



Peace through Truth? The Press and Moral Disarmament through the League of Nations

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Inhalt

Comparing transnationally and transculturally: Leaving Container Thinking Andreas Hepp	4
Transnational Journalism History Perspectives for the Study of Global Universals and National Peculiarities Marcel Broersma	10
Peace through Truth? The Press and Moral Disarmament through the League of Nations Heidi J. S. Tworek	16
On the Spot New Ways of Reporting in British and Dutch Newspaper Journalism, 1925 – 2005 Frank Harbers / Bas den Herder	29
“By Atlantic Telegraph” A Study on Weltcommunication in the 19th Century Simone Müller-Pohl	40
Rezensionen	55

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Peace through Truth?

The Press and Moral Disarmament through the League of Nations

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Abstract

The League of Nations Assembly passed a resolution in September 1931 to consult the press about the “spread of false information which may threaten to disturb the peace or the good understanding between nations.” By September 1932, 16 nations and two international associations of journalists had replied with suggestions for the Third Conference of Press Experts in Madrid in 1933. This article uses these proposals from journalists as a springboard to discuss how we can use comparative and transnational history to understand the press’s role during the interwar period. After analyzing the current methodological debates on comparative and transnational history, I address the uses of both for histories of the press. How can comparative or transnational history help us to investigate the press? How can scholars think about journalists’ associations and conceptualize their role within the interwar diplomatic framework? More specifically, how did the press fit into the League of Nations’ efforts towards disarmament? Ultimately, an investigation of the two methodologies shows that we cannot class the press neatly into national boxes, but rather have to recognize the messy networks that overlapped, crisscrossed, and intersected to create those apparently national press systems.

Introduction

Communications history sometimes seems to be separated from other historical work by a methodological Grand Canyon. Communications history has increasingly emphasized the importance of quantitative, empirical work based on newspapers.¹ There is also another strand of more qualitative archival work, especially led by Jürgen Wilke on the history of press institutions.² Despite this, historians have until relatively recently rather neglected the study of the media.

In Germany and England, at least, interest has grown considerably in the last few years.³ In the Anglo-American arena, on the other hand, historians have tended to be more interested in the institutional and technological background of the press such as the telegraph.⁴ Driven by different questions about the media and different methodological backgrounds, the two groups have much to learn from each other. In this article, I will address historians’ methodological debates about the pitfalls and promises of comparative and transnational history and illustrate through

¹ For details of this transition, see Maria Löblich, *Die empirisch-sozialwissenschaftliche Wende in der Publikations- und Zeitungswissenschaft* (Köln: Von Halem, 2010).

² Jürgen Wilke, *Presseanweisungen im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert: Erster Weltkrieg, Drittes Reich, DDR* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2007); Jürgen Wilke, *Grundzüge der Medien- und Kommunikationsgeschichte: Von den Anfängen bis ins 20. Jahrhundert* (Köln: Böhlau, 2000); *Pressepolitik und Propaganda: Historische Studien vom Vormärz bis zum Kalten Krieg* (Köln: Böhlau, 1997); Jürgen Wilke, *Telegraphenbüros und Nachrichten-agenturen in Deutschland: Untersuchungen zu ihrer Geschichte bis 1949* (München; New York: K.G. Saur, 1991). This builds on work begun by Koszyk. See Kurt Koszyk, *Deutsche Presse, 1914-1945*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1972); Kurt Koszyk, *Deutsche Pressepolitik im Ersten*

Weltkrieg (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1968).

³ To cite some of the most prominent examples, Dominik Geppert, *Pressekriege: Öffentlichkeit und Diplomatie in den deutsch-britischen Beziehungen (1896-1912)*; Frank Bösch, *Öffentliche Geheimnisse: Skandale, Politik und Medien in Deutschland und Grossbritannien 1880-1914* (München: Oldenbourg, 2009), Corey Ross, *Media and the Making of Modern Germany: Mass Communications, Society, and Politics from the Empire to the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁴ Daniel R. Headrick, *The invisible weapon: telecommunications and international politics, 1851-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Dwayne Roy Winseck and Robert M. Pike, *Communication and empire: media, markets, and globalization, 1860-1930* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

examples how historians' approaches can inform work on the press.

The main example from my own research concerns journalism and the League of Nations. For the League of Nations, the press was critical not only in relaying information about the League around the world, but also as an instrument to promote peace. The press was seen as an arm of moral disarmament. Moral disarmament aimed to be the "soft power" equivalent to negotiations on material disarmament. It sought to change ideas about diplomacy and conflict resolution by promoting conditions for peace through intellectual cooperation and the press, along with various committees.

In the specific case I consider here, the League of Nations Assembly passed a resolution on 24th September 1931 on the cooperation of the press in the organization of peace. It asked the Secretary-General to consult with the press about the matter of the "spread of false information which may threaten to disturb the peace or the good understanding between nations." By September 1932, 16 nations and two international associations of journalists had replied with various suggestions in time for the third Conference of Press Experts in Madrid in 1933. This article will use these answers along with the debates about accurate news at the Conference of Press Experts as a springboard to discuss how we can apply approaches from comparative and transnational history to understand the press' role during the interwar period. How should scholars investigate conferences convened by and for the press? How can we evaluate journalists' associations and conceptualize their role within the interwar diplomatic framework? More specifically, how did the press fit into the League of Nations' efforts towards disarmament? Answers or debates on these questions cut to the core of understanding how journalists saw their role as transmitters of League international news and how the League relied on and nurtured journalists as their best method of reaching the public, whose opinion they cherished.

Over the past few decades, scholars have debated the virtues and vices of both comparative and transnational approaches to history; such conversations have often cut to the heart of the very aims of historical research. These discussions have interrogated the implicit biases, methods and results of scholarship and challenged historians to reconceptualize their objects of study both in

scope and scale. I aim to provide an overview of the main debates about comparative and transnational history, and then to reflect on the specific uses of both for the history of journalism and the press. This short survey of transnational and comparative history does not intend to pit the two approaches against each other. Indeed, as I hope to show in regards to the press, the most fruitful work combines both.

The Case for Comparative and Transnational History

Comparative History

John Stuart Mill's reflections on the vices and virtues of comparison in 1882 illustrate some of the core concerns of comparative history even today: investigations of similarities and differences, and attempts to use them logically to understand causal relationships. Mill suggested that there were two methods of comparison: the Method of Agreement and the Method of Disagreement.⁵ The Method of Agreement tried to find common elements between phenomena, though he emphasized that this could only elicit laws and commonalities between phenomena, rather than discover causes. When there is more than one cause, the Method of Agreement can only identify that two cases have these influences in common, but cannot prove a causal relationship.

For Mill we can discover causes only through the Method of Difference, "the most perfect of the methods of experimental inquiry."⁶ The Method of Difference tried to understand causes by looking for examples that are the same in all respects except the one under investigation. Yet he recognized that this ideal situation was impossible to apply to social phenomena, suggesting that we instead examine classes where a phenomenon is present in one and absent in the other, such as a country with free trade versus one with restrictive measures. Nevertheless, Mill concluded that neither of these methods is able to identify causes for trends and events. Rather, there are countless potential influences; even if a circumstance did not produce an effect in one instance, this does not mean that it cannot produce this effect under a different set of conditions. For Mill, "we can conclude that the effect is sometimes produced without it [a phenomenon]; but not that, when present, it does not contribute its share."⁷

⁵ J. S. Mill, "Two Methods of Comparison," in Amitai Etzioni and Frederic Dubow (eds.), *Comparative Perspectives: Theories and Methods* (Boston: Little, Brown,

1969), 205-213.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 211.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 213.

In the 1920s, Marc Bloch built on reflections by Durkheim and Mill, amongst others, to plead for the use of the comparative method in history.⁸ For Bloch, writing in the aftermath of the destruction of World War I, comparative history was not just a means to extend our historical knowledge, but also served the political goal of developing a common scientific language amongst historians of different nationalities. According to Bloch, the first step in comparative history entailed the discovery of a viable geographical area of investigation. Indeed, in contrast to later historians' concentration on the nation as the basic unit of comparison, Bloch believed that comparative history "demands most insistently that we abandon obsolete topographical compartments in which we pretend to enclose social realities; they are quite unfit for the contents which we force into them."⁹ Bloch hoped that the comparison of related societies, a method he favoured over universal comparisons, would allow historians above all to discover causes of differences and similarities in comparable societies. Bloch's comparative history bequeathed us no particular methodology. Yet it remained important for its appeal not only to use the comparative perspective, but also for its insistence upon questioning our units of analysis.¹⁰ In the United States at least, in the 1960s and 1970s, comparison became a touchstone for understanding democracy and revolution for sociologists such as Theda Skocpol and political scientists concerned with comparisons of civilizations, principally Barrington Moore.¹¹ Mean-

while, comparison garnered renewed interest in the historical discipline in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Charles Maier's now classic *Recasting Bourgeois Europe* (first published in 1979) emphasized how comparison can lead us to ask new questions about the interwar years in Europe, particularly in demonstrating its potential for stability.¹² Other historians, such as Raymond Grew, argued that, "to call for comparison is to call for a kind of attitude – open, questioning, searching – and to suggest some practices that may nourish it."¹³ As emphasized by later historians such as Jürgen Kocka and Gerhard Haupt, comparison highlights new problems, developments and questions, forces us to reflect more deeply on our explanatory models and research methodologies, and forces us to consider similarities and differences.¹⁴ Yet comparison's calls for openness left historians in search of a methodology. Here German, French, and Anglo-American historiography have diverged in recent years. Comparative history has been criticized for reifying the nation as a category in the Anglo-American world and for failing to deal sufficiently with causality.¹⁵ In France, transfer history, as espoused by Michel Espagne, emphasizes how transfers of knowledge across national boundaries create "national" cultures, while *histoire croisée*, propounded by Bénédicte Zimmermann and Michael Werner, argues that we have to historicize our methods and objects of analysis and understand how we as historians are also the product of "entangled history". Comparative history remains an extremely popular methodology

⁸ For a discussion of antecedents to Bloch's ideas on comparative history, see Maurice Aymard, "Histoire et comparaison," des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales École and Deutsches Historisches Institut (Paris, France) *Marc Bloch Aujourd'hui: Histoire Comparée & Sciences Sociales* (Paris: Editions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1990), 271-278.

⁹ Marc Bloch, "Toward a Comparative History of European Societies" (1928), in Frederic Chapin Lane and Jelle C. Riemersma (eds.), *Enterprise and secular change; readings in economic history* (Homewood, Ill.: R.D. Irwin, 1953), 517. Other important early advocates of the comparative method are Henri Pirenne and Otto Hintze.

¹⁰ For the heated discussion on Bloch's importance for comparative history, see Alette Olin Hill and Boyd H. Hill, "AHR Forum: Marc Bloch and Comparative History," *The American Historical Review* 85, no. 4 (October 1980): 828-857; Charles J. Halperin et. al, "AHR Forum: Comparative History in Theory and Practice: A Discussion," *The American Historical Review* 87, no. 1 (February 1982): 123-143; William H. Sewell and Sylvia L. Thrupp, "[Marc Bloch and Comparative History]: Comments," *The American Historical Review* 85, no. 4 (October 1980): 847-853; William H. Sewell, "Marc Bloch and the Logic of Comparative History," *History and Theory* 6, no. 2 (1967): 208-218; Alette Olin Hill and Boyd H. Hill, "[Marc

Bloch and Comparative History]: Reply," *The American Historical Review* 85, no. 4 (October 1980): 854-857.

¹¹ Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy; Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966); Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). For a critique of sociological typologies, see Peter Baldwin, "Comparing and Generalizing: Why All History is Comparative, Yet No History is Sociology," in *Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-National Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1-22.

¹² Charles S. Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany, and Italy in the Decade After World War I* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988).

¹³ Raymond Grew, "The Case for Comparing Histories," *The American Historical Review* 85, no. 4 (October 1980): 776.

¹⁴ "Historischer Vergleich: Methoden, Aufgaben, Probleme. Eine Einleitung," in Haupt and Kocka (eds.), *Geschichte und Vergleich: Ansätze und Ergebnisse international vergleichender Geschichtsschreibung* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 1996), 9-46.

¹⁵ See Peter Baldwin's and Michael Miller's essays in *Comparison and History*, 1-22, 115-132.

in Germany, however, where it has been defended as an approach for a “more theoretically oriented, analytic type of history.”¹⁶ Hartmut Kaelble’s introductory work to comparative history countered suggestions to comparative history’s amorphous methodology by suggesting a typology of comparisons to enable the historian to comprehend the particularities of the phenomena under investigation and to choose appropriate units of comparison.¹⁷ Indeed, for Haupt and Kocka, comparison concerns itself with similarities and differences, rather than understanding change over time. To put it another way, comparison aims to understand synchronic situations, but cannot be used to explain diachronic developments. Comparison can illustrate snapshots while other approaches to history investigate how the negatives developed into those snapshots in the first place.

Transnational History

The main response to criticisms of comparative history has been transnational history.¹⁸ The history of the term “transnational” itself stretches back at least to a 1916 essay called “Transnational America” by Randolph Bourne, which called in a certain sense for a form of American cultural plurality.¹⁹ Just as Chris Lorenz has emphasized the importance of politics for choosing comparisons, the rise of transnational history too was sparked by contemporary political events.²⁰ In Germany, much comparative historical research took its impetus from debates about the *Sonderweg*. For transnational history, the end of the Cold War and the resulting new geopolitical circumstances led historians to question the nation more than they had before. Especially in the last decade, “transnational” has become a byword for that openness to new approaches advocated by Raymond Grew for comparative history in 1980. To paint its various historical trends with broad brushstrokes, transnational history aims to understand phenomena passing across, undermining, and indeed

creating the nation-state. It searches for actors, organizations, and ideas that cross boundaries and constitute groups, networks and flows. Indeed, adherents of transnational history argue that we can only understand how the very nation itself was produced transnationally by examining how ideas about nation disseminated through Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.²¹ The emergence in the mid-nineteenth century of liberal ideals of a unified Germany, for example, were greatly influenced by Mazzini in Italy, and in the later 1860s, nationally-minded Prussians especially looked to Cavour and Piedmont-Sardinia as a model for Prussia and Germany.

Transnational history seeks to address the main criticism leveled at comparison: that by concentrating on similarities and differences, it has obscured how societies have mutually influenced each other. It allows historians to focus on processes and diachronic developments, rather than single events that may elude constructive comparison in the first place. This approach pushes historians to remain receptive to other units of analysis than the nation and to understand contemporaries’ networks that sometimes spread in decidedly non-national directions. Transnational history questions traditional temporal and spatial divisions. As Patricia Clavin notes, it “allows us to consider the processes by which change is facilitated on a different timescale.”²² Spatially, transnational history has come to encompass much work on colonialism and imperialism.²³ For Jürgen Osterhammel, transnational history has rediscovered the importance of geography in its attention to borders and territoriality.²⁴

Despite its purported openness, however, transnational history has been criticized on a number of grounds. Firstly, it often presents too positive and progressive a picture, wherein the world advances teleologically towards ever more interconnection and transnational structures.²⁵ Secondly, its very openness can allow vagueness to creep

¹⁶ Haupt and Kocka in *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁷ Hartmut Kaelble, *Der historische Vergleich: Eine Einführung zum 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus Verlag, 1999).

¹⁸ Other responses to the perceived problems of comparative history have included *histoire croisée* and transfer history, though these approaches are transnational in their emphasis on transfer and entanglement across national boundaries. See Matthias Middell, “Kulturtransfer und historische Komparatistik. Thesen zu ihrem Verhältnis,” *Comparativ* 10, no. 1 (2000): 7–41.

¹⁹ For the history of the term “transnational,” see Ian Tyrrell, “What is transnational history?,” 2008, <http://iantyrrell.wordpress.com/what-is-transnational-history/>; Patricia Clavin, “Defining Transnationalism,” *Contemporary European History* 14, no. 4 (2005): 421–439.

²⁰ Chris Lorenz, “Comparative Historiography: Problems and Perspectives,” *History and Theory* 38, no. 1 (February 1999): 25–39.

²¹ Ian Tyrrell, *Transnational nation: United States history in global perspective since 1789* (Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

²² Clavin, “Defining Transnationalism,” 428.

²³ For Germany, a key work is Sebastian Conrad and Jürgen Osterhammel, *Das Kaiserreich transnational: Deutschland in der Welt 1871–1914* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004).

²⁴ Jürgen Osterhammel, “Transnationale Gesellschaftsgeschichte: Erweiterung oder Alternative?,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 27, no. 3 (2001): 464–479.

²⁵ David Armitage, “Is There a Pre-History of Globalization?,” in *Comparison and History*, 165–176.

into works on transnational history. Finally, as Johannes Paulmann notes for cultural transfers, we can only understand the importance of a transfer by comparing, at least implicitly, our object's status, name and meaning in the culture whence it came.²⁶ Similarly, Glenda Sluga argues that we have to understand how people at the time used comparison to create what have later been identified as transnational phenomena. For example, American, French and British concepts about nations critically influenced the composition of the nation-states created from the Habsburg Empire after World War I. Comparison by Central European elites at the time fuelled their desire for a nation-state to emulate Anglo-American political structures. Thus for Sluga, "conventional characterizations of the nature of nations are themselves the ideological products of the processes of comparison."²⁷ The development of national sentiment and later nationalism rely upon comparisons between one's own nation and another. Yet the ideological basis for these comparisons is very often trends and thoughts that have disseminated across the very borders of those nations that compare themselves.

The Outlook for History of the Press

Both comparative and transnational history offer many fruitful approaches for the history of the press. Firstly, communications historians have long been aware of the importance of choosing commensurable units of analysis, particularly given their empirical bent. Secondly, comparative history has allowed historians of the press to contribute to our understanding about the influence of historical context and generational experience upon journalists.²⁸ Thirdly, as exemplified by Jean Chalaby, historians of the press have used comparison to demonstrate the thesis that modern journalism and news are an "Anglo-American invention."²⁹

Yet these comparisons leave us with certain questions. In establishing the creation of norms and practices, how exactly did these enter specific national contexts? Who precisely were the agents of this change? For Chalaby, the French public became exposed to Anglo-American discourse

centered on facts through the launch of *Matin* in 1883 by American financiers. Transnational history gives historians the opportunity to investigate those categories of actors who agitated beyond national borders and sought to gain success through dissemination of particular norms and business practices.

As regards the press, the Anglo-American and French realms of news had in fact been intertwined in several ways since the mid-nineteenth century. Despite differences in concepts of news, the news agency cartel system meant that the French, British, and Germans at least had been consistently supplied with the others' news from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. This global arrangement complicates our ability to compare national press systems, for example, given their common suppliers for much news. The German Wolffs Telegraphisches Bureau (WTB), the French Agence Havas and British Reuters Telegram Company constituted the 'Big Three' modern news agencies from the mid-nineteenth century.³⁰ The 'Big Three' operated a formal global cartel on news collection from 1870 until around 1933, whereby they divided the global supply of news between them: each agency reported on its assigned sphere and supplied this news for free to the other two. News supply was a transnational affair from the start: the founders of the 'Big Three' had worked together at Agence Havas in 1848 and cooperated informally from the foundation of Reuters (1851) and the WTB (1849). Personal contacts were key to the three agencies' stranglehold on global news and continued to be vitally important during every renegotiation of the cartel contract. The cartel arrangement dominated the world of news agencies for sixty years, surviving World War I; it ended in 1933-34 when the Nazis merged the WTB and the Hugenberg-owned Telegraphen-Union, to create the Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro, and when the Associated Press forced Reuters to abandon cartel arrangements. Under the cartel, the WTB was responsible for Germany, its colonies, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Scandinavia and Russia. Agence Havas concerned itself with France, Spain, Italy, Portugal and South America, while Reuters gathered news from its empire and

²⁶ Johannes Paulmann, "Internationaler Vergleich und interkultureller Transfer: Zwei Forschungsansätze zur europäischen Geschichte des 18. bis 20. Jahrhunderts," *Historische Zeitschrift* 267, no. 3 (December 1998): 681.

²⁷ G. Sluga, "The Nation and the Comparative Imagination," in *Comparison and History*, 104.

²⁸ Simone Christine Ehmig, *Generationswechsel im deutschen Journalismus: Zum Einfluss historischer Ereignisse auf das journalistische Selbstverständnis* (Freiburg: K. Alber, 2000).

²⁹ Jean K. Chalaby, *The invention of journalism* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Macmillan Press; St. Martin's Press, 1998).

³⁰ Agence Havas was founded in 1832 as a translation agency, and in 1835, Charles Havas transformed it into what was the first modern news agency. Reuters was founded in 1851. Reuters and the WTB initially served as financial press agencies, especially the WTB, but soon expanded into other types of news.

North America.³¹ Within its sphere, each agency negotiated contracts of news exchange with particular national and imperial news agencies.³² These agencies' cooperation with particular national or imperial news agencies stifled competition within those countries, as other news agencies had little or no access to foreign news, and thus determined which news agencies within various countries were successful.

To complicate the picture yet further, these agencies sent their news through telegraphs cables often owned by the British before World War I and indeed, regulated through the International Telegraph Union (ITU). The ITU, founded in 1865, constitutes one of the first intergovernmental organizations and established agreements on

telegraph lines, tariffs and telegraphic systems.³³ The press thus became one of the first industries whose commodity, information, was partially governed internationally by the emergence of legislation through conventions and international conferences from the 1860s.

Other aspects of the press overlay the apparently national grid of newspapers. The establishment of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) in 1926, for example, represented one effort to coordinate journalistic activity across national and imperial boundaries. When the League of Nations consulted governments prior to conferences on the press in 1927 and 1931, it also asked the IFJ for its opinion on various matters relating to the press. The IFJ thus held the same status for the League of Nations, at least, as governments.

Finally, languages, concerns, and styles often crossed national or imperial boundaries.³⁴ As Marcel Broersma has pointed out, forms and styles cross borders more readily than many had assumed.³⁵ By examining how forms and styles

became transnational, perhaps we can begin to understand *why* these might be more readily transferrable than content or institutional structures. For instance, who exactly was involved in the dissemination of forms and styles? Were particular organizations or events catalysts for these developments? The Paris Peace Conference in 1919 and later conferences at the League of Nations provided vital meeting points for journalists from much of the world, for example. These journalists and news agency reporters certainly compared their coverage to others, reflecting on their relative success or failure in disseminating news back home. Yet they were also influenced by methods and techniques from other countries from the number of telegrams sent a day to the type of reporting itself.

The different networks sketched above highlight new areas of research for historians of the press if we open our gaze beyond the comparative and the national. Transnational history involves a search for agents and networks beyond and across the nation; research can trace the active creation or destruction of those connections and their dissemination. It can encourage research of hitherto overlooked phenomena such as intergovernmental organizations and conferences, such as the League of Nations Press Conferences that I will discuss below. Yet the comparative shouldn't be left out in the cold. Journalists and governments often compared themselves to others and assessed their achievements in relation to others' successes. For the German government of World War I, for example, their lack of influence on neutral countries could only be explained by comparison to British agitations through Reuters in the pre-war period. Government press officials lamented by comparison their relative lack of news dissemination in South America and East Asia prior to World War I and blamed it for the hostility from these coun-

Transnational history involves a search for agents and networks beyond and across the nation; research can trace the active creation or destruction of those connections and their dissemination.

³¹ The AP became a signatory on cartel treaties from 1900.

³² Terhi Rantanen calls this the "bi-directional dependency" of global agencies, which were always dependent on news supply from smaller agencies within their spheres. Rantanen, "The Struggle for Control of Domestic News Markets," in Oliver Boyd-Barrett and Terhi Rantanen, *The globalization of news* (London: Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1998). See also Esperança Bielsa, "The Pivotal Role of News Agencies in the Context of Globalization: a Historical Approach," *Global Networks* 8, no. 3 (2008): 347-366.

³³ For the history of the ITU, see Headrick, *The invisible weapon: telecommunications and international politics*,

1851-1945; Madeleine Herren, *Internationale Organisationen seit 1865: Eine Globalgeschichte der internationalen Ordnung*, Geschichte kompakt. (Darmstadt: WBG, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2009); Peter J. Hugill, *Global communications since 1844: geopolitics and technology* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

³⁴ For example, Polish was used in newspapers in its three partitions in Austria, Russia and Germany.

³⁵ Marcel Jeroen Broersma, *Form and style in journalism: European newspapers and the presentation of news, 1880-2005* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007).

tries during the war. Comparison with Britain spurred Germany to develop its wireless news networks and broadcast on the sea in the early post-war period; without understanding the urgency of these comparisons for officials at the time and the conclusions they drew from them, we gain an incomplete picture of motivations for the swift development of wireless and also for the German government to disseminate news for free to ships. Conversely, we can only understand the press baron, Lord Northcliffe's somewhat overblown reaction to discovering this news if we remember that for a man like Northcliffe, power of the press equaled political power. If German news spread further than British, then in comparison, British influence was under threat.³⁶ Comparison provides the means to assess these claims and to understand their validity for contemporaries. Finally, comparison stops historians from forgetting about the importance of the nation, as Susan Pedersen points out.³⁷ According to Charles S. Maier, a new history of the twentieth century needs to take into account its emphasis on territoriality, meaning the "properties, including power, provided by the control of a border political space."³⁸ This new periodization portrays the twentieth century as a century from the 1860s to 1960s/1970s, when control over a particular territory (and its resources) was the dominant concern. In our eagerness to find those who did not fit into state and territorial structures, we cannot neglect the paradigmatic status of the nation-state.

The Fight against False Information

The League of Nations and Journalists

In the Convention establishing the League of Nations at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, Article VIII stated that the maintenance of peace required the reduction of armaments to the lowest point possible. Disarmament came to mean

not just the reduction of physical armaments, but also moral disarmament. Moral disarmament aimed to encourage international cooperation and understanding to ensure that war between nations could no longer be possible. The League's first committee, formed in 1919 upon the mandate from Article 23 (e) of the League Covenant, addressed communication and transport, indicating the central importance placed upon the press as a promoter of peace from the very start of the League's existence. In moral disarmament and intellectual cooperation, journalists played a key role in the dissemination of information and establishment of new discursive norms on peace, and truth in particular.

Older interpretations of the League of Nations have dismissed it as a body "with no teeth" that ultimately failed to prevent World War II and whose international record on issues such as mandates, was murky at best. Historians of Germany, for instance, have argued that Germany through the Weimar Republic only instrumentalized the League to attempt to revise the Treaty of Versailles.³⁹ Others have highlighted that even the "high" period of international cooperation after Locarno in 1925 and before the Great Depression in 1929 actually relied upon negotiations behind the scenes between Aristide Briand, Gustav Stresemann and Austin Chamberlain.⁴⁰ On the other hand, more recent works have emphasized that Germany differentiated between the Versailles and Geneva systems, and took the framework of Geneva seriously, not simply pursuing revisionist aims.⁴¹ Meanwhile, Susan Pedersen has emphasized that for all its failings, the League did matter: at Geneva, "internationalism was enacted, institutionalized, and performed."⁴² She calls for further examination of the mechanisms of governance at the League of Nations to understand how it interacted with its various publics and how it laid the groundwork for many aspects of the UN and other organizations that still exist today, such as

³⁶ Heidi J. S. Evans, "The Path to Freedom? Transoceanic and German Wireless Telegraph, 1914-1922," *Historical Social Research* 35, no. 1 (2010): 209-236.

³⁷ Susan Pedersen, "Comparative History and Women's History: Explaining Convergence and Divergence," in *Comparison and History*, 71-84.

³⁸ Charles S. Maier, "Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era," *American Historical Review* 105, no. 3 (June 2000): 808.

³⁹ Christoph M. Kimmich, *Germany and the League of Nations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976). Carole Fink illustrates the somewhat cynical German attitude to minority protection treaties. Carole Fink, *Defending the*

rights of others: the great powers, the Jews, and international minority protection, 1878-1938 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 2004).

⁴⁰ Jon Jacobson, *Locarno diplomacy: Germany and the West, 1925-1929* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972); Peter Krüger, *Die Außenpolitik der Republik von Weimar* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1985).

⁴¹ Joachim Wintzer, *Deutschland und der Völkerbund 1918-1926* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2006), 59.

⁴² Susan Pedersen, "Back to the League of Nations: Review Essay," *American Historical Review* 112, no. 4 (October 2007): 1113.

the International Labour Organization.

More specifically, for my work on the press, public opinion took on a vastly increased importance in connection with the League of Nations after World War I. We can take as one key example Jan Smuts, who wrote the first outline of the League of Nations to be made public and subsequently published in early 1919. This pamphlet, *The League of Nations. A Practical Suggestion*, is the main reason that he is generally acknowledged as one of the fathers of the League of Nations. The pamphlet greatly influenced Wilson and became the basis for the draft Covenant of the League presented to the Plenary Session of the Peace Conference on February 14, 1919. In the aftermath of World War One, Smuts felt that international structures and laws had been totally transformed, warranting the creation of a very new kind of global order. He believed in "public opinion" as the ultimate judge and motivating force of these diplomatic undertakings. The formation of public opinion had in fact been Smuts's first aim in writing *Practical Suggestion*. He believed that the League could only be a success when it was supported by "a powerful international public opinion." Furthermore, "the enlightened public all over the world will have to be taught to think internationally, to look at public affairs, not merely from the sectional national point of view, but also from a broad human international point of view."⁴³ He was not the only one. Indeed, Susan Pedersen's articles on the League of Nations mandate system have emphasized just this point: for her, the mandate system is best conceived as a "discursive arena and not an administrative system."⁴⁴ What really mattered, Pedersen has argued, is that "League oversight proliferated information and publicity about the mandates and conferred legitimacy to those powers that complied with the system's formal requirements and professed to uphold its norms."⁴⁵

Journalists and the press thus served several vital purposes in the League of Nations, although this has been somewhat neglected in the historiography. Firstly, they were key conveyors of moral disarmament and other developments at the League to their publics at home. Secondly, the growth in politicians' belief in public opinion meant that

journalists became more important than ever before in disseminating the information that would influence that public favourably. Thirdly, journalists vitally contributed to the discursive language of the League, such as the mandate system and its norms. They helped to establish for the League what Peter Haas calls an "epistemic community": a community of interest, based on the principle of inclusion, with a communal character, composed of individuals sharing the same location or organization.⁴⁶ Epistemic communities rely for their cohesion upon knowledge-based networks; these networks built and expanded upon journalists' connections with their newspapers and agencies, and the technological framework of telegraph, telephone, and, later, wireless. Yet the League also provided a space for the creation of this epistemic community: during conferences, journalists of different nationalities met and interacted, and began to develop a more cohesive (or more contested?) vision of what journalism was and what it could achieve for the League of Nations.

These points were not lost on League officials. The League placed great emphasis on public opinion and close cooperation between the League and journalists to supply the press with factual information about the League and conferences held under its auspices. Through its Information Section, the League effected what has been called "a revolutionary change in the relationship between diplomatic activities and the public."⁴⁷ It published a monthly summary of League activities along with pamphlets and brochures concerning subjects of particular interest to the public. Indeed, the Information Section was one of the largest sections with 12 members in 1920 and 19 in 1930; it was also the only section whose members were appointed to deal with their respective nationalities. Thus German nationals dealt with the German-speaking press for instance. The Information Section also organized and acted upon the proposal for the first independent conference of the League of Nations: a Conference of Press Experts in 1927. This was followed by a second conference in Copenhagen in 1932 and a final, third conference in Madrid in 1933. Both the preparation and execution of these conferences provide us with insights into the interaction bet-

⁴³ Jan Christiaan Smuts, *The League of Nations: a practical suggestion* (New York: The Nation Press, 1919), 31.

⁴⁴ Susan Pedersen, "The Meaning of the Mandates System: An Argument," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 32, no. 4 (December 2006): 581.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 560.

⁴⁶ Peter Haas, "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and

International Policy Coordination," *International Organization* 46, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 1-35.

⁴⁷ Anique H. M. van Ginneken, *Historical dictionary of the League of Nations* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 105.

ween the League of Nations and the press, the importance of conferences in establishing global practices and norms, and the press's vision of its mission and place within those norms and practices.

Conferences at the League of Nations

After a proposal from the Chilean delegate in 1925, the League of Nations Assembly resolved to convene a Conference of Press Experts in 1927 to suggest detailed regulation of the press in matters from journalists' visas to facilitating newspaper transportation. A resolution on the conference by the Council in December 1927 stated that conferences should be convened as necessary to debate further issues as they arose. The next conference was called for 1932 in Copenhagen. Over and above conferences for the press, international conferences convened by governments were relatively recent phenomena, dating back to the mid-nineteenth century and proliferating rapidly after World War I. These conferences had few international legal precedents or procedural conventions to fall back on and thus the late 1920s onwards saw a spate of publications on conduct at international conferences. These works acknowledged that the League of Nations had become the "natural center for the coordinated action of the nations of the world in almost every field of international activity."⁴⁸

Writing in 1929, Frederick Sherwood Dunn noted that "the international regulation of activities that do not coincide with the geographical boundaries of existing jurisdictions has made necessary the development of new types of collective action which can deal with interests and transactions from the standpoint of the whole public affected by them."⁴⁹ For the press, these issues included regulation of press rates, the removal of censorship, the provision of safe passage for journalists and ID cards recognizing their particular professional status. The press's concerns often overlapped with those of the conferences on communication and transit, and indeed, the Conference of Press Experts at Geneva in 1927 was part of a larger meeting of the Committee on Communication and Transit.⁵⁰ This commit-

tee had in fact paid the most attention to method and procedure during its conferences; as the first committee to be established, it often served as a model for other committees and technical organs at the League of Nations.⁵¹ Indeed, at the time, H. R. G. Greaves called its format of a technical international committee "an invaluable means of invention," whose officials "at their best form a link between the national and the universal outlook."⁵² Thus its approach to the constitution of conferences often functioned paradigmatically for future conferences held by the League. In particular, I will examine the League's appeal to 64 countries before the Conference of Press Experts in Madrid in 1933 to provide suggestions on how to prevent the "spread of false information which may threaten to disturb the peace or the good understanding between nations."⁵³

Comparing Concepts of Truth?

After the success of the Conference of Press Experts in Copenhagen in January 1932, the League Council called another conference for Madrid in 1933. At the Copenhagen conference, delegates had suggested that there might be more coordination between states in securing peace. The Council and Assembly eagerly seized on the opportunity to further their aim of moral disarmament through the press and sent a circular to 64 countries that reached over 130 press organizations. They received replies from 16 individual countries' organizations and two international journalists' organizations, including that of journalists accredited to the League of Nations. These replies demonstrate not only journalists' concern with the idea of "truth" and its connection to peace, but also practical concerns for us as historians about how to analyze terms and their comparability. As Marcel Broersma has pointed out, "journalism's claim to truth is the main feature of the journalism discourse"; striving for this truth has become "the basis for the social code shared by journalists and their reading audience."⁵⁴ Yet "true" and "false" are of course values whose exact meaning is somewhat blurry. Truth, like beauty, is somewhat in the eye of the beholder. The true can be the factually correct, the logically true, or

⁴⁸ Frederick Sherwood Dunn, *The practice and procedure of international conferences* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1929), 32. See also Norman Llewellyn Hill, *The public international conference; its function, organization and procedure* (Stanford University, California: Stanford University Press, 1929).

⁴⁹ Dunn, *The practice and procedure of international conferences*, 6.

⁵⁰ For more on the Communications and Transit Committee, see H. R. G. Greaves, *The League committees and*

world order; a study of the permanent expert committees of the League of nations as an instrument of international government (London: Oxford University Press, H. Milford, 1931), 139-158.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 245f.

⁵³ Series of League of Nations Publication, General 1932, 7.

⁵⁴ Marcel Broersma, "The Unbearable Limitations of Journalism," *The International Communication Gazette* 72, no. 1 (2010): 25.

the politically true, to give three simple examples. As the replies to the League of Nations illustrate, journalists' associations interpreted the concepts of "true" and "false" information in very different ways with important consequences for our understanding of the nature of journalistic discourse in the interwar period.

To summarize the replies briefly, they came from associations in countries as far-flung as Honduras, Italy, and New Zealand. The IFJ encompassed most European national associations: this was the main reason that there were fewer replies numerically to this League request for information than there had been in 1927 on the protection of news.⁵⁵ The IFJ, founded in 1926, had begun to operate as the umbrella organization for German, French, and many Central and Eastern European national associations; its reply in 1932 demonstrates how it had cemented its status as the representative organ for multiple associations. Indeed, this function continued after World War Two up to the present day. The International Association of Journalists Accredited to the League of Nations unsurprisingly gave the fullest answer as the representative of journalists reporting on the League. The content of the answers varied from the British Empire Union's direct dismissal of the topic of false news to the International Association of Journalists Accredited to the League of Nations, which suggested detailed preventative and remedial measures to address false news.

In some ways, these replies offer an ideal opportunity to compare different national conceptions of false news. Yet we have to be careful to avoid equating what Bloch called "homonyms": terms that appeared to mean the same thing, but in fact indicated something different. Replies to the circular relied upon translation of the original circular into languages ranging from Polish to Swedish to Turkish, and then translating replies back into French and English, the official languages of the League. Translation, of course, always involves a degree of interpretation, and occasionally, the creation of new terms if they do not exist, as Lydia Liu shows for the translation of American legal texts into Chinese in the late nineteenth century.⁵⁶ One example for our purposes is the concept of *Recht*, *droit* or *dritto*, which in English can mean either "law" or "right". Over and above translation issues, the replies indicate that even those who spoke the same mother tongue interpreted

the adjective "false" very differently.

In this particular context, we can see from the replies from the International Federation of Journalists and the Australian Journalists' Association that they interpreted the meaning of "false news" very differently. For the Australians, false news meant "untruthful or sensational presentation of international news."⁵⁷ For the International Federation of Journalists, on the other hand, "false news" was an amorphous term, which could be subdivided into three categories. Firstly, journalists occasionally supplied incorrect news, which they had thought to be factually accurate. Secondly, there was tendentious news, whereby particular groups sought to use news for their own gains. Thirdly, false information entailed deliberate forgery or distortion of news. Given these divergent definitions, it comes as little surprise that the two Associations reached very different conclusions about future actions on the subject. The Australians called for daily dissemination of news through wireless and an international journal to serve as a form of watchdog for truthful international news. Meanwhile, the IFJ believed that journalists alone were qualified to judge which category a "false" news item fell into each time and that the only disciplinary authority was the International Journalists' Court of Honour that had been established at the Hague in 1931. In essence, the IFJ argued on the basis of prior misinterpretations of "false news" by other authors, that only journalists could judge their colleagues. Journalists should have "international cards" to identify them as professionals and only fellow professionals could judge how a journalist had sinned. This was a bold statement for internal regulation of a journalistic *habitus*, which contrasted with the Australians' belief that an international journal could serve as an external standard by which all readers could theoretically judge journalists.

Meanwhile, although it professed a polite willingness to help, the British Empire Union's reply clearly indicated that the very idea of a survey on "false news" almost constituted an insult. The Union equated "false news" with an "abuse of the freedom of the Press", somewhat akin to the more restrictive Australian definition. For the Union, however, public opinion would criticize any such news item so heavily that given the competition amongst various organs of the press, they would be loath to become repeat offenders.⁵⁸ The

⁵⁵ Papers and Conference Reports on the Conference of Press Experts, 1927, League of Nations Archive.

⁵⁶ See Lydia He Liu, *Tokens of exchange: the problem of translation in global circulations* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999).

⁵⁷ Series of League of Nations Publication, General 1932, 15, League of Nations Archive.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

market and public opinion were the preventative cures for any transgression of truth. Any other method would be “difficult to reconcile with British conceptions of the rights of free publication of news and free comment.”⁵⁹ In the British Empire Union’s interpretation, opinion and comment served as correctives to false facts.

By contrast, for the International Association of Journalists Accredited to the League of Nations, the freedom required to prevent false news extended far beyond freedom of the press to financial freedom from advertisers and publishers and freedom for journalists to act as eye-witnesses to breaking stories and diplomatic negotiations. This radical suggestion based itself on the observation that, “only in the newspaper do people anywhere still believe that they can get something for nothing – and that something is the most precious of things, the truth, and the truth almost instantaneously.”⁶⁰ As readers were unwilling to pay full price for the gathering of their news, advertisers and publishers aka businessmen had gained inordinate and inappropriate power over newspapers and their content, according to the Association. It suggested solutions ranging from expanding the wireless station at Geneva to provide more international news globally to establishing an impartial fact-finding body to check news to creating financial freedom for newspapers through taxes. For the Association, though, prevention was the only measure: legal actions on cases of false news could not be substantiated as they were not sufficiently based on facts. These proposals imputed to the League a power beyond its ability to remake radically the world of international news; this Association at least believed that the League was its best bet for transformation, rather than individual national governments.

Thus for those who perceived “false information” as a problem, the solutions varied greatly. The Association for the Journalists Accredited to the League of Nations presented the most radical solution with its call for full financial independence for newspapers; the IFJ suggested greater professionalization and regulation through ID cards for journalists issued by the League of Nations. This profession should then regulate itself through the International Court of Honour for Journalists. An International Court of Honour for Journalists had been established at the Hague in 1931 to deal with transgressive acts by journalists, though

it remained somewhat unclear as to what exactly constituted these acts. Nevertheless, the establishment of the Court is an important moment in attempts to develop a global ethos of journalism, underpinned by an honorary legal framework.

The most common call was for more openness by the League and for it to allow journalists more access to diplomatic proceedings, with the Sino-Japanese conflict of 1931 as their main example. In this conflict, after the Mukden Incident, Japan had taken over Manchuria from the Chinese in a brutal manner and was busy turning it into a colony of Japan named Manchukuo. Upon China’s request, the League of Nations investigated and attempted to arbitrate the dispute, but the official Lytton Report of October 1932 and subsequent League motion in February 1933 to condemn Japan as an aggressor merely culminated in a Japanese withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1933. The Sino-Japanese conflict in 1931 certainly undermined the League’s legitimacy in dealing with conflicts.⁶¹ Yet journalists had clearly not abandoned it before the publication of the Lytton Report, but rather felt that the solution was a return to the Wilsonian principle of more open diplomacy. Indeed, one might argue that the importance of the Sino-Japanese conflict for journalists lay not in how it sullied their view of the League’s efficacy in solving diplomatic disputes. Rather the replies indicate that the associations were disturbed by *how* the conflict was addressed over and above the final result. Writing that “correct news is the antidote for false news” and hence pleading for open access to League meetings, the IFJ’s attitude demonstrates that the League’s closed-door diplomacy had hollowed out the promises of openness created by its numerous conferences.⁶² The League had asked journalists to inform it about how to prevent false information; for the IFJ, the League’s manner of diplomacy was one key reason for the increase in inaccuracy. The League’s legitimacy would soon be wholly dissolved through Japan’s and Germany’s withdrawal in October 1933 and the Hoare-Laval Pact in 1935; however, for journalists in 1932, the League had lost face not through the failure to resolve the Sino-Japanese conflict, but through forbidding journalists open access to negotiations. Journalists suggested that it was this closed diplomacy that had undermined public trust in the League’s operations

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 2.

⁶¹ See F. P. Walters, *A history of the League of*

Nations (London: Oxford University Press, 1960).

⁶² Ibid., 13.

by preventing journalists from gaining access to accurate information. This had led to skewed reporting and, consequently, a decline in public faith in the League. Moreover, it demonstrated the divide between those writing and those making the news. The International Association for Journalists Accredited to the League of Nations felt that the League's policy on publicity during the conflict illustrated, "the profound difference between those who are concerned with the effect of news and ourselves, who are concerned with its accuracy."⁶³ At the very moment that the League sought opinions on its ability to propagate truth, it had already begun to alienate its own journalists' association through a retreat from the principle of openness upon which it had ostensibly been founded.

Yet the League could still function as a protagonist of improvements in the eyes of journalists in 1932, whether through a new agency to disseminate international news or a world journal. The replies generated by the League's questions figure it as a repository of discussion about concepts that lie at the basis of journalism and its purpose; those who wrote clearly still believed that the League could reform and change international news by following journalists' suggestions. The League thus pushed journalists to consider their values and professional desiderata in a very concrete manner. The suggestions foresaw the League as the instigator of greater professionalization through securing journalists' status; the International Court of Honour so prized by the IFJ modeled itself to a certain extent on the Permanent Court of International Justice founded by the League of Nations. According to Marcel Broersma, journalism's power derives from its persuasion of readers that it is relating the truth.⁶⁴ Still in 1932, the League's power derived from its persuasion of journalists that it could translate their concerns into real action. The myriad replies indicate that journalists credited the League with an influence, which the next few years would sadly prove to be overinflated. Yet the League had provided a discursive space for journalists to discuss and attempt to align their often conflicting and contradictory views on the basic principles of journalism, such as truth and falsity. These discussions, as I have outlined above, tell us not only about different national attitudes, but also about how associations such as the IFJ, and indeed,

the League, created the possibility of discussing these issues at all. The League itself and journalists' associations still believed in 1932 in the power of the press to effect political change and to modulate diplomatic paradigms in the name of truth. Though respondents had no unified vision of the meanings of "true" and "false", all except the Brit-ish Empire Union found the fight against falsity worthwhile and felt that the League of Nations had a vital role to play.

Conclusion

Commentators on the League conceived of its work as transnational at the time. Charles Howard Ellis wrote in 1928 that, "the whole point about the League is that it is a deliberate attempt on the grand scale to organize the world for peace, and that means organizing on international or rather 'trans-national' lines."⁶⁵ Its two main tasks were to inform public opinion and enact the promises and League machinery pledged by governments in the Covenant of the League of Nations in 1919.

Work on moral disarmament and peace involved transnational committees and conferences. Additionally, the IFJ functioned from 1926 as a transnational association whereby members fleshed out their visions of journalism and compromised on their priorities. It influenced its member states' conceptions of the boundaries of journalists' actions and their core values. Meanwhile, the League of Nations Association of Journalists brought together even journalists from countries who were not members of the League of Nations. With a president in 1932 who was the Geneva correspondent for the *New York Times*, the Association represented a meeting point for journalists where they hammered out proposals for their vision of international news and its protection. Transnational history *precisely* alerts us to institutions such as the IFJ and events such as League of Nations' conferences that slip through the cracks of national organizations and state structures.

On the other hand, comparative history is essential in reminding us *not to forget* the nation, the ultimate unit of dividing up the world politically, culturally and economically from 1860s to 1960s. Despite cooperation under the auspices of the League, particularly on transportation and technology, most newspapers circulated within national boundaries. Comparative history exhorts

⁶³ Ibid., 2.

⁶⁴ Broersma, "The Unbearable Limitations of Journalism," 31.

⁶⁵ Charles Howard Ellis, *The origin, structure & working of the League of nations* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1928), 116.

us to understand similarities and differences and not to forget their importance for contemporaries in their actions and interpretations.

In attempting to understand journalists' visions of "true" and "false", using both comparative and transnational history is the only way to get at the crux of the problem. Comparative history provides the synchronic snapshot of various associations' views on the subject. Meanwhile, a more transnational approach enables us to see the emergence of common themes and encourages us to search for the networks that lie behind the dissemination of these views. Transnational history can suggest less conventional chronologies and causalities, often offering a more diachronic approach. It can help clarify how much of the press got to the point that it seemed worth considering the issue of false information internationally at all. In this case, we might start in 1926 and consider the key role of the IFJ and its meetings in creating a consensus on how to combat false information, at least amongst its members. The IFJ's call for

ID cards as proof of professional status represents a key moment in attempts to professionalize journalism, while the call for regulation through the International Court of Honour demonstrates the IFJ's preoccupation with creating global standards for journalism, though these might not have been enshrined in any particular law.

What does all this mean for history of the press? Historians of the press have to be alert to the similarities and differences between forms, styles and institutions. Comparison does provide many potential approaches for this research. Simultaneously, transnational history and cultural transfer can enhance our understanding of how concepts such as objectivity or styles such as the tabloid diffuse across borders. An investigation of the two methodologies shows that we cannot class the press neatly into national boxes, but rather that we must recognize the messy networks that overlapped, crisscrossed and intersected to create those apparently national press systems.

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