Abstract

This thesis delves into the far-right extremist movement QAnon, known for its affinity for Donald Trump and continuous propagation of conspiracy theories. The movement has gained notoriety through violent outbursts, with the attempted insurrection on January 6th, 2021, acting as a symbol of violent and anti-democratic activity. The objective of this thesis is to take an explorative and qualitative snapshot of the movement in order to understand its activity, beliefs, dynamics, and potential for future implications. The thesis focuses on QAnon's reproduction of the election fraud theory, a central element of the extensive conspiracy nexus. For this, the textual content disseminated through QAnon channels on Telegram, which constitutes a popular platform in the scene, is collected for this purpose. Additionally, in light of the movement's international expansion, a transnational comparison of the election fraud theory is undertaken. Germany, next to the United States, presents itself as a suitable country for comparison due to QAnon's extensive activity and presence.

A qualitative content analysis is employed in order to identify concepts and categories in the QAnon U.S. and German textual corpus, which are then compared transnationally for similarities, differences, and patterns. The results highlight a strong similarity in the reproduction of the election fraud conspiracy theory with a predominantly U.S. centric theme in both countries' content. Based on this finding, the research establishes an explanatory mechanism, emphasizing the overarching importance of shared ideology over country specific factors, U.S. centralism in the movement, and a core-to-periphery dissemination process. Consequently, the research points to a transnationally synchronized, borderless, and U.S. centric movement. Lastly, this thesis stresses the far-right extremist theme as a security threat to democracies, which is clearly reflected in the content and the findings.