

Conceptions and Practices of International Fascism in Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands, 1930–40

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journals.sagepub.com/home/jch**Nathaniël Kunkeler** 

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Abstract

This article explores conceptions of fascism as an international phenomenon as understood by three political parties of the 1930s: Quisling's Norwegian Nasjonal Samling (NS), Lindholm's Swedish Nationalsocialistiska Arbetarepartiet (NSAP) and Mussert's Dutch Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging (NSB). In order to highlight fascist movements' contributions to fascist internationalism, the article deploys both a comparative and transnational framework, showing up the national differences in their conceptions of international fascism, regional connections and influences, changes over time and the contingencies of transnational contact that affected the practical establishment of international relationships. It is shown that there was an impetus for international cooperation between fascist movements outside of the orbit of fascist regimes, typically sustained by regional affinities as existed among Northern countries and the Low Countries. While often framed by ambitious rhetoric, ultimately the three parties continued to focus on their own national projects rather than deepen international collaboration. Lastly the movements' different myths of international fascism are compared, constructed for propagandistic ends, all of which broadly fit within the mould of a new European or even global era which saw the rise of fascism and the (hoped for) victory over ideological enemies such as communism and liberalism.

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Introduction

It is an entire epoch which, from a world-historical perspective, meets its downfall in conjunction with the current turn of events in Europe. Democracy and everything it entails in politics, economic, and spiritual regards is in full retreat, its ideas have lost their old power of attraction, and our part of the world is now being reconstructed in accordance with entirely opposite principles. Authoritative state leadership, national planned economy, socialist justice and a more disciplined lifestyle are in short order the fundament for the ideology which now more and more appears as democracy's, capitalism's, and Marxism's successor.¹

In an October 1938 article which appeared in the party weekly *Den Svenske Nationalsocialisten* (DSN, The Swedish National Socialist), party ideologue Per Dahlberg set out Sweden's path into the future in the current age. The 'new political orientation' which Dahlberg discerned was a 'process of general European reach', and he argued that basic principles such as race and national community, and the struggle against 'Jewish foreign rule', were 'common for all those movements which have written the ideas of the new time on their flags'. Sweden, like other countries, could not simply copy the examples of states like Germany or Italy, as each movement had to take into account fundamentally different national characters and traditions.

The European fascist movements that followed in the wake of the March on Rome, and around the time of the Nazis' rise to power in Germany, saw themselves as part of a general European, if not global, phenomenon, as demonstrated by our three case studies. These are Norway's *Nasjonal Samling* (NS, National Unity); Sweden's *Nationalsocialistiska Arbetarepartiet* (NSAP, National Socialist Workers' Party, from Nov. 1938 onwards, *Svensksocialistisk Samling*, SSS, Swedish Socialist Union); and the Netherlands' *Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging* (NSB, National Socialist Movement). While for ideological and pragmatic reasons they invariably insisted on their unique national character, they saw fascism as something international. The idea of 'international fascism' held growing currency with the two regimes that inspired the fascist waves that crashed over Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, as they sought to

1 'Ur världshistorisk synpunkt är det en hel epok som går sin undergång till mötes i samband med den nuvarande händelseutvecklingen i Europa. Demokratien och allt vad den innebär i politiskt, ekonomiskt och andligt avseende befinner sig på full reträtt, dess idéer ha förlorat sin gamla dragningskraft, och det är helt motsatta principer efter vilka vår världsdel nu håller på att återuppyggas. Auktoritativ statsledning, nationell planhushållning, socialistisk rättfärdighet och stramare livsföring äro i kort sammandrag fundamentet för den idelogi [sic] som nu alltmer framträder som demokratiens, kapitalismens och marxismens efterträdare.', Per Dahlberg, 'Sveriges väg', DSN, no 177, 15 October 1938, p. 2.

extend their influence beyond their borders. In the early 1930s, this resulted in an Italo-German rivalry for ideological supremacy, centring around constructed differences concerning the role of racism and antisemitism, a dispute that was lifted after a rapprochement resulting in the creation of the Rome-Berlin axis in 1936.² Smaller fascist movements which necessarily recognised themselves as a part of something greater, wielded the idea of international fascism for their own ends, and made attempts to put that idea into practice, spurred on by the demonstration effect of ‘successful’ regimes they deemed fascist, first Italy, then Germany, but also Portugal, Spain, Hungary and so on.³ While the historiography has paid great attention to the international activities of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, and increasingly other authoritarian Rightist regimes which maintained close ties with the new role models, there is comparatively little understanding of the two questions that concern us here: how did the younger fascist movements conceive of fascism as an international phenomenon, and how did they ‘practise’ fascist internationalism?

Due to the nationalist nature of fascist ideology on the one hand and Germany’s and Italy’s pursuit of hegemonic power and imperialist aggression on the other, there is a long research tradition of conceiving fascism as the ‘antithesis of internationalism’⁴ and international fascism as an ideological ‘contradiction in terms’.⁵ However, despite tensions such as the Italo-German rivalry, more recent research has revealed a far more complicated picture, pointing out the complementary aspects of fascism and internationalism in the interwar period.⁶ Especially two recent historiographical shifts enabled new perspectives on the matter. First, historians of international relations, who profited from the rise of cultural, transnational and global approaches in the 1990s, discovered topics beyond the formerly dominant research on organisations such as the League of Nations and liberal internationalism in general,⁷ increasingly integrating illiberal and non-governmental forms of international perception and cooperation.⁸ Accordingly,

2 On the ambivalent relationship between Italian Fascism and German Nazism, see Christian Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler. The Forging of the Fascist Alliance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

3 Roger Eatwell, ‘The Nature of “Generic Fascism”: Complexity and Reflexive Hybridity’, in *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe*, ed. by António Costa Pinto and Aristotle Kallis (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 67–86 (79).

4 ‘Der Faschismus erwies sich als die Antithese des Internationalismus.’ Jerzy W. Borejsza, ‘Die Rivalität zwischen Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus in Ostmitteleuropa,’ *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 29, 4 (1981), 579–614 (607).

5 Walter Laqueur, *Fascism: Past, present, future* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996), 218.

6 Joachim Lund, ‘Denmark and the “European New Order”, 1940-1942’, *Contemporary European History*, 13, 3 (2004), 305–21; Mark Mazower, *Hitler’s Empire: Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe* (London: Penguin, 2009); Benjamin George Martin, ‘“European Literature” in the Nazi New Order: The Cultural Politics of the European Writers’ Union, 1941–3’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 48, 3 (2013), 486–508; Benjamin G. Martin, *The Nazi-Fascist New Order for European Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016); David Stephen Frey, ‘A Smashing Success? The Paradox of Hungarian Cultural Imperialism in Nazi New Order Europe, 1939–42’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 51, 3 (2016), 577–605.

7 Ana Antic, Johanna Conterio and Dora Vargha, ‘Conclusion: Beyond Liberal Internationalism,’ *Contemporary European History* 25, 2 (2016), 359–71.

8 On the historiographical development of the history of internationalism, see Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin, ‘Rethinking the History of Internationalism’ in *Internationalisms*, ed. Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 3–14.

fascist internationalism received more attention too.⁹ Typically, Madeleine Herren argued that fascist actors rejected internationalism as a liberal or socialist ideology while adopting its structural patterns, resulting in numerous international conferences, associations, exhibitions, and transnational contacts throughout the 1930s.¹⁰ One notable example is the Italian organisation *Comitati d'Azione per l'Universalità di Roma* (Action Committees for the Universality of Rome, CAUR), which hosted several international conferences in the mid-1930s with delegates from different minor European fascist movements.

Second, research beyond the nationalist/internationalist dichotomy has been facilitated by the 'transnational turn' in fascism studies.¹¹ Early proponents include Arnd Bauerkämper, who highlighted collaboration and coordination between movements and regimes, and the extensive network of transnational contacts, though using a largely regime-centric approach.¹² In the past decade research has further explored these transnational connections, with Constantin Iordachi, Aristotle Kallis, António Costa Pinto, David D. Roberts and Kevin Passmore among others, making major theoretical contributions.¹³ This transnational consensus has pointed to the politically fluid character of interwar Rightist parties and regimes, and their historical entanglement with each other. Emphasising the open-ended character and bricolage nature of 'fascism' that resulted from complex and contingent transnational dynamics, the transnational approach also encourages attention to the pragmatic nature and requirements for building international organisations and connections, providing insight into the difficulties of constructing fascist internationalism. This article is situated within these two broader historiographical shifts in the studies of fascism and internationalism. For the NS, NSB and NSAP, international cooperation and fascism entailed something quite different from what attention to the regimes has hitherto shown.

The Norwegian NS, Swedish NSAP/SSS and Dutch NSB make attractive case studies to address these issues, highlighting important differences and similarities. They all fall within the same bracket of new 1930s movements that operated under liberal democratic regimes. They attained variable degrees of party size and electoral success, and exhibited

9 On fascist internationalism, see Jens Steffek, 'Fascist Internationalism,' *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 44:1 (2015), 3–22; Philip Morgan, *Fascism in Europe, 1919 - 1945* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 159–89.

10 Madeleine Herren, 'Fascist Internationalism' in *Internationalisms*, ed. Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 191–212.

11 Ángel Alcalde, 'The Transnational Consensus: Fascism and Nazism in Current Research', *Contemporary European History*, 29, 2 (2020), 243–52.

12 Arnd Bauerkämper, *Der Faschismus in Europa, 1918-1945* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2006), chapter 3.

13 Constantin Iordachi, 'Introduction: Fascism in Interwar East Central and Southeastern Europe: Toward a New Transnational Research Agenda', *East Central Europe*, 37.2–3 (2010), pp. 161–213; *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe*, ed. by António Costa Pinto and Aristotle Kallis (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); David D. Roberts, *Fascist Interactions: Proposals for a New Approach to Fascism and Its Era, 1919-1945* (New York: Bergahn, 2016); *Fascism without Borders: Transnational Connections and Cooperation between Movements and Regimes in Europe from 1918 to 1945*, ed. by Arnd Bauerkämper and Grzegorz Rossolinski-Liebe (Oxford: Bergahn, 2017); Kevin Passmore, 'Fascism as a Social Movement in a Transnational Context', in *The History of Social Movements in Global Perspective*, ed. by Stefan Berger and Holger Nehring (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 579–617.

different types of relationship to the major fascist regimes of the time. But most importantly, their geographical proximity meant that they also paid attention to each other, allowing for transnational interactions which were a crucial element of fascist movement internationalism. Furthermore, they all saw themselves to various degrees as part of an international fascism, but with significant variations in their conceptions. The juxtaposition of the Dutch case with the Swedish and Norwegian, instead of including the Danish fascists of Clausen's DSNAP, is to underscore that these ideas and practices of internationalism were not a peculiarly Scandinavian matter, with transnational links between these regions too. Exploring the various conceptions and practices of international fascism, in terms of contacts with regime agents, transnational cooperation and connections with each other, and ultimately the deployment of their own ideas, it will become apparent that these three cases demonstrate a highly elucidatory entanglement with each other, and in their conceptions of international fascism.

With their attacks against 'internationalist' enemies such as the League of Nations, Bolshevism, and 'international Jewry', these movements belong to a broader history of authoritarian reactions against the post-1919 liberal-internationalist order.¹⁴ Globally, a new order of power had emerged, which meant the loss of Europe's privileged position, and instead the rise of the USA, and increasingly Asia. As Adam Tooze has argued, Europe was being provincialised, triggering an insurgency against those who apparently conspired to undo established European power. At the same time the Bolshevik coup in Russia and its numerous imitators elsewhere gave unprecedented salience to the spectre of communism, amplifying the Right's sense of international threat. These fascists' internationalism, coloured by the language of grievance, resentment, and defiance, was thus inseparable from the international rebellion against this new order, the European counter-revolution, and the striking 'autocratic wave' that swept the continent in the interwar period.¹⁵ Norwegian, Swedish and Dutch fascists show that also the small movements with little political promise were invested in internationalism. They formulated their own interests in this new international order, and had by no means a provincial mindset. They reveal not only the fractious complexity of fascist internationalism, but their engagement with a broader spectrum of international politics beyond Italian and German spheres of influence, and even against.

From the outset it was impossible for these groups not to have an established position vis-à-vis the major fascist regimes of interwar Europe. The connection between the Dutch NSB, founded by Anton Mussert and Cornelis van Geelkerken in December 1931, and the fascist regimes was obvious. The sudden explosive growth of the

14 David Motadel, 'Nationalist Internationalism in the Modern Age', *Contemporary European History*, 28, 1 (2019), 77–81.

15 Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of World Order* (London: Penguin, 2015), 4–8; Introduction to: *Visualizing Fascism: The Twentieth-Century Rise of the Global Right*, ed. by Julia Adeney Thomas and Geoff Eley (Duke University Press, 2020), 14; Robert Gerwarth and John Horne, 'Bolshevism as Fantasy: Fear of Revolution and Counter-Revolutionary Violence, 1917–1923', in *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War*, ed. by Robert Gerwarth and John Horne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 40–51; Kurt Weyland, *Assault on Democracy: Communism, Fascism, and Authoritarianism During the Interwar Years* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 3–10.

NSDAP just east of the border had made a deep impression on Rightists in the small neighbour country. Mussert had been pondering the formation of a political party for some years, and by 1931 it seemed obvious that national socialism was the right moniker under which to do so. His manifesto for the NSB was largely cribbed from the NSDAP programme, though crucially leaving out statements on race and antisemitism, and meshing a demand for authoritarian rule, corporatist management and limitations on the press with complete freedom of religion, as suited the confessionally divided Netherlands.¹⁶ Fascist Italy was perhaps an even greater inspiration in shaping NSB ideological discourse. The black-shirted Mussert visited Italy and Germany on holiday in the summer of 1933, and was effusive in his praise of the former. In 1935 Mussert went as far as to write to Mussolini that Italian Fascism was ‘le créateur et l’animateur’ of the NSB – not German Nazism.¹⁷ In practice contacts were maintained with both regimes, and both clearly shaped NSB propaganda, ideology and practice.

The Nasjonal Samling was founded on the Norwegian Constitution Day, 17 May 1933, in an attempt to highlight its nationalist character. Still, its style and program was in part inspired by the two fascist role models, with Vidkun Quisling becoming a dictatorial party leader called *Fører*, a proposed corporatist chamber in the style of Italian Fascism called *Riksting* and a paramilitary wing with the Nordic medieval name *Hirden* as a replica of the German SA, even if the perpetration of actual violence remained comparatively low.¹⁸ Naturally, parts of the Norwegian public and especially the labour party were quick to perceive the NS as a ‘Nazi party’ and Vidkun Quisling as a ‘Norwegian Hitler’.¹⁹ Indeed, as early as 1930, Quisling had been contacted by Heinrich Himmler’s associate Max Pferdekämper,²⁰ and in 1934–35 there were some informal meetings with the Außenpolitischen Amt der NSDAP (APA), but no permanent contact between the Nasjonal Samling and the NSDAP was established during the 1930s.²¹ However, the party cooperated with the minor association *Internationale Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Nationalisten* (The Nationalist International) founded in 1934. It was secretly financed by the German Propaganda Ministry as a counter-reaction to the Italian CAUR,²² which stood in contact with Quisling as well as the Italian delegation in Norway in the mid-1930s.²³

16 Robin te Slaa and Edwin Klijn, *De NSB: Ontstaan En Opkomst van de Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging, 1931–1935* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2010), 131–32; Willem Huberts, *In de ban van een beter verleden: Het Nederlandse fascisme, 1923–1945* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2017), 101.

17 Slaa and Klijn, 262, 627.

18 Hans O. Brevig and Ivo de Figueiredo, ‘Innledning’ in *Den norske fascismen: Nasjonal Samling 1933–1940*, ed. Hans O. Brevig and Ivo de Figueiredo (Oslo: Pax Forlag, 2002), 1–18, p. 12.

19 Hans F. Dahl, *En fører blir til* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1991), 343.

20 Letter, Max Pferdekämper to Heinrich Himmler, 22 December 1930, Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde, R 58/3550.

21 Hans F. Dahl, *Quisling: A study in treachery* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999), 112.

22 Report from the Geheime Staatspolizei to the Auswärtiges Amt, 6 August 1935, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, RZ 214, 99289. In July 1936, its third international congress even took place in Oslo with an entire delegation from the Nasjonal Samling, who advocated the event massively. ‘Nasjonalistkongressen’, *Fritt Folk*, 28 July 1936.

23 Hans Fredrik Dahl, *Quisling. En norsk tragedie* (Oslo: Aschehoug: 2004), 174–180.

In Sweden, fascists had (briefly) unified in the SNSP led by Birger Furugård and his deputy Sven Olov Lindholm, who on 15 January 1933 formed a splinter party, the NSAP, which rapidly outgrew the SNSP. Connections between the SNSP and the NSDAP had been particularly close: Furugård and his brothers had been in touch with the German party since the early twenties, while Lindholm and several other functionaries had been guests at the Nuremberg rally already in 1929 as delegates of Sveriges Fascistiska Kamporganisation (SFKO, Sweden's Fascist Combat Organisation). Like the NSB, their party programme had borrowed heavily from the German example; party organisation and campaigning tactics, not to mention aesthetics such as swastika and brownshirt uniform, likewise followed that model.²⁴ As in the Norwegian case, the proactive foreign wing of the NSDAP had sent Max Pferdekämper to forge connections with Furugård and later Lindholm, and was key in facilitating Lindholm's later visits to Nazi Germany and contacts with Himmler.²⁵ Unlike the NS and NSB, the NSAP shunned the Italian Fascists however, who were denounced as racially inferior imperialists, so that the Swedish party did not make contact with the Italian regime.²⁶

Like many such movements of the era, Quisling's NS eschewed fascism or national socialism as a term of self-description. While Lindholm and Mussert believed the term a suitable vehicle for their politics, they were also faced with an imperative to distance themselves from the two dominant regimes of the 1930s, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.²⁷ Opponents and even sympathisers criticised the parties for adopting the novel names of fascism or national socialism, let alone the aesthetics of uniforms and massed spectacle, even if those were by no means unique to fascism, or even the New Right.²⁸ Their nationalist claims seemed to jar with what was deemed a 'foreign import' – worse still when that import was from a regime that was in some way deemed threatening.

While the three parties had their counter-arguments and denials ready for these accusations, perhaps more difficult to handle was the behaviour of the regimes and how it reflected on fascism generally.²⁹ As a NSAP circular from September 1938 put it:

24 Eric Wärenstam, *Fascismen Och Nazismen i Sverige 1920-1940: Studier i Den Svenska Nationalsocialismens, Fascismens Och Antisemitismens Organisationer, Ideologier Och Propaganda under Mellankrigsåren* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1970), 73–90; Heléne Lööv, *Hakkorset Och Wasakärven: En Studie Av Nationalsocialismen i Sverige 1924–1950* (Magnus Mölner & Jörgen Weibull, 1990), chap. 3.

25 Police investigation protocol, Lindholm, 18 February 1948, Stockholm, P1279, no 1, SRA: Arninge. See also Lindholm interview, 1980-81, 256:B, SO Lindholm's Collection, vol. 4, SRA: Marieberg.

26 Nathaniel Kunkeler, 'The Evolution of Swedish Fascism: Self-Identification and Ideology in Interwar Sweden', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 50.4–5 (2016), 378–97 (389–90).

27 Aristotle Kallis, 'The "Fascist Effect": On the Dynamics of Political Hybridization in Inter-War Europe', in *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe*, ed. by António Costa Pinto and Aristotle Kallis (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 13–41 (14–15).

28 Noël O'Sullivan, *Fascism* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1983), 7; Geoff Eley, 'Nazism, Everydayness, and Spectacle: The Mass Form in Metropolitan Modernity', in *Visualizing Fascism: The Twentieth-Century Rise of the Global Right*, ed. by Julia Adeney Thomas and Geoff Eley (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2020), 69–93 (69–70).

29 The NSB devoted a large section of its commemorative history volume to these accusations, see: *Voor Volk En Vaderland: De Strijd Der Nationaal Socialistische Beweging 1931 - 14 December - 1941*, ed. by Cornelis van Geelkerken, 2nd edn (Utrecht: Nenasu, 1943), chapter 8.

'The boundless agitation, turned against the national socialist movement in Germany, has also rebounded on the Swedish [national socialists], even though our organisation never has and never will have anything to do with the to us alien [*väsensfrämmande*] German national socialism'.³⁰ Quisling and his colleagues argued from the outset for the NS's distinctiveness [*egenart*]. The roots of the party were only to be found in Norway, as Quisling declared in 1936: 'The Nasjonal Samling is not a copy of foreign movements... [...]. The ideas that form the basis of the Nasjonal Samling were formulated in their basic features before Fascism and National Socialism came into being'.³¹ If Mussolini's regime still reflected quite positively on fascism in the eyes of many Rightists across the world in the early 1930s, public opinion was on the wane soon after. Hitler's dictatorship did not need nearly as long before most foreign observers started to associate national socialism with brute violence and gangsterism. The NSB and NS turned this into something of a tightrope act. The main NS journal *Nasjonal Samling* stated in the wake of the Night of the Long Knives: 'The Nasjonal Samling is absolutely independent from German National Socialism, we have [...] not had any contacts with the German movement, we have our own Norwegian program, our Norwegian mindset, our Norwegian aims and our Norwegian symbols. But we will openly say that we follow Hitler's struggle for social and spiritual liberation from the rigid formulas of a dying age with deep sympathy'.³² The Swedish NSAP eventually dropped the name of national socialism and the swastika altogether in 1938 as a crucial symbolic gesture,³³ at a time when they deemed public opinion so hostile against 'all things named national socialism' they could not hold public rallies.³⁴

Relations between these fascist movements and the two regimes were thus far from straightforward, as the NSAP/SSS, NS and NSB continuously renegotiated their position vis-à-vis these highly ambivalent role models, and their place within fascism internationally. They all modified what they had adopted, recontextualising transnationally circulating ideas, forging syntheses from national, regional and international projects. The three parties' relationship to fascism internationally, and how it defined their characters and actions, was thus significantly determined by constantly shifting tactical and strategic needs throughout the 1930s.

30 'Den måttlösa hets, som riktats mot den nationalsocialistiska rörelsen i Tyskland, har även återfallit på den svenska, trots att vår organisation aldrig haft och aldrig kommer att ha någonting att göra med den för oss väsensfrämmande tyska nationalsocialismen.', 26 September 1938, circular copied in police memorandum, 'concerning the National Socialist Workers' Party', 30 September 1938, p. 1, SRA, Arninge (police archives), 2B: vol. 7.

31 'Nasjonal Samling er ikke noen kopi av utenlandske bevegelser [...]. De ideer som ligger til grunn for Nasjonal Samling blev i sine grunntrekk utformet før fascismen og nasjonalsocialismen var trådt ut i livet.' Vidkun Quisling, 'En statsmanns tale', *Fritt Folk*, 3 October 1936.

32 'Nasjonal Samling står absolutt uavhengig av den tyske nasjonalsocialismen, vi har [...] ikke stått i forbindelse med den tyske bevegelse, vi har vårt eget norske program, vår norske tankegang, våre norske mål og våre norske symboler. Men vi vil åpent si at vi følger Hitlers kamp for sosial og åndelig frigjørelse fra en døende tidsalders stivnede formler med dyp sympati.' 'Nasjonalsocialismens vei fra erobrende til byggende bevegelse', *Nasjonal Samling*, 05. July 1934.

33 Kunkeler, 'The Evolution of Swedish Fascism', 391–95.

34 Police memorandum, 'concerning the National Socialist Workers' Party', 30 September 1938, p. 3, SRA, Arninge (police archives), 2B: vol. 7.

However, when it came to the practices of fascist internationalism, it was not just ideological dynamics and party-political needs, but pragmatic considerations which dictated the transnational development of international relations. The 'CAUR organisation', which had been founded in July 1933 by the Italian Fascist Eugenio Coselschi, was the first explicit attempt to connect European fascist movements. Its aim was to propagate Italian Fascism's claim to supremacy internationally against Germany, and to influence foreign movements.³⁵ However, the lack of a clear understanding of which movements actually counted as 'fascist' complicated CAUR's task. In Sweden, Coselschi's agents studied different right-wing parties and decided to avoid contact with clearly national socialist groups such as Lindholm's NSAP due to their 'racist Hitlerism'.³⁶ Instead, it established contact with Rütger Essén, a former diplomat and an influential member of the authoritarian right-wing party Sveriges Nationella Ungdomsförbund (National Youth League of Sweden, SNU).³⁷ In the Dutch case, CAUR collaborated at first with the much smaller movement Zwart Front (Black Front) in 1934,³⁸ before it came into contact with the NSB in early 1935.³⁹ In Norway, president Coselschi contacted Quisling from the Nasjonal Samling due to its corporatist party program corresponding with Coselschi's perception of corporatism as a core of fascist universalism.⁴⁰

Quisling did not only agree to attend CAUR's first international conference in December 1934 in Montreux together with representatives from 14 other European movements, but was elected as a member of its coordination committee. In this function, he represented Norway in meetings and conferences in Paris, Amsterdam and again Montreux throughout 1935. It provided Quisling with the opportunity to contact other fascist leaders such as Frits Clausen, Marcel Bucard from the French movement *Le Franciste*, and Anton Mussert, the host of a meeting in March 1935. On this occasion, the members of the CAUR committee were invited to the NSB party convention in Amsterdam, which made a deep impression on Quisling, as he stated in his party journal afterwards.⁴¹ (Mussert on the other hand, while interested, declared he was too busy building up the Movement to contribute to CAUR activities.)⁴² The NS press

35 Marco Cuzzi, *L' internazionale delle camicie nere: I CAUR, Comitati d'azione per l'universalità di Roma, 1933-1939* (Milano: Mursia, 2005).

36 Cited in Marcos C. Carlomagno, 'C.A.U.R.: Den 'fascistiska' internationalen,' *Scandia* 60.2 (1994), 283-96 (289).

37 Wärenstam, 134-39.

38 At its first conference in Montreux, the Netherlands had been represented by Arnold Meijer and Wouter Loutkie from the *Zwart Front*. Comités d'Action pour l'Universalité de Rome (ed): *Réunion de Montreux. 16-17 Décembre 1934, XIII*. (Rome: Le Bureau de Presse des Comités d'Action pour l'Universalité de Rome, 1935), 24.

39 In a meeting of the CAUR coordination committee in Paris on 30 January 1935, Charles Oberndorff represented Mussert and the NSB, explaining its 'adherence' to the Montreux resolutions. Letter from CAUR headquarters to Rütger Essén, 4 February 1935, RA, Marieberg, Rütger Essén Arkiv, Vol 154.

40 On CAUR and Quisling, see Martin Kristoffer Hamre, 'Norwegian Fascism in a Transnational Perspective: The Influence of German National Socialism and Italian Fascism on the Nasjonal Samling, 1933-1936,' *Fascism* 8:1 (2019), 36-60 (48-51).

41 'Veien til nasjonal og internasjonal fred og forståelse,' *Nasjonal Samling*, 11 April 1935.

42 'Buitenlandsche geestverwanten - Begroetingsrede van Mussert in de Commissie voor het Universeel Fascisme', *VoVa*, no 14, 6 April 1935, 2.

covered these transnational meetings, championing CAUR as a path to national and international peace and understanding and as a suitable replacement for the outdated League of Nations. For the Norwegian fascists, the aim of the organisation was ‘to create direct and honest cooperation between all the young and healthy national movements, in order to achieve a general spiritual renewal and political revival in the world’.⁴³ The articles downplayed the Italians’ role in CAUR, which was presented as a platform for equal and independent European movements of national regeneration united in their common battle against liberalism and Marxism. However, due to changing international political circumstances, including the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935 and the Italo-German rapprochement in 1936, CAUR contacts with smaller European ‘fascists’ faded.

Transnational contacts between fascist movements were not exclusively organised by agents of Italy and Germany (such as the Nationalist International), even though conferences hosted by their organisations facilitated contacts between other movements. Initiatives for international organisation were also started by these movements on a regional basis. For Mussert and the NSB this was a matter of ideological imperative. From the outset, a keystone of the Dutch movement had been the concept of Dietsland, a united Dutch state incorporating all ethnic Dutch groups over the world, including the Flemish in particular, but also – less feasibly – the *boeren* of South Africa. This Greater Netherlands idea had started taking serious political form in the wake of WW1, and found support both among a small section of Dutch nationalists and Flemish separatists.⁴⁴ Already in the first issue of NSB weekly *Volk en Vaderland* (VoVa, People and Fatherland) from January 1933, the party affirmed the common destiny of the Netherlands and Flanders, ‘the idealistic Greater Netherlands position’ rooted in the historical resistance against the French oppressor.⁴⁵ There were other fascist parties who affirmed the ‘dietsche idéé’, namely Flemish fascist parties such as Joris Van Severen’s (1894–1940) Verdinaso (Union of *Dietsche* National Solidarists),⁴⁶ and Staf ‘Declercq’s’ Vlaams Nationaal Verbond (VNV, Flemish National Union), which commanded considerable support in Belgium. The idea of Dietsland was a natural basis for cross-border cooperation, rather than a rhetorical one-way street for the NSB. In practice this took the form of growing contacts between the NSB and Flemish fascists in the second half of the decade, and particularly cooperation with the VNV. Flemish ‘comrades’ seem first to have requested to attend NSB party congresses in August 1935, and the NSB formally invited Declercq to attend the national congress in The Hague, who duly sent a delegation.⁴⁷ In subsequent years VNV regularly attended NSB events, and NSB-members in turn attended VNV

43 ‘Et nytt Verdensforbund,’ *Nasjonal Samling*, 19 September 1935.

44 Bruno de Wever, ‘Groot-Nederland Als Utopie En Mythe’, *Journal of Belgian History*, 3 (1997), 163–80 (pp. 164–65).

45 vdm., ‘Vlaanderen en Holland’, VoVa, no 1, 7 January 1933, 2.

46 Wim Zaal, *De Nederlandse Fascisten* (Amsterdam: Aspekt, 2016), 87–88.

47 Letter, Stadsdienst II to Jacque de Vries, Rotterdam, 26 August 1935, NIOD, 123: 2.55 (Organisation and Personnel). Letter, in the name of the leader of the General Secretariat, to the leader of the NSB congress, 7 October 1935, NIOD, 123: 2.55.

rallies.⁴⁸ ‘At the beginning of his speech’, VoVa reported, ‘the Leader of the V.N.V. called out a *hou-zee* [the NSB salute] to the thousands who had come to Gent, after which he also greeted the millions of national comrades [*volksgenooten*] in the South- and North-Netherlands, French-Flanders and South-Africa...’.⁴⁹

NSB internationalism was also shaped by imperialism, unlike Quisling’s and Lindholm’s parties. The Dutch empire, and particularly colonial rule in the East Indies (Indonesia), enjoyed majority popular support, while the NSB itself was staffed by several former colonial administrators and military. Fascist organisations enjoyed greater support in the Indies than in the metropole: the NSB became the largest political party in the colony by the mid-30s, while the colonial branch supplied a disproportionate amount of funding. NSB headquarters quickly acquired a dedicated department for the East Indies administration. Direct contacts between the Netherlands party and the colonial branch remained necessarily limited, though Mussert visited the Indies in 1935 in a heavily publicised propaganda tour. The imperial perspective loomed large in NSB rhetoric – Dutch security depended above all on the colonies – but in practice the metropolitan NSB’s relationship to the colonial branch was as strikingly unidirectional as it was conservative; there was to be no opposition to the established administration.⁵⁰ When the NSB organisational leader in the Indies called for a greater role for Indies fascists, Mussert fired him and publicly reaffirmed ‘that for N.S.B.-members in the Indies there is principally but *one* task regarding the N.S.B. and this is: providing moral and material support to the N.S.B. in the Netherlands. *Nothing more and also nothing less*’.⁵¹

In Northern Europe, not only notions of a common Nordic race, heritage and destiny, but also the similar historical and linguistic background made it interesting to observe each other, and as a further step, to support each other publicly too through the party press. For the NSAP this made a natural basis for some kind of regional internationalism. The union with Norway was dissolved in 1905 without a military confrontation, and while some figures in the Swedish Right rather romantically dreamed of reconquering Finland,⁵² the NSAP regarded the independent White Finland that came out of the

48 ‘Bericht. Afgevaardigden van VNV aanwezig op Hagespraak’, VoVa, no 23, 10 June 1938, p. 5.

49 ‘De Leider van het V.N.V. riep aan het begin zijner rede de duizenden, die naar Gent waren opgekomen een hou-zee toe, waarna hij ook de miljoenen volksgenooten in Zuid- en Noord-Nederland, Fransch-Vlaanderen en Zuid-Afrika ... van verre groette.’, ‘De volkseisch tot zelfbestuur – Twintigduizend Vlamingen betuigen hun Leider trouw – Vijfde Landdag van het V.N.V.’, VoVa, no 21, 26 May 1939, p. 4.

50 Jennifer L. Foray, *Visions of Empire in the Nazi-Occupied Netherlands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 2–3; Ethan Mark, ‘Fascisms Seen and Unseen: The Netherlands, Japan, Indonesia, and the Relationalities of Imperial Crisis’, in *Visualizing Fascism: The Twentieth-Century Rise of the Global Right*, ed. by Julia Adeney Thomas and Geoff Eley (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2020), 183–210 (183–201); Slaa and Klijn, 679–82; Tessell Pollmann, *Mussert & Co: De NSB-Leider En Zijn Vertrouweligen* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2012), chaps 12, ‘Mussert en de Indische NSB’; Tessell Pollmann, ‘“Either One Is a Fascist or One Is Not”: The Indies’ National-Socialist Movement, the Imperial Dream, and Mussert’s Colonial Milch Cow’, trans. by Benedict R. O’G. Anderson, *Indonesia*, 92, 2011, 43–58.

51 ‘...dat er voor N.S.B.’ers in Indië principieel maar één taak ten aanzien van de N.S.B. is en deze is: moreele en materiele steun en de N.S.B. in Nederland. *Niets meer en ook niets minder*.’ ‘Onze strijd wordt uitsluitend hier in Nederland gevoerd: Mussert’s richtlijn voor ons Indië’, VoVa, no 3, 21 Jan. 1938, p. 4.

52 Sverker Oredsson, ‘Stormaktsdrömmar och stridsriver: Ett tema i svensk opinionsbildning och politik 1910–1942’, *Scandia*, 59, 2 (1993), 257–96 (p. 262).

1918 civil war as an ally against the Soviet Union. However, linguistic barriers meant actual cooperation was far easier between Norway, Sweden and Denmark, whose political situations in any case had a far closer resemblance. The Swedes had contact with both the DNSAP of Frits Clausen in Denmark, as well as Vidkun Quisling's NS. As with the NSB and VNV there were exchanges of invitations for party congresses. Not many people made it to the much smaller Swedish party congresses, which even members had difficulties attending, but DSNAP delegates did on several occasions make it, particularly in 1939, when a representative even gave a speech (in Danish). That same year guests from NS also attended the SSS party congress in Malmö.⁵³ From 1935 onwards, the Swedish fascists, who had no real aspirations to revive Sweden's early modern Baltic Empire, started talking of a Nordic Union, predicated on international cooperation between Scandinavian fascist powers. In 1935 party paper DSN spoke for the first time of a common Nordic foreign policy, and by 1937 it was talking of a Nordic alliance as a response to the rapprochement between Germany and Italy – the Nordic alliance would be the 'spiritual power central for a new nationalist Europe'.⁵⁴ It was less clear what that entailed in practice, but it is evident that the Axis in Europe was (accurately) perceived as a potential threat to Scandinavia – the NSAP was already envisaging a polycentric international fascism, with multiple power blocs.

At first, the Norwegian fascists were reserved about such specific Scandinavian cooperation, based on the fact that their country had become fully independent from Sweden as late as 1905 and the emergence of Norwegian nationalism had been connected to anti-Swedish sentiments.⁵⁵ In the case of Denmark, the main bone of contention hindering cooperation was Greenland, a recurring irredentist theme of the Norwegian right in the interwar period.⁵⁶ The former Norwegian colony had belonged to Denmark since the split of the Danish-Norwegian Union in 1814. In July 1931, Norway annexed Eastern Greenland, but two years later the dispute was brought before the Permanent Court of International Justice, which decided against Norway. Quisling and Clausen met each other for the first time at the CAUR conference a year later, where Quisling immediately complained about the Greenland case (a problem Clausen was not aware of). Afterwards the Norwegian party leader participated at the party meeting of the Danish Nazi party as honoured guest in 1935, but he remained sceptical of a closer relationship.⁵⁷ However, despite these tensions and probably due to the changing foreign political circumstances, the NS became more open towards Scandinavian internationalism.

53 DSF, no 38, 4 June 1939, pp. 1, 4, 8.

54 'Gemensam nordisk utrikespolitik', DSN, no 26, 3 April 1935, p. 4. 'Norden skall bli ett andligt kraftcentrum för ett nytt nationalistiskt Europa.', 'Två folkledare mötas', DSN, no 75, 29 September 1937, p. 2.

55 Dahl, 2014, 211–212.

56 Garau, Salvatore, 'Anticipating Norwegian Fascism: The Radicalization of Urban Right-Wing Nationalism in Inter-war Norway', *European History Quarterly* 43, 4 (2013), 681–706, (686).

57 John T. Lauridsen (ed.), *"Føderen har ordet!". Frits Clausen om sig selv og DNSAP*, (København: Museum Tusulanums Forlag, 2003), 230. Letter from Vidkun Quisling to the DNSAP party headquarters, 20 September 1935, Danish National Archives (Rigsarkivet), DNSAP arkivet, Rigspolitichefen, Politiets Efterretningstjeneste: Sager (1945–1950), 55.

Accordingly, at the end of the decade, contacts between the NS, SSS and DNSAP intensified: in June 1939, after the success of gaining three seats in the Danish parliament, the DNSAP, the main driving force in this Scandinavian cooperation, invited the Norwegians and Swedes to its party convention in Kolding. Per Dahlberg, Lindholm's right-hand man, gave a speech highlighting the common Nordic destiny. Vidkun Quisling spoke too, outlining the common battle of the Nordic peoples against the international forces of Marxism.⁵⁸ The convention was also the occasion for Clausen and Quisling to discuss the formation of an international Nordic fascist organisation, the Nordic Peoples' Rising [*Nordisk Folkereisning*], which would coordinate the three parties' activities and support each other.⁵⁹ Soon after the outbreak of the Second World War, a so-called Nordic battle appeal [*Nordisk Kampapell*] was organised on 13 November 1939 in Copenhagen. The conference was a spectacle of international fascist solidarity in Scandinavia, underpinning a myth of a revived Nordic Great Power in Europe in the presence of two-thousand guests. The party leaders celebrated the common Nordic heritage and the peaceful character of their cooperation as a counterweight to the warmongering allies and Axis powers. The party press made the most of their ability to host an international event of this kind, and used it to show up the promise and potential of fascism as a bulwark of peace and stability in Europe.⁶⁰ In the aftermath of the event, Per Dahlberg and Vidkun Quisling contributed to the yearly DNSAP magazine *Jul i Norden* (Christmas in the North), reaffirming Scandinavian cooperation based on the Nordic idea and race in times of the war.⁶¹ However, in spite of the strong emphasis on a common heritage and the international image of the conference, in practice cooperation proved extremely limited. Lindholm's speech jarred with those of Quisling and Clausen, with a more social-radical message. The three lunched together the following day and discussed Nordic cooperation, but according to Lindholm's diary no practical decisions were taken, and 'no one was actually very keen' ('ingen var precis angelägen').⁶² The Nordic Appeal remained the only event of this kind. With the German occupation of Norway and Denmark in April 1940, opportunities to work together ceased altogether.

While these small-scale organisational initiatives between movements demonstrate common understandings of fascism as international, far more typical and ubiquitous was the constant maintenance of low-level contacts. The archival evidence is highly fragmentary, making it difficult to reconstruct anything like a coherent international network, but the traces point to continuous contacts. By 1938 the NSAP had assigned specific functionaries with the task of working with foreign fascists, a Dr Åke Berglund and Gösta Hallberg-Cuula (1912–42). Hallberg-Cuula, who was killed in 1942 as a volunteer in the Finno-Soviet wars, was tasked with taking care of visiting fascists from abroad,

58 'Kæmpemødet paa Koldingshus,' *National-Socialisten*, 1 July 1939.

59 Wärenstam, 103–6.

60 'Nordisk kampappell i Köpenhamn,' DSF, 18 November 1939. The meeting was also covered in-depth in the DNSAP newspaper *Fædrelandet*, 15 November 1939).

61 Per Dahlberg, 'Kampen om Norden,' *Jul i Norden* 6:1 (1939), p. 5; Vidkun Quisling, 'Frode-freden,' *Jul i Norden* 6:1 (1939), 7.

62 13 November 1939, Lindholm diary, RA, Marieberg, SO Lindholm's archive, vol. 2.

especially the Finns.⁶³ In 1934, the NSB sent a delegate to Britain to visit the British Union of Fascists (BUF), which was followed a few months later by an invitation for Mussert to visit Oswald Mosley personally.⁶⁴ A year later NSAP delegates also paid a visit, attending a BUF meeting in London,⁶⁵ while DSN somewhat proudly reported that BUF paper *Action* had written about the NSAP.⁶⁶ The Norwegian NS similarly corresponded with the BUF, as well as the Imperial Fascist League in Britain.⁶⁷

Intriguingly, there were also contacts between the Netherlands, and Norway and Sweden, though these were awkward and asymmetrical. A prominent NSB functionary, Gerrit van Duyl, had first visited the NS in 1934, and followed up with a request in German for the address of the Swedish National Socialist movement in February 1935, hoping to counter 'Marxist megalomania' which was pointing to the successes of the Swedish Social Democratic government.⁶⁸ The Norwegians replied that there were three national socialist parties at that time in Sweden, next to the NSAP also the 'National Socialistiska Blocket' and the SNSP,⁶⁹ with which the Nasjonal Samling had been in loose contact in the years 1934–35. Indeed, NS in the first instance recommended contact not with the NSAP but Furugård's SNSP, which it claimed (erroneously) to be larger.⁷⁰ It seems that only two years later did the NSB send visitors to Sweden. A first VoVa report on Lindholm's NSAP appeared in 1937, on which it wrote in glowing, if patronising, terms about the small but rising movement in the 'Land of Vikings', whose members listened in awe to tales of Dutch fascist successes.⁷¹ The NSAP on the other hand had an established contact in the Netherlands no later than 1935, but not with the NSB. Rather it was a minuscule rival party, the viciously antisemitic Germanophile NSNAP led by CJA Kruyt,⁷² a former Major of the Dutch colonial army.⁷³ In about a dozen reports on Dutch fascism, the NSAP portrayed the NSB consistently as a corrupt and false fascist party, infiltrated by or subservient to the Jews, and could not understand NSB visitors who explained the Jewish Question did not apply

63 Police memorandum, 'concerning the National Socialist Workers' Party', 30 September 1938, p. 4, SRA, Arminge, 2B: vol. 7.

64 'Op bezoek bij de Britsche fascistten', VoVa, no 19, 1934, p. 5. 'Mussert uitgenoodigt naar Engeland door Mosley', no 39, 1934, p. 5. 'Mussert in Londen op bezoek bij fascistten', VoVa, no 44, 1934, pp. 5-6.

65 'Besök Mosleymöte London', DSN, no 26, 1935, p. 4.

66 'Artikel i *Action* om NSAP', DSN, no 52, 1937, p. 3.

67 See Norwegian National Archives (Riksarkivet), NS Partiarkiv, Del 1, Korrespondanse og sarkarkiv, 1935 Politisk ledelse. Udlandet.

68 Letter from the NSB party headquarters to Vidkun Quisling, 18 February 1935, in Norwegian National Archives (Riksarkivet), NS Partiarkiv, Del 1, Korrespondanse og sarkarkiv, 1935 Politisk ledelse. Nederland.

69 Letter from the NS party headquarters to Birger Furugård (SNSP), 20 May 1935, in Norwegian National Archives (Riksarkivet), NS Partiarkiv, Del 1, Korrespondanse og sarkarkiv, 1935 Politisk ledelse. Nederland.

70 E.g. Letter from the NS party headquarters to the NSB party headquarters, 18 February 1935, in Norwegian National Archives (Riksarkivet), NS Partiarkiv, Del 1, Korrespondanse og sarkarkiv, 1935 Politisk ledelse. Sverige.

71 'Vikingland – Het gericht der geschiedenis – Jeugd van Zweden', VoVa, no 10, 1937, p. 5; 'Vikingland – De heldenstrijd der Germaansche volkeren', VoVa, no 11, 1937, p. 5.

72 See: 'Kruyt och NSNAP', DSN, no 4, 1936, p. 1.

73 Huberts, 117–20. Kruyt's NSNAP is not to be confused with several other Dutch parties with the same name.

to the Netherlands.⁷⁴ It does not appear that the NSB's increasingly antisemitic stance in the later 1930s, and the NSAP/SSS's softening on the same issue, brought them closer together at any point. This gulf between the NSAP and NSB version of their tenuous relationship underscores that these transnational connections largely did not serve a collaborative purpose. However, as the NSB's approach to the Norwegian NS for Swedish contacts shows, these connections were formed in the service of clear, practical objectives such as information-gathering and propaganda. While larger-scale initiatives such as the *Kampappell* highlight the limits to collaboration and the differences of the movements, the very idea of a common, international fascism was useful.

For movements which had self-consciously taken up the internationally circulating names, liturgical characteristics and signs of fascism and national socialism, there could be no doubt that their groups were part of an international phenomenon, that a new political age had commenced for Europe, if not the world. At the second party congress of the NSB, in October 1933, Anton Mussert announced:

The war has ended an era that forever belongs to history, namely the period of democracy and liberalism. A new era commenced around 1920. This new era has done away with the demo-liberal state; it stands under the sign of Communism and Fascism. Communism, that has conquered the greater part of Asia ..., Fascism, that is currently conquering Europe. It has been victorious in Italy, Germany, and Austria, it is conquering Western Europe. The era of nations is coming...⁷⁵

Similarly, the *Nasjonal Samling* declared in 1934: 'Throughout Europe fascism is marching forward. And through sacrifice and struggle, the movements will eventually be victorious, because they represent the new age, they represent youth, idealism, and the will to win'.⁷⁶ In the new era there would be an end to internecine strife, class-based or otherwise, and national unity would emerge on a basis of order and discipline. If the first two years of activity had a strongly national focus, from 1934 onwards VoVa started to take a serious interest in what happened beyond the national borders or in Germany and Italy. The first 'Foreign Chronicle' [*Buitenlandsche kroniek*] column appeared in the autumn of 1934, and more and more articles were published on fascist movements around the world. We have noted reports on Belgium and South Africa that held particular ideological significance for the NSB, as well as the Dutch Indies which saw in 1934

74 E.g.: 'NSB judedränger?', DSN, no 37, 1935, pp. 1–2; 'Judar opptræder som nazister', DSN, no 54, 1935, p.5; 'Bakslag för Mussert, judefjäsik', no 41, 1937, p. 3.

75 'De oorlog heeft een tijdperk afgesloten, dat voorgoed tot de geschiedenis behoort, namelijk de preiøde van democratie en liberalisme. Een nieuw tijdvak is aangevagen omstreeks 1920. Dit nieuwe tijdvak heeft afgedaan met den demo-liberalen staat; het staat in het teeken van het Communisme en het Fascisme. Het Communisme, dat het grootste deel van Azië heeft veroverd ..., het Fascisme, dat bezig is Europe te veroveren. Het heeft in Italië, Deutschland en Oostenrijk gezegevierd, het is bezig West-Europe te veroveren. Het tijdperk der naties is komende...', Anton Mussert, 'Landdagrede van Mussert', VoVa, no 41, 14 October 1933, p. 2.

76 'Men overalt i Europa marsjerer fascismen frem. Og gjennem ofre og kamper når bevegelsen efterhvert frem til seier fordi de representerer den nye tid, fordi de representerer ungdommen, idealismen og seiersviljen.' 'Fascisme over Europa,' *Nasjonal Samling*, 24 May 1934.

the establishment of the party's largest and most profitable branch.⁷⁷ For an imperial power the fascist struggle was necessarily a global one, especially as Japanese expansionism threatened the East Indies. But the rise of fascism in Britain was also noted with pleasure, as was Daily Mail support for the BUF; Salazar's New State was hailed as a new fascist state in 1934; a photograph of the girls' section of the Spanish Falange was published in 1936; that same year saw an article on new movements in France, particularly the Croix de Feu.⁷⁸ VoVa did not limit itself to Western Europe, and reported with interest on developments in Hungary, Romania and even Iceland.⁷⁹ On some rare occasions it was also suggested that the new fascist era had come not just to Europe, but was in fact a global phenomenon. The blessing of a swastika flag in the USA by an American archbishop was noted in 1934, and in 1936 the paper reported on the blue shirt faction of the Guomindang in China, albeit in a small piece on page 11.⁸⁰ While links with fascists around the world were tenuous at best, there was an interest in portraying fascism as international. The same was true of the NSAP/SSS, though here there was a slightly longer delay: little interest was taken in foreign movements until 1935, and even then DSN often attacked foreign movements on racist grounds. Aside from numerous pieces on fascism in Denmark, Finland and Norway, over a dozen articles were published on Britain and the BUF from 1935 to 1939, at least ten on Belgium and the Rexists, half a dozen on France, eleven on Romania and the Iron Guard, and a handful on the Spanish Falange, Hungary and Greece.⁸¹ Again there were just a few outside of Europe, particularly Bolivia and the USA.⁸²

In contrast to the NSB and the NSAP, the main NS press championed nationalist governments and movements abroad from its first number on, including positive articles about party conventions, speeches, events and policies in specific sections on foreign policy called 'The world in the making' [*Verden i støpeskjeen*] and from 1934 on 'The world around us' [*Verden omkring oss*].⁸³ Next to Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, naturally receiving most of the attention, the NS press commented positively on among others the Austrian Nazis, which were preferred in contrast to the 'fascist' Dollfuß regime, the Spanish nationalists under Franco, Portugal's 'rebirth' under Salazar, the

77 'NSB marcheert ook in Indië', VoVa, no 5, 1934, p. 4. See also: Mark, 198–202.

78 'Fascisme in England', VoVa, no 43, 1933, p. 4. 'Daily Mail pro-fascist', VoVa, no 3, 1934, p. 1. 'Corporatieve Republiek Portugal, nieuwe fascistische staat', VoVa, no 16, 1934, p. 9. VoVa, no 43, 1936, p. 4. 'Nieuwe stroomingen in Frankrijk – De Croix de Feu en zijn leider', VoVa, no 1, 1936, p. 7.

79 'NS beweging in Hongarije', VoVa, no 1934, 21, p. 4; 'Verkiezingsuitslag in Hongarije', no 23, 1939, p. 3. 'De maatregelen in Roemenië – Een gevolg van Joodsche overheersching', VoVa, no 2, 1938, p. 7. 'Ook op IJsland marcheert het nationaal-socialisme', VoVa, no 21, 1936, p. 4.

80 'Amerikaansche aartsbisschop zegent hakenkruisvlag', no 45, 1934, p. 7. 'Fascisme in China – De politieke actie der blauwhemden', VoVa, no 23, 1936, p. 11.

81 E.g.: 'Finland vaknar', DSN, no 3, 1935, pp. 1, 8; 'DNSAP på frammarsch, Clausen stormöte', DSN, no 88, 1937, p.3; 'Bekämpande judarna, Quisling stormöte', DSF, no 12, 1939, p. 4. 'Mosley har börjat kampen om Englands folk', DSN, no 20, 1937, pp. 1, 6. 'Belgiska rexisterna fruktas av kapitalisterna', DSN, no 43, 1936, p. 3. 'Eldkorset ska förbjudas', DSN, no 78, 1936, p. 3. 'Codreanu och Järngardet', DSN, no 47, 1938, p. 2.

82 'Fascismen segnar i Bolivia!', DSN, no 4, 1938, p. 3; 'NS i USA oroar landets judar', no 28, 1937, p. 3.

83 See first edition of *NS – Organ for Nasjonal Samling*, 29 August 1933.

activities of the Irish fascist Eoin O'Duffy and the Swedish SNU.⁸⁴ Despite its Italian origins, 'Fascism' as such was several times used as a term for all European anti-parliamentarian and anti-communist movements. This is best illustrated by the article 'Fascism over Europe', which subsumed movements such as the NSB, the BUF, the Action Française, the Spanish Falange, as well as groups from Finland, Romania and Bulgaria under the generic term 'fascism'.⁸⁵ The NS clearly located itself within this community of 'progressive' parties. For party leader Quisling, a common feature was a moral and spiritual crisis that all these new forces ought to overcome, as he argued in an interview with the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera* (reprinted in the NS press).⁸⁶

Sympathetic reporting on fascists abroad was a simple and limited tool for constructing a myth of international fascism, but it was easily the most ubiquitous one in these case studies. Inferring the global significance of fascism was left largely to the reader, while the regular but usually bare bones reports on other movements left little material for critical perspectives on fascism elsewhere beyond what the party papers declared. This myth was a narrative of fascism as a pan-European political force,⁸⁷ powerful, but unthreatening to the national agenda, in which each movement had a heroic role to play within its own nation. Internationalism was here not a matter of expansionism, but of cooperation for mutual benefit in the struggle against the international forces of communism, capitalism and Jewry. For example, these 'internationalist' enemies played an important role in Quisling's argument for fascist internationalism. After joining the CAUR coordination committee, Quisling stressed that there was a new, corporative, universal philosophy and order represented by CAUR, contrasting the allegedly warmongering forces of liberalism and Marxism.⁸⁸ Anti-communism had been a core conviction since the beginning of the party, but anti-liberalism gained momentum when the Soviet Union joined the League of Nations in September 1934.⁸⁹ The internationalist activities of its enemies helped justify Quisling's own affiliation with fascist movements abroad.

These movements in effect created a narrative in speeches and publications which tied together their own failing efforts with those of movements abroad, to show that fascism was on the rise, and that Europe had in fact entered a new political age, to end in a

84 E.g.: 'Verden utenfor oss', *Nasjonal Samling*, 15 May 1934. 'Hele Andalusia erobret av de NASJONALE', *Fritt Folk*, 01 August 1936. 'Portugals gjenreisning', *Nasjonal Samling*, 30 January 1936. 'Verden i støpeskjeen', *Organ for Nasjonal Samling*, 29 August 1933. 'Nasjonal samlingsbevegelse i Sverige', *Nasjonal Samling*, 20 December 1934.

85 'Fascisme over Europa', *Nasjonal Samling*, 24 May 1934. For fascism as generic term, see also 'Nasjonalsosialisme contra Fascisme', *Nasjonal Samling*, 12 April 1934; 'Det våknede Europa', *Nasjonal Samling*, 30 January 1936.

86 'Carattere e propositi di Nasjonal Samling di Norvegia', *Nasjonal Samling*, 24 May 1934.

87 On the pan-European dimension of interwar fascism, see Arnd Bauerkämper, 'Ambiguities of Transnationalism: Fascism in Europe between Pan-Europeanism and Ultra-Nationalism, 1919-39', *German Historical Institute London Bulletin*, 29 (2007), 43-67; Roger Griffin, 'Europe for the Europeans: Fascist Myths of the European New Order 1922-1992', Matthew Feldman (ed.), *A Fascist Century. Essays by Roger Griffin*, (London, Palgrave Macmillan UK: 2008), 132-181.

88 As argued in Hamre, 49-51. Similarly, the Nationalist International was advocated as a 'spiritual revival in Europe'. Cf. 'Åndelig nyreisning i Europa', *Nasjonal Samling*, 13 December 1934.

89 Vidkun Quisling, 'Norge og Folkeforbundet', *Nasjonal Samling*, 20 September 1934.

colossal confrontation with the international enemy. It was in Lindholm's words 'a struggle for the world's restoration out of the international degradation', a struggle of life and death between two world views, and a 'peoples' freedom struggle against international Jewish finance; it was a world-historical moment in which an entire era was going towards its end in Europe.⁹⁰ Mussert wrote of a 'glorious time', 'in which the world in which we grew up creaks down to its very foundations'. Admiringly he cited Mussolini's statement that sooner or later all of Europe would be fascist, and the Netherlands was no exception.⁹¹ Even if electoral success was receding into the distance in the later 30s, the NSB, NS and NSAP could point abroad to show that there was a greater historical event in motion, and that they too would be victorious out of historical necessity.

Reflecting these notions of a new era that would bring about a new world order, Quisling and Mussert drafted their own plans for how to organise international alliances accordingly. Drawing on ideas already envisioned in the late 1920s, Quisling presented a draft for a so-called 'Nordic World Federation' [*Nordisk Verdenssamband*] in 1936 as a counter-reaction to liberal and Marxist materialism, secretly controlled by Jewish nationalism.⁹² Despite building explicitly on the resolutions from the CAUR conference in Montreux, this federation – with a common currency, internal free trade, and a common customs policy – was imagined as an exclusively 'pan-Nordic union', thereby excluding Fascist Italy and other southern fascist movements. Quisling's idea was to unite 'all peoples of the Nordic race, Norwegians, Swedes, Danes, Icelanders, Faroe Islanders, Britons, Germans, Dutch, Flemish and all others of Nordic blood and spirit' against the common enemies.⁹³ Again, internationalist enemies justified counter-internationalism: 'as the forces working for our national destructions are internationally organised, we are obliged to meet them with an organisation which aims beyond national interests'.⁹⁴ In September 1939, after the beginning of the Second World War, Quisling telegraphed a similar unrealistic plan, the 'Great Nordic Peace Union', to the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, urging Great Britain to make peace with Germany, stating that it was time to create a 'European Commonwealth of Nations'.⁹⁵

90 'En samlingsignal har gått ut över världen, so manar till kamp för världens återupprättelse ur den internationella förnedringen, som nu råder.', DSN, no 38, 19 May 1937, 'Auditorium ett hav av entusiasm och okuvlig kampvilja', p. 5; 'De spanska judarna – trogna bolsjeviker', DSN, no 83, 27 October 1937, p. 3; 'Blod och Jord: Över hela världen pågår nu folkens frihetskamp mot den rotlösa internationella judefinans', DSN, no 68, 14 September 1938, p. 4.

91 'Zonder eenig begrip van de grootscheit van dezen tijd en van het feit, dat de wereld waarin wij zijn opgegroeid kraakt tot in zijn fundamenten...', Anton Mussert, 'De weg omhoog', VoVa, no 1, 4 January 1936, p. 1; 'Mussert of Moskou – De keus van opgang of ondergang – De West-Europeesche beschaving', VoVa, no 41, 9 October 1936, p. 3; Anton Mussert, 'Krachtig voorwaarts! Gezuiverd en in slagorde', VoVa, no 42, 15 October 1937, 1–3.

92 Vidkun Quisling, 'The Nordic Revival' and 'A Greater Norway', in Roger Griffin (ed), *Fascism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 208–11.

93 'Et nordisk verdenssamband,' *Fritt Folk*, 29 June 1936.

94 Ibid. Quisling's plan was also presented to the members of the BUF in the journal *British Union Quarterly* 1 (1937), 91–7.

95 Vidkun Quisling, *Quisling ruft Norwegen! Reden und Aufsätze*. (Munich: Franz-Eher-Verlag, 1942), 82–3.

With the military campaigns and occupations of the Axis in the Second World War and the implementation of the so-called New Order,⁹⁶ the situation changed radically for most smaller European fascist movements, therefore constituting a natural endpoint for our analysis. However, there are important ideological consistencies between the interwar and war period we want to emphasise in the cases of the NS and the NSB. (Lindholm in unoccupied Sweden had become only more sceptical of German intentions even as he remained in correspondence with Nazi contacts; Himmler conversely deemed him unreliable for his insistence on Swedish sovereignty.)⁹⁷ During the German occupation of Norway (1940–45) the NS moved from total political insignificance to becoming the only legal party, collaborating with the German occupational forces. From 1942 to 1945, Vidkun Quisling was Norwegian prime minister of a Nazi puppet government. In this capacity, he continued planning a Northern European or Greater Germanic Union, now as integral part of the Nazi New Order, which simultaneously would guarantee Norwegian independence including a peace treaty with Germany. As late as November 1944 he presented a draft of a ‘European pact’ to Reichskommissar Josef Terboven, suggesting the creation of a European community of peoples [*Europäische Völkergemeinschaft*], now including Southern and Eastern European nations.⁹⁸ While mostly ignored, Quisling’s unrealistic plans did achieve a declaration by Hitler stating his willingness to create ‘a national and socialist Norway in freedom and independence’ as part of a European community, if only after winning the war.⁹⁹

Intriguingly Mussert too pondered similar plans for a Germanic/Nordic Union. The Netherlands was occupied by Germany in May 1940, and for five years administered by a *Reichskommissariat* under Arthur Seyss-Inquart. Seyss-Inquart initially promoted a process of ‘self-nazification’, but before long the German authorities banned all parties except the NSB, who proved the most reliable collaborators. Nevertheless Mussert and his loyalists retained strong ideas about Dutch sovereignty, drawing the party into a drawn-out conflict with the Germans, especially the SS. As became very evident to SS-leader Heinrich Himmler, Mussert’s ideas of an international fascist order sharply diverged from the SS’s Greater-Germanic imperialist vision.¹⁰⁰ In a

96 On the Nazi New Order and its influence on Europe, see Raimund Bauer, *The construction of a national socialist Europe during the Second World War. How the new order took shape* (London: Routledge, 2020); Benjamin G. Martin, *The Nazi-Fascist New Order for European Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016).

97 Police investigation protocol, Lindholm, 18 February 1948, Stockholm, P1279, no 1, pp. 28–9. SRA: Arninge.

98 On Quisling’s plans for Europe during the Second World War, see Hans Werner Neulen, *Europa und das 3. Reich. Einigungsbestrebungen im deutschen Machtbereich 1939–45*, (Munich: Universitas-Verlag, 1987), 331–68.

99 ‘[...] nach dem siegreichen Ende dieses Schicksalskampfes ein nationales und sozialistisches Norwegen in Freiheit und Selbständigkeit erstehen zu lassen [...]’. ‘Erklärung Hitlers über Norwegens Stellung in Europa, 26. September 1943’, reprinted in *ibid.*, p. 136.

100 Hans-Dietrich Looock, ‘Zur “Grossgermanischen Politik” Des Dritten Reiches’, *Vierteljahrshefte Für Zeitgeschichte*, 8.1 (1960), 37–63; Konrad Kwiet, *Reichskommissariat Niederlande: Versuch Und Scheitern Nationalsozialistischer Neuordnung* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1968); Nathaniël Kunkeler, ‘Narratives of Decline in the Dutch National Socialist Movement, 1931–1945’, *The Historical Journal*, 61.1 (2018), 205–25 (220–23).

series of 'notes' to Hitler, written between August 1940 and 1944, Mussert set out his vision for a formal union of nation-states under Nazi hegemony, a 'Union of the Germanic Nations' [*Bond der Germaansche Volkeren*]. The notes were intended to resolve the issue of how to develop the relationship between a victorious Germany and militarily vanquished but racially related nations, with the (naïve) aim of maintaining the latter's sovereignty under Hitler's leadership, a product of Mussert's absolute trust in the Führer's good intentions. In the first note of 1940, Mussert sketched out the historical development of Europe and its imperial power in the world since the Sixteenth Century, before explaining the organising principles of the union. These were the 'ties of blood' [*bloedsverbondenheid*], national socialism, a common military, and a common economy [*Lebensraumwirtschaft*], after which Mussert pleaded the particular case of the Dutch people.¹⁰¹ This included the particular unity of the six Dutch ethnic groups, including the Flemish, and of course the Afrikaner *boeren*. Ultimately, like Quisling's concept, the Union was to include the Netherlands, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark and Sweden, under the leadership of Germany. He also envisaged a parallel southern Union of Latin nations under Italy's leadership, leaving Eastern Europe aside for the moment.¹⁰² As Mussert put it in an accompanying letter to Hitler, 'I am convinced, that my people herein will find the guarantee for a beautiful and strong, racial existence [*völkische Existenz*] of their own'.¹⁰³

Neither Mussert's nor Quisling's plans for international unions were realistic, and they were both blithely disregarded, but they show a real internationalist perspective among the fascist movements. The sense of a new era, common opponents, as well as a growing awareness over the decade of their own smallness in the face of a predicted apocalyptic confrontation between 'two worlds', made an international fascism both a comfort and a real hope for the future. The essentially solidary nature of these movements' fascist internationalism perhaps found its ultimate expression in Mussert's almost unthinkable naïve and pathetic plea before Hitler, that the New Order be based on the common good of independent sovereign nations under the protection of a great Germanic state, rather than annexation, imperialism and exploitation. While the ideas of the Norwegian and Dutch Leaders can appear like a hopelessly opportunistic bid in the face of German Nazi aggression and occupation, the hopes and desires for an international fascism had always been there.

The positive ideological basis of fascist wartime collaboration and plans for the future had roots in the smaller movements' conceptions of fascist internationalism going back a decade. While Quisling's and Mussert's plans were the by-product of a coercive and highly asymmetrical relationship with German Nazi authorities, that should not distract us from the genealogy reaching back to more independent times.

101 Anton Mussert, *Vijf Nota's van Mussert Aan Hitler over de Samenwerking van Duitsland En Nederland in Een Bond van Germaansche Volkeren, 1940-1944* ('S-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1947), 16–30.

102 Mussert, 19.

103 'Ich bin überzeugt, dass Mein Volk hierin die Gewähr für eine schöne und starke, eigene völkische Existenz finden wird.' Mussert, 14.

Quisling and Nasjonal Samling had from the outset in 1933 been interested in like-minded movements across the continent, and saw themselves in the context of a 'new world in the making' – Mussert's perspective was essentially the same. By contrast, Lindholm and the NSAP did not engage significantly with the outside world beyond Germany until two years after its founding. Only in 1935 did the party seriously start to propagate the idea of the NSAP as part of an international movement, and even then continued to hedge that idea with attacks on 'false' foreign fascist groups. The three movements had some contacts with the German and Italian fascist parties early on, a reflection partially of the inspiration these organisations provided, but also of their proactivity in courting potentially useful foreign persons and groups. The NSDAP was probing for sympathisers in Scandinavia already in 1930, while CAUR provided a ready framework for movements to engage with Italy. Contacts with other movements came later for the NS, NSAP and NSB. Broadly speaking, tentative contacts were first made in 1934–35, while small-scale but growing collaboration followed in the second half of the decade. That collaboration was at its most intense with immediately neighbouring countries, with limited language barriers, and where there existed a natural historical affinity, that is, Scandinavia and the Low Countries, but all three parties were interested in connections with fascist groups further afield. These connections were abruptly broken with the German invasions of 1940.

The developing conceptions of international fascism between the three cases, and the timing of practical transnational developments, highlights the complex nature of collaboration as well as the multiple functions to which 'international fascism' was put. To the NS and NSB, at least to their leadership, internationalism was innate to their self-understanding as fascists. The idea that they had entered the political scene as participants in a 'new era' was an important part of their message and identity. Furthermore, common internationalist enemies such as Marxists, liberals and Jews legitimised counter-internationalism, while the NSB had a global empire to defend. This conception was subsequently developed into a potent myth, as the leadership seemed to realise the attractive and mobilising potential of a fascist internationalism. The demonstration effect of regimes and movements elsewhere, tethered to the sense of a new era, made the fledgling parties part of a broader European or even global success story – perhaps even one that followed a historically predetermined trajectory towards ultimate victory. The mythic construction of a great international fascism was something that in turn reflected on the movements to make them appear bigger, while the movements' solidary myths also took the teeth out of international fascist aggression. It also went beyond just the Italian and German regimes: while the conservative authoritarian regimes of the time were in many ways also a reaction *against* fascism, to the small movements they usually constituted a part of international fascism. The propaganda utility was obvious.


While constructing myths through party discourse was easy, the establishment of tangible connections and practical collaboration was not. The examination of NS, NSAP and NSB international contacts and the timing of its development must not be regarded in purely ideological or political terms, but transnationally. This puts the pragmatic nature of establishing international connections at the forefront, and shows that there were obvious practical difficulties for these smaller movements to forge meaningful international connections. CAUR was a handy way for movements to connect across borders, and make plans for cooperation, but was a sizeable organisational feat on a scale a small

movement which counted its members in the thousands or even tens of thousands could not orchestrate. Where the NSB, NS or NSAP/SSS tried to establish contacts abroad this was fraught with difficulties and delays, something perhaps easy to forget from a contemporary perspective of instant global connectivity. The background to the NSB's tenuous and one-sided connection to the NSAP, established in 1937, speaks volumes about the contingencies that shaped transnational relationships. After the NSB visit to NS headquarters in 1934, where van Duyl missed the opportunity to meet Quisling, the Dutch used their connection to the Norwegians to reach out to the Swedes – in itself part of an effort to organise internationally against the socialists. Unable to figure out which organisation among the Swedish fascists to contact, or even how – lacking any address – they asked the NS. The Norwegians were able to provide party names and addresses, but they were not so well informed as to provide accurate information about which party was actually on the rise and which ones to recommend. By the time the Dutch had sent a delegation to Sweden, the Furugård party NS had recommended for contact was dissolved. The relationship itself was doomed to failure at that point: the Swedes had already for years maintained contacts with the NSNAP rival to the NSB, fanatically opposed to the NSB and its brand of supposedly philosemitic bourgeois fascism. It is uncertain whether the NSB ever realised this, but either way VoVa merrily ignored the NSAP's hostility and used the NSB delegation visit to Sweden as an opportunity to develop the myth of international fascism.

From the perspective of our three cases, these contingencies show that there was no single international fascism that would correspond to a generic fascism framework. Rather, we see a messy overlap of organisations and people who understand themselves under the same or similar categories of fascism or national socialism, but construct that commonality in different ways, and at different times. There is a clear impact from demonstration effects, regime examples, and de facto collaboration, but this is not just a matter of perceptions and practices of internationalism. Movements were simultaneously individually engaged in a construction of international fascism for their own ends, marked by the vicissitudes of transnational connections.

The historiography has shown the tremendous influence of fascist and other authoritarian Right regimes in creating a sense of commonality and internationalism in the extreme Right in the interwar period. But there were a multitude of other factors shaping conceptions of international fascism and practices of fascist internationalism. These were outside the regimes' spheres of influence, even if smaller movements engaged directly with German and Italian agents. In fact, as regimes on the international stage threatened smaller nations, impulses towards internationalism moved away from Italy and Germany, and between younger movements instead. This created an essentially (largely mythic) parallel alternative to the aggressive Rome-Berlin(-Tokyo) axis, a solidary international fascism.

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