

A MODERN
HISTORY OF
POLITICS &
VIOLENCE

MATTEO ALBANESE
AND PABLO DEL HIERRO

TRANSNATIONAL FASCISM IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Spain, Italy and the
Global Neo-Fascist Network



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Transnational Fascism in the Twentieth Century

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*To Giulia,
To Laura,
To our parents*

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Acknowledgements¹

The origins of the present project can be traced back to the spring of 2011, when both of us were busy with the preparation of our respective PhD defences at the European University Institute in Florence. Even though we had discussed our topics many times before, it was at that precise moment, when our dissertations were about to be finalized, that we realized the possibilities of starting a joint scientific collaboration in the near future. In fact, we became aware during those spring talks that despite our different topics (the Red Brigades on the one hand, and Spanish-Italian diplomatic relations on the other), that we shared the interest and determination to study our common ‘natural’ enemy, which is the enemy of freedom and individual rights: fascism. It was (and still is) our conviction that in order to prevent the return of fascism in Europe, it is necessary to understand it better, tracing back its origins and identifying the continuities and discontinuities with respect to the Second World War. In essence, we were (and are) in total agreement with Umberto Eco when he wrote that fascism was still around us in ‘plainclothes’, and that our duty as historians was ‘to uncover it and to point our finger at any of its new instances – every day, in every part of the world.’²

Furthermore, during the long talks in the wonderful café at the Badia Fiesolana, we also realized that we already had at our disposal important tools to begin our joint project. In fact, during our respective research we had encountered numerous documents which showed important links between Italian and Spanish fascism from the 1920s all the way up until the 1980s. In essence, what these documents clearly showed was that fascism had not disappeared after 1945; on the contrary, fascists had survived the end of the Second World War, and with them also the fascist ideology. This had been done thanks to the existence of a transnational fascist network, already created in the 1920s, which operated at a global level. The idea of studying such a network was certainly appealing, but we did not have the time or the resources for just the two of us to study it: that was not feasible. However, we had the opportunity to focus on one of the nodes of the global chain: the Spanish-Italian nexus of the fascist network. This was not irrelevant at all. Spain and Italy had been two key countries in the formation and development of the network. Mussolini’s Italy was the initiator of it all, and the Francoist regime had become an essential actor to ensure the survival of the fascist ideology after 1945 thanks to the granting of asylum to many fascists escaping the Allied authorities when the Second World War finished. In essence, the analysis of the Spanish-Italian node of the network would allow us to understand the functioning of the global network and, therefore, contributed to the study and identification of the new instances in which Fascism became apparent after 1945.

Of course, we still had substantial work to do, but we did not have to start from scratch: we had an idea (to study the relationship between Italian and Spanish fascism since the March on Rome), an approach (transnational history), and important archival

documents gathered by both of us over the past five years. We just needed to continue in that direction, visit more archives, include further interviews with the actors of the network who were still alive ... and that we did. Our research missions took us to Cosenza, Rome, Madrid, London, Washington, Paris and Lisbon, all meaningful trips that contributed to improving our understanding of the network and also of the fascist ideology. In fact, the more we consulted the available sources, the more interviews we conducted and the more books we read, the more convinced we became that our project was relevant not only to understand Spanish and Italian fascism, but also to understand fascism in the twentieth century. Furthermore, the most important international events of the last few years which we have lived very closely with (and sometimes experienced first hand) have definitely shaped part of our project by confirming the convenience of our methodological choices. The *Indignados* movement in Madrid (which took place during our research mission in Madrid), the economic crisis in Europe (particularly strong in the Mediterranean region), and the re-emergence of international terrorism, showed us that we live in a global and interconnected world. That has been the case for many decades, thus reinforcing our determination that fascism needs to be understood and studied as a transnational phenomenon with global repercussions.

In order to accomplish this project, we have incurred many scientific debts which we would like to acknowledge in the following lines. Special thanks go to our respective institutions which have supported us throughout the entire process. Without the financial and academic aid of the Instituto de Ciências Sociais da Universidade de Lisboa (ICS) and the Maastricht University, this book would not have been possible. Of course, we cannot forget the role played by the European University Institute (EUI): the discussions that gave birth to the present volume started there, but the EUI gave us so much more, including financial support for the first missions and a methodological background which allowed us to better understand the functioning of the network. We would also like to acknowledge the role in the present research of the leading experts on fascism and neo-fascism, Antonio Costa Pinto and Andrea Mammone. They were kind enough to read excerpts of our work and always gave us useful feedback that has only improved this book. We have also benefitted enormously from the intellectual support and friendship of our colleagues at Maastricht University and the ICS. Special thanks to Vincent Lagendijk, Kiran Patel, Yannick Servais, Georgi Verbeeck, AnnaRita Gori, Goffredo Adinolfi, Riccardo Marchi, Caterina Froio, Pietro Castelli and many others. We also received invaluable guidance from Javier Muñoz Soro, Eduardo González Calleja, José Luis Rodríguez Jiménez, Giuseppe Parlato, José Luis Gómez Navarro, Ferrán Gallego, Fernando García Sanz and Ismael Saz. We would also like to thank the whole ICS scientific community that gave us the opportunity to discuss the different steps of this research project over the last four years. Special thanks go to Katy Pugh, our language editor, who agreed to proofread our text at almost the last minute and did a wonderful job.

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partners. They have proved to possess almost an infinite patience when they heard us talk non-stop year after year about Mussolini, Franco and the rest of the fascist actors which fill the pages of this book. Surprisingly enough, they resisted the boredom of our disquisitions and gave us a hand whenever we needed it most: their love and encouragement has provided us with the energy necessary to finish this project. This book is for them all.

Introduction

In the last two decades we have witnessed the development of a new wave of international terrorism; expressions such as global scale terrorism, international network of terror, and underground terrorist cells have become part of everyday vocabulary. Many scholars, among them historians, have engaged themselves in the study of these phenomena from different perspectives and tried to better understand when and, of course, how this transnational tendency of terrorist groups and ideologies was born. For the historians who studied Fascism the analysis of this new wave of international terrorism was particularly interesting due to its links with Fundamentalism and the existence of a wider debate on the very nature of the fascist ideology and the regimes to which it gave birth.¹ In other words, there was the underlying question as to whether these new terrorist movements that emerged from Fundamentalism could be interpreted as a degeneration of nationalism and therefore labelled as fascist or totalitarian. However, in order to answer this question, it was first necessary to understand the roots and nature of the fascist ideology. In this regard, and while a number of scholars followed Juan Linz's interpretation and saw fascism as a mere totalitarian ideology of the twentieth century, it was Emilio Gentile who suggested that fascism should be interpreted as a type of political religion made of practices, symbols and rituals built in order to shape a new kind of human being.² This new approach to the study of fascism opened the door for new interpretations of current developments and gave rise to heated discussions on the relationship between fascism as a political religion, a totalitarian movement, Fundamentalism and political extremism.³

In short, it seems clear that these new events and debates have evidenced even further the necessity to obtain a better understanding of the fascist ideology, its roots and evolution during the twentieth century. Of course, the definition of fascism remains very open, and the debate is so wide that it cannot be entirely addressed in this volume. However, while this book does not intend to offer an all-encompassing definition, it is possible to advance three main characteristics of fascism that will stand as the conceptual axis of the present volume:

1. As with any other totalitarian ideology, fascism seeks for a spiritual, economic and political revolution; and a revolution cannot be embarked upon within national borders. Thus, fascism is by definition not a simple national inclination and even though there are clear cultural roots and national specificities present in it, it also seems evident that, as a totalitarian ideology, it does not respect borders.

2. Fascist groups and regimes started to build an international network from the very beginning of their activity in the 1920s and throughout most of the twentieth century; this chronological aspect suggests that its internationalism is a crucial part of the nature of fascism and neo-fascism.
3. Fascism is an alive ideology which has existed throughout almost a century of history and travelled across many countries; in order to survive, fascism has had to change and adapt itself to the international context; accordingly, the understanding of structural conditions cannot be separated from the cultural turns.

These three premises can be perfectly identified in the case of the Spanish-Italian network which lies at the centre of this book. Thinking about past individuals as existing within a densely woven matrix of social relations is hardly new. The present research thus relies on the assumption that fascism during the twentieth century might fruitfully be analysed as interacting sets of dynamically evolving networks comprised of people and practices. Specifically, our approach is motivated by the main claim that fascists in Europe (and therefore also in Spain and Italy) developed a wide cross-national network of extreme right connections and exchanges during that period. However, we are not exclusively interested in loosely evoking the existence of a world of connections across national borderlines. Even though the present work will not use formal network analysis, it will go beyond a loose relational approach and actually insert the Spanish-Italian network into a set of serious historical explanations and narratives.

The Spanish-Italian fascist network was created in the early 1920s and it managed to survive the end of the Second World War. In fact, when Germany surrendered and the Axis was finally defeated in May 1945, fascists in Europe did not just disappear. Most of them were arrested by the Allies but a reduced group managed to escape and take refuge in safer places like Spain, Portugal or South America. Of course, not all of them continued to be politically involved but a number of recalcitrant elements were still determined to fight and defend the fascist cause. In this way, the network that had existed in the 1920s and 1930s slowly began to be rebuilt. The reconstruction and consolidation of this network engaged not only the generation of the interwar period but also the following one. Young militants within the extreme right who had participated in the Second World War only marginally inherited this network from their ideological 'fathers' and interpreted their role in the light of the political changes that had taken place in the 1950s and the 1960s as something more than being the facilitators of safe escape routes: they were determined to revolutionize the strategy and the methods of the nexus. This brought about important changes within the network which allowed for progressive radicalization and the emergence of a series of terrorist attacks that would shake the foundations of European society in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In accordance with these notions, *Transnational Fascism in the Twentieth Century* will be adopting a historical network approach which will allow for the detection of structures that might not be recognized by all actors involved in them, but whose shape provides key aspects about the underlying political mechanisms of twentieth-century fascism. At this stage, it is important to consider that the point of this historical

network approach is not only to reach the conclusion that the network existed or was important, but also to take into account its existence as a hypothesis, to describe its precise patterns, to understand how it was created and what its consequences were. In accordance with Claire Lemerrier, this study is founded on the belief that 'using a network vocabulary [...] is only interesting if we are prepared to say something precise about our "network": not only that ties matter, but that they are organized in a significant way.'⁴

While doing so, *Transnational Fascism in the Twentieth Century* also examines patterns of relations that are to an extent independent of the wills, beliefs and values of the actors. Accordingly, the capacities of an individual to act inside the network, and the implications of these actions, depend not only on the attributes of a given actor, but also on the pattern of relations within which this actor is located.⁵ In other words, the present work will verify that the network attracted actors within the field of the far right who, even though they cannot be considered as fascist *strictu sensu*, willingly became part of the Spanish-Italian fascist web. This was the case with figures such as Giovanni de Lorenzo, Alberto Martín Artajo, José Antonio de Sangróniz and Alfredo Kindelán.

The aim of this book is thus to provide the reader with an understanding of the Spanish-Italian network between 1922 and 1981. The focus is on the formation, evolution and composition of the network in an attempt to explain how it became a crucial channel for communication, exchange of ideas and even cooperation within the neo-fascist political field. Similarly, this work will also analyse how the network was impacted by the international context of the interwar years, the Second World War and the Cold War – with particular emphasis on the European integration process which had a great influence on neo-fascist movements. Finally, this work aims at showing that the Spanish-Italian nexus was an important part of a global network which also began its formation in the early 1920s, and was essential for the fascist ideology to travel from one country to another. However, the present volume goes one step further by studying the people that participated and actually created the web and the channels through which ideas were circulated and eventually transferred. In order to do this, it will be necessary to take into account the ways in which power, ideas and traditions flowed within the network, always colliding and interacting with the global political and economic structures of the time, as well as the socio-economic and political practices existing in both Spain and Italy. This approach substantiates the insufficiency of conceiving the nation-state as an explanatory category and enables, instead, alternative political and social units of study to be formulated. It provides an understanding of broader processes of import or export of certain knowledge, ideas and models across different regions. This kind of transmission may take place at different levels: across nation-states, across different regions within nation-states, or from cosmopolitan centres (like Rome or Madrid) to other places. As a result of this, the historical network approach appears as complementary to other types of perspective, in this case transnational history.⁶

In fact, *Transnational Fascism in the Twentieth Century* combines the historical analysis of networks with a transnational approach. The adoption of this methodology stems mainly from the conviction that fascism, as an ideology, is transnational by

nature.⁷ Secondly, and in agreement with Andrea Mammone, we believe that the adoption of a transnational approach allows us 'to break away from the exceptionalist parochialism which so often characterizes the single-country focus, but without falling into the opposite trap of excessively general conceptual models.'⁸ This analytical framework will thus help us when studying the ideology, strategies and development of the different actors inside the network and make richer our knowledge of the phenomenon. In fact, it will prove that 'fascism for export' was not just adopted without question in other countries. As Federico Finchelstein has written, 'Fascism was a cross-regional civic religion in its most extreme form', and an interpretative appropriation through the network was central to its reception.⁹ Finally, the focus of this book lies more with the interconnections between the different actors within the network, than referring to every single event that occurred in the two chosen countries over such a long period of time. In this regard, this book has to be read as the first step of a larger project in which the two authors are involved, together and individually, aimed at the reconstruction of the global fascist network during the twentieth century.¹⁰ Given the magnitude of the project, and the space limitations of this book, it has not been possible to analyse here such a vast and global network. It is for this reason that the present work focuses exclusively on a link of this chain, namely the relations between the Italian and Spanish fascist and neo-fascist movements after 1922. In this regard, it is important to stress once again that, even if this case study represents only a small part of the network, it remains one of the strongest nodes of the whole web, to the extent that it contributes to enlightening the way in which the entire network worked.

Despite the fact that the international level is crucial to studying this network, it has to be noted that the vast majority of the literature focusing on the extreme right-wing movements is still national-oriented.¹¹ This trend has only very recently started to change thanks to the work of a group of young scholars who have begun to analyse fascism and neo-fascism using a transnational approach. The present work will continue in this vein, sharing the basic assumption that fascism and neo-fascism cannot be fully understood without the transnational dimension.¹² At the same time, and despite this conviction, we also acknowledge that the transnational approach does not possess full explanatory capabilities. In this regard, our work will show how a number of issues and debates within the network were still heavily influenced by the nation-state, or even by local factors (especially in the Spanish case), thus allowing us to reflect upon the challenges of the transnational approach, its problems and its limitations.

From a methodological perspective, *Transnational Fascism in the Twentieth Century* will use a multi-layered approach that distinguishes and analyses three different levels of enquiry that entwine: individuals, political organizations and state apparatuses. By doing so, this work recognizes the relevance of the local, state and global forces among which the network was formed, and acknowledges that the fascist network formed in the 1920s was a complex socio-political phenomenon that mattered at a variety of levels and which needs to be studied in its multifaceted nature. With regard to this, it is important to consider that when we think of networks, we generally refer to ties between human beings. Our historical network approach is, however, not limited to ties between individuals. As explained by Shawn Graham, Ian Milligan, and Scott

Weingart, connectivity is key to understanding how the world works, both on an individual and a global scale. The entities connected can thus be people, social groups, political parties, myths, rituals, stories, etc., and these links can be established through friendships, people, affiliations, locations or shared experiences.¹³ At the same time, this methodological choice stems from the assumption that transnational actors have often served as the 'historian's Trojan horses'. Studying them helps to establish a better grasp on the extent, dynamics and mechanisms of particular transnational connections, and highlights the entanglement and mutual constitution of cultures and societies in a more general sense. However, these actors usually play multiple roles on different spatial scales. They are not confined to the transnational or trans-regional spheres, as their activities are also embedded in local, regional or national contexts.

This can be seen perfectly in the case of the Spanish-Italian network in all of the three layers that we have identified. As far as the first level is concerned, the relationship born during the 1920s and consolidated throughout the 1930s, especially during the Spanish Civil War with the cooperation between the *Corpo di Truppe Volontarie* (CTV) and the Francoist armies, shaped a series of personal links fundamental in the first steps of the network. These links were further developed during the Second World War and would not disappear after 1945. In fact, the network managed to survive the end of the war and continued working for the expansion of the fascist ideology worldwide in the new context of the Cold War and the European Integration Process.¹⁴ As this book will show, these relationships between fascist elements were based on the joint experience of the Spanish Civil War and the shared perception of defeat in the Second World War as well as common political values.

Regarding the second level of enquiry, it is necessary to take into account that these people were very often involved or partly involved in political organizations. In this way, these relationships became immediately political and, therefore, non-static, varying with the different national and international scenarios. That was the case with the *Partito Nazionale Fascista* (PNF), *Falange Española* (FE) and the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI), among others, all of them crucial actors within the network.

Finally, the third level of enquiry corresponds to the particular situation of the Mussolini regime first, and Franco's Spain later. As a matter of fact, it is absolutely evident that the fascist elements in both countries were very often part of the governments in Madrid and Rome, which implied that the network also managed to establish links within the highest political spheres, including diplomats, civil servants, politicians, and even Mussolini and Franco themselves. The decision to incorporate this governmental level of analysis is also determined by our need to explain bilateral dynamics between these governmental actors, a focus which can sometimes be labelled almost as that of international history. At the same time, it is this third level of analysis that makes our transnational network unique and this work so enriching; the active involvement of both governments certainly constitutes another reason why this small part of the global chain remains so important in understanding the functioning of the whole network. At the same time, we believe that, for the reader to follow our narrative without feeling lost, the manuscript had to strike a balance between the descriptive and the analytical parts of the work, as well as between the transnational dimension and the main aspects of international history.

Finally, *Transnational Fascism* is based on a wide collection of sources collected from different archives around Europe. Spanish and Italian archives were the core of this research but Portuguese, English, French and US archives have also provided us with crucial pieces of information which have enabled us to rebuild the history of this network; further, the interviews conducted with former militants of this political area were extremely valuable for our work. All in all, the very nature of the enormous amount of sources, together with the focus of the book and our interpretation of fascism as an ideology, pushed us to select a classical approach to transnational history.¹⁵

From a chronological perspective, the present study begins in 1922 coinciding with the March on Rome that marked the beginning of Mussolini and his PNF's ascension to power. Although the roots of the fascist ideology can be traced back to the previous decade, it was in 1922 when the network started to be created thanks to the formation of the first pro-fascist associations in Spain. It is also during this time that elements within the Italian colony that existed in Spain began to organize themselves politically in order to sustain and spread fascist ideals: these were the origins of the Spanish sections of the *Fasci all'Estero*. As we will outline in the first chapters, these first initiatives were used by the fascist regime in Italy in order to spread fascism as a possible European model. In this way, fascism becomes, since the 1920s, an inescapable point of reference for the European right parties: either to maintain a certain distance from it, or to incorporate some of its elements. To be sure, fascism had become a dominant phenomenon capable of imposing itself on or at least influencing other political movements, as the Spanish-Italian case will prove. The influence it had on the Spanish right, and which has been neglected by historiography until very recently, is particularly important as it confirms the idea that fascism should be framed as a transnational phenomenon, at least in its intention. This is even more relevant if we consider that neo-fascism had been re-utilizing this transnational dimension since the end of the 1940s, thus bringing the militants into the debate around the new issues that had emerged in the new political scenario of the Cold War.

Equally clear is the end point of this book. In 1981, elements of the Spanish army and police forces organized a *coup d'état* to destroy the recently created democracy and restore an authoritarian regime which would resemble the Francoist one. This was not a new strategy; in fact, the more radical groups inside the fascist network had supported this coup solution throughout the 1960s and the 1970s, first in Italy and then in Spain as part of the so called '*strategia della tensione*' or strategy of tension. However, none of the attempted coups succeeded in defeating the democratic governments in Italy and in Spain. The failure of the coup in 1981, the subsequent victory of the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE) in 1982, and the Spanish membership of NATO and the European Union is evidence that the strategy adopted by these radical groups needed to be revised and changed. In this way, and even though the neo-fascist network did not disappear after 1981, it underwent such substantial changes in its composition and methods that it would deserve a completely different analysis which would go beyond the scope of this book.

Nevertheless, the selection of these two dates does not correspond exclusively to the identification of turning points in the evolution of the network. At the basis of this

choice also lies the firm conviction that in order to understand the development of the network after 1945 it is necessary to trace its origins back to the 1920s when the network was actually created. In this way, this book makes a crucial contribution to the debate around the nature of extreme right-wing parties after the end of the Second World War. This debate has become particularly intense over the last few years due to the resurfacing of these parties in Europe.¹⁶ Academia's interest in this debate has grown even further after the recent European elections of May 2014, which have witnessed a substantial increase in the number of votes of radical right parties, including the victory of *Front National* in France with 24 per cent of the votes, or the victory of UKIP in Britain also with 24 per cent of the votes. Of course these political formations which stand at the right of the right refuse to acknowledge the label of neo-fascists or any reference that might have anything to do with the interwar fascism by claiming that there are no similarities at all with that ideology. A number of scholars who defend the idea that, in spite of a number of similarities, these parties represent a new phenomenon linked to post-industrial societies have supported this argument. Accordingly, they discard the term neo-fascism, which is deemed as misleading, and have instead coined the label 'national-populism'.¹⁷ Another group of scholars argue that neither the term 'national-populism' nor 'neo-fascism' have managed to capture the complexity of the political parties at the right of the right. As a result of this, they suggest the label 'extreme right' which acknowledges the differences with respect to the interwar period and at the same time recognizes similarities in a number of key aspects.¹⁸

Although the present book does not deal directly with these parties and their evolution after 1981, it shows that they have resurfaced in Europe from a political and ideological milieu, which maintained substantial continuities with interwar fascism. In fact, this work will demonstrate that the fascist transnational network created in the 1920s was a fundamental actor in the circulation and transfer of the fascist ideology throughout different countries all over the world for almost sixty years. Indeed, when the war ended, neither the network nor its components vanished into thin air and a number of the fascists that survived after 1945 like Gastone Gambara, Junio Valerio Borghese, Filippo Anfuso, Raimundo Fernández Cuesta, Leon Degrelle and Otto Skorzeny (all prominent fascists during the 1920s and 1930s) managed to adapt to the new circumstances and continue with their political activities. With them, the main fascist ideas also survived and, through them, these ideas were transmitted to the new generations that received the baton around the middle of the 1950s. Of course, the new generations also brought new ideas and new strategies, but even then the continuities were still more important than historiography has acknowledged in the last few years. Because of this, and even though the labels are not our primary concern, the present book will refer to the groups and movements that integrated the network as fascists until 1956 and neo-fascists after 1956.

Similarly, the present volume claims that these neo-fascist groups need to be placed at the far right of the political spectrum. Yet, neo-fascism, according to this transnational and enlarged perspective, has to be understood here as a multi-factor process which involved theoretical issues such as tradition and social order but also pragmatic elements such as the defence of the field itself, even though within this big area there

were differences and sometimes disagreements. The capability to merge despite their inner differences became clear immediately after the Carnation Revolution in Portugal when different parts of the network went to Spain in order to defend Francoism. It is also a common claim of neo-fascist parties, even today, that the distinction between left and right is clearly anachronistic and cannot be used anymore. This book relies on the assumption that the left-right dichotomy is still very valid and remains crucial to understanding politics in the twentieth as well as the twenty-first century.¹⁹ However, it is important to make the distinction, following the work by Franco Ferraresi, between the Radical Right and Extreme right. While the former defends extreme ideas by non-violent means, the latter defends its radical positions using violence.²⁰ This distinction will become crucial while analysing groups such as *CEDA* (*Círculo Español de Amigos de Europa*), *Giovane Europa* or *Nouvelle Droite* (radical right), and *Ordine Nuovo* (ON), *Avanguardia Nazionale* (AN), *Fuerza Nueva* or *Cruzados de Cristo Rey* (extreme right).

The book is structured, chronologically, into six chapters and each one corresponds to a different phase in the evolution of the Spanish-Italian network. Chapter 1 outlines the first contacts between Italian fascists and Spanish extreme right-wing elements from the 1920s until the end of the Republic in Spain in 1936. Special emphasis will be given to the group of people around José Antonio Primo de Rivera who travelled frequently to Italy and used the Italian Fascist Party as the main point of reference to give birth to *Falange*. It should be clarified that this first chapter mainly focuses on the birth of the transnational network and, as a result of this, on the establishment of a series of personal relations between people in both countries. During this preliminary period in which acquaintances were made and trust was still being built, the exchange of ideas was limited. Hence, this part deals less with the mechanisms of transfer and transformation of ideas, and more with how these people met and established channels of communication – which would subsequently be used to exchange ideas. In other words, this chapter of the book aims at explaining the strategies, capacities and institutions that transnational actors in Spain and Italy built in order to create transnational connections. Nonetheless, this period needs to be included in this work because without the analysis of the formative years of the network, with the build-up of the first personal bonds and the establishment of the first channels of communications, albeit limited, it is not possible to understand the subsequent phases of the network in which the exchange of ideas was much more frequent.

Chapter 2 will analyse the consolidation of the network from 1936 to 1945. It will scrutinize the contacts established during the Spanish Civil War and the relevance they had in the consolidation of the network. The military aid given by the Mussolini regime to the rebel army strengthened the previous contacts and contributed to creating new ones (especially in the economic sphere), fundamental in the evolution of the Spanish-Italian nexus. Finally, this chapter will analyse the evolution of the transnational network during the Second World War, with special attention to the issue of defeat which would become an ideological point of reference for these groups. This will allow us to challenge the traditional interpretations that regarded the end of the Second World War as the end of the fascist ideology in Europe, by emphasizing how the network lost relevance in that period but never fully disappeared.

Chapter 3 covers the period between 1945 and 1950 – the time period when the global fascist network, and therefore the Spanish-Italian node, started to undergo important changes. This chapter will show that the Spanish-Italian contacts between fascist elements were strengthened from 1945 onwards, starting to operate in a clandestine way and on a transnational basis. Among these contacts there are three actors that have to be highlighted due to their relevance in the bilateral nexus of the network. The former officials and followers of the *Repubblica Sociale Italiana* (RSI) who decided to stay in Spain after 1945, the *Movimento Italiano Fede e Famiglia* (MIFF), the *Fasci d'Azione Rivoluzionaria* (FAR), and finally the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI). All these connections allow for the rebuilding of the network in which the MSI would become a crucial actor due to its contacts with the Francoist regime. However, it is necessary to clarify that the people integrating this rebuilt network were concerned mainly with their own personal survival after the war. Accordingly, the exchange of ideas was also limited during that period.

Chapter 4 examines the period between 1951 and 1960 which can be described as a period of transition for the transnational network. This was due to the new situation that was being delineated both in the international sphere and in the internal scene of Spain and Italy. The focus of this chapter will, therefore, be on the analysis of this new context with particular emphasis on the Cold War, the European integration process, the appearance of a new generation all over Europe, the irruption of *Opus Dei* in the highest spheres of the Francoist regime, and the failure of the MSI to seize power in Italy through democratic means.

Chapter 5 examines the period between 1960 and 1968, the latter being the moment at which a number of movements/groups inscribed in the neo-fascist network decided to adopt a more direct strategy. This period is therefore characterized by the progressive radicalization of the network, especially in Italy. The appearance of new groups such as *Ordine Nuovo* or *Avanguardia Nazionale*, much more extremist than the MSI, introduced new elements in the Spanish-Italian nexus. In fact, faced with these new actors the Francoist regime decided to adopt a pragmatic strategy and to establish contacts with these new groups that were gaining strength in Italy. This decision accelerated the radicalization of the network and, at the same time, set the ground for the next phase marked by the proliferation of terrorist actions.

Chapter 6 analyses the period between 1968 and 1981 when, according to historiography, the Spanish transition officially ended. As has been said, this period was characterized by the proliferation of extreme right-wing terrorism all over Europe, but especially in Spain and Italy. The main objective of this chapter is to analyse four main terrorist actions in which the Spanish-Italian node was somehow involved (the bombings at the Agricultural National Bank in Milan, and in Brescia, and the shootings at Montejurra and Atocha) in an attempt to understand the role played by the neo-fascist network.

All in all, the following pages will deal with the relations established between Spanish and Italian extreme right-wing movements between 1922 and 1981, in an attempt to understand an important nexus in a global network of neo-fascist terrorist organizations. Similarly, *Transnational Fascism* aims at showing that the Spanish-Italian node was essential for the circulation and transfer of the fascist ideology at a

global level for almost sixty years. By doing so, the present volume makes two main contributions to scholarly literature.

First, it analyses the contacts between extreme right-wing groups in Spain and Italy using an approach (transnational networks) which had been almost completely neglected by historiography. This point is crucial in order to open the field of research to a new wave of historiography on fascism; if fascism is intended as a transnational phenomenon that was able to develop itself over almost one century and adapts itself to different contexts, it is then possible to frame many other movements and parties under a more general label, above all the South American regimes. Here stand the benefits of this approach which allows for a larger interpretation of fascism not with the aim of stretching a category to its limit, but to examining these borders.

Furthermore, the importance of the Spanish-Italian node contributes to obtaining a better understanding of the whole transnational fascist network in its entirety, how it was created and how it expanded at a global scale. These contributions shed new light onto the study of extreme right-wing political violence in Europe during the twentieth century. As a matter of fact, the Spanish Italian 'link' proved our intuition and drove us to define different movements such as *Falange* and MSI, or *Guerrilleros de Cristo Rey* and ON as a part of a common political culture trapped between modernity and their rejection of it, between the mythological conception of the nation and the strong need to open their reasoning and action to a more transnational level; contradictions and paradoxes that, in the end, have become one of the main features of fascism to this day.