

N.B.: This is the Author's Version (AV) of my article that was published as 'Colonial Crossovers: Nazi Germany and its Entanglements with Other Empires,' *Journal of Global History* 12,2 (2017), pp. 206-27. As the AV is not identical with the printed version, please always consult the *Journal of Global History* webpage or the printed version.

Colonial Crossovers: Nazi Germany and its Entanglements with Other Empires

Abstract:

Nazi Germany's place in the wider world is a controversial topic in historiography. While scholars such as Ian Kershaw argue that Hitler's dictatorship must be understood as a unique national phenomenon, others analyze Nazism within comparative frameworks. Mark Mazower, for example, argues that the international concept of 'empire' is useful for comprehending the German occupation of Europe. Using an approach native to transnational cultural studies, my contribution goes a step further: I analyze how the Nazis themselves positioned their regime in a wider international context, and thus gave meaning to it. My main thesis is that while the Nazis took a broad look at international colonialism, they differentiated considerably between the various national experiences. French and British empire building, for instance, did not receive the same attention as Japanese and Italian colonial projects. Based on new archival evidence, I show that the act of referring in particular to the Italian example was crucial for the Nazis: on the one hand, drawing strong parallels between Italian colonialism and the German rule of Eastern Europe allowed Hitler to recruit support for his own visions of imperial conquest. On the other hand, Italian colonialism served as a blueprint for the Nazis' plans for racial segregation. The article thus shows the importance of transnational exchange for understanding ideological dynamics within the Nazi regime.

Keywords:

Nazi Germany; Fascist Italy; Imperial Japan; settlement policies; racist social engineering; cross-cultural fertilization and learning

Short bio:

Patrick Bernhard is Associate Professor at the University of Oslo. He completed his MA and his doctorate in Munich and has since lectured or held fellowships at the Université de Montréal, the Freiburg Institute for Advances Studies, the German Historical Institute in Rome, the Istituto Storico Italo-Germanico in Trento, at Trinity College Dublin, at University College Dublin, and at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at USHMM in Washington, D.C.

He is author of various publications that cover a broad range of topics, ranging from European fascism to colonialism, from war and genocide to peace movements and Cold War cultures. His publications include *Zivildienst zwischen Reform und Revolte: Eine bundesdeutsche Institution im gesellschaftlichen Wandel, 1961-1982*, Munich: Oldenbourg, 2005; *Den Kalten Krieg denken: Beiträge zur sozialen Ideengeschichte seit 1945*, ed. P. Bernhard and H. Nehring, Essen: Klartext Publishing House, 2014; Patrick Bernhard, 'Hitler's Africa in the east: Italian colonialism as a model for German planning in Eastern Europe,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 51, 2016, pp. 61–90 and *La Pizza sul Reno: Per una storia della cucina e della gastronomia italiane in Germania nel XX secolo*, *Memoria e Ricerca*, 23, 2006, pp. 63-72.

A unique racial state? Putting the first German dictatorship in perspective

Nazi Germany's place in the wider world is a controversial topic in historiography. Mainstream scholarship has frequently considered Nazi Germany to be a singular phenomenon in European history that had a unique developmental path independent of the traditional democracies of France and Britain and the various fascist movements that emerged in the inter-war period. In one widely read account, British historian Ian Kershaw spoke of a 'uniqueness' that defined Nazism: For Kershaw, what rendered this right-wing dictatorship so special and distinguished it from others was its intransigent stance on racial issues.¹ Whereas Hitler's state was structured around a racist ideology that ultimately led to the Holocaust, Kershaw insists that regimes such as Fascist Italy and Francoist Spain were only marginally interested in racial questions.

Furthermore, Kershaw argues that these dictatorships only took racist positions for tactical reasons – that is, to placate Germany, the dominant Axis partner. In this way, Kershaw claims that contact between right-wing dictatorships during the inter-war period were superficial: According to Kershaw, instances of cross-cultural fertilization, such as the emulation of the Nazis' leader-cult by Franco's Spain, were little more than an 'aping' of the German model. For Kershaw, these gestures did not touch the essence of Nazism.²

Based on a reading of the secondary literature, Kershaw revives the longstanding understanding of a unique German path to modernity, albeit in a diminished form: While he does acknowledge that Germany was woven into the fabric of Modern European

¹ Ian Kershaw, 'Hitler and the uniqueness of Nazism,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 39,2, 2004, pp. 239–54.

² Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, the Germans, and the Final Solution*, New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2008, p. 354.

history following unification, and thus shared various commonalities with its neighbors, Kershaw still sees the Nazi state as an exception. In the years between 1933 and 1945, the country became an absolute state in the strictest sense of the word: a regime largely disconnected from the world surrounding it. In the final analysis, Kershaw writes the history of Nazism as a disentangled history of a nation state.

With the advent of transnational, culturalist, and post-colonial perspectives, these ideas have come under increasing scrutiny.³ Three distinct strands of research can be identified. First, using transnational analytical frameworks, a new wave of scholarship has shown that even the ultranationalist and xenophobic right-wing dictatorships of the first half of the 20th century had transnational moments. Driven not only by strategic considerations, but also by a shared racist ideology, these regimes collaborated and learned from each other precisely because they understood that they needed each other to overthrow the existing post-war order established by the Treaty of Versailles, and to fight against ‘international Jewry’ that the Nazis believed threatened the racial integrity of their own people.⁴ Against this backdrop, policing and repression designed to socially exclude political and racial ‘undesirables’ became one of the most prolific fields of Axis cooperation.⁵

Second, cultural approaches to the history of Nazism have shattered claims that racism represented the unique essence of Hitler’s regime. As Mark Roseman and a group of younger scholars have argued in a pathbreaking new work, race was hardly the only factor shaping Nazi thought and action; nationalism, religion, class as well as economic considerations also played important roles.⁶ Moreover, as Roberta Pergher has argued, the Nazi regime had massive problems defining race and implementing coherent racist policies both domestically and in newly conquered territories.⁷ In sum, these studies have de-essentialized ‘race’ as constituting the ‘true’ nature of Nazi Germany.

³ On historiography, see also the contribution by Daniel Hedinger to this special issue.

⁴ See Ana Antic, Janna Conterio and Dora Vargha, ‘Conclusion: beyond liberal internationalism,’ *Contemporary European History*, 25,2, 2016, pp. 359–71.

⁵ Mario Ivani, *Esportare il fascismo: Collaborazione di polizia e diplomazia culturale tra Italia fascista e Portogallo di Salazar (1928–1945)*, Bologna: Clueb 2008; Patrick Bernhad, ‘Konzertierte Gegnerbekämpfung im Achsenbündnis: Die Polizei im Dritten Reich und im faschistischen Italien 1933 bis 1943,’ *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 59, 2011, pp. 229–62.

⁶ Mark Roseman, Devin Pendas and Richard Wetzell (eds.), *Beyond the racial state: rethinking Nazi Germany* (in preparation).

⁷ Roberta Pergher, ‘Looking at the ‘racial state’ through the window of Fascist Italy,’ conference abstract. See www.indiana.edu/~beyond/Abstracts/23_Oct_11_AM_3.pdf (last accessed June 22, 2016).

Third and finally, scholars working in the field of global history who have been inspired by postcolonial thought have begun applying the concept of empire, commonly used to analyze the relationship between European and extra-European societies in the 19th century, to the study Nazi rule over Europe, especially its eastern territories. Mark Mazower in particular has sought to bring this perspective away from the margins of scholarship on Nazi Germany and into the mainstream. In his seminal work, *Hitler's Empire*, Mazower situates the Nazis' violent drive for expansionism in a context that goes well beyond the country's national development pathway. Indeed, he understands German domination over continental Europe as the most extreme outcome of the imperial rivalries that constituted Western modernity since the 19th century.⁸

My contribution seeks to integrate these three new historiographical approaches to examine how Nazi Germany's visions and policies sought to create a new racist empire, while at the same time offering an original answer to the question of Nazi Germany's place in the wider world. Indeed, while scholars such as Mark Mazower have argued Nazism was the extreme outcome of European imperialism, such accounts only sporadically mention actual contacts and mutual exchange that took place between the German and other empires it competed with. My contribution seeks to close this gap. Using an approach native to transnational cultural studies, I analyze how the upper echelons of the Nazi regime positioned their rule in a wider international context, and thus gave meaning to it. In particular, I examine how Germans viewed the colonial projects of European and non-European regimes during the interwar period, and how they collected and processed information to fit their own needs.

Indeed, Nazi officials, bureaucrats, and technicians constantly invoked the examples offered by other imperial powers. Most notorious and often cited are Hitler's remarks concerning the British Empire.⁹ In 1942, as his troops struggled on the Eastern front, Hitler noted that Eastern Europe was to become Germany's India. Hitler's assertion is less amusing and bewildering than it might sound, especially to British ears. Despite claims that the so-called 'Age of Empire' ended with the outbreak of World War I, at that time colonialism was still a prominent feature of European societies.¹⁰ The Nazis, seemingly obsessed with their Germanic roots and race, were hardly exceptional

⁸ Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: how the Nazis ruled Europe*, New York: Penguin Press, 2008.

⁹ Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: a new history*, Basingstoke: Pan Book, 2000, p. 531.

¹⁰ See David Armitage, *Foundations of modern international thought*, Cambridge: CUP, 2013, p. 191.

in this regard. One should not forget that many Nazi leaders were born in the late 19th century during the heyday of European imperialism.

My main thesis is, however, that while the Nazis were broadly interested in international colonialism, they distinguished between the various national experiences. Ultimately, the French and British empires served primarily as a negative point of reference when it came to defining the Nazi empire in ideological terms. By contrast, newer forms of imperial conquest, especially the large-scale Japanese and Italian settlement projects in North Africa and Manchuria, provided positive templates for action to Hitler and his men.¹¹ As I will discuss in greater detail, Nazi Germany's vision of empire was crucially informed by the examples set by other nations.

Italian empire building was particularly fascinating to the Nazi leadership because *from the Nazi perspective*, the Italian Fascists had transcended traditional notions of colonialism, thus overcoming the very idea of imperialism – that is, the rule of a central power over a variety of peoples. Indeed, Italian authorities wanted to create a much more homogeneous empire in racial terms: the indigenous populations in their African colonies were to be marginalized and relegated to separate enclaves in the less fertile hinterlands in order to make way for the millions of white colonists the Fascist regime hoped to settle in Italian Africa. In this way, the Germans at the time understood Italian rule in Africa as a highly innovative and modern form of settlement colonialism, and it was precisely its seemingly new features they took a special interest in, as these resonated positively with their own vision of a racially pure settler society to be engineered in the newly conquered territories mainly of Eastern Europe in the shadow of the Holocaust.¹² I argue the Italian case was crucial for the Nazi leadership: On the one hand, drawing strong parallels between Italian colonialism and German rule of Eastern Europe allowed Hitler to recruit support and enthusiasm for his own visions of imperial conquest. On the other hand, the Italian example also offered a blueprint for the Nazis' plans for racial segregation and eugenics, both in their future African colonies and in Eastern Europe.

¹¹ Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt: Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, 5th edn. Munich: Beck, 2010, p. 606.

¹² As the debate on the possible nexus between Nazism and colonialism has concentrated almost exclusively on the Holocaust, this aspect will not be dealt with in this article. See most recently Shelley Baranowski 'The colonial roots of Nazi violence: The place of the Holocaust in Nazi imperialism,' in Tobias Hof, ed., *Empire, ideology, mass violence: The long 20th century in comparative perspective*, Munich: Utz, 2016, pp. 71–96.

My transnational cultural approach uses different methods than classical historical comparisons. While the comparative historian identifies and elaborates on differences and commonalities between historical objects, cultural studies analyze the ways in which the people at the time identified and defined differences and similarities. These subjective frameworks of interpretation form the objects of my analysis. Accordingly, it is no longer the historian's task to describe the past 'as it really was,' but rather how people in the past created reality when perceiving the world and making sense of what they saw. Thus, I draw on insights offered by cultural historians such as Roger Chartier and Frank Ankersmit.¹³

A transnational cultural approach to the history of Nazi imperialism has specific advantages. First, it allows us to move beyond questions regarding whether, for example, the Nazis misperceived British or French colonial rule and their associated conceptions of empire. Instead, we can take German perceptions of other empires for what they were: a specific form of appropriating the world and dealing with experiences gained abroad. Furthermore, we are also able to interpret the reception or rejection of given 'objects of transfer' as being the consequence of particular political, social, and cultural contexts. In this way we can understand cross-cultural exchange as a learning process independently of its 'success' or 'failure.' Indeed, such a historical approach is concerned with how Germans viewed and judged examples of colonialism against the backdrop of their *own* assumptions. Such an approach not only sheds light on the object of reflection, but also on the observers, on their way of thinking, and how they perceived themselves in a wider world. Entangled histories are thus also about the way the minds of the observers themselves are shaped when observing. Writing a transnational history of German imperialism after 1918 may help us to reconstruct the genesis of what could be called 'Nazi identity,' as identity is always the product of an encounter with the 'other,' and does not constitute an endogenous essence.¹⁴ As scholars such as Stuart Hall have argued, identities are historically defined: they are 'formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us.'¹⁵ These cultural systems should not simply be equated

¹³ Roger Chartier, *Cultural history: between practices and representations*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993; Frank Ankersmit, *Meaning, truth, and reference in historical representation*, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2012.

¹⁴ Lynn Hunt, *History Writing in the Global Era*, New York: Norton, 2015.

¹⁵ Stuart Hall, 'The question of cultural identity,' in Stuart Hall et al., *Modernity: an introduction to modern societies*, Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1996, p. 598.

with the nation. This is because identities are frequently the product of encounters with entities defined as alien. In this way, the very idea of being a 'true Nazi' must be understood at least in part as a consequence of the dynamics of entanglements with other foreign groups, movements, and regimes.

My argument has three parts. In the next section I will show how Germany both rivaled and cooperated with other imperial powers before 1933, sharing knowledge on various aspects of colonial rule while developing its imperial identity through comparisons with other empires. It is worth noting that even after the loss of its overseas possessions after World War I, Germany remained embedded in an international framework of imperial knowledge exchange. As the second part will demonstrate, Germany's dependence on this outside resource grew even stronger after the Nazi takeover in 1933. While the dictatorship dreamed of developing and integrating huge new territories into the *Reich*, it did not possess the requisite knowledge for doing so. As the Nazi leadership did not want to rely on its own colonial traditions, it sought to a considerable degree to mine the experiences of other imperial powers. Based on a systematic and, if appropriate, quantitative analysis of edited and unpublished primary sources, I will show that while assessing the expertise of various colonial powers for solutions that would be applicable to its own imperial ambitions, German officials and experts did prioritize the knowledge they had gained. In the end, ideological concerns were pivotal as the Germans drew distinctions between democracies and right-wing dictatorships, and then between authoritarian and fascist regimes when it came to conquest, dominion, and empire building. In the third and last part I discuss the channels of knowledge exchange created between Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy and the subsequent learning processes that took place between them. More specifically, I will outline how Germany's plans for its new territories were informed by various racial population management techniques that were borrowed from abroad.

Copy and compete: Germany and Europe's imperial powers before 1933

As Alex Middleton reminds us, 'empires, after all, have always compared themselves to other empires.'¹⁶ For example, imperial officials consistently sought information about their competitors and used such comparisons to justify certain techniques of imperial

¹⁶ Alex Middleton, 'French Algeria in British Imperial Thought, 1830–1870', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 16, 1, 2015, pp. 1–15.

rule, which at the same time contributed to the formation of cultures that imagined themselves through comparisons with other empires. This indicates that 'knowledge about empire' became key in both domestic debates and in the struggle between the European powers. Thus, even at the peak of their animosities in the late 19th century the European states had to deal with their imperial rivals in cooperative ways, sharing experiences, and exchanging colonial knowledge across national borders. Somewhat paradoxically, this caused nationalism to be accompanied by a growing internationalism, as confirmed by a number of studies that have uncovered linkages across the formal borders of imperial nations.¹⁷

International hubs of scholarly exchange emerged during this period. For example, the *Institut Colonial International*, founded in 1893 in Brussels, was just one of various organizations that brought together British, French, Belgian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch experts in what became known as 'colonial sciences.' The rapid rise of this new academic discipline was closely tied to its highly international outlook. The participating experts understood themselves as a transnational scientific community dedicated to influencing their nations' policy agendas in Africa and Asia.

Imperial Germany was deeply involved in these discussions. As a latecomer nation that only acquired her first overseas territories in 1884, Germany was largely dependent on experiences gained abroad in order to catch up in what has been described as the 'scramble' for overseas territories and imperial control. As Ulrike Lindner has shown, as the biggest and most successful colonial power, Great Britain, became the 'gold standard' for Germany to emulate.¹⁸ While Germany tacitly adapted some of the British strategies of imperial rule, she also expressly distanced herself from aspects of the British example. In a final analysis, this 'moment of demarcation' was crucial to the development of German imperial identity.

The situation did not entirely change after Germany's defeat in World War I and the forced cession of its overseas possession following the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. Despite much embitterment about the loss of its colonies, Germany remained part of the international debate on empire, and German imperial experts continued cooperating with their European colleagues as they tried to use these channels to reclaim their

¹⁷ An overview is provided by Elizabeth Buettner, *Europe after empire: decolonization, society, and culture*, Cambridge: CUP, 2016, pp. 12–4.

¹⁸ Ulrike Lindner, *Koloniale Begegnungen: Deutschland und Großbritannien als Imperialmächte in Afrika 1880–1914*, Berlin: Campus, 2011.

former colonies in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific.¹⁹ However, after Versailles, Germany could not rely on its own colonial experiences. This made it harder for the Germans to keep pace and not lag behind the imperial powers that were still in the 'race' for colonial holdings.

After the late 1920s two major developments altered the relations among empires and their colonial experts. First, the world economic crisis of 1929 caused many countries to withdraw funding for international organizations like the International Africa Institute, founded in London in 1926. With the Rockefeller Foundation diminishing its support, the IAI basically became a British institution, restricting its subsequent international work. Second, following the Great Depression two rising empires fundamentally challenged the international order: Imperial Japan and Fascist Italy. It was foremost Mussolini's regime that presented itself as a radical alternative to the established order.

While scholars have documented the Italian regime's claims to be rebuilding the ancient Roman Empire, its claims to represent modernity are often overlooked.²⁰ Indeed, the Italian Fascists linked the construction of their empire to something that few believed stood for modernity's promise of shaping the future: racism. Mussolini's regime envisioned a state-sponsored resettlement of millions of Italians to African territories that would serve as a breeding ground for the white race, thereby reversing the negative demographic trends underway in many European societies. The emerging imperial society would contribute to the racial regeneration of the decaying 'Old Continent.' The Italian Fascists asserted that their vision of a racial empire fundamentally differed from the economic rationale that shaped the politics of the traditional colonial powers. While the latter regimes served the interests of a few capitalists, Fascist empire aimed at the betterment of the entire population. Accordingly, the Fascists spoke of the 'demographical colonization' undertaken by a 'proletarian empire.'²¹ In this sense, Fascist imperialism was depicted as something entirely new and unique. This later became a common feature within Axis alliance. As Reto Hofman argues in his contribution, politicians, bureaucrats, and intellectuals in Italy, Germany, and Japan

¹⁹ Stefan Esselborn, *Übersetzer Afrikas. Das Internationale Afrikainstitut (IIALC/IAI) und die Praxis afrikanistischer Expertise, 1926–1976*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Munich, 2016.

²⁰ See Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist modernities: Italy 1922–1945*, Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2004.

²¹ Daniel Hedinger, *Der Traum von einer neuen Weltordnung: Die Achse Tokio-Rom-Berlin, 1931–1942*, forthcoming Munich, 2017.

emphasized the alleged novelty of both their policies for domestic reorganization and for reshaping the way the world was governed.

By the 1920s, the Fascist vision for remaking Italy through the creation of a new racial empire became an international sensation.²² Fascist Italy's imperial policies were particularly attractive because they promised to change the fate of the entire white race. As its purpose was demographic rather than economic, British experts such as known geographer E. J. Russell observed that it differed from anything that had previously been put 'into large-scale operation.'²³ The effects of the world economic crisis and the widespread fear from the 'decay of the West' gave meaning to Fascist anti-capitalist rhetoric, which promised a new racial beginning.

Germany joined the international wave of excitement over Fascist empire. Indeed, the German fascination with Italian rule in Africa can hardly be overestimated. As recent research has shown, such enthusiasm was hardly limited to a few technical experts or fringe right-wing parties, but rather permeated broader segments of German postcolonial society, including in particular conservative and nationalist circles.²⁴ This interest must be understood against the backdrop of a specific colonial culture that gained ground in Germany after 1919. Probably as a consequence of the traumatic loss of its overseas territories, this culture was not nationally defined, but was drawn from a European reservoir. Indeed, insofar as German cultural elites were engaged with colonial issues after 1918, their inspiration came from France, Britain, and, to an increasing degree, from Italy.²⁵

The magnetism exerted by Italy in particular has much to do with the course of European colonialism after 1918. Fascist expansionism seemed to demonstrate that the German dream of empire was anything but over. While other European colonial powers experienced a fundamental crisis of legitimacy in the interwar period after they were either unable or unwilling to fulfill the promises of independence extended to their colonies during World War I, Fascist Italy ruthlessly conquered significant territory in

²² On the worldwide interest in Fascist Italy see the overview of Arnd Bauerkämper, 'Interwar Fascism in Europe and beyond: toward a transnational radical right', in: Martin Durham and Margaret Power, eds., *New perspectives on the transnational right*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 39–66.

²³ E. J. Russell, 'Agricultural Colonization in the Pontine Marshes and Libya', *The Geographical Journal*, 94, 4, 1939, pp. 273–89.

²⁴ Patrick Bernhard, 'Borrowing From Mussolini: Nazi Germany's colonial aspirations in the shadow of Italian expansionism,' *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 41, 2013, pp. 617–43.

²⁵ Birthe Kundrus, 'From the periphery to the center: on the significance of colonialism for the German Empire,' in Sven Oliver Müller and Cornelius Torp, eds., *Imperial Germany revisited: continuing debates and new perspectives*, New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2013, pp. 243–66.

Ethiopia, and in 1936 became a major colonial power. In this way, Fascist Italy became a shining example that showed Germany the way toward a bright imperial future. The intoxicating nature of this vision made many Germans ignore various inconsistencies in Italy's imperial mission, including its utopian aspects.

Empire 2.0: Updating and prioritizing foreign knowledge, 1933–1943

After Hitler's seizure of power in January of 1933, the Nazis found their country integrated into a weakened international imperial framework. At this point, the Nazi leadership decided to remain within the established networks of inter-imperial exchange. This was partially an attempt to legitimize their regime at the international level. For years, the Nazis had not only been harshly criticized, but also ridiculed for being an absurd German copy of the much admired 'Roman original.' One method for overcoming its status as a parvenu was to become proactive in the international academic community. Both Nazi officials and German academics hoped to capitalize on the new scholarly interest in interdisciplinarity and internationality, which were not only becoming increasingly fashionable in scientific circles, but could also be used to demonstrate how modern the Nazi regime actually was.²⁶

As mentioned, the new regime was highly dependent on foreign knowledge for developing plans for future colonies and turning Germany into a new empire. Mining foreign knowledge and experience was crucial, for the new schemes being hatched up by the Nazis went far beyond anything the country had previously undertaken. The regime was not only interested in building vast new colonies in Central Africa, but also envisioned the conquest of enormous territories in Eastern Europe to serve as 'living space' for the resettlement of millions of German colonists. However, the Nazi leadership made clear that it was not advisable to rely solely on past German experience when fleshing out such plans. Hitler himself, but also some of his closest collaborators, such as Hans Frank and Heinrich Himmler, believed German colonial knowledge was completely outdated, as many years had passed since the country had lost its overseas territories.²⁷ In the interim period, both the *Reich's* political and legal frameworks as well as the situation on the ground in Africa had 'profoundly' changed. On the one hand, the new Germany had been transformed into a unified state with a clear racial vision that

²⁶ Rüdiger Hachtmann, 'Forschen für Volk und "Führer": Wissenschaft und Technik,' in Dietmar Süß and Winfried Süß, eds., *Das 'Dritte Reich': Eine Einführung*, Munich: Pantheon, 2008, pp. 205–26.

²⁷ Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *The German Myth of the East: 1800 to the Present*, Oxford: OUP, 2009, p. 188.

Imperial Germany had never embraced. On the other hand, the 'natives' and their relations with the Europeans had undergone various changes as well. In this context, officials spoke of new 'native policies' that the colonial powers had specifically developed to clarify the legal definition of 'half breeds,' usually the descendants of a white father and a non-white mother. This is how an official of the Ministry of Justice assessed the current situation in Africa. His assertion demonstrates that skepticism about the value of Germany's own colonial expertise did not remain limited to the upper echelons of the NSDAP, but was shared by people within the traditional bureaucracy.²⁸

To make matters worse, the Nazi leadership believed the Kaiser's imperial policies had been a complete failure. For example, Fritz Tiebel, a high ranking civil servant, asserted in a conversation with the Secretary to the Italian Minister for Africa Italiana that Imperial Germany had been a liberal *laissez-faire* state during the 19th century, interested only in economic exploitation of its oversea possessions.²⁹ While Nazi representatives sometimes paid lip service to the 'glorious colonial past' to placate segments of German society that retained sentimental feelings about the country's former colonies, their internal communications made it quite clear that there was little to learn from Imperial Germany, except its mistakes.³⁰ It was thus logical to turn to foreign imperial powers as templates for the future Nazi empire. What Hitler and his inner circle had in mind was a new empire, a rebooted and relaunched Empire 2.0, if you will, that avoided the errors they believed had undermined Wilhelmine Germany.

Almost immediately after Hitler seized power, various organizations began collecting data on foreign countries that were potential colonial holdings. It is worth noting that not only the Party's Colonial Office was tasked with gathering information, nor was it only traditional colonial policies the Nazi leadership was interested in. Rather, various newly founded institutions of the regime that complemented existing international ties were charged with surveying the activities of other states, including in particular their spatial planning and settlement policies in urban and rural areas. This means the interest in matters of reorganizing space were not limited to Africa and other

²⁸ Memo of Oberjustizrat Cusen, Reich's Ministry of Justice, December 1938, National Archives Berlin (BArch), R 3001, 22364, fol. 145.

²⁹ See letter of Bernardo Attolico to Foreign Minister Ciano, November 19, 1938, in *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani, ottava serie: 1935-1939*, Rome: Ist. Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 2003, vol. X, p. 460.

³⁰ See Werner Schubert, 'Das imaginäre Kolonialreich: die Vorbereitung der Kolonialgesetzgebung durch den Kolonialrechtsausschuß der Akademie für Deutsches Recht, das Reichskolonialamt und die Reichsministerien (1937-1942),' *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Germanistische Abteilung*, 115, 1998, p. 97.

more traditional places of settlement activities, but cut across various regions to include Europe. Indeed, the regime sought to map all spatial knowledge available at the time. A good example is the Reich's Office for Spatial Planning, which was founded in 1935 and headed by Hanns Kerrl. It was formed to consolidate all planning and research activities. And as there was a lot of 'new ground' to cover, Kerrl was interested in how other nations dealt with similar problems. As a first step, he installed a proper department for foreign exchange. As Kerrl explained in a letter to the Foreign Office that was to help him in establishing international contacts, he and his men were interested in specific countries, 'in particular Italy (including Abyssinia), England and the USA, but also the Netherlands.'³¹ These countries were sent a questionnaire asking detailed information regarding the organization of their planning activities, its legal basis, problems of financing, urbanism, and most recent settlement projects. The data from these countries were immediately made accessible to other planning bodies that were being created by the new state, such as the *Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für Raumforschung* and the *Forschungsdienst der Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft der Landwirtschaft*, both headed since the mid-1930s by Konrad Meyer, an agronomist who subsequently became the main architect of the SS settlement plans for Eastern Europe.³² In this context, Meyer and his colleague Paul Ritterbusch specifically referred to Italy as a leading country when it came to modern techniques of colonialism.³³ Additionally, the German Labor Front and its academic think tank also examined other nations' problem solving capacities in the area of spatial planning. Here, too, the planners' interest focused both on traditional colonial territories and new forms of imperial rule, such as the Japanese settlements in Manchuria. The results were quite impressive. Between 1938 and 1942, the German Labor Front alone published more than 50 working papers on various African and Asian regions, among others on 'Japanese colonization in East Asia.'³⁴

At the start of the war, as the German planning staff begin making more detailed plans for their newly conquered territories, they encountered a basic problem: While they had acquired detailed materials on various imperial regimes, these imperial

³¹ Letter of the Reich's Office for Spatial Planning to the German Foreign Office, March 12, 1937, BArch, R 113/1634.

³² See letter of the Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für Raumforschung to the Reichsstelle für Raumordnung, March 21, 1939, BArch, R 113/1634. On the information returned by Italy see Political Archives of the Foreign Office Berlin (PA-AA), DBR, 1248a, vol. 1937-1939.

³³ Memo of RfR, No 1972/40, March 1940, BArch, R 113, 1586, fol. 13.

³⁴ Arbeitswissenschaftliches Institut der DAF, ed., *Das Kolonisationswerk Japans im ostasiatischen Raum*, Berlin: Eigenverlag, 1941. The working papers are collected in BArch, NS 5/IV, No. 39864-40000.

regimes greatly varied, and so did their respective approaches to imperial rule.³⁵ This forced German planners to compare, assess, and prioritize the new information they collected. In other words, the Nazi regime and its planning staff had to select foreign templates that fit their own ideas of the future German empire.

As it soon turned out, German officials and experts were not equally interested in all foreign colonial experiences. For sure, the British Empire remained a crucial point of reference and the German press continued to broadly cover India and its other colonial possessions.³⁶ Yet the ways in which the Nazis referred to it have to be scrutinized. While Hitler, among others, admired the size and grandeur of British overseas possessions, the common notion that the Germans took colonial lessons from the British appears flawed. References to British rule in India are few and far between in planning documents for the settlement of Africa and Eastern Europe.³⁷ Perhaps most importantly, British colonialism was seen as venture from the past. As Hitler explained to his inner circle in August 1941, shortly after the Wehrmacht had invaded the Soviet Union, 'What India *was* for England, the territories of Russia *will* be for us.'³⁸ This means the German dictator clearly saw Germany as the rightful heir of the British Empire; an empire that he wanted to surpass.

What rendered the British and French empires so obsolete to German eyes was their failure to act in accordance with the racial imperatives of the time. To Hitler, both powers still clung to the old notion of imperial rule over a broad variety of populations.³⁹ He had very clear ideas about the ethnic composition of his future empire. Only a small part of the population was to be indigenous, the rest would be composed of Germans, and hence, would not resemble the British and French dominions. What was even more egregious to Berlin was that London and Paris allowed for the 'racial line' to be crossed. While the British contented themselves with discriminating against 'half-castes' in economic terms, the French even endorsed 'colored people' to assimilate, according to one senior official of the Ministry of Justice who was tasked with providing

³⁵ Thus Wilhelm Wengler in his presentation during one of the sessions of the Committee for Colonial Law, April 1938, in Werner Schubert, ed., *Akademie für deutsches Recht 1933-1945: Protokolle der Ausschüsse*, Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2001, vol. 12, p. 414.

³⁶ See more in detail Bernhard, *Borrowing*, pp. 621-2.

³⁷ Jens-Uwe Guettel, *German expansionism, imperial liberalism, and the United States, 1776-1945*, Cambridge: CUP, 2013.

³⁸ Hugh R. Trevor-Roper, ed., *Hitler's table talk, 1941-1944: his private conversations*, New York: Enigma Books, 2000, p. 24, my emphasis.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 426.

the legal frameworks for future German colonies in Africa.⁴⁰ In the end, as a colleague of this official stated in internal exchanges, it was the ideological proximity to Nazism that determined which foreign model fit best. Taking the example of colonial policing, he explained that there was a close relationship between the form of empire and the shape its security forces took: Every regime had the kind of police force that corresponded to its 'true nature.'⁴¹

Given such logic, it is little surprise that Nazi officials and their senior staff within German bureaucracy were attracted by authoritarian and fascist templates, especially Fascist Italy and Imperial Japan. It was this idea of being united by a specific fascist 'nexus' that helped them to overcome many of the national and racist resentments that they nurtured against each other. Indeed, it was both in public statements *and* in internal debates that Japan and Italy were invoked as prime examples of a new way of thinking about empire. Thus, it would be misleading to dismiss the various positive statements made by Nazi officials regarding both regimes as mere 'Axis lyricism' intended to paper over deep-seated conflicts within fascist alliances. For example, describing closer European police collaboration to fight Communism, in the mid-1930s the newly founded Gestapo proposed integrating a 'block of states' comprising Italy, Germany, Portugal, Austria, Hungary, and Turkey to form the 'center of a political defensive front of civilized European states against political criminality.'⁴² In sharp contrast to European democracies, these nations were concerned with purging their societies of antisocial and dangerous 'elements,' while at the same time fostering those elements they considered to be 'valuable' in racial terms.

Although leading representatives of the Nazi state referred to various right-wing regimes as being guided by certain shared ideas, they discriminated within them, and not all were on equal footing with their own regime. In his 1936 memorandum on autarky, Hitler clarified certain fundamental differences between authoritarian and fascist regimes.⁴³ In this memorandum, Hitler emphasized that only the Third Reich,

⁴⁰ Memo of Oberjustizrat Cusen, Reich's Ministry of Justice, December 1938, BArch, R 3001, 22364, fol. 145.

⁴¹ Memo of the Colonial Office on policing, 1942, BArch, R 1001/9757.

⁴² Memo of the Foreign Office, 14 March 1934, PA-AA, R 100748, fiche 1909.

⁴³ Unsigned Memorandum (August 1936), in *Documents on German Foreign Policy: From the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Series C (1933-1937), The Third Reich: First Phase*, Vol. 5: March 5 - October 31, 1936, Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1966, pp. 853-62. See similar Aristotle Kallis, *Fascist ideology: territory and expansionism in Italy and Germany, 1922-1945*, London: Routledge, 2000, p. 38.

Imperial Japan, and Fascist Italy had sufficient control over their societies, and a common commitment to war, to fight the Soviet Union 'with any prospect of success.' Other states lacked the resolve and public support necessary for conflict with the 'disciplined rule' of the Soviets. Hitler believed many other authoritarian regimes that were still forced to stabilize their political leadership were 'unable to direct this armed hand outwards for the preservation of their states' against the communist menace. According to Hitler, Western democracies lacked the social cohesion necessary for the effective defense of their nations. Regardless of whether he was correct, this belief helps explain Hitler's aggressive behavior in 1939, when he felt strongly supported by his principal Axis partners. In any event, the notion that only fascist governments could fully mobilize the resources of the nation was soon taken for granted.

Within these wider debates on the 'true nature' of Nazism and fascism, the particular way these regimes understood empire was of pivotal importance. Hitler again set the agenda here, providing the leadership of the Wehrmacht with an authoritative understanding of new fascist thinking about colonialism. Indeed, in a speech given to his generals shortly after the beginning of the war, Hitler recognized that Germany and Italy were fundamentally driven by a racial expansionism. For Hitler, the Italian Fascists had shown their true face in Africa. By expanding Italy's 'vital spaces' and resettling thousands of colonists in occupied territories, Mussolini's state was pursuing goals that were for Hitler 'based on the sound footing of the Volk,' (viz. '*volklich fundiert*').⁴⁴

Other German observers were also captivated by Japan's and Italy's vast settlement schemes, and saw them as unique from the undertakings of other imperial powers. Journalists and state officials alike drew strong parallels between these countries' colonization programs and German expansionist visions. Most notably, they were impressed by the speed and magnitude of their allies' colonization programs, and ultimately put pressure on the Nazi leadership not to lag behind international trends in what was dubbed 'modern colonization'. In 1936 Japan officially declared the start of the 'Millions to Manchuria Plan' to resettle one-fifth of Japan's farmers, or 5 five million people, to Manchuria within 20 years. Shortly thereafter, in 1938, Italy followed suit, announcing that 500,000 Italian colonists would be resettled to Libya, and millions more to Ethiopia, which had been integrated into the new-born *Impero fascista*. These

⁴⁴ Adolf Hitler 'Denkschrift und Richtlinien über die Führung des Krieges im Westen vom 9.10.1939,' in H. A. Jacobsen, ed., *Dokumente zur Vorgeschichte des Westfeldzuges 1939-40*, Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1956, p. 4.

programs received considerable public attention in Germany. While there was some media coverage of similar, yet smaller Portuguese and Spanish settlement schemes, Japanese Manchuria and *Africa Italiana* were clearly the main focus of interest. For instance, it was only to Manchuria and Libya that German newspapers dispatched special correspondents who provided their German readers with very detailed and numerous accounts, often on a weekly basis.⁴⁵ Just like Hitler, the authors highlighted in particular Italy and Japan's far-reaching demographic ambitions.⁴⁶

This clear hierarchy among fascist and authoritarian states is reflected in the number of German publications on empire, and the ways the Nazi leadership used foreign templates when discussing a country's political future. Using newspaper coverage of colonialism, I have created a 'fascism index' to examine patterns in how Germans perceived its imperial allies. One of the biggest collections of newspaper clippings was kept by the *Arbeitswissenschaftliches Institut* (AWI). As a large academic think tank of the German Labor Front, the AWI was one of the organizations the Nazi regime used to monitor labor relations and welfare problems both at home and in the newly conquered territories. In 1933, the AWI took over several existing newspaper clippings collections and further expanded them, until their collection comprised 3 million articles by the end of the war in 1945. As the newspaper clippings were collected along uniform principles and subdivided by individual country, it is possible to compare the data by counting the number of folders labeled 'colonialism' for each regime.⁴⁷ The result reads as follows: Japan stands atop of the list with 101 folders, closely followed by Italy with 81 folders, while Salazar's Portugal and Franco's 'New Spain' trail behind with 49 and 30 folders respectively.

While the collection of information is an interesting indicator, more crucial is how this information was processed in the planning of Germany's colonial future. Examining how the upper echelons of the party and state bureaucracy used information concerning authoritarian and fascist regimes, we find that one country clearly stands out: Italy. In their minutes and memos, edited in *Records of the Reich Chancellery*, the German administration between 1933 and 1940 referred to Italy 195 times, to Japan 37 times, to

⁴⁵ On the high frequency of the reports see, for instance, the articles by Herbert von Borch in *DAZ*, October 26 1938, and November 5, 8, 18 and 20, 1938.

⁴⁶ 'Japans Siedlung in Mandschukuo: Erfahrungen und Pläne für die Zukunft,' *Frankfurter Zeitung*, September 29, 1937.

⁴⁷ I used the finding aids of the National Archives in Berlin as the basis for my quantitative analysis.

Spain 29 times, and to Portugal 7 times.⁴⁸ If we move away from various quantitative figures and examine how representatives of the regime viewed these regimes, Fascist Italy again appears at the forefront. In internal communications of the consular service or in the discussions of experts working in institutions such as the AWI, Mussolini's colonial endeavors in Africa are described as 'particular,' in a 'class of their own,' 'second to none,' and ultimately 'unique' relative to other regimes' efforts.⁴⁹ It seems that this narrative was so widespread that, despite his strong doubts regarding the Italian regime, Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels could not help but praise the Italians. After having seen a film on Libya and Abyssinia in his private theater, he noted in his diaries that their policies in Africa were truly remarkable.⁵⁰ The notion that Mussolini's dictatorship stood head and shoulders above other authoritarian and fascist regimes shaped both the general debate concerning Germany's imperial future and the way German experts developed detailed plans for the new territories Germany was to hold in Eastern Europe and Africa.

The Fascist script: The many meanings of the Italian template and its effects

Italy's colonial empire acquired various meanings for the Germans. First, as Mussolini's policy of conquest had been a significant driver of colonial aspirations within Germany, Hitler realized Italy could be used to advertise his own visions of imperial conquest in Eastern Europe. In other words, the Nazi leadership tried to harness colonial enthusiasm in Germany by drawing parallels between Italian colonialism in Africa and German rule in Eastern Europe. Basically, the regime sought to harness existing colonial aspirations within society in the pursuit of its objectives. In this endeavor, the Italian empire served as an extremely useful tool: it helped to translate Nazi ideas into the language of colonialism, an idiom that was still widely understood in Germany. The Italian empire thus functioned as a crucial link between the 'old colonial world' and the new Nazi empire.

⁴⁸ Friedrich Hartmannsgruber, ed., *Akten der Reichskanzlei, Regierung Hitler: 1933–1945*, Berlin and Boston, Mass.: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 1999–2015, vols. 1–7. The figures are based on the register of the edition.

⁴⁹ Cable of the German Consul General in Addis Ababa to the German Foreign Office in Berlin, November 22, 1938, p. 1, BAArch, R 1001, 9714; Memo 'The Italian settlement scheme in North Africa' by Rudolf Fitzner, January 1939, BAArch, NS 5, VI/28041.

⁵⁰ Elke Fröhlich, ed., *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels*, part I: *Aufzeichnungen 1923–1941*, vol. 6: *August 1938–Juni 1939*, Munich: K. G. Saur, 1998, pp. 360–1.

This context helps to explain why the new Italian territories in North Africa were portrayed in the regime's official propaganda as new and unique. The Nazis argued that the new territories were not traditional colonies, but rather represented an integral part of the Italian homeland, just as the new territories in Eastern Europe would be an integral part of Germany. To strengthen public acceptance for this narrative, Italian settlement activities in Africa – including in particular the shipping of the first 20,000 Italian colonists to Libya in October 1938 (the famous '*ventimila*') – received massive press coverage. The various journalists sent to Libya as special correspondents didn't just have privileged access to Italian officials, who often arranged for guided tours of the new settlements.⁵¹ They were also able to give their stories a very personal touch: they reported, for instance, about their private conversations with ordinary Italian families and their feelings about leaving their homes forever to settle in Libya, thus making it easy for German readers to relate to them.

In their stories on Libya, journalists stressed that the country had ceased to be a traditional colony. In 1938 its coastal region had been 'integrated into the Italian homeland' and now formed 'Italy's fourth shore.'⁵² Libya was 'Italian soil'; the settlers did not 'migrate' to a colony, but had rather simply resettled. In this context German journalists used the word '*umgesiedelt*' (or 'resettled') to refer to their own relocation of people to the East. Drawing on his personal experiences when accompanying Italian settlers to their new homes, one journalist explained that the new territories were simply an extension of Italy into Africa. An article in the *Voelkischer Beobachter*, the official Nazi party newspaper, made it very clear: In Libya the Fascists had created 'four new provinces *for Italy*.'⁵³

Commending the Italian Fascists' colonial efforts allowed the Nazi regime to promote its own settlement scheme and overcome hesitation towards its plans for its newly conquered territories. Indeed, German state officials, merchants, and small farmers expressed considerable skepticism toward settling in Poland and its neighboring countries; these territories were seen as the 'Wild East.'⁵⁴ It was therefore

⁵¹ Exemplary is R. Vogel, 'Italien kämpft gegen die Sahara,' *N.S. Landpost*, May 20, 1938.

⁵² 'Libyen mit dem Mutterlande vereinigt,' *Berliner Börsenzeitung*, October 26, 1938. Very similar 'Die vierte Küste Italiens,' *Deutsche Bergwerkszeitung*, June 1, 1939.

⁵³ Robert Kroetz, 'Vier neue Provinzen für Italien: Kulturarbeit statt Ausbeutung,' *Völkischer Beobachter* October 23, 1938.

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Harvey, *Women and the Nazi east: agents and witnesses of Germanization*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003, p. 126; R. M. Douglas, *Orderly and humane: the expulsion of the Germans after the Second World War*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 2012, p. 46.

useful for the Nazi regime to use Italy's experience to demonstrate how resettlement had already been practiced with great success, and to emphasize that the Italian settlers did not leave their country per se, but simply moved to another part of it.

Internal communications reveal that the Nazi leadership was curious about how the Fascist regime had convinced settlers to move to Africa. Indeed, Berlin appointed a special envoy, the labor attaché to the German Embassy in Rome, to accompany the 20,000 settlers that the Fascist regime sent to Libya in October 1938 to understand their hopes and fears.⁵⁵ It was with 'particular interest' that Minister of Labor Franz Seldtke read this detailed travel report, and he immediately requested additional information on Italian colonialism.⁵⁶

The effects of the regime's propaganda upon German society are difficult to assess. There are, however, various indications that its efforts stirred enthusiasm among Germans for the colonial project in the East. Admittedly, many Germans could not be persuaded and remained skeptical about the feasibility of settling millions of Germans within a short time span. Hermann Stresau, a librarian and writer who had difficulties in making a living in Nazi Germany due of his liberal political beliefs, is a noteworthy representative of the skeptical camp. As Stresau noted in his diaries, one evening he attended a public lecture on Italian colonialism, organized by the local Italo-German Cultural Society. Although the speaker proclaimed the entire African continent would soon be under German and Italian rule, Stresau was more impressed by the limited possibilities North Africa offered to white settlers.⁵⁷

While clearly unpopular in some quarters, Italian and German dreams of empire were also supported by segments of German society. Surveying a wide variety of sources, such as official reports, personal letters, and diaries, it appears the regime was able to reach a broad spectrum of the emerging 'National Community.' School children were among the prime groups to be targeted. Indeed, Hitler's regime focused its aspirations on future generations, hoping to impart them with the 'true Nazi spirit' in the area of empire building. Winning the hearts and minds of the young took on tremendous significance. Italy's colonial aspirations, for example, were officially taught in German classrooms. *Volk and Führer*, the basic history textbook for German grammar

⁵⁵ See letter of Oskar Karstedt, Reich Labor Ministry, to Wolfgang Spakler, Social Affairs Attaché at the German Embassy in Rome, October 29, 1938, PA-AA, DBR, 713d.

⁵⁶ Letter of Franz Seldtke, Reich Labor Minister, to the German Embassy in Rome, April 26, 1939, PA-AA, DBR, 713e.

⁵⁷ Hermann Stresau, *Von Jahr zu Jahr*, Berlin: Minerva, 1948, p. 310.

schools, drew a direct comparison between the Reich's and Italy's expansionist goals, and emphasized that both nations had been denied 'vital space' for years.⁵⁸ To prepare for teaching this topic, the Nazi Teachers' Organization provided additional information in its journal.⁵⁹ Students were shown films that drew parallels between Nazi Germany's and Fascist Italy's imperial ambitions. A prime example is 'Men Make History: The March on Abyssinia,' a film produced by the NSDAP's Propaganda Department in 1938 and distributed in all schools in the *Reich*. In Stuttgart alone 30,000 school children saw the movie. The way Fascist empire was presented, and the exoticism of the African setting, certainly had their effects. As the local Italian consul, who had attended the screening to monitor the audience's reactions, reported to his superiors in Rome, the students had enthusiastically applauded the film.⁶⁰ This was not just wishful thinking, nor was it an attempt to curry favor with the regime by reporting what many wanted to hear; private papers also corroborate the official view. As East German writer Hermann Kant remembered his Nazi-era school days in his 1977 novel 'Der Aufenthalt,' he and his schoolmates played 'Bombs on Adua,' a game they had invented after seeing the film. Some of his friends who took the role of the Italian soldiers shot huge stones with a catapult at the 'Abyssinians' hiding under a tin sheet.⁶¹ In the truest sense of the word, German children playfully learned and internalized the violent ideals of both regimes.

Another group to be targeted were the educated bourgeois elites in Germany. Here, the regime could rely on a plethora of organizations to disseminate knowledge on Italian empire, mainly in the cultural sector. Starting in the late 1920s, for instance, in dozens of towns local elites set up Italo-German cultural societies, often in the context of sister-city partnerships.⁶² Talks and slide shows on Italian Africa were particularly popular among an audience of lawyers, doctors, university professors, entrepreneurs, and other local dignitaries. As the directors of the Italo-German *Studienstiftung*, a foundation started by a Siemens Corporation executive in Berlin, observed, the encounters between the German audience and the Italian speakers proved to be

⁵⁸ Dietrich Klagges and Walter Franke, eds., *Volk und Führer: Deutsche Geschichte für Schulen*, vol 5: *Der Weg zum Großdeutschen Reich*, Frankfurt am Main: Diesterweg, 1941, p. 189.

⁵⁹ *Der Deutsche Erzieher*, 7, 1940, p. 218.

⁶⁰ Cable of the Italian consul in Stuttgart to the Italian Propaganda Ministry in Rome, March 12, 1938, ACS, MinCulPop, D.G. Servizi della Prop., propaganda presso gli stati esteri, b. 97, Germania '1938' 1e parte. See also cable of the Italian Embassy in Berlin to the Italian Propaganda Ministry, July 9, 1938, *ibid*.

⁶¹ Hermann Kant, *Der Aufenthalt: Roman*, Leipzig: Reclam, 1986, p. 264.

⁶² There were about 30 local branches in the Reich. See letter of the Italian Ambassador in Berlin to the Italian Foreign office June, 21 1943, Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Serie Affari Politici, Germania 1931-1945, b. 74, fasc. 2.

particularly fruitful, as there was a chance to exchange ideas at a more informal level after the talk. These discussions ‘over a beer or two’ were ‘highly inspirational’ for both sides.⁶³

Finally, members of Erwin Rommel’s *Afrikakorps* also showed much affection for the Italian colonization project and were able to relate it to Germany’s own quest for new territories. Not only had they been exposed to German propaganda on Fascist and Nazi Empire to prepare them for the fighting in Africa; they also witnessed what the Italians had actually achieved in Libya. Although many soldiers expressed contempt for the purportedly poor fighting abilities of their Axis comrades, they were also impressed by the new Fascist settlements in the desert. In their letters, war diaries, and memoirs, soldiers described the villages and farms with their palm trees and green gardens as true paradises.⁶⁴ The concept most often used in this context was ‘clean and neat.’⁶⁵ With ‘untiring diligence’ the settlers had greened the desert, and huge fields of golden grain surrounded villages whose centers were formed by elegant and snow-white buildings. Sometimes, however, the soldiers’ enthusiasm about Fascist endeavors was so great that the original message of the official propaganda got lost: namely, the link to Germany’s expansionism in Eastern Europe. For instance, several German soldiers’ letters wrote that the fighting in North Africa was ultimately for German colonies in Africa.⁶⁶ Others, however, did see links between Africa and the Eastern territories. When seeing the Italian villages in Libya for the first time, a veterinary officer wrote that he was reminded of ‘German settlements in our Eastern provinces.’ The regime deemed the letter to be so important that it was published in a major newspaper.⁶⁷ In sum, the Nazi regime could use Fascist colonialism as a tool for social mobilization, even though it did not always control how Germans imbued these ideas with meaning.

However, Fascist colonialism was not only a means of social activation. It also provided a blueprint for emulation when the Nazi regime began developing plans for a

⁶³ Activities report of the Deutsch-Italienische Studienstiftung for the year 1938/39, p. 2, PA-AA, R 61301.

⁶⁴ Letter of Second Lieutenant Robert Witzke, 1942, March 31, 1941, Archives of the Museumsstiftung Post und Telekommunikation Berlin, 3.2002.7605.

⁶⁵ Rudolf Marwan-Schlosser, *Rommel's Flak als Pak: das Flak-Regiment 135 als Rückgrat des Deutschen Afrikakorps*, Wiener Neustadt: Weilburg, 1991, p. 107.

⁶⁶ Letters of Private Hans Eisenstein, May 22 and 25, 1941, Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte Stuttgart, Sammlung Sterz. For further evidence see Carlo Gentile, ‘Wehrmacht und Waffen-SS im Kampf gegen Resistenza und Zivilbevölkerung’, in Thomas Schlemmer, Lutz Klinkhammer and Amedeo Osti, eds., *Die ‘Achse’ im Krieg: Politik, Ideologie und Kriegführung 1939 bis 1945*, Paderborn: Schöningh, 2010, pp. 492–518.

⁶⁷ Schmidt, ‘Wie ich Libyen sah: Ein Land voller Gegensätze, dessen Wesen man nur langsam kennen lernt,’ *Westdeutscher Beobachter*, March 19, 1942.

future German empire in Africa *and* Eastern Europe. Indeed, settlement experts were particularly interested in the racist dimension of Fascist rule in Africa. More specifically, German planning staff were intrigued by the Italian policies of racial segregation and their guidelines regarding the racial improvement of future settlers. As I aim to show on the basis of previously unearthed material, there is indication that German experts emulated Italian Apartheid laws when they drafted the *Kolonialblutschutzgesetz*, a law to protect the 'purity of the German blood' in Germany's future African possessions. They were also inspired by Italian directives regarding the selection of settlers for the newly conquered territories in Eastern Europe.⁶⁸

This emulation process was facilitated by channels of exchange that Hans Frank and Heinrich Himmler had managed to create. A leading lawyer of the Nazi regime and subsequently a governor in occupied Poland, Hans Frank helped to both elaborate the legal frameworks for the new German territories and implement them on the ground as well. Frank, who spoke some Italian and proclaimed to be a fervent admirer of Mussolini, quickly forged close links with leading legal experts of Germany's main Axis partner. The Academy for German Law, established in 1933 as the main institution to transform Germany into a dictatorship and headed by Frank himself, provided an important hub for cross-cultural exchange and learning. Italian specialists in colonial law were regular guests at the meetings of its Committee for Colonial Law, where they provided detailed information on current Italian legislation.⁶⁹ For instance, in May 1939 Renzo Meregazzi, Chief of Cabinet to the Ministry of Italian Africa, gave a speech to his German colleagues on the 'Fundamentals of colonial law and colonial policies within the Fascist Empire.'⁷⁰ In his talk, Meregazzi stressed that Fascist Italy had taken an intransigent stance towards the problem of 'racial mixing,' gradually enforcing its legislation over the last few years. In Africa the Fascist state protected not only Italian nationals, but also the entire 'white race' from being 'contaminated' by those they identified as 'inferior races.' Law forbade marriage and sexual contact between white

⁶⁸ Scholars such as Birthe Kundrus have long assumed that the German legislation was in part inspired by the Italian experience, yet I am the first one to provide further evidence to support this idea. See Birthe Kundrus, 'Von Windhoek nach Nürnberg? Koloniale „Mischehenverbote“ und die nationalsozialistische Rassengesetzgebung,' in Birthe Kundrus, ed., *Phantasiereiche: zur Kulturgeschichte des deutschen Kolonialismus*, Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2003, pp. 110–31.

⁶⁹ Letter of the German Foreign Office to the German Embassy in Rome, November 27, 1937, PA-AA, DBR, 777c.

⁷⁰ Invitation to the meeting of the German Academy on colonial matters, May 14, 1939, BArch, R 1501, 127192, fol. 169.

and black people, and violators were severely punished with multi-year prison sentences.⁷¹

Frank and his colleagues were so intrigued by Meregazzi's paper that they immediately translated and published it in German, along with other official texts.⁷² For example, the law on 'Penalties for the Defense of the Prestige of the Race in regard to African Italian Natives' of May 1939 was reprinted in its entirety in *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Rechtswissenschaft*, the leading journal on comparative law, and introduced by Giuseppe Lo Verde.⁷³ A Visiting Professor at the University of Königsberg and co-editor of the eminent quarterly '*Reich-Volksordnung-Lebensraum*' ('Reich, Population Order, and Living Space'), Lo Verde regularly published on various problems of Italian and German law and thus was an important academic intermediary between the two countries.⁷⁴ Finally, scholars such as Lo Verde were supported by the German Embassy in Rome that in late 1941 appointed a proper liaison officer for colonial matters. This post – a rather unique institution within the *Reich's* inter-imperial relations – was to guarantee a broad and constant flow of information between German and Italian academia.⁷⁵

The main reason why Frank's staff was so attentive of foreign experiences in managing race relations was that the Nazi regime was about to draft its own colonial legislation for Germany's future colonies in Africa.⁷⁶ Beginning in 1933, the Nazi regime developed serious plans for a German *Mittelafrika* that was to encompass the former German East Africa, the Belgian Congo, French Senegal, and Madagascar. As victory over the Allies seemed within reach in 1940, preparations for the acquisition of African colonies intensified. When assuming control of the Allies' colonies, Germany would be confronted with a major problem: miscegenation. Thus, the new colonial masters were to administer and regulate race relations. Of course, the Germans had considerable expertise in racial legislation, the most notorious being the Nuremberg Laws of 1935.

⁷¹ See, for instance, Renzo Meregazzi, 'Lineamenti della legislazione per l'Impero,' *Annali dell'Africa Italiana*, 2,3, 1939, p. 12.

⁷² Renzo Meregazzi, *Die Grundlagen des italienischen Kolonialrechts und der faschistischen Kolonialpolitik*, Rome: Istituto poligrafico dello Stato, 1939.

⁷³ 'Strafmaßnahmen zum Schutze des Rassenprestiges gegenüber den Eingeborenen von Italienisch-Ostafrika,' *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Rechtswissenschaft*, 1,2, 54, 1939, pp. 109–12.

⁷⁴ Christian Tilitzki, *Die deutsche Universitätsphilosophie in der Weimarer Republik und im Dritten Reich*, Berlin: De Gruyter 2002, part 1, p. 1108.

⁷⁵ Letter of the German Foreign Office to the Embassy in Rome, October 3, 1941, PA-AA, Rome Quirinal (secret), 119.

⁷⁶ Report of Freytagh-Loringhoven, president of the committee for colonial law, June 16, 1938, BArch, R 1501, 127192, fol. 82.

Indeed, the Nuremberg Laws were initially to provide the basis for all subsequent legal planning for Germany's future colonies.

Yet as legal experts such as Wilhelm Wengler soon realized, the social and cultural context into which the law was to be inserted was different from the one at home. In Africa, the key problem was not separating 'German Jews' from 'Aryans,' but basically 'white people' from 'black people.' Thus, it was not possible to simply extend domestic legislation to the colonies. Rather, the Germans needed a solution that was appropriate for the local situation. Wengler, one of the leading experts of comparative law at the *Kaiser-Wilhelm Institute*, was an advocate for mimicking the Fascist legal template for Italian East Africa.⁷⁷ Not only was Italian legislation in this area quite restrictive, banning, for example, cohabitation between black women and white men; its main value was that it had also been tested on the ground. In other words, it had shown to work effectively in Africa.⁷⁸

Fascist colonial legislation inspired German law in various ways. Above all, the severity with which the Italian authorities punished any transgression of the color line appealed to German officials' views regarding colonial racial relations.⁷⁹ In their deliberations on the future colonial law, senior officials of the Ministry of Justice believed Mussolini's Italy could also provide a 'strong stimulus' to the new Germany.⁸⁰ Other than the British and French, who did little to impede the creation of a new race of 'half castes,' the Italians had established one of the most comprehensive systems of racial segregation in colonial Africa, banning interracial marriage and cohabitation.⁸¹

The success of the Italian authorities guided the German's decision to punish legal transgressions and provided a framework for determining the adequate degree of penalties.⁸² While the first German draft of the *Kolonialblutschutzgesetz* had called for the expulsion of whites who had experienced sexual relationships with a black person,

⁷⁷ Wilhelm Wengler, 'Die Kriterien für die rechtliche Abgrenzung der verschiedenen Bevölkerungsgruppen in den Kolonien,' *Zeitschrift für ausländisches öffentliches Recht und Völkerrecht*, 8, 1938, pp. 48–83.

⁷⁸ Wilhelm Wengler, 'Die Rechtsstellung der Mischlinge im italienischen Kolonialrecht nach dem Gesetz vom 13.5.1940,' *Zeitschrift der Akademie für Deutsches Recht*, 8, 1941, pp. 127–8.

⁷⁹ Intriguing on Fascist racial policies Martina Salvante, 'Violated domesticity in Italian East Africa, 1937–1940,' in Emily S. Burrill et al., eds., *Domestic violence and the law in colonial and postcolonial Africa*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010, p. 98.

⁸⁰ Memo of Oberjustizrat Cusen, Reich's Ministry of Justice, December 1938, p. 4; Resume on the deliberations of March 1939 of Dr Wengler's Guidelines, BArch, R 3001, 22364, fols. 144 and 414.

⁸¹ Friedrich Schack, 'Die italienische Rassenpolitik in Afrika,' *Afrika Rundschau*, August 4, 1940.

⁸² Minutes of the session of the first working group on 'the state in the new protectorates,' December 7–9, 1938, in Schubert, ed., *Akademie für deutsches Recht*, vol. 12, p. 470.

in the following versions the sentences were increased. Just like in *Africa Italiana*, whites that had sexual contact with non-whites were penalized with imprisonment. German officials had learned from the Italian experience that they needed stricter laws to deter possible offenders and enforce racial segregation. Indeed, before introducing prison sentences, Italian authorities had simply deported offenders, yet this had proven ineffective.

In their meetings, the legal experts of Frank's Academy explicitly referred to its fascist neighbor.⁸³ While also considering the emerging Apartheid regime of the Union of South Africa as a possible template, they almost immediately scrapped this idea. As the delegate of the NSDAP's Office for Racial Policy proclaimed, it was an independent country. The situation on the ground could thus not be compared to the future German holdings in Africa, as these were to be dependent on the core areas of German *Reich*. Of course, this argument was not entirely convincing, as its Apartheid system could have been emulated regardless of the country's actual constitutional basis. However, the German debate is quite telling, for it shows us how foreign models that did not entirely fit the ideological frameworks of the Nazi regime were discarded as inappropriate.

The experiences of other colonial powers crucially informed German empire-building not just in Africa, but in Eastern Europe as well. In this connection, it was foremost Heinrich Himmler who established close relations with Italian officials, experts, and technocrats. These relationships were significant, as Himmler was put in charge of the vast German resettlement program for Eastern Europe, commonly known as the *Generalplan Ost*, in October 1939. Himmler not only sent his experts on field investigations to Italian North Africa (something that never occurred in the case of French North Africa), but also created an institutional framework for these contacts to put them on more solid footing. Thus, he created a joint Italian-German expert group to exchange ideas on agrarian and settlement problems, an organization with no equivalent in British-German or American-German relations. In this context, Giuseppe Tassinari, a famous agronomist and under-secretary in the Italian Ministry of Agriculture, gave a talk about Italy's new possessions in Abyssinia to an audience of selected Nazi officials and settlement experts at the Harnack House in Berlin, one of the

⁸³ See the presentation of K. Zoepke from the NSDAP's Office of Racial Office, *ibid.*, p. 501.

most important forums for scholarly dialogue in the Third Reich. The talk was deemed so important that it was immediately published in German.⁸⁴

Two aspects of the Italian efforts in Africa absorbed Himmler in particular: the complete incorporation of the new territories into the homeland and the selection of settlers. Indeed, in 1939, after years of intensive colonization and land improvement, Libya's coastal region was officially recognized as Italian homeland, an accomplishment that perfectly matched Himmler's own idea for transforming the newly conquered Eastern European territories into German lands, the infamous 'Germanization policies.'⁸⁵ Thus, the Roman example served as a source of encouragement to Himmler and his men, who felt they were pursuing the correct policies when acquiring new territories. It is against this backdrop that we must understand Heinrich Himmler's famous 1942 speech on empire building in Eastern Europe. According to Himmler, these new territories would be 'a colony today, an area of settlement tomorrow and part of the Reich the day after tomorrow.'⁸⁶ The speech is intriguing for two reasons: On the one hand, it shows us how much Himmler's thinking was shaped by a colonial mindset. On the other hand, it is clear he wanted to transcend – just as he thought the Italians had done – the very same notion of colonialism.

Like Hans Frank before him, Himmler and his staff began gathering information on Fascist Empire in more systematic ways. A good example is Helmut Müller-Westing's work. A junior officer of the SS and law student in Prague, Müller-Westing was encouraged to travel to Libya and write his Ph.D. thesis on the legal and technical aspects of the Italian settlements, with the main focus being the contract settlers signed with the state.⁸⁷ His mentors were agrarian expert Wilhelm Saure, who at the time worked for the Race and Settlement Office of the SS, and Oswald Pohl, one of Himmler's closest collaborators. Both were particularly interested in the Italian authorities' practical experiences since the nation had begun 'venturing off to new shores' of

⁸⁴ Giuseppe Tassinari, 'Die landwirtschaftlichen Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten Abessiniens,' *Berichte über Landwirtschaft* 23, 1938, pp. 599–620.

⁸⁵ Gerhard Wolf, 'The East as historical imagination and the Germanization policies of the Third Reich,' in Paolo Giaccaria and Claudio Minca, eds., *Hitler's geographies: the spatialities of the Third Reich*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016, pp. 93–109.

⁸⁶ Excerpt from a speech given by Himmler at the SS-Junkerschule Tölz, November 23, 1942, National Archives Prag, 2325, sg. 109-11/127, ka. 145. See Bradley F. Smith and Agnes Peterson, eds., *Heinrich Himmler, Geheimreden von 1933 bis 1945*, Frankfurt am Main: Propyläen-Verlag, 1974, p. 273.

⁸⁷ Helmut Müller-Westing, *Der Siedlungshof in Libyen: Rechtsgrundlagen der faschistischen Volksiedlung in Libyen, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Siedlungsvertrages*, PhD thesis Prague: Rechts- und staatswissenschaftliche Fakultät, 1941, printed Bozen: Selbstverlag, 1941.

Africa.⁸⁸ Thus, the guiding question Westing examined was *how* settlements should best be organized. As the author's introduction explained, now that the Nazi regime entered a 'space without people' in Eastern Europe and were about to design proper contracts with their future settlers, his thesis was meant to provide the necessary information for German experts to learn from an advanced system.⁸⁹

One of Müller-Westing's and other scholars' findings was that large and productive settler families were key to colonial success.⁹⁰ However, as the Italian experience had shown, it was crucial for the male head of the family to be supported by at least two grown sons who could perform the farm's heavy manual labor. Himmler's men were so interested in Müller-Westing's conclusions that they immediately published them in their specialist journal *Neues Bauerntum*, noting that the author gave settlement experts much to consider.⁹¹

It was at this time that Himmler personally intervened in German planning for Eastern Europe. In November 1941, he suggested a clause be inserted in the drafts for a German settler contract requiring presumptive settlers to have two grown sons.⁹² Although similar regulations had been discussed among German experts,⁹³ it was only after the Italian African experience that the head of the German settlement program made it a mandatory requirement. Given that Himmler's staff at the very same time emulated Italian colonial architecture to serve as a model for the German settlements in Eastern Europe,⁹⁴ an important learning process appears to have taken place. Selecting the right settlers became the key prerequisite for the emergence and prosperity of a new German Imperial society; as *Commissioner for the Strengthening of Germandom*, it was Himmler's task to secure its 'racial integrity' in Eastern Europe. Thus, it is not without

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 9.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 63–4 and 131. On the contracts between Italian settlers and the regime see Roberta Pergher, *Fascist borderlands: nation, empire and Italy's settlement program, 1922–43*, Cambridge: CUP, 2017 (in print).

⁹¹ Helmut Müller-Westing, 'Der Siedlungshof in Libyen Teil 1,' *Neues Bauerntum*, 34, 1942, p. 218.

⁹² Letter of Heinrich Himmler to Ulrich Greifelt, November 20, 1941, and letter of the Reich Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germandom to Brandt, personal assistant to Himmler, August 10, 1942, Barch, NS 19, 1596. On German interest in Italian colonialism see also Roberta Pergher, 'The consent of memory: Recovering fascist-settler relations in Libya,' in Giulia Albanese and Roberta Pergher, ed., *In the society of fascists: Acclamation, acquiescence and agency*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 169–88.

⁹³ Maria Fiebrandt, *Auslese für die Siedlergesellschaft: Die Einbeziehung in die NS-Erbgesundheitspolitik im Kontext der Umsiedlungen 1939–1945*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014, p. 445.

⁹⁴ Patrick Bernhard, 'Hitler's Africa in the east: Italian colonialism as a model for German planning in Eastern Europe,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 51, 2016, pp. 61–90.

irony that the measures taken to preserve the German race in the new territories were actually inspired by a foreign country.

Simply the dark side of modernity? Coming back to the problem of locating Nazism

I believe my findings challenge previous assumptions regarding how to understand Nazi Germany's international context. First, the limits and shortcomings of nation-centered accounts that focus on race as a 'unique' and thus incomparable feature have become evident. It is worth noting that Nazi Germany was willing to learn – and actually did learn – in the field of racial population management from foreign countries. Its schemes for an Apartheid regime in Germany's future African possessions and, more importantly, for Nazi eugenics in its Eastern European settlement project, were visibly influenced by Fascist Italy's African colonies. What is even more relevant, this issue became a vehicle for the realization of a core aim of the Nazi regime – that is, to create a new, racially pure society.

Furthermore, my findings challenge another assumption that has recently become prominent, namely the idea that fascism in the inter-war period was not an aberration, or an isolated case, but was a manifestation of the 'dark side of Western modernity.'⁹⁵ Edward Ross Dickinson, a specialist of modern German history, argues that 'scientific racism' was a common feature of almost all Western societies in the first half of the 20th century, and thus cannot solely be ascribed to Nazi Germany.⁹⁶

While this argument was important for ending the view that Nazism was a complete aberration in Western modernity, it still exhibits certain deficits. Above all, the notion that modernity has a 'dark side' tends to ignore differences that existed between individual Western societies. Among many scholars, particularly in England, there is a certain propensity to overlook the substantial differences between democracies and totalitarian regimes while focusing almost exclusively on modernity's destructive potential.⁹⁷ From this perspective, modernity as such is to blame for racial

⁹⁵ Jeffrey C. Alexander, *The dark side of modernity*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013.

⁹⁶ Edward Ross Dickinson, 'Biopolitics, Fascism, democracy: some reflections on our discourse about "modernity",' *Central European History*, 37,1 (2004), pp. 1–48.

⁹⁷ Exemplary is Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press 1989.

discrimination, oppression, and ultimately genocide.⁹⁸ Such oversimplifications have been challenged by numerous scholars. Lynn Hunt, for example, bemoans the demonization of the French Revolution, which for many has become synonymous with violence, terror, and authoritarianism.⁹⁹ Such a perspective wholly neglects the positive contributions made by the French Revolution to political thought and practice. Thus, Hunt argues for more balanced accounts that give due attention to the specific and local manifestations of modernity in different time periods.

My contribution confirms the need for accounts that differentiate between specific manifestations of modernity. Examining the imperial regimes of the inter-war period and their mutual contacts and relations, we find significant differences in how different countries and regimes were perceived. At various levels, German observers drew a distinction between Britain and France on the one hand, and Japan and Italy on the other hand. This distinction is visible not only in public rhetoric but also in internal deliberations about the future direction of the country. Indeed, Germany's self-purported kindred ties to Japan and Italy had a clear ideological basis, and were not merely founded by a desire to gloss over points of difference between wartime allies. For German observers, a fundamental area of difference between the democratic and fascist camps concerned demographic policy. Despite their underlying racist conceptions, the British and French visions of empire were seen as not racist *enough*. Fascist Italy, by contrast, clearly shared numerous fundamental beliefs with Nazi Germany, including the idea of rigidly separating people by race.

These often-repeated points of ideological distinction, which were eventually accepted as self-evident, crystallized into specific tangible differences. For example, the notion that Germany was the home of a unique form of fascist imperialism had significant effects on the way it conducted itself at the international level. The processes of exchange that took place between Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy in the area of colonial policy were unique and differed substantially from Germany's relations with other nations. As Hans Frank's and Heinrich Himmler's cooperation with Italian authorities has shown, these ties were far more elaborate and complex than the links Germany maintained with other colonial powers at that time. By the same token,

⁹⁸ Resuming the discussion on the relationship between Nazism and modernity is Ricardo Bavaj, *Die Ambivalenz der Moderne im Nationalsozialismus: Eine Bilanz der Forschung*, Munich: Oldenbourg, 2003.

⁹⁹ Lynn Hunt, 'The World We Have Gained: The Future of the French Revolution,' *American Historical Review*, 108 (2003), pp. 1–19.

Germany's deepening contacts with its main ally also meant a weakening of relations with other colonial powers. This, in turn, had repercussions for the way Nazi Germany perceived other regimes. Thus, as discussed, for a wide range of interlocking and self-reinforcing reasons, Germany came to view Fascist Italy as a role model worthy of emulation, as a vanguard nation in a much broader global fascist movement. Clearly, the 'inspirational force' exerted by Italian Fascism cannot be overlooked in seeking to account for the historical development of Nazi ideology, particularly as it relates to colonial policy and racial population management.