MORE ATLANTIC CROSSINGS? EUROPEAN VOICES AND THE POSTWAR ATLANTIC COMMUNITY

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The decades following World War II are generally regarded as the height of the “American Century” in transatlantic relations. American hard and soft power dominated diplomatic and political as well as economic and cultural relations to a degree that gave rise to the notion of American hegemony. The era saw the project of constructing a “modern” West unfold under the leadership of U.S. experts and institutions, with European societies often perceiving postwar reconstruction as, in many ways, an “Americanization” of their politics, cultures, and economies. The Marshall Plan, productivity missions, as well as American products and popular culture, all added up to a massive flow of transatlantic transfers from the United States to Western Europe, expanding the reach of America’s “irresistible empire.”

Was the Atlantic, however, truly a one-way street during the “American Century”? European voices had been a prominent part of the Atlantic dialogue in the early part of the twentieth century, which had witnessed a vibrant back-and-forth with numerous “Atlantic crossings” resulting in social, political, and cultural exchanges. World War II was a significant caesura, but, this volume contends, not an abrupt break in this reciprocal dialogue. After the war, Americans continued to look to Europe in many areas — or to the expertise of their European colleagues — for inspiration and contrast. Europe, for example, continued to matter in urban studies, particularly to American architects and planners tackling the problems of postwar urban development within a transnational framework. In fashion and design, as well as in the arts and postwar intellectual life, European influences remained strong. As important as the American model became, Europe and Europeans continued to be relevant in science and academia, too.

“European voices” continued to influence the postwar transatlantic world. These voices included European diplomats and experts in various transatlantic networks and institutions as well as, quite prominently, European immigrants and émigrés in the United States. The 2012 workshop “More Atlantic Crossings?” at the German Historical Institute in Washington, DC, from which the contributions

3 On the transatlantic interconnections in mid-twentieth-century urban planning, see, e.g., the special issue of *Planning Perspectives* 2, no. 1 (2014), edited by Carola Hein, whose contributions also draw primarily from the GHI's 2012 workshop “More Atlantic Crossings?”
to this volume stem, explored precisely these European inputs and their relative weight within transatlantic social relations. It asked, for example, about European migrants and émigrés and the degree to which their work not only maintained a continuing and sometimes expanding interest in European developments but also helped shape the very “American model” that became so dominant in the postwar period. Many of them became the “European voices” in the transatlantic dialogues of the time. We are interested in the contributions of these migrants, visitors, diplomats, and members of transnational organizations of European background to transatlantic exchanges and mutual perceptions. What was their role — as Europeans of varying stripes — in reshaping the transatlantic world following World War II?

We already know that the influx of European immigrants and émigrés impacted the development of various professional and academic fields in the U.S., but how did they, as a group, enable transatlantic exchanges and help shape American society more broadly? The research project Transatlantic Perspectives at the German Historical Institute, which gave rise to this volume, aimed to highlight the multidirectional and circulatory flow of transfers in the interwar and postwar transatlantic world by emphasizing the role of European-born migrants in transnational transfers. In areas as central to “postwar modernity” as mass consumption and business marketing, the social sciences and urban planning, European migrants to the United States helped build Euro-American networks and facilitated exchanges within the transatlantic world.

### Qualifying the “American Century”: Transnational Approaches to the Postwar Atlantic Community

This volume looks closely at European actors within transatlantic political, cultural, and economic networks and institutions. Daniel Rodgers’s *Atlantic Crossings*, a study that gave a decisive impetus for looking at the transatlantic dialogue as a multipolar conversation, in many ways pioneered a growing body of transnational scholarship. Our intention here is to extend Rodgers’s transnational perspective into the postwar period and to see what evidence of genuine reciprocal interaction can be found. Rodgers focuses on the first half of the twentieth century, or more broadly the Progressive Era, and the impact European actors and ideas had on the way America negotiated the Social Question through networks of politically engaged professionals. In his narrative, World War II appears as a break...
that effectively ended the circulatory flow of transatlantic exchanges in favor of more unidirectional transfer processes. Yet, the United States and Western Europe certainly remained intimately intertwined during the Cold War — arguably more closely than ever, under the label of an “Atlantic Community.” The emphasis, however, both in the minds of contemporaries as well as in the historical scholarship has been on the influence that American modernity and the American model have exerted on European economies, societies, and cultures.

Such notions of “Americanization” have been a recurring trope in almost all areas of transatlantic history, as Mary Nolan’s contribution to this volume notes. Scholars have traced American influences since the late nineteenth century — but especially after 1945 — on European economies (Taylorism and Fordism, management and technology), consumption (supermarkets and advertising), urban development (automobility), and popular culture (film, music, and entertainment), to name just a few. Today, analyses of Americanization nearly uniformly recognize this to be not a unidirectional process of assimilation but a complex set of transfers and negotiated adaptations with substantial agency on the part of the receiving society. Debates over “modernity” and “modernization,” moreover, were transnational in nature — exchanges about the meaning and problems of Western modernity in disciplines ranging from economics to urban planning continuously crisscrossed the continents and spanned the Atlantic world and beyond. That “Americanization” did not mean transatlantic social convergence, finally, is underscored by scholarship that traces the continued distinctiveness of European social models in the second half of the twentieth century — for example, the European city, the European welfare state, and European economic models such as Rhenish Capitalism. Adelheid von Saldern has recently addressed Americans’ attempts during the first decades of the twentieth century to distinguish themselves from European societies and culture by constructing a European “other.” The degree to which “European ways” of the postwar decades were received and reflected in the United States and impacted the construction of an “Atlantic Community,” however, has to date been little explored in historical scholarship. If Europeans saw themselves reflected in America and

7 Rodgers, Atlantic Crossings.
8 On American influence in twentieth-century transatlantic relations, see the recent work by Mary Nolan, The Transatlantic Century: Europe and America, 1890-2010 (Cambridge, 2012).
9 See e.g. de Grazia, Irresistible Empire, and Alexander Stephan, The Americanization of Europe: Culture, Diplomacy, and

12 Hartmut Kaelble, The European Way: European Societies during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (New York, 2004). Transatlantic differences in varieties of capitalism are discussed in Volker Berghahn and Sigurt Vitols, eds., Gibt es einen deutschen Kapitalismus?: Tradition und globale Perspektiven der sozialen Marktwirtschaft (Frankfurt am Main, 2006).
contrasted themselves to it, as research on European perceptions of the United States has found, how did Americans see themselves reflected in Europe after World War II?15

To be sure, the undeniable imbalance of power between Europe and the United States following World War II poses challenges to recent transnational approaches in historiography. One cannot analyze transatlantic flows of ideas, goods, or people without acknowledging this underlying shift in power relations.16 Thus, to find and highlight evidence of transnational networks and exchanges is not to deny the influential role of the United States or of an American model of modernity during the early Cold War. Such an approach can, however, help us to reach a more nuanced understanding of the Cold War Atlantic West by unearthing continuities that stretched across World War II and by showing the multifacetedness of transatlantic relations. It can also globalize our understanding of American history by tracing external influences and interrelationships with broader transatlantic trends that qualify notions of American “exceptionalism” at the height of the American Century. It can further lend more agency to European actors by putting to rest outdated notions of a unilateral Americanization of Western Europe during the postwar decades.

The concept of a transnational “Atlantic Community” connotes a shared discursive space, which exemplifies the reciprocity of transatlantic transfers. Much like the idea of “Atlanticism” as discussed in Kenneth Weisbrode’s essay, it allows for an investigation of transatlantic relations that goes beyond mere political and military alliances but instead suggests a broader social and cultural framework.17 The origins of the concept, which precede the decades of the Cold War, can be traced to Wilsonian internationalism and to efforts since World War I to understand American developments within the broader framework of “Western Civilization.” Just like “Western Civilization,” the Atlantic Community has certainly also always been an ideological construct, designed to strengthen transatlantic ties, for example, in view of a perceived communist threat. Its discursive construction, however, has allowed room for both the discussion of shared transatlantic or “Western” values and social characteristics as well as for the negotiation of “European” and “American” differences. The essays in this volume explore the European voices in such transatlantic discourses on “modern” Western society and its discontents. Showcasing these voices will not suddenly transform the “American Century” into a “European Century,” but it suggests

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a picture that is more complex than the catchphrases of “Americanization” or “American Empire.” Mary Nolan’s term “Transatlantic Century” in many ways captures this complexity.

The actors at the center of our investigation, primarily experts and professionals, frequently shared a belief in a universal Western model of social modernization. At the same time, they often highlighted aspects of European or American distinctiveness. We acknowledge that the very “Europeanness” or “Americanness” of ideas and concepts is as difficult to ascertain as that of the actors carrying the discourses themselves, many of whom were transatlantic “transmigrants,” shifting repeatedly between continents (at times with ease, but frequently not without friction). The émigré historians discussed by Merel Leeman in this volume, for example, cannot be easily categorized as either “European” or “American.” Other distinctions along political, social, or gender lines, furthermore, were frequently more crucial than the distinction between European and American when it came to deliberating what the “Atlantic Community” was. The essays in this volume underscore the often multifaceted and fragmented nature of this community, particularly as we move into the later 1950s and 1960s — they set out to explore various dimensions of what Nolan calls the “Transatlantic Century” and to situate it within the broader history of the mid-twentieth century.

Our questions regarding European voices within postwar transatlantic relations and the Cold War Atlantic Community are informed by a growing literature of new political and diplomatic history. On the one hand, an increasing body of work explores the cultural dimensions of the Cold War and the role of cultural “soft power” networks that undergirded U.S. Cold War diplomacy. The Congress for Cultural Freedom and similar organizations, for example, arguably pursued the construction of an Atlantic Community with an anti-communist bent. Much of this scholarship, however, emphasizes the extension of American power rather than the contribution of European voices within the cultural Cold War. On the other hand, numerous studies broaden the scope of transatlantic history in this era by looking at exchanges on the level of civil society organizations and new social and protest movements. These “other alliances” significantly expand our understanding of the fragmented nature of the postwar Atlantic Community, which we now recognize as having contained multiple and often quite contradictory visions and agendas that were nonetheless shared across borders and the Atlantic.
Beyond the realm of political history, research on international institutions and transnational professional exchanges provides another important context for our efforts to situate European voices within postwar transatlantic relations. The institutionalization of transnational transfers, moving away from informal networks of experts at the center of Rodgers’s account of Progressive Era exchanges and towards formalized institutions, had its beginnings in the interwar period but expanded significantly during the postwar years.21 Large foundations such as Rockefeller and Ford became central actors in mid-twentieth century transatlantic relations, channeling scientific and cultural transfers (again, frequently with a political agenda).22 The transatlantic crossing of Critical Theory, as discussed by Thomas Wheatland in this volume, for example, was tightly intertwined with the Rockefeller Foundation. Various international organizations and networks became nodes for exchange and platforms for transatlantic debates. Their relevance becomes evident in the transnational histories of professional fields; from the social sciences to urban planning, professional debates took place within a transatlantic institutional framework that always also included European voices.23 The essays by Daniel Bessner, who focuses on the RAND Corporation, and Christian Albrecht, who discusses the Club of Rome, provide two very different examples of such institutions and networks within the postwar Atlantic world.

In addition to a reevaluation of the transatlantic debate about an Atlantic Community, the search for European voices contributes to efforts to internationalize American history. Thomas Bender and others have countered narratives of American exceptionalism with an eye primarily towards the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.24 But understanding the United States as a nation among nations, shaped in constant exchange with external influences, is equally relevant for the middle of the twentieth century. Studies on the impact of European émigrés on U.S. society have long provided examples of outside influences on particular fields of American academia and culture.25 Migration history more generally, its emphasis shifting from the assimilation (or “Americanization”) of immigrants to the dynamic creation of cultural hybridity, has similarly underscored American society’s entanglement in broader transnational developments.26 Migrants and émigrés are thus a central category of actors in this volume and among the most prominent European voices in postwar American society. Combining the perspectives of emigration or migration history with that of transnational studies of institutions


22 John Krieger and Helke Rausch, American Foundations and the Coproduction of World Order in the Twentieth Century (Göttingen, 2012).


24 On the “globalization” of American history, see Thomas Bender, A Nation among Nations: America’s Place in World History (New York, 2006); and Ian Tyrrell, Transnational Nation: United States History in Global Perspective since 1789 (Basingstoke, 2007).


and networks may prove to be one of the most fruitful avenues of future research in transatlantic relations.27

A more globalized perspective on the postwar Atlantic is a final important contribution of several of the assembled essays as Quinn Slobodian’s investigation into the global networks that gave rise to new forms of Conservatism in the transatlantic world demonstrates. The Atlantic Community was not a closed-off regional entity; its construction took shape within an increasingly globalized world. This perspective has long informed the field of Atlantic history and has focused primarily on the early modern exchange relationship between Europe, Africa, and the Americas but can just as well be applied to more recent history.28 Cold War studies have recognized the global nature of the Cold War and of postwar conceptions of the West.29 Protests against and challenges to the Cold War Atlantic Community frequently reflected its position within a decolonizing world.30 The transatlantic differences between “Europeanness” and “Americanness” were often articulated most clearly at the postcolonial periphery. At times, a look beyond the North Atlantic relativizes the importance of the transatlantic relationship and, at other times, it helps underscore a shared sense of commonality vis-à-vis a non-Western “other.” By the early 1970s, the “mental maps” of actors and institutions increasingly favored a global, rather than simply a transatlantic, perspective (despite an often lingering Atlantic bias).31

Diplomats, Professionals, Academics: Manifold European Voices

The essays in this volume cannot comprehensively cover the broad spectrum of postwar transatlantic relations or the variety of European voices within them. Instead, most contributions focus on specific case studies that illuminate the different roles of European actors within specific areas and disciplinary settings.

Mary Nolan begins this collection with an essay that provides a sweeping overview of transatlantic relations during the twentieth century, a time in which the United States certainly became an increasingly dominant partner. However, Nolan also points to the limits of “Americanization” and of American influence on European societies as well as to a variety of countercurrents in transatlantic exchanges. Americans, too, borrowed from their European partners. To better situate the Transatlantic Century within global and transnational histories, Nolan finally calls for more research on the “intra-European

27 See e.g. the recent AHR Forum on “Transnational Lives in the Twentieth Century” with transatlantic contributions from Nancy Cott, Stephen Tuck, Jean Allman, and Matthew Pratt Guterl, American Historical Review 118, no. 1 (2013).
28 I would like to thank to Moshik Temkin for making this point at our workshop. On the state of Atlantic history, see Jack Green and Philip Morgan, eds., Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal (Oxford 2009).
30 One example is Quinn Slobodian, Foreign Front: Third World Politics in Sixties West Germany (Durham, NC, 2012).
circuits” of the Cold War that connected West and East across the Iron Curtain, as well as on the ties between Third World countries and the Atlantic Community. Slobodian and Albrecht, especially, take up this call in their contributions to this volume.

Atlantic relations after World War II were ultimately framed by international politics, but for all of America’s power, European diplomats and statesmen remained important players in transatlantic relations. Diplomatic historian Kenneth Weisbrode contextualizes the Atlantic transfers and networks discussed in this issue with a broader look at the mid-twentieth-century redefinition of the “Atlantic Community” as the core of the West, as well as the concept’s roots in the Wilsonian tradition of international and transatlantic relations. In Weisbrode’s account, the postwar decades appear to be a “midlife crisis” rather than a “Golden Age” of an Atlanticist movement pushing for an ever closer European-American relationship. The era saw a large number of, at times contending, Atlanticist groups with many active Europeans. The Atlantic idea had gained its urgency out of a shared sense of crisis in the middle of the century and during the early years of the Cold War. Yet, ironically, as the institutionalization of Atlantic advocacy networks reached its height in the early 1970s, interest in this Atlantic idea waned among both Europeans and Americans, only to be revived in the 1980s in a new, more globally outward-looking form.

Any clear distinction between the “American” and the “European” side of this postwar Atlantic dialogue was often far from simple, as Daniel Bessner’s essay demonstrates. His is one of several in this volume that emphasizes the importance of European émigrés in American society since the interwar years. Bessner focuses on the particular transfer of political gaming within Cold War strategic thinking and shows the influence of émigré intellectuals such as Hans Speier on American institutions like the RAND Corporation. The essay underscores the influence of lessons from Weimar Germany that — through the work of a large number of European émigrés — helped shape American as well as transatlantic thinking about the challenges of the Cold War.32 Bessner’s work further illustrates the continual effect of European voices on American military and intelligence thinking, which was especially prominent in the wartime Office of Strategic Services, but also impacted the postwar national security state and the very institutions central to America’s Cold War power.

Due to their own biographies, émigré intellectuals were often heavily invested in constructing a new postwar Atlantic Community, as Adi Gordon has recently shown using the example of Hans Kohn, a prominent historian of nationalism with postwar ties to the Congress for Cultural Freedom.33 In this volume, Merel Leeman demonstrates how European émigrés influenced cultural constructions of the Atlantic West in postwar historiography. German-American historians such as George Mosse and Peter Gay became prominent voices in postwar debates about the nature of and challenges to American and Western culture. Utilizing both the European traditions of intellectual history and their own perspective on Europe as migrants, these émigrés made substantial contributions to cultural history approaches and the (re)construction of ideas of the West and Western liberalism both through their academic teaching and scholarship, as well as through dialogue with transatlantic intellectual elites. In facing totalitarian regimes and a crisis of modern society, émigrés frequently offered warnings and lessons to American society that were based on their European experiences.

That the postwar Atlantic Community was more complex than such a liberal Cold War consensus, however, becomes evident in Quinn Slobodian’s contribution to this volume. Slobodian analyzes the position of the Swiss-German economist Wilhelm Röpke, a linking figure between American conservatives dissatisfied with the New Deal economic order and German neo- or ordo-liberalism in the late 1950s and early 1960s. His work reminds us that European voices played a role in dissenting social movements not only on the political Left but also on the Right. Both American Conservatism and modern Neoliberalism drew from transnational networks and an exchange of ideas that went well beyond the famous Mont Pèlerin Society, the Cassandra warnings of Russian emigrant Ayn Rand, or the oft-cited influence of “Austrian school” émigré economists, such as Friedrich Hayek and Ludwig von Mises.34 Noting Röpke’s preoccupation with South Africa, Slobodian’s contribution further situates the construction of an Atlantic Community among “market-liberal” conservatives within a global framework and importantly highlights the ongoing significance of race in transatlantic debates about the West.

On the political Left, the émigrés of the so-called Frankfurt School were among the most prominent European voices. Highly critical of Western capitalist societies in their sociological writings, these intellectuals would come to have a significant impact on the transatlantic


34 On transatlantic influences on America’s postwar Right, see Bernd Volkert, Der amerikanische Neokonservatismus. Enstehung – Ideen – Intentionen (Münster, 2006).
student movement and its challenge to the Cold War Atlantic Community. Thomas Wheatland discusses the two Atlantic crossings of the Frankfurt School: from Europe to the United States and back to Europe after the war. His essay focuses on Franz Neumann’s role in negotiating and resolving the tension between Critical Theory as espoused by the Institute for Social Research and the “American” brand of empirical social science research. To be sure, European émigrés such as Paul Lazarsfeld played key roles in formulating this American brand as well, which the Frankfurt School encountered in exile. Ironically, they would ultimately even help to export this type of research back to postwar Europe. Neumann’s role as translator and mediator was quite typical as many émigrés helped to facilitate transatlantic exchanges in this fashion. Their work contributed to making the social sciences, so central during the Cold War, into an inherently transnational field.35

When the transatlantic framework began to yield to a global one, the significance of European voices changed. As Weisbrode’s look at the course of Atlanticism in diplomatic advocacy networks already suggests, the 1960s ushered in a shift in the mental maps of many international elites. Christian Albrecht traces the origins of the Club of Rome and its critique of the growth paradigm that framed much of postwar Atlantic modernity. Europeans made up the core of the group that would form the Club of Rome network, but for all their Atlantic ties to institutions such as the RAND Corporation, their outlook was a decidedly global one that cut across the Iron Curtain and reached beyond any narrowly defined Atlantic Community. Moreover, they did not primarily define themselves as “European” but as a network of expert professionals engaging with a “world problematique” and global — if not universal — challenges to modern society. Like Slobodian, Albrecht shows how a transatlantic discourse — again sustained in part by migrants and transnational institutions — had global implications reaching beyond “Europe” and “America.”

The diplomats and activists of the Atlanticist movement, the émigré scholars and visiting professionals, the experts in think tanks and networks discussed in the essays of this supplement were all part of a transatlantic elite. They represent only a sliver of the societies that made up the “Atlantic Community” of the postwar decades. Their “European” voices, to be sure, prominently contributed to fashioning transatlantic relations in this era. They suggest that American hegemony was far from complete or monolithic and

35 On the symbiotic relationship between the social sciences and Cold War culture; see Mark Solovey and Hamilton Cravens, *Cold War Social Science: Knowledge Production, Liberal Democracy, and Human Nature* (New York, 2012).
that “Americanization” had its limits, even at the height of the American Century and the Cold War. To focus on these cases, however, means to neglect other, equally important arenas of exchange, such as the film and popular music industries. Did European voices continue to matter in these arenas as well, despite the global success of Hollywood, as the work of historian Richard Pells, for example, has suggested?36 The focus on elite networks furthermore leaves unanswered the question of the broader resonance of “European voices” and transatlantic institutions within American society. What did Europe and America’s transatlantic ties mean to the proverbial “milkman in Omaha” during the 1950s and 1960s? The present collection of essays cannot answer these questions, but it hopes to challenge future researchers to read more of postwar transatlantic relations “against the grain” of the American Century.

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