascist, and the likely characteristics of a Japanese fascism.⁴³ From the spring of 1932, the *Nihon Fasshizumu renmei* [Japanese Fascist League] published a new monthly journal entitled *Fasshizumu*. It also provided a definition of Japanese fascism: 'Japanese fascism is, above all, a (popular) nationalism deriving from Japanese consciousness, a national movement and a reform movement to strengthen social justice. It also resolutely faces the world as a nationalist movement which speaks majestically to the Japanese nation, the Japanese and Japan.'⁴⁴

³⁷ Hofmann, 'The Fascist Reflection,' 86.

³⁸ Inoue Seiichi, *Mussorini to sono fashizumu* (Tokyo: Jitsugyō no nihonsha, 1928) as well as Giulio Aquila and Hiroshima Sadayoshi, *Italia ni okeru fashizumu undō* (Tokyo: Hakuyōsha, 1927).

³⁹ Adolf Hitler, *Yo no tōsō: Doitsu kokumin shakai shugi undō* (Tokyo: Naigaisha, 1932). See also Adolf Hitler, *Kokuminteki seikaikan* (Tokyo: Naigaisha, 1932). Concerning the translation process of *Mein Kampf* see Iwamura Masashi, "'Waga tōsō': Nihongoban no kenkyū: Hitorā no "tainichi henken" mondai wo chūshin ni,' *Mediashi kenkyū* 16 (2004): 53–73.

⁴⁰ See the archive of the *Asahi Shimbun*, <http://database.asahi.com/library2/main/help/help.html>, accessed May 18, 2013.

⁴¹ See the archive of the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/rekishikan>, accessed May 18, 2013.

⁴² See the Digital Library from the Meiji Era, <http://kindai.ndl.go.jp>, accessed May 24, 2013.

⁴³ See for example Hōjō, *Fassho to kōkoku no shōrai*; or Tsuda, *Nihon fassho no gensei*.

⁴⁴ Author unknown, 'Nihon fasshizumu to wa nani ka,' *Fasshizumu* 2 (1932), 9–10.

The actual details of the program may appear rather vague and even meaningless, as in most such cases. But the crucial point is that, from the very start, Japanese fascism's proponents took it to be a program through which the country would turn its attention to the world at large, while also initiating domestic social reforms.

The Italians had their own interpretation of Japan's fascism boom. First and foremost, they saw it as proof that fascism really had been universalized. And they quickly identified the situation's underlying potential.⁴⁵ The Italian foreign ministry – which from the summer of 1932 was led by Mussolini – therefore began to show interest in Japanese fascism.⁴⁶ The archives of the foreign ministry include a dossier entitled *Fascismo Giapponese* for the first time in 1932.⁴⁷ This includes a January report which notes the 'strong sympathy which fascism enjoys [in Japan]'.⁴⁸ The Italian ambassador, Giovanni Cesare Majoni, remarked confidently in March: 'Healthy public opinion understands the nature of Italian Fascism. It continues to gain sympathy, and the number of its supporters is rising continuously.'⁴⁹ And regarding its organization in early 1933 of visits by Italian tourists, the embassy translated a Japanese newspaper article saying: 'Japan has recently witnessed a strong increase in interest in Italian Fascism; accordingly, the country's population generally views Italian tourists with enthusiasm and welcomes them.'⁵⁰

Journals committed to the universalization of fascism as *Ottobre* now began to intensively focus on Japan.⁵¹ This attention yielded mixed results. Commentators were frequently unable to give credence to the notion of Japan undergoing a strictly fascist transformation along the lines of the Italian model. Nor were Italy's diplomats in the Far East confident: they referred to 'pseudo fascism' in relation to Japan and repeatedly emphasized that a broad variety of movements were labelled 'fascist' in Japan.⁵² The Italian side was also disgruntled by Italy's evident lack of influence over developments in the Far East.

⁴⁵ Dispatch by Ambassador Giovanni Cesare Majoni from Tokyo to Rome, 'Socialdemocrazia, nazismo,' February 8, 1932, in ASMAE, AP, Giappone, Busta 3, 'Fascismo Giapponese'.

⁴⁶ For the year 1932 see also ASMAE, AP, Affari Politici, Giappone, Busta 5.

⁴⁷ ASMAE, AP, Giappone, Busta 3, 'Fascismo Giapponese'.

⁴⁸ Dispatch by Ambassador Giovanni Cesare Majoni from Tokyo to Rome, 'Pseudo fascismo o nazional-socialismo giapponese,' January 16, 1932, in ASMAE, AP, Giappone, Busta 3, 'Fascismo Giapponese'.

⁴⁹ Dispatch by Ambassador Giovanni Cesare Majoni from Tokyo to Rome, 'Nazismo, nazionalismo, Svisamento fascismo,' March 28, 1932, page 3, in ASMAE, AP, Giappone, Busta 3, 'Fascismo Giapponese'.

⁵⁰ Dispatch 'Notiziario stampa giapponese,' February 23, 1933, in ASMAE, AP, Giappone, Buste 5, 'Giornali e giornalisti'.

⁵¹ Andrée Viollis, 'Il formidabile sviluppo del movimento fascista in Giappone,' *Ottobre* 1 (1933); Andrée Viollis, 'Il fascismo e i partiti popolari in Giappone,' *Ottobre* 1 (1933); both quoted in Cuzzi, *Antieuropa*, 226.

⁵² Majoni, 'Pseudo fascismo o nazional-socialismo giapponese'.

While in its activities in Europe the CAUR sought to safeguard Italy's pioneering role in the universalization of fascism, the distant and rapidly unfolding developments in East Asia appeared beyond their control, and were therefore also a threat for them. This was also increasingly associated with fears that Japan might ultimately opt to follow the model of German National Socialism.⁵³ In Germany, the situation frequently appeared to be quite the opposite. In late 1932, the *Vossische Zeitung* reported the founding of a fascist party in Japan under the headline 'The Roman model'.⁵⁴

However, the fears of the Italians and Germans appear unjustified, since the Japanese in any case intended to pursue their own specific path. In Imperial Japan, an overly close association with the 'Roman model' was a thorn in the eye for some. Under the heading 'Fascismo italiano e fascismo giapponese', in April 1932 the Italian embassy reported a speech given by Japan's minister of war, Araki Sadao, who emphasized that Japan had no need for external products such as fascism to achieve its ultranationalist goals.⁵⁵ Baron Hiranuma Kiichirō made similar comments in this period.⁵⁶ Yet the Italian ambassador Giovanni Cesare Majoni repeatedly pointed to the paradox that it was precisely these two who were seen as leading fascists, either of whom might be expected to become the country's future leader in the event of a coup d'état. Indeed, many in Japan did see General Araki as a proponent of fascistic ideology. Shortly before giving his speech he had participated in a revolt – the so-called 'Incident of March 15' – which failed but resulted in the death of the prime minister, Inukai Tsuyoshi. The insurrectionaries would have granted Araki, who was already a member of the current government, a leading role in their new order. The 'Incident of March 15' is often interpreted as a turning-point in modern Japanese history. It put an end to the epoch of party governments and the so-called *Taishō* democracy. There is good reason to see it as the beginning of the fascist era in Japan, as many historians have indeed done. But for Japan's fascism boom – reflected in the frequent use of such words as *fassho* or *fashizumu* – the incident had a paradoxical effect. From this moment onward, fascism was increasingly associated with political terror and internal revolution; many started to reject the use of such terms, which they perceived as alien and non-Japanese.

⁵³ For 1935 see for example ASMAE, AP, Giappone, Busta 10, 'Dichiarazioni Germanofile degli Ambasciatore Giapponese a Berlino'.

⁵⁴ Author unknown, 'Das römische Vorbild,' *Vossische Zeitung*, December 23, 1932, quoted in ASMAE, Ministero della Cultura Popolare, Busta 129.

⁵⁵ Dispatch by Ambassador Giovanni Cesare Majoni from Tokyo to Rome, 'Fascismo italiano e fascismo giapponese,' April 25, 1932, quoted in ASMAE, AP, Giappone, Busta 3, 'Fascismo Giapponese'.

⁵⁶ Majoni, 'Fascismo italiano e fascismo giapponese'.

Thus, the fascist moment in Japan was short-lived. Certainly this was true of the currency of the terms: *fassho* and *fashizumu* lost their appeal as quickly as they had gained it. In 1933, the terms featured in major daily newspapers with roughly the same frequency as in the previous year. However, it is now used increasingly frequently as a means of slandering political opponents, while noting its origin as an unpatriotic western import. Books which vehemently criticized fascism also began to appear.⁵⁷ Italy heedfully noted this trend. Its ambassador, Majoni, reported to Rome that in the aftermath of March's revolt the term fascism was now virtually invisible in Japanese newspapers.⁵⁸

Other catchwords which emphasized Japan's distinctiveness and independence now became (once again) fashionable – the newspapers made frequent reference to *Shōwa ishin*, *kokutai*, *kōdō* oder *ōdō* [Shōwa restoration, the body of the nation, the imperial path/rule, righteous/imperial rule]. From this moment on, also Pan-Asianism became more and more a political tool for the former advocates of fascism. This ideology – which may be seen as a peculiarly Japanese version of universalized fascism – would play a central role in the Empire's impending expansion.⁵⁹ To be sure, Pan-Asian ideologies can be traced back to around the turn of the century, but they were increasingly seized upon by military leaders and politicians in the wake of the Manchuria Crisis. They now directly legitimated Japan's plans for Imperial expansion. Over the next decade cooperation with Asian independence movements intensified in the guise of Pan-Asianism. A Japanese strategy for the reordering of Asia thus emerged which could be seen as a counterpart to the fascists' and the National Socialists' concepts for reorganizing Europe. Over the course of the decade Pan-Asian ideas became increasingly universal in terms of their geographical scope. They initially called for the reordering of East Asia, then of Asia as a whole and finally of the entire world. This final goal is exemplified by the term *Hakkō ichiu* [literally 'eight crown cords, one roof' i.e. 'all the world under one roof'] which became fashionable towards the end of the decade and expressed the utopia of Imperial supremacy throughout the world.

It is tempting to conclude that Japan had thus developed its own specific form of universal fascism. However, this universalized version of Japaneseness proved to be as utopian as the Italians' attempts to universalize fascism. But Italian diplomats certainly noted this development and the attendant

⁵⁷ Hasegawa Nyozeikan, *Nihon fashizumu hihan* (Tokyo: Ōhatashoten, 1932). See also Date, *Fassho no arashi*.

⁵⁸ Dispatch by Ambassador Giovanni Cesare Majoni from Tokyo to Rome, 'Fascismo', June 20, 1932, in ASMAE, AP, Giappone, Busta 3, 'Fascismo Giapponese'.

⁵⁹ For Pan-Asianism see Sven Saaler and Christopher W. A. Szpilman, *Pan-Asianism: A Documentary History* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011).

dangers for Italy. From 1934 detailed reports appear on Japanese Pan-Asianism – frequently full of concern, in the belief that Italian Fascism's diminished significance in this part of the world would thwart Italy's own universalistic designs.⁶⁰

The global legacy of universal fascism: 1934 and thereafter

Had the project of universalizing fascism thus already run its course by the middle of the decade? This may appear so at first sight. While the term 'fascism' largely vanished from Japan's political vocabulary in 1934, by the end of that same year, at the latest, the proponents of universal fascism in Italy suffered increasingly strident criticism. One reason for the latter was the perceived failure, in the regime's judgment, of the fascist congress held in Montreux in 1934, which Japan and Germany – revealingly – did not even attend.⁶¹ In the opinion of Galeazzo Ciano who was responsible for the CAUR's activities as press spokesman and designated propaganda minister and his father-in-law, Benito Mussolini, the figurehead of this movement, Eugenio Coselschi, had invited the wrong sort of people to attend this congress. The movement's early protagonists now suffered a rapid loss of political influence. Moreover, in Europe Italy now faced a powerful ideological competitor in the shape of National Socialist Germany. The first meeting between Mussolini and Hitler, in the spring of 1934 in Venice, had clearly brought to light the notes of discord between the two regimes.

An initial, utopian phase of fascism's universalization thus ended at almost the same time in Italy and Japan. Since a fascist 'international' comparable to the communist one never emerged, historians have characterized Italy's attempt to universalize fascism as a failure. Furthermore, they have pointed out that the efforts to universalize the ideology had nothing to do with the formation of the Tokyo-Rome-Berlin Axis; in fact, in their view the end of this utopian project was an essential precondition for the ultimate rapprochement of these three future partners towards the middle of the decade.⁶²

Such a reading may seem plausible if we consider the Italian case in isolation. But, from a global perspective, the story looks quite different. If one takes into account Italy's interaction with Japan, fascism's global moment proved to have important legacies as well as a sinister afterlife. Three long-term effects are evident: Firstly, mutual interest in the other country's version of fascism encouraged the discovery of systemic resemblances between the two

⁶⁰) ASMAE, AP, Giappone, Busta 6, 'Movimento Panasiatico'.

⁶¹) Ledeen, *Universal Fascism*, 130.

⁶²) Ledeen, *Universal Fascism*, XXI; Cuzzi, *L'internazionale delle camicie nere*, 296–388.

regimes – with huge consequences, especially in the field of politics and diplomacy. Secondly, networks and interest groups were formed; in the post-1935 period some of them should play a important role. And ultimately connected to this, each country's strategy of exporting its ideology beyond its borders also gave rise to longer-term institutional changes.

Concerning the first point: mutual interest between Italy and Japan in the 1932–1933 period increasingly prompted contact and communication between the two countries. To be sure, this mutual interest was no guarantee of harmony or consensus. On the contrary, in discovering fascism's international potential the two parties had also identified their respective differences. Japanese decision makers began to emphasize their lack of need for Italian Fascism, as an alien import, while the Italian experts expressed doubts as to the authenticity of the Japanese version of fascism. But, at the same time each party was beginning to arrive at a better understanding of the other's goals and intentions. In other words, during fascism's first global moment each side began to perceive a whole series of similarities, common interests and concurrences. First of all, in view of the global economic crisis a new economic system – focusing on bloc building, planned economy and corporatism – became a key issue for both. Italy saw corporatism as central to fascism's international expansion. And the Japanese were already intensively discussing this Italian model of economic reorganization in 1932.⁶³ However, this mutual interest intensified following the failure of the London World Economic Conference a year later, which was seen as representing the final breakdown of the old world economic order. Japan was increasingly interested in Italy's domestic economic reforms, particularly in relation to labour market policy.⁶⁴ However, the pattern of influence was certainly not one-sided, as in Manchuria the Japanese Empire had a huge testing ground for fascist-oriented economic projects. Italy in turn closely followed these experiments,⁶⁵ since they appeared to promise new forms of imperial expansion and dominance. During the Ethiopian war the Japanese model finally became highly significant for fascist Italy.

A further shared developmental characteristic was the commonly-held view of universal fascism as a project for young nations and young people. Initially, Italy's youth – disillusioned by the loss of fascism's revolutionary impetus in the late 1920s – were seen as the movement's true standard-bearers. The view in Japan was quite similar, although the context was different. The Manchurian Incident had lit the fire in the breast of the nation's youth and driven them into

⁶³) See for example *Fasshizumu* 2, April 1932, 8–9.

⁶⁴) Matsushima Hajime, 'Itarī no naiji gaikō,' *Gaikō Jihō* 73 (1935): 152–161, here 154–155. See also: Inomata Tsunao, 'Nōmin to fashizumu,' *Chūō Kōron* 50 (1935): 2–16, here especially 4–5.

⁶⁵) See ASMAE, AP, Manciuquò, Busta 1 and Busta 2.

the arms of fascism, reported for example the *Ōsaka Mainichi Shimbun* in early 1932.⁶⁶ While the establishment gained control of the movement in each country, the rhetoric of the cult of youth endured and had its own particular legacies. For example, in 1935 the magazine *Gerarchia* mentioned the potential for universalizing fascism and its attractiveness for other young nations as proof of the regime's vitality.⁶⁷ From this point of view, the recurrent references around the time of the Axis' conclusion to young regimes to which the future belonged is no coincidence. Finally, pictures of children or young people would become a key propaganda motif for the Tokyo – Rome – Berlin Axis.⁶⁸

Moreover, after the establishment of Manchukuo the Italian side began to interpret Japan's aggressive behaviour in East Asia as proof of its youth and vitality.⁶⁹ 'This is a young nation which is tenacious, passionate and potent,' Italy's new ambassador in Tokyo, Giacinto Auriti, wrote to Mussolini in June 1934 in relation to Japan. This report is a key document, since it suggests for the first time that Italy should back Japan as an ally in the Far East. Besides the youth of the nation, Auriti also puts forward geopolitical and ideological arguments: 'In geographical terms, [Japan] is virtually Italy's antipode, we have never had, and never will have, territorial interests in its part of the world and it has always had peaceful relations with us; at the same time, it has sympathy for us . . . and sees in the new Italy's *duce* a hero, while perceiving its own salvation . . . in Italy's doctrine.'⁷⁰ This latter point is of course a brazen exaggeration – particularly at this time, when the *fassho* wave in Japan had long since ebbed away. The motive of the Italian ambassador in Tokyo in exaggerating Italy's influence on Japan is clear enough. However, the crucial point here is not the accuracy of Auriti's statement but how the supposed turn towards Italian Fascism is used as an argument. Looking to the future, the ambassador subsequently lists a series of concrete reasons for Japan's attractiveness for Italy. As a result of its recently released Amau Statement – a sort of Monroe Doctrine for East Asia – Japan would come into conflict with all of the world's great nations: 'It appears to me that we might derive twofold benefit – from the present situation and likewise for the future. . . . Undoubtedly, Japan's policies will provoke universal opposition which is readily explicable: any expansion meets with resistance, while peoples which are static or in decline place

⁶⁶ *Ōsaka Mainichi Shimbun*, January 7, 1932, quoted in ASMAE, AP, Giappone, Busta 3, 'Fascismo Giapponese'.

⁶⁷ Selvi, 'Fermentazione fascista nel mondo,' 267.

⁶⁸ See for example the cover picture of *Shashin shūhō* 151 (1941).

⁶⁹ Ministero degli affari esteri, *I documenti diplomatici italiani*, serie 7, volume 15 (Rome: Libreria dello stato, 1990), 381.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

obstacles [in the way of] young peoples on the rise.⁷¹ Auriti repeatedly emphasized the two countries' analogous conditions. In mid-1934, Rome was not (yet) able to follow this line of reasoning. However, now that they had been articulated, these arguments were present; they would be taken up once again one year later, following the outbreak of the Ethiopia crisis.

On the other hand, in Japanese diplomatic circles interest in Italian foreign policy and its potential rapidly developed after 1933. An article in *Gaikō Jihō* of 1935 emphasized the successful reforms which Mussolini had enacted in Italy and asked how they would be reflected in a new fascist foreign policy in the near future.⁷² The Four-Power Pact of 1933, conceived by Mussolini, was hailed by Japanese experts. They welcomed it as further weakening the League of Nations following Japan's recent exit from Geneva.⁷³ There was frequent speculation over Italy's impending withdrawal from the League. 'Not only had Italy weakened the League of Nations; at the end of last year the Grand Council of Fascism resolved to leave the League at the next possible opportunity,' noted the *Gaikō Jihō* in the autumn of 1934.⁷⁴ Fascist politics was thus a constant topic of discussion in the diplomatic sphere. One outcome of this was that in the spring of 1935 the prestigious *Gaikō Jihō* was faced with the question of whether this magazine would now become 'outright fascist'.⁷⁵ Accordingly, in the post-1933 period the Japanese general public certainly did not lose sight of Italian Fascism, it was just that discussions tended to focus on concrete foreign policy issues.

The second legacy of fascism's initial moment of universalization relates to the sphere of personal experiences, networks and relationships. One important example is Matsuoka Yōsuke's. On the one hand, Matsuoka's activities document the dimensions of political links between Italy and Japan. On the other, they demonstrate the global effects of the Manchuria Crisis and its association with fascism's universalization. In Japan in 1933, Matsuoka was the man of the hour. As Japan's special emissary in Geneva, through a grand gesture widely reported in the media, he had in March led the country's exit from the League of Nations. Already upon his departure to Geneva as special envoy in October 1932, Matsuoka had met with a euphoric response in Japan. The departure scenes at Tokyo's central station reminded the well-known journalist Kiyosawa Kiyoshi of 'southern rapture', in the same way that 'the

⁷¹ Ibid., 380.

⁷² Matsushima, 'Itarī no naiji gaikō,' 161.

⁷³ Matsushima Hajima, 'Itarī no gaikō,' *Gaikō Jihō* 72 (1934), 58–68, here 62; and Matsushima, 'Itarī no naiji gaikō,' 157.

⁷⁴ Matsushima, 'Itarī no gaikō,' 63.

⁷⁵ The question probably was asked by the editorial staff itself, see Hanzawa Gyokujō, 'Honshi wa fassho wo korenari ya,' *Gaikō Jihō* 73 (1935), 220–221.

Italians greet Mussolini'.⁷⁶ Matsuoka would certainly have appreciated the comparison, since he was a great admirer of the Duce. During his stay in Europe he had insisted on a personal audience with Mussolini in Rome. Matsuoka noted that he sought to persuade Italy (though ultimately without success) to take Japan's side in the coming vote on the Manchuria question at the League of Nations.⁷⁷

Once back in Japan, Matsuoka demanded a fascist revolution and the abolition of all political parties. In late 1933 Italy's ambassador Giacinto Auriti paid him a visit out of a desire for greater familiarity. Auriti provided the Duce with a detailed report of this meeting with a man whom he (correctly) saw as Japan's 'future foreign minister'.⁷⁸ Auriti indicated that he wished to get to know Matsuoka due to his great enthusiasm for Mussolini and fascism. In a meeting which the Italian ambassador described as 'unforgettable', Matsuoka outlined his desire for a new authoritarian youth-led government. He emphasized that Japan required transformation along the lines of the fascist model. Auriti wrote enthusiastically to Mussolini: 'He impressed me most when he began to speak of Your Excellency and of fascism. I have never heard anything of the kind [in terms of praise] regarding Your Excellency.'⁷⁹

At this time, Matsuoka was seen in Japan as a potential leader of a future dictatorship. For a brief moment, many of Matsuoka's followers believed that he would soon lead a march on Tokyo.⁸⁰ This never materialized, and Matsuoka soon found himself largely marginalized politically, for the time being. However, ultimately he was appointed foreign minister and thus served as one of the leading architects of the Tokyo-Rome-Berlin Axis in 1940. On the other hand, his behaviour at the League of Nations – particularly Japan's exit from the organization, which he handled with great media aplomb – established a new style of diplomacy and greatly impressed the Italians.

One of those impressed was Galeazzo Ciano. At the beginning of the 1930s Mussolini had appointed his son-in-law (who was then not yet thirty years old) Italy's consul general in Shanghai. This too is indicative of the significance which the Duce began to attribute to East Asia around this time. In early 1932 Ciano thus directly experienced the hostilities in Shanghai. He even led an international committee of inquiry into Japan's conduct. Ciano was initially highly critical of Japan's behaviour – the journalist Kiyosawa Kiyoshi explicitly

⁷⁶ Quoted in David John Lu, *Agony of Choice: Matsuoka Yōsuke and the Rise and Fall of the Japanese Empire, 1880–1946* (Lanham: Lexington Books 2002), 83.

⁷⁷ Lu, *Agony of Choice*, 88.

⁷⁸ Dispatch by Ambassador Giacinto Auriti from Tokyo to Rome, 'Situazione interna: Colloquio con il signor Matsuoka,' December 28, 1933, in ASMAE, AP, Giappone, Busta 6, 'Rapporti politici,' 2.

⁷⁹ Auriti, 'Situazione interna,' 4.

⁸⁰ Lu, *Agony of Choice*, 106.

referred to this some years later, in an article on Mussolini.⁸¹ Yet Japan's handling of the international crisis had a profound impact on Ciano. Due to his experience in East Asia, he became a determined proponent of fascist universalization. Upon returning to Europe, Ciano served as Mussolini's press spokesman and, from 1935, as propaganda minister, and was thus responsible for universalizing fascism. Unlike in the case of many others, this role proved beneficial for his career: in 1936 he was appointed foreign minister and in this role he encouraged Italy's rapid reconciliation with Japan, not least on the basis of his experience in East Asia. Ciano's experience during the first phase of fascism's universalization – Japan's attitude to the League of Nations and its bold actions in China – had impressed him so strongly that after 1935 he became one of the foremost advocates of a pact with the East Asian Empire.

Ciano is also a good example to show how, last but not least, the legacy of the universalization of fascism also had concrete effects on Italy and its institutions and diplomacy. In the summer of 1932 Benito Mussolini personally took charge of the foreign ministry. This was associated with major changes in the diplomatic corps. The previous foreign minister, Dino Grandi, was made ambassador to London, while some of Mussolini's older comrades lost their positions and new names established themselves.⁸² Italian historians have seen in this period the origins of a 'fascist foreign policy' which replaced a less aggressive, 'laicist' policy.⁸³ In the late 1930s Galeazzo Ciano finally proved to be one of foremost beneficiaries of this development.

Conclusions

The universalization of fascism in the early 1930s thus had important legacies. Following the end of an utopian phase, a second, more realistic phase of global fascist politics began which was to prove far more dangerous to the international order. However, the path to take was not an easy one. The Italian side was disappointed in Japan's failure to faithfully adopt Italian Fascism. And the Japanese side got more and more concerned about the Italian ambitions in Asia. But such dissonances do not necessarily prove that the universalization of fascism abruptly ended in 1934. In fact, reciprocal differentiation within the scope of this process and presentation of cultural difference from the point of view of the two countries' fascist movements were an ideological precondition for a

⁸¹) Kiyosawa Kiyoshi, 'Tabi de hirota hanashi: Musorini no hitogara,' *Tōyō Keizai Shinpō* 1832 (1938), 1072–1073.

⁸²) Giovanni Tassani, *Diplomatico tra due guerre: Vita di Giacomo Paulucci di Calboli Barone* (Firenze: Le lettere, 2012), 239.

⁸³) Cuzzi, *L'internazionale delle camicie nere*, 32.

future alliance. In this light, it is not surprising that in East Asia a separate form of ultra nationalism developed which emphasized, above all, its own specific character. Nonetheless, after 1933 the process of ever closer interaction between Italy and Japan remained intact. And in view of the later Anti-Comintern and the Tripartite Pact it is obvious that, in the long run, both nations had embarked upon a process of political and ideological convergence.

Was early Shōwa Japan (1926–1945) thus fascist? As we saw at the start of this article, this question has been a key issue for research. We can't provide any clear and final answer, or at least not a simple one. While the term fascism soon went out of fashion in Japan, fascistic concepts enjoyed a far more impressive career. Although the catchwords changed around 1933, the agenda of the movement – political violence, territorial expansion and economic bloc building – certainly did not. On the contrary, following the establishment of Manchukuo this agenda developed faster than ever. For Japan, fascist revolts such as the February 26 Incident (1936) and military expansion on mainland Asia surely dominated the second half of the decade. One might thus conclude that fascism enjoyed a second global moment. But an answer to the above question is necessarily complex and must give greater consideration to the ever changing international history of the late 1930s.

Seen from the more transnational perspective of shared history, one thing is obvious: in the early 1930s Japan was an integral part of the history of universal fascism. This history is a complex and transnational one, flowing in many different directions. In this context it is interesting to note that, from a global perspective, Germany is something of a latecomer to the project of universalizing fascism. On the one hand Italy's increased desire to export its ideology in the early 1930s cannot simply be written off as a passive reaction to the rise of the National Socialists. After all, Mussolini himself had personally adopted this agenda, by the end of 1932 at the latest. On the other hand Japan's turning to fascistic ideologies has even less to do with the National Socialists' seizure of power, which it also predated. Nor did Japan's turning to fascistic ideologies have its main origins in the universalization of Italian Fascism. When international isolation threatened at the start of 1932, due to the Manchuria Crisis, Japan became interested in Italian Fascism for reasons of its own. Fascism appeared to offer a welcome third way which was independent of both the League of Nations and the Communist International. Paradoxically, when Mussolini, in October 1932, declared the twentieth century the fascist century and proclaimed the universalization of fascism, this wave was already ebbing away in Japan. In fact, far from passively responding to Italy's agenda, Japan's actions in the Far East had a momentous effect on the international political scene. The obvious destabilization of the international world order driven by the Japanese actions in Manchuria from late 1931 onwards may have been one reason of Mussolini's turn to universal fascism.

In any case, the crucial two years following the so-called 'Manchurian Incident' firmly established the foundations for Italy's and Japan's increasingly interwoven history in the subsequent period. This article shows that fascism and the question of its realization at a global level were of central significance in the entangled history of both countries in the 1930s. But we still know too little about the global history of fascism in the crucial latter half of the decade. In future, we shall probably have to ask slightly different questions. It is not simply a case of whether Imperial Japan was fascist, but rather to what extent Japan – and with it, East Asia – was an integral part of global history of fascism in the interwar period. At the same time, it would be helpful to examine in greater depth the process of institutionalized exchange in the second half of the decade. The answers to such questions will not necessarily yield a new, global consensus on fascism. But hopefully we gain a more concrete as well as complex idea of the global charisma and significance which fascism possessed during the interwar period.