Antonio Costa Pinto and Aristotle Kallis, ed.

Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe 1919–1945 (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

This year marks a quarter century since Roger Griffin's *Nature of Fascism* made its splash into the academic ocean of what now goes by the name of 'fascist studies'. It needs hardly to be added that this book became widely referenced for Griffin's contribution to the hotly contested debate over 'generic fascism'. There, Griffin proposed his definition of the fascist minimum: 'Fascism is a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism.'[1] That sentence and its elucidation in the 1990s reinvigorated interest in the subject and divided scholars into 'Griffinites', who broadly agreed with his culturalist premise, and a range of sceptics, who were either unconvinced or vehemently disagreed with his single sentence definition. Consequently, the debate over 'what is fascism?' continues to this day and remains as important as ever.

Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe 1919–1945 moves away from the rigid focus on ideology. Instead, this collection focuses upon the political dynamics that are constructed from a hybrid of historical, nation-centred factors *as well as* impacts and influences from abroad. The chapters in this edited volume concentrate on the inter-war European movements defined by historians as authoritarian (possibly 'semi-fascist' or, from the Marxist perspective, 'fascist') successfully arguing that the neat taxonomies that they attempt to map these 'ideal-types' are considerably more complex on the ground than previous research has accommodated.

The book is categorised into two parts. Part I consists of four chapters each attempting to move away from the narrow ideologically centred viewpoint by examining the theoretical and comparative perspectives of radical right regimes and their complex (inter-) relationships. Aristotle Kallis's opening chapter explores the similarities and differences between two methodological approaches to the study of fascism: one based on an 'ideological weighted' heuristic concept; the other, which Kallis endorses, combines primary research *as well as* ideology. By adopting the latter, he suggests that Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy are 'key facilitators of the wider inter-war post-liberal/anti-socialist "departure"' (36) stressing that the 'demonstration' effects from the two regimes remain inadequately under-explored. In Chapter 2 David D. Roberts explores the relationship between fascism and 'parafascism'. He suggests that historians have been too 'hung up' (44) on definitions and correspondingly suggests more

1 Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Routledge, 1991), 26.

flexible approaches, even with the possibility of 'jettisoning' static classifications altogether. The chapter's focus is heavily weighted towards the Italian model and highlights interactions between Fascism and other European dictatorial regimes. This results in interesting observations like the suggestion that 'parafascist' regimes were more innovative than has previously been thought; for example, aspects of the Italian model could be viewed more 'parafascist' than fascist when compared with Nazi Germany.

Chapter 3 is a contribution from another leading scholar in the field, Roger Eatwell. He argues that as a result of the cultural turn, recent 'ideal types' used by scholars to categorise the anti-liberal, anti-democratic and anti-socialist political players in the decades between the wars are inadequate and problematic. He suggests that the concepts historians have formed are constructed overwhelmingly upon static ideology, thus overlooking the 'mercurial and syncretic' (83) elements that are prominent in every inter-war radical right-wing group's ideological make up. What is needed, Eatwell contends, is a considerably more complex approach that takes into consideration the 'feedback between different parts of political systems' (68). In the final chapter of Part 1, Antonio Costa Pinto re-evaluates the role of corporatism as a tool used against liberal democracy arguing that this socio-political organisation of major interest groups was one of the leading agents in the process of transnational radical right diffusion. Pinto suggests that corporatism played a vital role in the hybridisation processes of inter-war radical-right regimes.

Part II then focuses on six specific countries (Portugal, Spain, Austria, Greece, Hungary and Romania). This section is not as thought-provoking as Part I but the shift from discussing concepts to examining individual countries complements it well. In chapter 5 Gerhard Botz examines the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg dictatorship in Austria between 1933 and 1938. He aims to describe the regime as a 'hybrid comprising different elements and theoretical models in an ever-shifting mixture' (122). To accomplish this, he explores the main protagonists of this 'mixture': Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and the indigenous Heimwehr 'fascist' movement. In chapter 6 Goffredo Adinolfi and Pinto analyse the Portuguese *Estado Novo* [New State]. They explain how Salazarism and its political institutions amalgamated with the Portuguese blue shirts party organisations. They pay particular attention to the cross border relationships that influenced Salazar's dictatorship.

Keeping with the Catholic focus in these middle chapters, Miguel Jerez and Javier Luque examine Spanish Francoism (1936–1945) in chapter 7. The article provides an insight into the political climate before General Francisco Franco became supreme leader and how his brutal regime operated while in power, alluding occasionally to the influence from the two main fascist regimes on the

continent. Jerez and Luque explain the different dynamics and actors that contributed to the rise of *El Caudillo*, including how he manipulated these forces throughout. Included is the interesting role that the fascist Falange had in the period and the group's relationship with Franco. In chapter 8 Mogens Pelt's case study moves across the continent to General Ioannis Metaxas's dictatorship in Greece in the late 1930s. Pelt investigates the regular periods of change and the ways in which these changes affected the internal balance of power at the time, for example, between Metaxas and the king. In addition, external impacts are analysed, most notably the Third Reich's relationship with Greece. In chapter 9 Jason Wittenberg turns attention on Hungry. He highlights the complexity of the political climate in the inter-war period and how it affected the emergence of dictatorial practices, including that of the fascist Arrow Cross. Wittenberg argues that Hungary's shift to the right had as much to do with transnational influences as national. In the final chapter Constantin Iordachi investigates the colourful political life of Romania between 1937 and 1944. He analyses the hybridisation of each regime during the period. This includes events occurring outside of Romania that affected the complex interaction within the country at the time.

Whether this collection will result in a new wave of scholarship on the inter-war right remains to be seen. Yet the innovative methodology at the heart of this collection looks beyond conceptual dichotomies that have dominated historiography for some time. The contributors make a convincing case that existing taxonomies need to be reworked far more than has been the case to date encouraging experts to embrace the hybridity that is clearly highlighted throughout the book. Through undertaking this line of inquiry they also enhance the emerging but vitally important field of transnational fascism by uncovering pathways between continental regimes in Italy and Germany, but also *within* democratic nations, such as the US and Great Britain. On this count alone, *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Interwar Europe* should become a valuable addition to the field of generic (para) fascist studies.

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