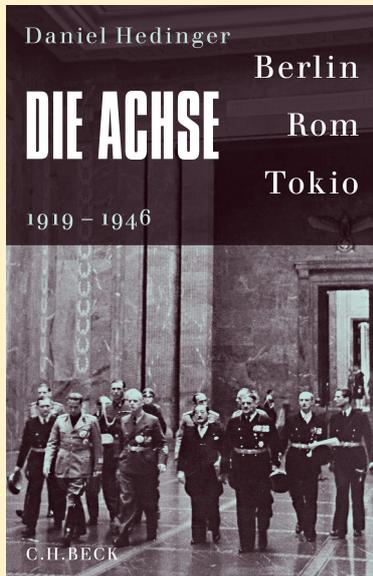


The Berlin – Rome – Tokyo Axis.

From a Transnational to a Transimperial Perspective



This presentation is based on my book on the Axis alliance, published in Germany in September 2021. The book illuminates how the three fascist powers came together and how, in trying to reorder the world, they plunged it into a war of unprecedented scale. The book proposes a double scope, as an interpretation and a synthesis: As the latter, it traces the three countries' shared history from the end of the First to the end of the Second World War, focusing on eight global moments – the first in the spring of 1919, the last in the autumn of 1946. By describing the alliance as a strong, consequential, and far-reaching project of fascist world ordering, the book offers at the same time an interpretation. The Axis was, so the thesis, the product of cooperation and interaction, as the three regimes radicalized each other mutually.

The book emphasizes the ideological foundation and shared world views of the three powers, thus pointing to fascism as a global phenomenon of the interwar years. However, this global turn in fascist studies also implies a further shift in the research focus: A shift from a transnational to a transimperial perspective – a perspective that focuses on cooperation, competition, and connectivity in the colonial context. Today's presentation discusses what this shift implies for the history of the Axis and the more general history of the Second World War. Concerning the alliance, it is evident that in all three cases radicalizing fascist imperialism combined colonial warfare with ethnic cleansing, economic plunder, and large-scale settler colonialism. It was an imperial nexus, as I would like to call it, which bound the three powers and accelerated their expansion. This process of radicalization of imperialism was from the early 1930s onwards closely interlinked with the convergence of the Axis. Concerning the Second World War, we see that historiography has long preferred to write the history of the war as a conflict between nation-states. But the Second World War was, as the book shows, first and foremost a struggle between empires, a war over empires as well as over the question of which form of imperialism should dominate the world.

Daniel Hedinger is a global historian based at LMU Munich. His work deals with East Asian and European history, in particular, understood as shared history, from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century. His more recent publications in English include “The Spectacle of Global Fascism: The Italian Blackshirt Mission to Japan’s Asian Empire” (*Modern Asian Studies*, 2017), “The Imperial Nexus: The Second World War and the Axis in Global Perspective” (*Journal of Global History*, 2017) and “Transimperial History – Connectivity, Cooperation, and Competition” (together with Nadin Heć, *Journal of Modern European History*, 2018).