Vortrag

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Fascism and Total War

A Transnational Perspective from the Japanese Home Front

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The issue of whether wartime Japan was “fascist” has long obsessed historians. However, fascism may be too narrow a lens with which to examine Japan from 1931 to 1945. Japan’s authoritarian transformation, I argue, was inspired by longer-term and broader transnational developments related to nation-building and mobilization for “total war.” Like other Great Powers, the Japanese state had been engaged in molding a disciplined, patriotic citizenry since the late 19th century. Moreover, it vigorously embraced global discourses of total war and the “home front” that emerged after World War I. Although Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy provided some models, Japanese officials and thinkers also vigorously investigated mass mobilization policies in democratic Britain and the Soviet Union.

Sheldon Garon is the Nissan Professor of History and East Asian Studies at Princeton University. A specialist in modern Japanese history, he also writes transnational history that spotlights the flow of ideas and institutions among the U.S., Japan, and European and Asian countries. He is currently writing a transnational history of “home fronts” in Japan, Germany, Britain, and the United States in World War II. Previous publications include Beyond Our Means: Why America Spends While the World Saves; The State and Labor in Modern Japan; Molding Japanese Minds: The State in Everyday Life; and The Ambivalent Consumer: Questioning Consumption in East Asia and the West.