

The Fascist Crucible: Fascism and the Transatlantic Political Community

Paper proposal for the 26th World Congress of the International Political Science Association, July 25-29, 2020, Lisbon, Portugal. RC36: Political Power, Panel session “Sovereignty and Crisis/Sovereignty in Crisis (confirmed)”

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Abstract:

The crisis in transatlantic relations today has commonly been linked to the rise of “Trumpism” in the United States – a cry for U.S. sovereignty in a globalized, post-Cold War world. Europe is willing to stay together; it is the U.S. that is walking away. Yet what exactly do we mean by “transatlantic relations”? And is the solution to the crisis simply a matter of the United States coming “back” (Joe Biden)? The proposed paper is part of a larger project on transatlantic relations as a political community. At issue for this project is the question if or to what extent one can identify an actual transatlantic political community, a transnational political space with a sense of togetherness and even belonging, beyond and above the political-economic-geographical determinants of the Cold War international order. While the paper cannot engage all questions of transatlantic relations as a transnational political community (e.g., by broadening the perspective to include Latin America), the paper identifies and discusses fascism as a crucible: a critical political-normative moment and problematic in the creation, subsequent meaning, and development of a transatlantic political community. The paper concentrates on three cases: United States, Germany, and Italy. It analyzes the U.S.’ debates on and political impacts of fascism, especially German Nazism, in the 1930s and 1940s, the German debates on and political impacts of fascism on Germany’s “long road West” (H. A. Winkler) and Italy’s debates on and impacts of fascism on the “post-war settlement” and subsequent Republic. The paper uses a critical inter-disciplinary and cross-methods approach – political and social thought, foreign policy analysis, public opinion analysis – and select critical readings of popular culture artifacts (movies, comics). As opposed to a linear narrative of political, let alone, moral progress, the paper makes the case that fascism in all three cases proves to be a multi-faceted problematic. Far from being a historical epoch that was left behind, fascism is a central moment and problematic against which – and, thus, with which – the transatlantic political community is defined and as such even informs the current debates on the fundamental crisis in transatlantic relations itself.