

# **Mediterranean Europe(s)**

Rethinking Europe from  
Its Southern Shores

Edited by  
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*Matthew D’Auria and Fernanda Gallo*  
*Parma and Cambridge*  
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## 9 *Mare Nostrum* and the European Polity

### Fascist Italy and the Mediterranean Sea in European Civilisation

*Lucio Valent*

Egidio Moleti di Sant'Andrea's book *Mare Nostrum: Roma nella civiltà mediterranea* offers a fascinating insight into Italian Fascist Mediterranean and European policy in the late 1930s. It was published at a time when geopolitics was receiving considerable attention in Italy, as a result of Mussolini's new foreign policy and following the shifts in the European political system caused by the Nazi rise to power.<sup>1</sup> In his book, Moleti di Sant'Andrea reflected, with great originality, on the policies that the regime should adopt towards Europe, on Mediterranean history, and on the Italian contribution to the shaping of European culture. As will be argued here, Moleti di Sant'Andrea's ideas were indeed consistent with the tenets of Fascist foreign policy as it had been conceived of in the years succeeding the founding of the Empire and following the *Anschluss*. And yet they offer nonetheless a highly original interpretation of European identity and European history as such.

#### The Context

Exploring the aims of Fascist thinkers in relation to the 'new order' they envisaged for Europe and the Mediterranean at the end of the 1930s is, in many respects, a daunting task. This chapter will start by offering some insights into the Fascist Revolution, on how it was understood by Fascist intellectuals and into the practical implementation of the decade's geopolitical projects. By doing so, it will outline some of the most important concepts emerging in those years and, by the same token, render it possible to better apprehend the precise contours of the idea of Europe within Fascist geopolitics.

First of all, it is important to remark that most, if not all Fascist authors justified their projects teleologically, on the assumption that the Fascist revolution had transformed Italian society into a totalitarian dictatorship and that such a process was irreversible. Their claim was that the 1922 revolution, as it was known, had ushered in the dawn of a new civilisation, the Fascist one. Mussolini's ability to understand the 'Spirit of the age' had been, they believed, its driving force. Most Fascist intellectuals went

on to contend that the momentous changes taking place throughout the world in the 1930s had been influenced by their revolution and added that the *Duce* had made it possible for the Italian people to show Europe and the world, once again, its greatness. After centuries of decadence, it was argued, Italians were about to fashion a new civilisation, one that would transcend the bounds of their own country. Yet this task could be fulfilled only through a blind faith in the ‘Fascist religion’ and in the *Duce*’s commands. Eventually, the character of the Italians would be remoulded, and they would become a race of rulers and conquerors. Once the first stage of the revolution had been completed and the cult of the nation had regenerated the Italians, thereby forming a solidaristic community, they would be able to face the challenges posed by the modern world. The aim was to achieve a new primacy for Italy, taking on a civilising mission and restoring, in the near future, the spirit and greatness of Rome.<sup>2</sup> It was assumed that the regime’s references to the image of imperial Rome and the Roman mind would instil in Italians the pride they needed to overcome their inferiority complex in the face of the British and the French. This historical myth would bind together Italy’s different local cultures and serve to create a mass National-Fascist consciousness. According to Fascist intellectuals, Mussolini had hastened the creation of this new civilisation after the Ethiopian war of 1935–1936. The war and the newly proclaimed Empire were the engine behind the Italian renewal, providing a workshop, in the colonies, for Fascist social engineering. Through its empire, Italy was seeking to carry out its innovative ‘corporative colonialism’ and thus obtain a leading position in Europe.<sup>3</sup>

In actual fact (and secondly), the truth was more complex. Indeed, the Regime’s lack of clarity on the subject had left Fascist intellectuals floundering and in the dark. No one could point to a coherent and organic vision or a single, detailed plan for Mediterranean domination. Mussolini himself noticed how threadbare conceptually the writings of his intelligentsia were in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the Second World War. It was a gap that he planned to fill by writing a book (*Europa 2000*) that would describe the characteristics of the new Fascist civilisation and account for his belief that the Germans, Italians, Russians, and Japanese were destined to rule the world in the decades to come.<sup>4</sup> Thus, and notwithstanding the verbose proclamations remarked upon above, many Fascist thinkers were uncertain and undecided about what Fascist rule in the Mediterranean and the Middle East might look like – and that uncertainty persisted despite the pressure exerted by the Fascist leadership. Between 1938 and 1941, a fair number of more or less elaborate, and often ambiguous and contradictory, plans and projects were drafted by economists, intellectuals, bureaucrats, and the regime’s main exponents. Formulated during the war, these plans did of course postulate a favourable outcome for Fascist Italy.<sup>5</sup> Those plans that were drafted before 1940, when their authors were unaware of, or unconcerned about, the country’s real military strength and the difficulties

that a Europe-wide conflict might pose, projected Italy into a radiant future in which the Fascist regime, freed from any help or external interference (namely, without interference from Nazi Germany), was to dominate and rule the Mediterranean, one of the main geopolitical areas of Europe. Such fantasies were the consequence of a wholly uncritical belief in the Fascist revolution's redeeming role for Italy and for Europe as such – a notion, indeed, rather widespread within European public opinion, though not shared by many politicians and statesmen.

There are five tenets that might be recognised as common ground in the thinking of the majority of Italian geopolitical scholars. They offer an interpretative key for a better understanding of Moleti di Sant'Andrea's book and its genesis, not least because the latter was responding to, and had seemingly been prompted by these same scholars to undertake his own research.

First of all, the volume was written in the light of the profound impression left by the victory in the Abyssinian War, which ensured Italian control over the country and healed an open wound dating back to the débâcle of Adowa in 1896. In giving Italy a vast empire, the conquest promised new opportunities for emigration abroad and guaranteed the nation the status of great power, a notion soon to be cherished by Italian public opinion.<sup>6</sup> Although the war had caused a serious drain upon resources, Fascist propaganda described the empire as a source of prosperity. Many Italians accepted such claims and were even prepared to emigrate to Abyssinia.<sup>7</sup>

Second, after the war in the Horn of Africa had come to an end, Fascist Italy became involved in the Spanish Civil War. Mussolini's support for Francisco Franco has been interpreted in various ways.<sup>8</sup> The main and most authoritative explanations are to be sought in his concerns over the possibility of a left-wing government taking control in Spain following the 1936 elections. It is worth noting that the war – although not particularly popular in Italy as a whole – was greeted with real enthusiasm in some circles. It suggested a new task for Rome: the defence of Christian values threatened by the mounting communist threat in Western Europe. Some writers even explained intervention as a 'duty' that Fascist Italy had to take on for the sake of European civilisation itself.<sup>9</sup> It was a claim that many authors reiterated when describing Italy's place in Europe as a bulwark of European civilisation against alien aggression. Moleti di Sant'Andrea's silence over the issue indicates that he believed that the Western Mediterranean problem had been solved.

Third, in the latter part of the 1930s Mussolini had to deal with a drastically changed European system, due to Hitler's rise to power. Although the *Duce* could not publicly acknowledge it, from 1933 Nazi Germany became the continent's ideological, economic, diplomatic, and military lynchpin, depriving Italy of its leadership role where right-wing parties and organisations were concerned.<sup>10</sup> Hitler's activism and the re-emergence of Germany



as a continental power shrunk Italy's room for manoeuvre in Southern Europe and the Balkans.<sup>11</sup> This prompted Mussolini to investigate opportunities for expansion in other regions. Undoubtedly, he feared that Italy's socio-economic system would not be able to compete with Germany's and was likewise wary of Berlin's growing influence in the Balkans. But he also saw Germany's return to the fore in European affairs and its potentially leading role as a chance to obtain what he believed was rightfully Italy's. The attention of the United Kingdom and France, he correctly assumed, would in fact be focused on Berlin. The Eastern Mediterranean Sea and the Middle East were both areas with potential for unconstrained Italian action. Moleti di Sant'Andrea indicated as much in his book, when he emphasised that Italy 'constitutes a monolithic block with Germany because of an obvious regime solidarity', but then went on to add that it was merely a 'temporary solidarity of interests'.<sup>12</sup> By championing the notion of a united Europe as a single bloc it might thus be possible to prevent Germany marginalising Italy on the continent. Furthermore, this same notion was taken up and emphasised by other Fascist intellectuals during the war, but in a different political conjuncture, one in which Italy had shown its worrying fragility. At the same time, the importance of the word 'temporary' in Moleti di Sant'Andrea text was decisive, highlighting as it did the Fascist notion, in 1938, of a temporarily suspended but in the longer run inevitable Italo-German competition.<sup>13</sup> Unsurprisingly, as we shall see, in the last (and most interesting part) of his volume Moleti di Sant'Andrea acknowledged the *Duce's* understanding of Germany's renewed activism in Europe – as well as his concerns over it.

Fourth, the renewed Italian focus on the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and the Middle East, duly emphasised by Moleti di Sant'Andrea, was a consequence of the fact that, following the conquest of Abyssinia, these areas were now strategically crucial for Italy's maritime routes to Eastern Africa and across the Red Sea. All this was, on the one hand, proof of a diminished room for manoeuvre in Europe and the acceptance of this by Rome. And, on the other, it was evidence of the responsiveness of an Italian intellectual to a rapidly changing situation, which called for *ad hoc* solutions to new issues, such as the *Anschluss*.

Lastly, it is important to point out that, although Mussolini did not completely rule out war against the Western powers, he did not envisage it in the short run. Rightly assuming that Italy would not be ready for war before 1942 or 1943, the *Duce* sought to compromise with the Western powers, or at least with the United Kingdom. This is corroborated by the Easter Pact of 1938 between London and Rome, registered in March 1939 by the League of Nations.<sup>14</sup> It is by no means an irrelevant fact, lending credence to the interpretation of those who see Mussolini as having wavered until the actual outbreak of the war, in September 1939, between Nazi Germany and the United Kingdom. Moreover, this may well be the only point where Moleti di Sant'Andrea seems to disagree with Mussolini's policy – as we will see shortly.

## Italian Geopolitics

As noted above, Italian Fascist intellectuals reacted to Mussolini's attempts to firmly ground his ambitions to transform Italy into one of the main powers and a leader in both the Mediterranean Sea and the European system, by presenting themselves as 'prophets' of a new era. From the second half of the 1920s onwards, the regime's policy was seen through the lens of a national geopolitics that, many historians believe, took full shape in the second half of the 1930s with the aim of gaining the support of Italian public opinion. But this belated popularity meant that geopolitics, as a discipline, was very controversial in intellectual circles.

It is well known that the Swedish geographer, Rudolf Kjellén, gave a precise definition of geopolitics in 1917, basing his theories in large measure on the German geographer Friedrich Ratzel's *Politische Geographie*, although Sir Halford Mackinder had already anticipated them with his *The Geographical Pivot of History*, published in 1904.<sup>15</sup> In Fascist Italy geopolitics, as a science studying the effects of human and physical geography on politics and the relationships between peoples, communities, and states, only belatedly received attention from public opinion and academia alike. Giorgio Roletto and Ernesto Massi, together with Antonio Renato Toniolo and Umberto Toschi, founded an Italian school of geopolitics, at the University of Trieste, only in the late 1920s.<sup>16</sup> However, it may be argued that authors like Giuseppe Prezzolini, Giovanni Papini, Mario Morasso, Alfredo Rocco, Alfredo Oriani, and Enrico Corradini were the forerunners of the Italian geopolitologists of the 1920s and 1930s. Writing works ranging from novels to academic essays about nationalism and dreaming of Italian expansion in the Mediterranean Sea, the Oceans, and even on other continents, in the early twentieth century they suggested that expanding national influence through military conquest would be doubly beneficial: on the one hand, it would guarantee the Italian state's great power status and, on the other, it would finally transform the Italians into one of the leading peoples in a new political system stemming from the one that had already seen the light in the early twentieth century. All of these authors cannot be described as having produced highly sophisticated geopolitical reflections in their (sometimes) non-academic volumes. And yet their thought can be considered the foundation upon which Roletto and Massi based their analysis. Roletto and Massi's ideas were publicised in the journal *Geopolitica: Rassegna mensile di geografia politica, economica, sociale, coloniale*, published by a Milanese publisher (Sperling & Kupfer) from late 1939 to 1942. It is worth noting that this journal, richly illustrated though it was with special 'geopolitical maps', tables, etc. and featuring articles, essays, and various contributions spanning five continents (although with a strong preference for the analysis and study of the Balkan and Mediterranean areas), was never officially accepted by the Royal Italian Geographic Society, precisely because of accusations of novelty that led to mistrust on the part of

the then closed guild of local geographers. Nevertheless, many Italian geographers were involved in fashioning this Fascist blueprint for a colonial and imperial Italy.<sup>17</sup> Be this as it may, the discipline of geopolitics was not well received in the Italian geographical *milieu* at the start and was newborn in Italy when Moleti di Sant'Andrea set about writing his book.

### The Author and His Aims

Heir to an old Southern-Italian aristocratic family, Egidio Moleti di Sant'Andrea acquired an outstanding reputation in the 1930s thanks to his commentary on the new Fascist criminal trial law introduced in Italy by the Fascist regime in 1930.<sup>18</sup> Yet before and after doing so, he wrote two books on geopolitics. The first of these would seem to have gone quite unnoticed in Italy.<sup>19</sup> The second, by contrast, published in 1938 and entitled *Mare Nostrum: Roma nella storia della civiltà mediterranea*, was better known.

With the latter, Moleti di Sant'Andrea sought to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of Italy's role in the Mediterranean Sea, as a force that could enhance and promote European civilisation.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, he devised a possible framework for organising Europe politically, so as to be able to withstand rivalries and overcome disputes with other empires in the future.<sup>21</sup> Of course, his perspective was a narrowly national one and he agreed with those who deemed the lack of a *coscienza geografica* (combined with the Italians' limited *coscienza coloniale*) to be the main obstacle to the dissemination of an expansionist frame of mind in national public opinion during the Ventennio.<sup>22</sup> But what is perhaps striking is the sheer immensity of the geographical expanse that Moleti di Sant'Andrea had in mind when suggesting to his readers that they conceive of European relations in geopolitical terms. The next war, he argued, would be intercontinental in scope. Moleti di Sant'Andrea took it for granted that the United States would be one of the main players in any such war. After all, it had already tried to influence Europe's future by acting as mediator. Perhaps Wilson was sincere in his desire to rein in the Great War victors' old and new imperialist greed and alleviate the heavy burdens loaded on to defeated Germany and its economy by them. Yet with his Fourteen Points he had, in Moleti di Sant'Andrea's opinion, achieved nothing but the creation of a league society that was ineffectual, and, indeed, useless: 'The League of Nations, a pact born out of the messianic, illusionistic, and fanatical fantasy of his sick brain, from which, however, the United States steered clear'.<sup>23</sup>

In those years, Moleti di Sant'Andrea argued in his book, Europe had seemed unable to turn back the tide transforming it into a downgraded global subject, politically and culturally. As for the latter point, the British Empire was described as an enemy from within, while the Bolsheviks were enemies from without. Only Italian culture and tradition, nurtured over the centuries, could defend European culture and the European polity. The book was published in 1938 and divided into two parts – the first, running

from chapter one to ten and entitled 'The Mediterranean Sea in Ancient History'; the second, from chapter eleven to chapter twenty-six, entitled 'The Mediterranean Sea in Modern History'. The first part of the book was shaped by Moleti di Sant'Andrea's determination to view Imperial Rome as the final stage in the evolution of ancient culture. His aim was to magnify the allegedly moderate model of Imperial Rome as the source of universal peace (*pax*) rather than pure and brute political domination (*potestas*), as was suggested during a famous conference held in Rome in November 1932, by the *Reale Accademia d'Italia*, on the idea of Europe. The aim was to analyse, historically and politically, the critical period for Europe between the end of the First World War and the 1929 economic crisis. In the course of the conference, many contributors paid particular attention to Western European civilisation, often dealt with in a unitary key, in contrast to both the United States and the Muslim world.<sup>24</sup> Since his was an evolutionary perspective, Moleti di Sant'Andrea praised the role played by Egyptians, Phoenicians, Greeks, and Carthaginians in shaping Mediterranean civilisation. It was the sturdy rationality of philosophy, mathematics, engineering, and law, introduced by previous societies, that was the basis of the civilisation that had culminated in the Roman Empire.<sup>25</sup> Moleti di Sant'Andrea was extolling Rome's central role in shaping, elevating, and consolidating Mediterranean civilisation as the core of human culture for the centuries to come. Like the bulk of Fascist theorists, Moleti di Sant'Andrea was fascinated by the Roman model, above all for the pragmatic way in which Rome adapted its ruling structures to local contexts: in the East, it took advantage of existing powers (incorporating them into its structure, requiring them to acknowledge Roman superiority), while in the West, it pursued territorial and legal unity through direct rule.<sup>26</sup>

Moleti di Sant'Andrea did not believe that the arrival of the barbarians in the Empire had impeded the steady progress of Mediterranean civilisation. On the contrary, he maintained that it had continued during the Byzantine Empire, which for its part played a role in preserving Roman traditions, although in a highly (and unpalatably) Oriental way. Prepared to concede that the barbarians had broken the empire's unity, he nonetheless argued that from that moment onwards a new Western Empire, completely free of any Byzantine (that is, Oriental) influence, had flourished in the Longobard kingdom. This meant that a new civilisation took root in Italy, ultimately contributing to European development well before Charlemagne had built his own Frankish kingdom. More specifically, Moleti di Sant'Andrea attempted to substantiate the idea that the Longobards had ensured Italian historical continuity from ancient Rome to the free Communes of the Middle Ages. He argued that an Italian people had been born at the start of the eleventh century, amidst the wars fought by the Italian Communes against German and Angevin claims to the peninsula. Notwithstanding these wars, the peninsula's economy, culture, and society flourished thanks to trade in a Mediterranean Sea, which had remained until at least the

fifteenth century an 'Italian Lake'. The growth of a culture as glorious as Italy's, despite the long series of internecine wars, was proof of the pivotal role it had played in the prosperity of the European polity. It was thanks to this evolution that 'with the Roman Empire, the Catholic Church, and the Renaissance, the Italian nation had created and recreated European civilisation'. In this, Moleti di Sant'Andrea propounded a personal conviction that the new Fascist Italy had been entrusted with 'the duty and glory of saving the civilisation of Europe and the entire world, for the fourth time'.<sup>27</sup>

Two facts brought about a momentous change in the early modern era. First, Portuguese and, to a lesser extent, Spanish sea exploration opened up new naval routes to Asian seas and markets. Second, Turkish conquests in the Middle East and the Balkans slowly but steadily reduced the Italian maritime republics' freedom of trade with the Far East and eventually choked it.<sup>28</sup> Both developments (and particularly the Turkish rise to prominence) transformed the Mediterranean Sea; formerly at the forefront of European economic life, it now became a sort of backwater. These changes eased Great Britain's path to becoming the greatest naval power, conquering lands belonging to other peoples and defeating the Spaniards, the Dutch, and the French in turn. Moleti di Sant'Andrea depicted these episodes in terms of the survival of the fittest, with a view to justifying the expansionist approach adopted by the Fascist regime during the 1930s. According to Moleti di Sant'Andrea, this was how, from the eighteenth century onwards, the Mediterranean Sea had become the central trading route for the British navy and the basis of its prosperity, a position enhanced by the nineteenth-century opening of the Suez Canal, which had turned both the Red and the Mediterranean Sea into the centre of world commerce. In his narrative, Moleti di Sant'Andrea backed Italian claims to the Canal on the basis of the recent as well as the distant past. This was not simply a matter of 'sentiment', he insisted, nor was he principally concerned with the role of Italian endeavour and genius in planning and implementing the waterway. It was simply that it was in the Italian interest to eradicate 'any foreign power's interference in *Mare Nostrum*'. If this were to be achieved, the nation's strategic position would be greatly enhanced. In fact, Italy was 'a bridge between Europe and Africa, a direct outlet for Egyptian products and trade', and this very fact ought to induce Egypt, which was 'in its magnificent natural position, at the confluence of three continents and between the two most sailed seas [...] to forge ever closer ties with Italy because it lies at the centre of our imperial system'.<sup>29</sup> The Canal was in the south-eastern corner of a sort of Italian *Lebensraum* the boundaries of which were the Iberian peninsula, France, Switzerland, the Balkans, and Turkey. This was, precisely, the Mediterranean area defined as one of the two historical halves of European civilisation by many geopoliticians, with the other being Northern Europe. To further substantiate his views, in the first part of his book Moleti di Sant'Andrea emphasised the existence of historical Italian interests in Tunis, Egypt, Malta, Corsica, Cyprus, and, generally

speaking, in the Middle East. Such interests were to play a central role in Moleti di Sant'Andrea's analysis in the second part of his book.<sup>30</sup>

However, the liberal governments' colonial policies prior to 1922 meant that Italy had been almost entirely dispossessed of what rightfully belonged to it, namely, a real empire, which ought to be, Moleti di Sant'Andrea judged, in part indirect (through the creation of a ring of protectorates in Europe) and in part direct (an empire in the literal sense). He believed that room for manoeuvre was to be found amidst the collapse of the Ottoman Empire before the Great War. Liberal Italy had missed its chance to become an imperial power because of apathy and exaggerated respect for so-called national rights. Since Italian public opinion had clearly perceived the state's lack of glory and purpose, noted the author, the middle class had been profoundly estranged from the nation state well before 1915. This was the context in which the Great War had broken out, and the socio-economic system of Liberal Italy had collapsed. It was at this point in his book that Moleti di Sant'Andrea explored the widely held belief that the Fascist regime had opened up a new era in Italian colonial history and European history as a whole. He noted that the birth of the Fascist movement and its defeat of ineffectual liberalism on one hand and of rampant Bolshevism on the other was a new note in Italian politics. Practically speaking, Fascism operated as a palingenetic movement in national life: 'Today we can legitimately say that we feel strong and worthy of the highest rank among the nations [...] because contemporary Italy has finally won its empire'.<sup>31</sup> Mussolini and his vigorous action had reversed the steady decline of the nation and paved the way to a new global stage for Roman and Italian culture and civilisation. It was Italian Fascism, the heir to the Roman tradition, that set Italy apart from and even above its German ally.<sup>32</sup>

Within this perspective, it is clear that speaking of a Mediterranean civilisation was a way of bypassing the bottleneck caused by the impossibility of replicating the ancient Roman Empire in the contemporary world. In exploring the idea of a Mediterranean civilisation culminating in Fascist ideology, Moleti di Sant'Andrea and other Fascist thinkers paved the way for a convoluted imperial framework grounded on direct or indirect rule and informal control over other areas, arguing that Rome could be the centre of such a system, on the basis of a cultural superiority recognised by all the peoples living on the Mediterranean shores.

### **The African Empire**

The virtues of the Italians (the finest of the European races), glorified by Fascism, had to be transmitted in its newly acquired territories by a new man, the guardian, and custodian of a superior civilisation, forged through the unique understanding of a universal conception of life based on justice and equity. For Moleti di Sant'Andrea, Italian colonialism would be a match for ancient Rome's and was to be considered a new

stage in the dissemination of European civilisation across the globe. As he put it:

It is on Rome's example, of Augustus's 'Pax Romana' that a great modern Mediterranean power will take advantage of its unique natural position and become the intermediary of European civilisation in the East [the Middle East], enjoying the full trust of those populations, which will look to its strength as a promise of freedom and well-being.<sup>33</sup>

Moleti di Sant'Andrea thus recalled what Roletto had argued in his own lectures and courses some years earlier, at the onset of the Abyssinian war.<sup>34</sup> But, at the same time, he anticipated what *Geopolitica* would publish in its following issues, mainly attributing an economic rather than a political meaning to the concept of *spazio vitale*. This implied an understanding of 'economic relationship' that somehow had an affinity with, and preceded Moleti di Sant'Andrea's notion of 'intermediary' in the passage quoted above.<sup>35</sup>

In the works by Moleti di Sant'Andrea, Fascist ideology seems to find its political, philosophical, and moral foundations in a Spenglerian and Darwinian view of international relations and a highly distorted interpretation of the Giobertian notion of primacy and the Mazzinian civilising mission.<sup>36</sup> Characteristically, these ideas reflected Mussolini's ideological evolution after the Abyssinian War, when he returned to themes in which he had earlier been interested: Mazzini (whose spiritualistic and messianic conception of the nation had had a profound impact on *Il Duce*), Vincenzo Gioberti (noteworthy for his idea of an Italian moral and civil primacy), Alfredo Oriani (who believed that each race had an original consciousness and a unique way of thinking), and Oswald Spengler (who assumed the existence of a chain of civilisations taking over from one another in human history over the centuries).<sup>37</sup> As many Fascist theorists of the time often argued, territorial expansion in the Mediterranean was the logical result of the spiritual and demographic supremacy of the Italian race. Since history favoured larger human communities living in larger spaces, the slow evolution of other societies enabled Italy at *that time* to impose its superiority on other races and civilisations.<sup>38</sup> In other words, he believed that the Italian 'race' was shaped more by psychological and spiritual factors than by biological elements; and consequently the basis for unity would have been a common imperial and civilising spirit, which reinstated Italy in its rightful place as an imperial power. In arguments such as these, Moleti di Sant'Andrea was always careful to downplay notions of 'blood' and 'purity' of race, distancing himself from the conceptualisations contrived, in particular, in Germany.<sup>39</sup>

Clearly, Moleti di Sant'Andrea was trying to clarify two points. First, he deemed any possible presence of Germany within the Mediterranean space entirely unwelcome. His goal was to create an autonomous and, at least in

the early 1940s, neutral bloc, following Mussolini's own views and his dictum, 'the Mediterranean to the Mediterranean peoples'.<sup>40</sup> Second, Moleti di Sant'Andrea felt entitled to argue for the inferiority of African peoples and the superiority of European civilisation, with Italy as its worthiest part. There is no doubt that he shared the belief that the wars in Africa (first the recapture of Libya, then the conquest of Abyssinia) offered new opportunities for Fascist social engineering schemes. These he depicted as the prime engine in the rebirth of 'Italian man', the culmination of Fascist national regeneration and the crucible of a new civilisation that would confer upon Italy the leadership in Europe.<sup>41</sup>

By 1938 Moleti di Sant'Andrea had come to believe that the colonial wars had generated a new kind of Italian human being, well suited to conquering and domination. Italy had brought civilisation to Africa in order to redeem it. On this point he was adamant, arguing that 'it was Italy's duty and its right to conquer those vast lands [Abyssinia], a heterogeneous and undisciplined agglomeration of races and tribes with different languages'.<sup>42</sup> Moleti di Sant'Andrea went even further, suggesting that the Fascists were rectifying a manifest historical distortion since, as the recent past had shown, an independent Abyssinia was a historical anachronism and an outrage against Western civilisation. In this way, he seemed almost to equate the Fascist conquest with the deeds of Rome, when Roman genius had established order in Europe's social and economic life through force.<sup>43</sup> Practically, it was an assertion of the natural right to expansion, thanks to which Italians would transmit their values to their newly acquired subjects.

Thus, Moleti di Sant'Andrea laid the groundwork for two subsequent considerations. First, he described the choice to conquer territories in Africa as a necessary alternative to Italian emigration, which until then had mainly been directed to the Americas. He ruled out Italian emigration to other European states, because he could not identify any geographical vacuums that could be filled by a migrating population. It was contrary to Nazi ideology that foresaw instead the forced relocation of so-called 'inferior populations' outside Europe or their extermination. But he anticipated Italian migration to Africa or Asia, in view of the future confrontation between continents organised through different political systems. Borrowing the concept from ancient Rome, Moleti di Sant'Andrea believed that the new Italian Empire in the Mediterranean had to consist of a centre (Italy and its people), a first circle of protectorates (Southern European states), and a chain of African or Asian territories to which Italians could migrate, carrying with them the Italian genius.<sup>44</sup> This migration was a pillar of Fascism's African policy, a mixture of direct rule (Abyssinia and Libya) and indirect rule in those states, such as Egypt, where Italy had 'conspicuous economic interests'. As Moleti di Sant'Andrea argued, 'Egypt's independence is dear to us not only for sentimental reasons, but also because it [...] favours our interests, which are the elimination of foreign interference in a basin as sensitive as the *Mare Nostrum*'.<sup>45</sup>



Second, the Italian conquest of the Horn of Africa was described as the first step towards the establishment of a *Eurafrica* which Moleti di Sant'Andrea felt to be a practical necessity.<sup>46</sup> Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi first introduced such a notion in public discourse in 1929 when campaigning for Pan-Europa. Karl Haushofer had later incorporated the idea into his own theory of pan-regions.<sup>47</sup> In Italy, the term was first used in 1930 by Paolo D'Agostino Orsini, a colonial geographer and future contributor to *Geopolitica*. He subsequently set down his reflections in a book printed in 1934.<sup>48</sup> In due course Orsini further refined his ideas while attempting to carry out a political and economic revision of the hypothetical Eurafrikan system through which all the nations of Europe would find their place on the African continent. It might be worth emphasising that Orsini excluded the United Kingdom from Eurafrikan because of its allegedly anti-European stance.<sup>49</sup> Orsini saw the Euro-African system as essentially economic and demographic: for Europe, Africa would be a source of raw materials, a market for continental goods, and an area of migration. This approach, he argued, was legitimised by geography: Africa was precisely on Europe's axis. Moreover, on this axis the Mediterranean was the linking zone between the two continents and, consequently, the way to create the Eurafrikan bloc. This space was to be brought to fruition not through Suez, but from Tripoli, connected, through a trans-African railway line, to Stanleyville in the Belgian Congo.<sup>50</sup>

If in a less sophisticated form, *Mare Nostrum* partly summarised this reasoning, adapting it to fit the author's personal opinions. Although he was not explicit, he dotted his book with references to the idea that if the main Powers of *Mitteleuropa* and the Mediterranean region were to organise the Continent, then the borders of Eurafrikan would reach as far as the Caucasus and the Persian Gulf, encompassing Asia Minor and the Arabian Peninsula. Securing that area would have been mainly an Italian task.<sup>51</sup> He assumed that the return of some (if not all) of its previous colonies to Germany and the new, close cooperation between the European powers would foster a widespread Europeanisation of the African continent through the desired relocation of white races. In other words, Moleti di Sant'Andrea called for the great powers to undertake a massive political and cultural mission. Given this premise, it is unsurprising that he saw British, French, and Italian security as something that might be achieved via control of the African continent. The European powers had to understand that a rational and balanced *Eurafrica* was in their common interest.<sup>52</sup> In this way, Europe could bolster its precarious prestige worldwide, at a time when other great empires (American and Soviet) were ousting the Europeans from their possessions and when Japan was trying to recast the Asian system.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, Moleti di Sant'Andrea was adamant that, on the strength of this cooperation, Italy could sidestep its greatest geopolitical and military problem, the Mediterranean Sea trap or, in other words, its predicament as a prisoner in the Mediterranean. This problem put the empire's survival and its aspirations to be a great power at risk, and

Mussolini recognised as much in a top-secret report to the Gran Consiglio del Fascismo on 4–5 February 1939, when he explained his idea of a ‘March towards the Ocean’, aimed at releasing Italy from the narrowness imposed by the limited borders of the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>54</sup>

Finally, it is important to note that Moleti di Sant’Andrea did not envisage – as the Germans did – the complete annihilation or expulsion of African populations,<sup>55</sup> but only their submission to a higher race; and their elevation through a process of cultural growth, in the long term. In other words, his imperial theory echoed the Roman tradition as it had been revitalised in Europe by nineteenth-century English and French imperialism. But, at the same time, it harnessed elements of Napoleonic missionary expansionism (and then those of America and the Soviet Union), based on the assumption that, in the conquered territories, occupiers had to project their political, social, cultural, and economic systems outwards (as the British had done in India).<sup>56</sup>

### The Need for European Cooperation

In the later pages of his book, Moleti di Sant’Andrea expounded the strategy he believed Italy and Europe ought to adopt in the face of the challenges posed by the new European system. In other words, he tried to substantiate his suggestion that Anglo-French-Italian cooperation in Africa was key to shaping European security. Indeed, he argued that the Fascist regime having fulfilled Italian colonial aspirations, the time had come to resuscitate the Quadripartite Agreement of 1933. Designed to settle all of the continent’s political and diplomatic problems, the document had remained on paper, with no practical results. Its relaunch, argued Moleti di Sant’Andrea, could help the continent to unite in the face of all internal and external threats. On the strength of this, Europe would be able to drive back Bolshevik aggression, the greatest danger for Western civilisation. Yet there was another reason behind Moleti di Sant’Andrea’s interest in reviving the old Quadripartite Agreement: after the Austrian *Anschluss*, in 1938, Germany monopolised at least fifty percent of Balkan trade. Berlin had effectively pushed Italy out of the region. Thus, Italian ambitions had to be redirected to the Mediterranean Sea, the nation’s only chance of maintaining an autonomous foreign policy.<sup>57</sup> However, this strategy might potentially lead to conflict with London or Paris. Therefore, an appropriate diplomatic forum capable of tempering at least European conflict was needed. Reinvigorating the Quadripartite Agreement seemed the best way to ‘reconcile the contrasting views of France, Germany, England, and Italy and defend the interests of peace and security in Europe’.<sup>58</sup> In this way, the country’s scarce resources could have been allocated exclusively to supporting Italian ambitions in the *Mare Nostrum*.

Alternatively, the opportunity existed to reach an agreement with Germany alone and identify spheres of influence bilaterally, if the

Quadrupartite Agreement were not to be revived. Moleti di Sant'Andrea suggested this option as the simplest, although not the best, because any bilateral agreement between Italy and Germany would have been very much in Berlin's favour. If Fascist politicians nurtured illusions about their room for manoeuvre in 1938 or 1939, the months that followed showed how vain such hopes were. At first, it seemed that Germany was willing to share control of specific geographical areas with the Italians and that Berlin was ready to accept the birth of two different geopolitical poles: a *Mittleuropa* under Nazi rule and the Mediterranean Sea-Africa-Middle East under Fascist rule. However, the Germans never had a genuine interest in a fair deal with Rome. Their priority was establishing a system that revolved around Berlin alone with no rivals, however formally allied.<sup>59</sup>

### The Role of Islam

Moleti di Sant'Andrea's book offered some intriguing reflections on the role that Islam might have played in Fascist foreign policy, and this in Europe's favour. After briefly analysing the decadence of the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Moleti di Sant'Andrea extolled the potential role of Islam in his European strategy. Throughout his book, he vaunted the dignity of the Islamic religion and traditions. He accused the Ottomans of having been politically and culturally antagonistic to European civilisation, but he never criticised Islam itself. He recognised its contribution to Mediterranean civilisation, although not at the same level as European culture. Unsurprisingly, Moleti di Sant'Andrea suggested that Europe had to bring Jewish emigration and Zionist ambitions in Palestine to an end, describing it as a purely British plot to divide the Arabs and thwart Italian ambitions in the Middle East. He suggested that Italy and the Muslim world might join forces to resist British domination. Here, his views were at odds with those of the Italian maritime strategists, who supported instead an entente with Britain because of Italy's naval weakness in the face of the Royal Navy. Interestingly, Mussolini adhered to the first option at least until the latter part of 1938, but he then took up the second option in an attempt to placate Great Britain with the Easter Agreements (16 April 1938).<sup>60</sup>

With his suggestions about the Arab world and its relationship with Italy, Moleti di Sant'Andrea advanced a twofold argument. First – whether consciously or not – he briefly but tellingly set out Fascist strategy in the Middle East in the years immediately prior to the start of the Second World War. At the time Moleti di Sant'Andrea was writing, the Italian approach to the region was defined by the Easter Agreements, which established Rome and London's rights and duties in the Mediterranean basin and South-Eastern Europe.<sup>61</sup> These were the result of Italian action in the region in the two previous years. From June 1936 to the middle of 1938 Rome tried to win around Arab public opinion. This strategy took the practical form

of selling rifles and ammunition to Arabs (particularly to Palestinians when they rose against the British authorities in consequence of the so-called Jewish invasion of the country) with a lengthy wooing of Egyptian and Iraqi public opinion, the renewal of links with the Yemeni authorities, and the launch of targeted Radio Bari programmes in Arabic.<sup>62</sup> Second, Moleti di Sant'Andrea suggested that the Islamic world should be considered a conveniently located obstacle to any Bolshevik expansion, the Middle East being strategically placed between Europe and Asia and between the USSR and Africa. In his own word, 'The Islamic people live in lands at the frontier between the European and Asian worlds [*and they*] are at once a bulwark against the pernicious infiltration of anti-Fascism and a buttress – albeit in a different spirit closer to the particular Oriental psychology – of the anti-Bolshevist united front'.<sup>63</sup> Certainly, what he feared most was a Soviet breakthrough in the Mediterranean Sea and Africa, a concern that echoed those implicit in Mackinder's 'inner crescent' concept.<sup>64</sup> Moleti di Sant'Andrea seemed to have been suggesting that the Muslims, who were a significant part of the population of the USSR and were well aware of the distortions and brutalities of its government, could act in favour of Italian interests and, to a certain extent, those of Europe as a whole.

### **A Far-Distant Future: The Yellow Peril**

To persuade the Islamic world to side with a united and fascist Europe, wrote Moleti di Sant'Andrea, was key also for one other political reason. In fact, he saw Islam as a valuable partner in combating the rise of the Asian powers. Moleti di Sant'Andrea seems to have viewed the so-called Yellow Peril rather anxiously, like so many other Western and European intellectuals at the time. It was Russian sociologist Jacques Novikow who had coined the phrase in his 1897 *Le Péril Jaune*. The racist colour-metaphor was part of the xenophobic colonialist lexicon that assessed the extent of the Far Eastern threat to the European and Western world and its values. The concept was then popularised by various politicians yamato race (most famously by Kaiser Wilhelm II) who played on ancient memories of the Mongol invasion in order to encourage European empires to invade, conquer, and colonise China. In the twentieth century, the concept was revitalised as a consequence of the Japanese rise to regional power status.

In Italy, the East had always been popular. In different times and ages, Marco Polo or Giacomo Puccini, for example, had portrayed it in literature and music, while Emilio Salgari wrote extensively about the East in his novels for young readers. But Italian public opinion had come up against the Yellow Peril during the Abyssinian War, when Japan (which had good relations with the Abyssinian Empire, sharing its hostility to European and Western imperialisms) came to the diplomatic and military assistance of Ethiopia before the Italian invasion. In response to this, Mussolini ordered the Italian press to conduct a 'Yellow Peril propaganda campaign' during

the war. Imperial Japan was depicted as a military, cultural, and social threat to Europe, and a possible alliance between the yellow and black races to unite Asians and Africans against the white peoples of the world was implied by the press.<sup>65</sup> After a tense period of suspicion and hostility, both governments overcame their disagreements. After the end of the war, in 1936, Rome and Tokyo both took a pragmatic attitude: the former recognised the Manchukuo state, while the latter accepted the Italian *fait accompli* over Ethiopia. This in practice cut short the anti-Japanese Yellow Peril propaganda campaign in Italy's national press.<sup>66</sup>

Nevertheless, the notion continued to circulate in academia and, to a certain extent, within public opinion. The dominance of the European powers would be affected by the rise of Asian states and races in the region and, potentially, worldwide. Like many other Italian Fascist thinkers, Moleti di Sant'Andrea feared a possible future clash with the Asian continent and culture(s). In a conference held at the University of Milan in April 1937, Giorgio Roletto stressed that the Japanese shared the Pan-Asiatic dream of excluding any non-Asian powers from the region, along with the Russians/Soviets. China, India, and the colonies of France and the Netherlands were coveted by Tokyo and Moscow. The idea of eliminating European, American and, generally speaking, white intrusion by any available means was the guiding principle of the Asian powers. Roletto went on to argue that in a relatively short time new continental geopolitical blocs would appear. They would proceed from north to south; they would create systems targeting these same trading routes; and these systems would then transform themselves into 'geographically organic structures', with their own lives, directives, trends, and intentions. Proof of this trend was to be found in skirmishes between outposts or war by proxy in China or South-East Asia which were then the order of the day and harbingers of future continental struggles.<sup>67</sup> All these ideas were used to justify the birth of Eurafica, as a bloc to contain Asian pressure on European interests and values.

Moleti di Sant'Andrea shared these ideas and was generally wary of Japanese policies. He too feared that the Japanese and the Chinese would soon become a single bloc, a consequence of Tokyo's expansion and its colonisation of China. More specifically, he noted that 'Japan will slowly assimilate China, forging it in its own image [...]. When will it overflow [outside of Eastern Asia]? Maybe in fifty years, maybe earlier; it is good therefore to live in peace with it, keeping a wary eye on it'.<sup>68</sup> Like Roletto, Moleti di Sant'Andrea too believed that, although Japan was currently an ally of the European totalitarian powers, it could potentially become an enemy in a not too distant future. At the time, Japanese thinkers were advancing the Yamato Race doctrine, the ideological basis of their future empire – the Co-Prosperity Sphere. Its bedrock was the assumption that millions of Japanese would be relocated to the newly conquered territories, where they would hope to establish new cities without mixing with local peoples.<sup>69</sup> Moleti di Sant'Andrea was struck by the desire of the Japanese

for geopolitical dominance, their conviction of their racial and cultural superiority, their belief in their civilising role in Asia, and their capacity to free it from European and Western domination. These being, in Moleti di Sant'Andrea's view, features common to both Japanese and Italian imperial practices, Rome and Tokyo would surely before too long find themselves at loggerheads. Although Moleti di Sant'Andrea judged Japanese hegemonic aims to be disproportionate and well beyond their practical capacities, he nonetheless was in no doubt that Tokyo would become a rival, albeit a distant one. And it was against this background that the Arabs and their culture were potentially seen as an ally of Europe, and a bulwark against Asia, naturally with Rome as its leader.

## Conclusion

At first sight, Moleti di Sant'Andrea's work might seem to contain many conventional observations, all too typical of the period, especially as regards its historical section. The book is indeed replete with clichés marshalled by an author who was evidently steeped in traditional nationalist historiography.

But at the same time, *Mare Nostrum* is a book that reflects (albeit partially) the opinions of Italian academics on geopolitics, on rivalries within Europe, on a common European culture, and on the challenges from the outside. A careful reading and in-depth analysis of the work can help us to better understand the regime's political and intellectual beliefs. Clearly, Moleti di Sant'Andrea's book was saturated with Fascist rhetoric. Having conquered its empire and having protected its interests (as was said at the time), Italy felt that it could play a new role in Europe and the world, provided that the other powers accepted its right to reshape the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern power balances to its advantage.<sup>70</sup>

Undoubtedly, Moleti di Sant'Andrea and the other Italian geopolitical thinkers as a whole shared the views of their German peers, who based their considerations precisely on the idea that the future world power rivalries would be intercontinental and that Europe had perforce to unite and offer an alternative political and social model to that of the USA, the USSR, and the British Empire. In the future struggle, Italy would have a special place, as the leader of the Mediterranean, Southern Europe, part of the African continent, and the Middle East, a vast area organised following its interests.

These dreams ended with the Second World War, a war in which Italy proved its extreme unpreparedness, a war that highlighted the shortcomings of the Fascist regime. The latter had indeed been able to control the country, but it had been unable to solve the deep-seated contradictions within Italian society, which had mainly been produced by the mistakes of previous ruling classes. At the same time, it might be said that Italian ambitions in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, as described by Moleti di Sant'Andrea, were by no means vain. After 1945, and especially from the

mid-1950s onwards (in very different political circumstances), Republican Italy pursued policies in the Mediterranean and the Middle East that echoed those suggested in *Mare Nostrum*. Good relations with the Arab elites attempt to penetrate the region (this time through economic rather than political means such as a different and more respectful oil policy that put Middle Eastern interests on a par with those of Italy and the West), Italy's ambition to act as a reference point for countries on the threshold of independence, the Italian desire to act in the Mediterranean area as the mouth-piece of European interests and as the deputy, so to speak, of a European polity: all these strategic steps were there in Moleti di Sant'Andrea's book, one way or another. Although we cannot go as far as to say that Moleti di Sant'Andrea was the unique precursor of innovative geopolitical thought, his effectiveness as a propagandist for these same initiatives must be acknowledged.

## Notes

- 1 A broad and comprehensive analysis is provided by Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889–1936, Hubris* (London: Allen Lane, 1998). A book dealing directly with this issue is Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy, 1933–1939: The Road to World War II* (New York: Enigma Books, 2010), 71–95 and ff.
- 2 See Emilio Gentile, *Il culto del Littorio* (Bari: Laterza, 1993), 153–4 and 180–95. Curiously, Moleti made only limited use of the term 'Fascist Revolution', holding back until almost the end of the book, when he praised the birth of the new Roman Empire thanks to 'the Fascist revolution that' had awakened 'Italy's imperial conscience'. Egidio Moleti di Sant'Andrea, *Mare Nostrum: Roma nella civiltà mediterranea* (Rome: E.L.I.C.A., 1938), 352–3.
- 3 See Matteo Pasetti, 'Un "colonialismo corporativo"? L'imperialismo Fascista tra progetti e realtà', *Storicamente, Dossier Imperi: Politiche ed eredità nel 'Lungo Novecento' (Italia, Portogallo, Spagna)*, 12 (2016), 1–30.
- 4 The reference to *Europa 2000* is in the Count Ciano's diary: Galeazzo Ciano, *Diario 1937–1943* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1980), 34 (6 September 1937, footnote).
- 5 See Antonio Barendson, 'L'economia della Grecia', *Economia Italiana*, 26 (June 1941), 305–11; Mario Gianturco, *Lineamenti della Nuova Europa* (Milan: Fratelli Bocca, 1941); Corrado Gini, 'Autarchia e complessi economici supernazionali', *Rivista di Politica Economica*, 32/2 (1942), 77–97; Massimo La Torre, 'Il compito direttivo dell'Italia imperiale', *Economia Italiana*, 25 (October 1940), 580–5; Massimo La Torre, 'Ingrandimento dello Stato italiano e del suo spazio vitale', *Economia Italiana*, 26 (June 1941), 283–90; Lodovico Magugliani, 'Impostazione geopolitica del Bacino Mediterraneo', *Geopolitica*, 4/8–9 (1942), 374–82; Lauro Mainardi, *Nazionalità e Spazi Vitali* (Rome: Cremonese, 1941); Giorgio Quartara, *La futura pace* (Milan: Fratelli Bocca, 1942); Renzo Sertoli Salis, *Impero e Colonizzazioni* (Milan: ISPI, 1941); Bruno Spampanato, *Perché questa guerra* (Rome: Politica Nuova, 1942); Giovanni Tamagnini, 'Lo "Spazio Vitale" nell'organizzazione del Nuovo Ordine', *La Rassegna Italiana*, 56 (1941), 157–62.
- 6 See Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini: Il Duce, vol. 1, Gli anni del consenso, 1929–1936* (Turin: Einaudi, 1974), 620–1, 626 and *passim*. For an alternative interpretation, if a rather unconvincing one, see Paul Corner, *The Fascist Party and Popular Opinion in Mussolini's Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 192–200.

- 7 See Angelo del Boca, *Gli italiani in Africa orientale. Vol. 3: La caduta dell'Impero* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1982), 137–217. Regarding the idea Italians had of Abyssinia through the national narrative, see Loredana Polezzi, 'Il Pieno e il Vuoto: Visual Representations of Africa in Italian Accounts of Colonial Experiences', *Italian Studies*, 67/3 (November 2012), 336–59; and Loredana Polezzi, 'L'Etiopia raccontata agli Italiani', in *L'Impero Fascista. Italia ed Etiopia (1935–1941)*, edited by Riccardo Bottoni (Bologna: il Mulino, 2008), 285–305.
- 8 See Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini: Il Duce, vol. 2, Lo Stato totalitario, 1936–1940* (Turin: Einaudi, 1981), 331–466; Enzo Collotti, with Nicola Labanca and Teodoro Sala, *Fascismo e politica di potenza: Politica estera, 1922–1939* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 2000), 279–327. Yet the most useful text is still John F. Coverdale, *Italian Intervention in the Spanish Civil War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).
- 9 See Leonardo Pompeo D'Alessandro, *Guadalajara 1937: I volontari italiani Fascisti e anti-Fascisti nella guerra di Spagna* (Rome: Carocci, 2017).
- 10 The perception of fierce competition within the far right may be discerned in Asvero Gravelli, *Panfascismo* (Rome: Nuova Europa, 1935), 181–219.
- 11 See Teodoro Sala, 'Gli interessi danubiano-balcanici dell'Italia', in *Fascismo e politica di potenza*, edited by Collotti, 205–46. A short but very interesting analysis of Hitler's foreign policy programme is still that by Eberhard Jäckel, *Hitlers Weltanschauung. Entwurf einer Herrschaft* (Tübingen: Rainer Wunderlich Verlag Herman Leins, 1969), 29–54.
- 12 Moleti di Sant'Andrea, *Mare Nostrum*, 340.
- 13 See Gisella Longo (ed.), *Il fascismo e l'idea d'Europa: Il convegno dell'Istituto Nazionale di Cultura Fascista (1942)* (Rome: Fondazione Ugo Spirito, 2000), 65–77, and particularly the speech of Gaetano Pietra on the European economic system.
- 14 Ciano, *Diario*, 394 and 340; Ciro Paoletti, *Dalla non belligeranza alla guerra parallela* (Rome: Commissione Italiana di Storia Militare, 2014), 5–4; Mario Toscano, *Le origini del patto d'acciaio* (Florence: Sansoni, 1948), *passim*.
- 15 See: Rudolf Kjellén, *Der Staat als Lebensform* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1917); Friedrich Ratzel, *Politische Geographie* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1897); Halford J. Mackinder, 'The Geographical Pivot of History', *The Geographical Journal*, 23 (April 1904), 421–44. A general analysis of the issue is in *Geopolitics, Geography and Strategy*, edited by Colin S. Gray and Geoffrey Sloan (London and New York: Routledge, 2013).
- 16 On Roletto and Massi's activities in Trieste, see David Atkinson, 'Geographical Imaginations, Public Education and the Everyday Worlds of Fascist Italy', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 18/5 (2013), 561–79, and David Atkinson, 'Geopolitical Imaginations in Modern Italy', in *Geopolitical Traditions: A Century of Geopolitical Thought*, edited by Klaus Dodds and David Atkinson (London: Routledge, 2000), 93–117. On the beginnings of political geography, see Andrea Perrone, 'Gli esordi della geografia politica italiana e gli scritti di Ernesto Massi', *Geopolitica*, 5/1 (January 2016), 31–60.
- 17 The journal enjoyed the full support of Minister Giuseppe Bottai and published an introductory statement by Karl Haushofer himself in its first issue. See Marco Antonsich, 'Geopolitica: The "Geographical and Imperial Consciousness" of Fascist Italy', *Geopolitics*, 14/2, (2009), 256–77.
- 18 Egidio Moleti di Sant'Andrea, *Il nuovo diritto processuale penale Fascista: Commento alla riforma 19–10–1930 VIII* (Milan: Editoriale moderna, 1931).
- 19 See Egidio Moleti di Sant'Andrea, *Dallo stretto di Gibilterra al canale di Suez: L'Italia e gli altri nel Mediterraneo e nelle colonie* (Lecco: Tipografia Sociale, 1928).



- 20 For the role of the Mediterranean Sea in shaping the image of Europe, see Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995).
- 21 See Lucio Gambi, 'Geography and Imperialism in Italy: From the Unity of the Nation to the "New" Roman Empire', in *Geography and Empire*, edited by Anne Godlewska and Neil Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 74–91.
- 22 See Luigi Rusca, 'Problemi Coloniali al X Congresso Geografico Italiano', *Rivista delle Colonie Italiane*, 1/1 (1928), 177–84; Nicola Vacchelli, 'Coscienza Geografica', *L'Oltremare*, 2 (1928), 159–60. See also Lucio Gambi, *Geografia e imperialismo in Italia* (Bologna: Patron 1992). Also see Nicola Labanca, *Oltremare: Storia dell'espansione coloniale italiana* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2002).
- 23 Moleti di Sant'Andrea, *Mare Nostrum*, 128.
- 24 Among them see Francesco Coppola, 'La crisi dell'Europa e la sua cattiva coscienza', in *Convegno Volta: Roma, 14–20 novembre 1932–XI. Relazioni e comunicazioni* (Rome: Reale Accademia d'Italia, 1932), 4–9.
- 25 Moleti di Sant'Andrea, *Mare Nostrum*, 52–84.
- 26 See Davide Rodogno, *Il nuovo ordine mediterraneo: Le politiche di occupazione dell'Italia Fascista in Europa, 1940–1943* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2003), 95.
- 27 Coppola, 'La crisi dell'Europa', 20.
- 28 Moleti di Sant'Andrea, *Mare Nostrum*, 147–52.
- 29 Moleti di Sant'Andrea, *Mare Nostrum*, 196–7.
- 30 Moleti di Sant'Andrea, *Mare Nostrum*, 199–222.
- 31 Moleti di Sant'Andrea, *Mare Nostrum*, 322.
- 32 See also Ugo Morichini, 'Le vicende alterne della concezione geopolitica italiana', *Geopolitica*, 1 (1939), 36–41. It is worth noting that Moleti first made the same claim at least a few months before Morichini.
- 33 Moleti di Sant'Andrea, *Mare Nostrum*, 81.
- 34 See 'L'inaugurazione del IV Corso di Cultura Coloniale a Trieste', in *L'Azione coloniale*, 21 November 1935, 4, cited in David Atkinson, 'Geographical Imaginations, Public Education and the Everyday Worlds of Fascist Italy', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 18/5 (2013), 572.
- 35 It is worth noting that the idea of *spazio vitale* was, at the time, confused with other ideas such as *grande spazio* (great space), *comunità imperiale* (imperial community) and *spazio economico autarchico* (autarkic economic space). Greater Space was a concept borrowed from the German *Grossraum*, while the concept of an *Imperial Community* was comparable with (but not indebted to) the idea of British Commonwealth, as suggested in *British Commonwealth Relations: Proceedings of the First Unofficial Conference at Toronto, 11–21 September 1933*, edited by Arnold J. Toynbee (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934). A comparison of Massi and Haushofer's different conceptualisations of geopolitics is in Matteo Marconi, 'Ernesto Massi e Karl Haushofer: La scienza alla conquista della politica', *Geopolitica*, 5/1 (January 2016), 61–121.
- 36 Moreover, Roletto, and Massi made references to Niccolò Machiavelli, Giacomo Durando, Carlo Cattaneo and Cesare Correnti too. See Giorgio Roletto and Ernesto Massi, 'Per una geopolitica italiana', *Geopolitica*, 1 (1939), 11.
- 37 On the evolution of Mussolini's thought see De Felice, *Mussolini: Il Duce*, Vol. 2, 255–330.
- 38 See Rodogno, *Il nuovo ordine mediterraneo*, 71.
- 39 See Renzo Sertoli Salis, 'Razza e nazionalità nella pace d'Europa', *Geopolitica*, 1 (1941), 12–9. On this specific difference between German and Italian racial doctrines, see Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini: Il Duce*, Vol. 2, 250, n. 56.
- 40 These ideas were explored by Renzo Sertoli Salis in his 'La guerra europea, il Mediterraneo orientale e l'Italia', *Geopolitica*, 10 (1939), 522–6.

- 41 See Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 123–30.
- 42 Moleti di Sant'Andrea, *Mare Nostrum*, 315.
- 43 See Moleti di Sant'Andrea, *Mare Nostrum*, 321–2.
- 44 On the definition of the Italian sphere of influence, see Moleti di Sant'Andrea, *Mare Nostrum*, 285–90. On the Fascists' idea of a constellation of protectorates surrounding Italy, in Europe, see Davide Rodogno, 'Le nouvel ordre Fasciste en Méditerranée, 1940–1943: Présupposés idéologiques, visions et velléités', *Revue d'Histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 55/3 (July 2008), 154.
- 45 Moleti di Sant'Andrea, *Mare Nostrum*, 196–7.
- 46 Moleti di Sant'Andrea, *Mare Nostrum*, 327–32.
- 47 See Thorsten Botz-Bornstein, 'European Transfigurations – Eurafica and Eurasia: Coudenhove and Trubetzkoy Revisited', *The European Legacy*, 12/5 (2007), 565–75, and John O' Loughlin and Herman van der Wusten, 'Political Geography of Panregions', *The Geographical Review*, 80/1 (1990), 1–20.
- 48 See Paolo D'Agostino Orsini, *Eurafica: L'Europa per l'Africa, l'Africa per l'Europa* (Rome: Cremonese, 1934).
- 49 See Paolo D'Agostino Orsini, 'La Nuova Eurafica', *Politica Sociale*, 3 (1941), 63–5.
- 50 See Marco Antonsich, 'Eurafica, dottrina Monroe del Fascismo', *Limes: Rivista Italiana di Geopolitica*, 3 (1997), 261–6.
- 51 See, for example, Moleti di Sant'Andrea, *Mare Nostrum*, 275–82. Moleti wrote an anonymous text, in 1940, on the same problem. See Anonymous [Egidio Moleti di Sant'Andrea], 'Panorami', *Geopolitica*, 10 (1940), 400.
- 52 The concept enjoyed a certain popularity in Italy both before and after the Second World War. Ernest Bevin used it also, if briefly, between 1947 and 1949. See John Kent, 'Bevin's Imperialism and the Idea of Euro-Africa, 1945–49', in *British Foreign Policy, 1945–56*, edited by Michael Dockrill and John W. Young (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1989), 47–76.
- 53 Moleti di Sant'Andrea, *Mare Nostrum*, 348. Other Fascist thinkers echoed this position during the war, but in different circumstances and in a delicate context. See Rodogno, 'Le nouvel ordre', 138–56.
- 54 On this see Ciano, *Diario*, 248, and Giuseppe Bottai, *Diario, 1935–1944* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1989), 141. For an in-depth analysis of the report, see de Felice, *Mussolini: Il Duce*, Vol. 2, 320–6.
- 55 See for example, Casper W Erichsen – David Olusoga, *The Kaiser's Holocaust: Germany's Forgotten Genocide and the Colonial Roots of Nazism*, London: Faber and Faber, 2010.
- 56 See Rodogno, *Il nuovo ordine mediterraneo*, 99.
- 57 For the consequences of this rivalry on Italian geopolitics, see Monica Fioravanzo, 'Italian Fascism from a Transnational Perspective: The Debate on the New European Order (1930–1945)', in *Fascism Without Borders: Transnational Connections and Cooperation between Movements and Regimes in Europe from 1918 to 1945*, edited by Arnd Bauerkämper and Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2017), 243–63.
- 58 See Moleti di Sant'Andrea, *Mare Nostrum*, 285.
- 59 See Rodogno, *Il nuovo ordine mediterraneo*, 73–4.
- 60 Mussolini's Mediterranean policy towards the Arabs in Renzo De Felice, *Il Fascismo e l'Oriente: Arabi, ebrei e indiani nella politica di Mussolini* (Bologna: il Mulino 1988).
- 61 See *League of Nations Treaty Series*, 195 (1939), 78–115, and Donatella Bolech Cecchi, *L'accordo di due Imperi: L'accordo italo-inglese del 16 aprile 1938* (Milan: Giuffrè, 1977). A contemporary reconstruction of Mussolini's policy in the area and his political aims in Latinus [Pietro Quaroni], *L'azione*

- dell'Italia nei rapporti internazionale dal 1861 a oggi (Milan: ISPI, 1940), 476–82.
- 62 See Stefano Fabei, *Mussolini e la resistenza palestinese* (Milan: Mursia, 2005).
- 63 Moleti di Sant'Andrea, *Mare Nostrum*, 351.
- 64 See Halford J. Mackinder, 'The Geopolitical Pivot of History', *The Geographical Journal*, 23 (1904), 421–37.
- 65 Joseph Calvitt Clarke III, *Alliance of the Coloured Peoples: Ethiopia and Japan Before World War II* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2011), 70.
- 66 Jim Ransdell and Richard Bardshaw, 'Japan, Britain and the Yellow Peril in Africa in the 1930s', *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 44/2 (October 2011), 1–21.
- 67 Giorgio Roletto, 'Le tendenze geopolitiche continentali e l'asse Eurafrica: Conferenza tenuta il 5 aprile 1937 nell'Aula Magna della Regia Università Milanese', in *Geopolitica Fascista: Antologia di scritti*, edited by Carlo Terracciano (Milan: Società Editrice Barbarossa, 1993), 47–62.
- 68 See Moleti di Sant'Andrea, *Mare Nostrum*, 332.
- 69 Marc Ferro, *Histoire des colonisations: Des conquêtes aux indépendances (XIII<sup>e</sup>–XX<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1994), 138 and ff.; Grant K. Goodman (ed.), *Japanese Cultural Policies in Southeast Asia during World War II* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991); Ramon Hawley Myers and Mark R. Peattie (eds.), *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895–1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); and Peter Duus, 'Imperialism without Colonies: The Vision of a Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 7/1 (1996), 54–72.
- 70 Moleti di Sant'Andrea, *Mare Nostrum*, 23.