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Nationalism—the principle that a people sharing a common culture should possess their own sovereign state—is widely regarded as the most powerful political ideology in the modern world. But it is not the unstoppable force sometimes described by international relations scholars, who tend to pay more attention to insurgencies than to stable multinational states and empires. As Matthew Adam Kocher, Adria K. Lawrence, and Nuno P. Monteiro helpfully remind us in their analysis of Nazi-occupied France, nationalism does not always generate immediate, substantial resistance to foreign domination.

As Kocher and his colleagues point out, the French in the early twentieth century were highly nationalistic by any measure. But following Germany's May 1940 invasion, French officials and industry collaborated extensively with the occupiers, and the vast majority of the population declined to participate in either violent resistance or organized non-violent resistance. Extensive collaboration and limited resistance, in turn, aided German control over French territory and exploitation of the French economy to subsidize the German war effort. Rather than fighting to regain their national sovereignty, the French instead provided resources supporting Nazi Germany's attempt to establish a long-lasting hegemony over all of Europe.¹ Nor was

¹ For analyses of the overall French contribution to the German war effort, see Filippo Occhino, Kim Oosterlinck, and Eugene N. White, "How Much Can a Victor Force the Vanquished to Pay? France under the Nazi Boot," *Journal of Economic History* 68:1 (March 2008): 1-45, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022050708000016>; Marcel Boldorf and Jonas Scherner, "France's Occupation Costs and the War in the East: The Contribution to the German War Economy, 1940-4," *Journal of Contemporary History* 47:2 (March 2012): 291-316, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009411431711>.

France's experience unique. According to the most comprehensive study to date, Germany was able to extract from all of occupied Western Europe over 30% of its war expenditures through 1944.²

The authors offer two main explanations for French acquiescence, one international and the other domestic. First, given Germany's military domination and willingness to punish noncooperation, French leaders faced strong incentives to collaborate. It may have seemed unlikely, especially in the darkest days of 1940 and the more hopeful ones of 1944, that French resistance or collaboration would alter the course of the war and the odds of liberation. The authors argue that refusing an armistice and fighting on from the colonies "would entail grave risks, both immediate and long term [for France]... Given the circumstances, it is not difficult to see how collaboration might have appeared not only consistent with nationalism, but even a nationalist duty" (143-144). This echoes the justification that Marshal Philippe Pétain gave after the war for his leadership of the collaborating Vichy regime: "I used my power as a shield to protect the French people."³

Kocher et al. do not elaborate on the "grave risks" of fighting on from the colonies or other less combative strategies, such as refusing to carry out key German demands or abdication. Nor do they discuss the motivations of lower-level national and local civil servants, police forces, business leaders, and workers, whose personal incentives might have outweighed national ones in choosing to remain at their prewar posts.

The second main explanation that Kocher et al. give for French acquiescence stresses domestic politics. Following Robert O. Paxton's seminal 1972 *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944*, the authors observe that the right-wing politics of Pétain and the other military officers and politicians of Vichy heightened their persecution of French Communists and cooperation with other domestic policies desired by Germany (144-145, 147).⁴ In addition, French ultra-conservatives' fear of the Soviet Union boosted sympathies for Germany's war in the east, just as it appears to have had incited their interwar opposition to an alliance with the Soviet Union against Germany, despite the latter being a far more proximate geopolitical threat (148).⁵

But even if Vichy's right-wing agenda explains many sins, it is not needed to explain much of France's administrative and economic cooperation with German pacification and exploitation. The politically centrist department heads who remained in place in Belgium and the Netherlands after their governments fled

² This estimate does not include booty taken without financial compensation; Hein Klemann with Sergei Kudryashov, *Occupied Economies: An Economic History of Nazi-occupied Europe, 1939-1945* (New York: Berg, 2012), esp. 98-108 and 178-179.

³ Quoted in Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 358.

⁴ Paxton, *Vichy France*.

⁵ For an extended argument that shared external threats promote indigenous cooperation with occupying powers, see David M. Edelstein, *Occupational Hazards: Success and Failure in Military Occupation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008) and a critique by Peter Liberman and Federico Manfredi in *H-Diplo Roundtable*, Vol X, No. 15 (2009); <https://issforum.org/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-X-15.pdf>. On the security policy stance of interwar French conservatives, see Mark L. Haas, *Ideological Origins of Great Power Politics, 1789-1989* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 105-145.

surrendered tribute and managed their economies at least as pliantly and capably as did Vichy. Indeed, the Belgians and Dutch provided greater per capita economic assistance to Germany than did the French, and lower levels of violent resistance.⁶ It was in the Netherlands where the greatest proportion of prewar Jewish citizens were murdered. As a recent summary of the Nazi mobilization of occupied Europe put it, “Hitler did not need the assistance of ideologically driven supporters in the occupied countries, as a combination of incentives and regulation could go a very long way toward mobilizing the resources that Germany needed to maintain its war effort for several years.”⁷ Paxton argued in *Vichy France* that Vichy would have better protected the interests and honor of the French people by abdicating.⁸ But neither he nor Kocher et al. go so far as to contend that it would have significantly increased the odds or speed of French liberation. That seems to have been unlikely as long as a large majority of Europe’s civil servants, businesses, and labor continued to work, despite indirectly aiding the German war effort.

However, the authors do provide new evidence that domestic politics affected French resistance at the grassroots level. Combining department-level prewar electoral results and wartime resistance data, they show that there were significantly more members of the Resistance and acts of railway sabotage in France’s left-leaning departments than in its right-leaning ones (146). Moreover, in results reported elsewhere, they find that the voting–sabotage correlation persists after controlling for rough terrain, distance from Germany, population size, and being inside or outside the zone that initially unoccupied by German troops.⁹ “By leveraging collaboration for domestic reform,” Kocher et al. conclude, Vichy “opened political fissures that helped produce the French Resistance” (148).

This raises further questions about the underlying mechanism that the authors do not tackle. Was the greater resistance in left-leaning departments due to their citizens’ greater ideological hostility to Vichy and the Nazis, or was it due to prudential, desperate responses by French Communists to persecution? Alternatively, did greater collaboration by conservative local officials, police forces, and snitches more effectively repress resistance in the more right-leaning departments?

Even if ideological motivations caused the voting–sabotage correlation, rather than prudential ones, we should not necessarily conclude that ascendant French conservatism was a major brake on resistance. Active resistance was greater in France than in the rest of occupied Western Europe, including countries without right-wing

⁶ Peter Liberman, *Does Conquest Pay: The Exploitation of Occupied Industrial Societies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), chap. 3. This was not due to milder German exploitation of countries led by right-wing collaborators. The French economy was particularly hampered by transport and coal shortages. Moreover, Norway, under the leadership of Nazi fascist puppet Vidkun Quisling, provided the greatest per capita contributions to Germany. See Klemann with Kudryashov, 96-99.

⁷ Hans Otto Frøland, Mats Ingulstad, and Jonas Scherner, “Perfecting the Art of Stealing: Nazi Exploitation and Industrial Collaboration in Occupied Western Europe,” in Hans Otto Frøland, Mats Ingulstad, and Jonas Scherner (eds.), *Industrial Collaboration in Occupied Western Europe: Norway in Context* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 32.

⁸ Paxton, chap. 5.

⁹ Matthew Adam Kocher and Nuno P. Monteiro, “Lines of Demarcation: Causation, Design-Based Inference, and Historical Research,” *Perspectives on Politics* 14:4 (December 2016): 952-975. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592716002863>.

collaborating regimes.¹⁰ Furthermore, the regional differences in resistance observed by Kocher et al. were quite small; the most left-leaning departments experienced only 44 more incidents of railway sabotage than the most right-leaning ones. Overall levels of violent resistance remained low throughout the West, and peaked around D-Day. As Mark Mazower has observed, “with the exception of the Eastern Front, where extensive partisan activity really did worry the Germans, there were few places or moments in the occupation of Europe when the Germans were seriously troubled for very long.”¹¹ Ideological motives for resistance, like nationalistic ones, were generally outweighed by ordinary people’s perception that open resistance was dangerous and futile.

That said, research drawing careful comparisons within occupied countries, such as this article’s findings on regional patterns of resistance in France, and cross-national comparisons are a valuable way to shed more light on the sources of cooperation and resistance. To what extent did the availability of weapons, explosives, and other technologies of resistance and repression matter? To what degree were differences in German exploitation across nations, sectors, and even individual firms due to strikes, slack working, sabotage, and boycotts, as opposed to German mismanagement and scarcities caused by other factors? Other central questions require more speculative counter-factual analysis, such as: Would more widespread passive resistance have been feasible, and might that have provided leverage for greater autonomy?¹² How would collaboration and resistance have evolved if the Allies had failed to liberate Europe? Would prolonged German control have required centralized economic management, of the kind that ultimately stultified technological innovation and economic growth in Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe? However thorny, such questions inevitably arise when trying to understand the power and limits of nationalist resistance by modern societies.

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¹⁰ Liberman, *Does Conquest Pay*, 48. See also Olivier Wieviorka, *The French Resistance*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016).

¹¹ Mark Mazower, *Hitler’s Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 516.

¹² For a general analysis of non-violent resistance, see Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).