colleagues, he argued that economists were far too devoted to deduction and lacked the empirical strength they sought to keep at the centre of their own field. By the time Karl Polanyi published *The Great Transformation* in 1944, which Luks terms a milestone in the Western history of others' economies, economic anthropology had become a subfield of sorts, and it continued to gain prominence with post-war debates about decolonization and the so-called Third World. In that sense, older discussions about non-European economics shaped post-war debates about developmental aid.

In the post-war context in particular, the work by Marcel Mauss in *The Gift* (1925) and by Claude Lévi-Strauss on exchanges unsettled western certainties about the superiority and natural emergence of capitalism. Other ethnologists, such as Marshal Sahlins, did the same by demonstrating that contemporary economic terms were weak analytical tools for understanding the exchanges of people living outside the world economic systems. Many stressed that the 'bride price', a favourite focus in these debates, was never a purely economic exchange; others such as Jack Goody stressed the symbolic meaning of marriage transactions and the productive and reproductive power of families; still others followed him to argue in favour of cultural relativism and stressed the importance of paying greater attention to victimization in a globalizing world.

All of these debates fed back into analyses of Western societies as ethnologists underscored that even money in the systems they studied was often of more than commercial value, that one person's trifle could easily be another's treasure, that conspicuous consumption was not a rational act, and they repeatedly underscored the nonexchange value of inherited and religious objects, as well as other things. Despite all those arguments, self-reflection among Luks's protagonists, as he makes clear with his final example of the Humboldt Forum, remained and continues to be fraught.

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***News from Germany. The Competition to Control World Communications, 1900–1945*. By Heidi J. S. Tworek. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 2019. 333 pp. $29.95 (hardback).**

Even people who do not regularly consume news know *The Guardian*, the *Daily Mail* or Fox News and have a pretty clear idea of the political orientation of these media outlets. When it comes to such names as Reuters, Agence France-Presse or Associated Press, however, even well-informed people often only have a very vague idea of what these institutions do and would have even more difficulties identifying their political perspective.

News agencies are the invisible infrastructure of journalism, maintaining global networks of correspondents that supply thousands of individual media organizations with news from around the world. Only huge organizations such as the BBC or the *New York Times* can afford to employ their own foreign reporters, so most media outlets rely on the service of the agencies. The reports of their unnamed correspondents are reprinted thousands of times all over the world, and while they all insist that their perspective on world affairs is objective and impartial their influence on the way the media represent the world is still underexposed, and little understood.

For this reason alone, Heidi Tworek's new history of German news agencies is an important study. Using a wealth of sources, Tworek shows how during the first half of the twentieth century German elites turned to news agencies in a bid to shape domestic and international politics. These efforts were based on what Tworek calls the 'news agency consensus'—the shared belief that control of the news equalled control over public opinion. With the dawn of mass politics at home and imperial competition abroad, this became increasingly important. Today, we know that media influence is far more complex than a simple transmission from sender to receiver, but in the early twentieth century, it was assumed that people simply believed what they read. Thus, controlling news agencies, the bottleneck of information distribution, seemed like an effective way to directly influence people's minds.

Other reviewers have commented on the important contributions Tworek's book makes to media history and diplomatic history. Among the most important is the fact that by focussing on Germany, she offers a challenge to the 'simple tale of inevitable Anglo-American dominance over international media in the modern era' (p. 5). However, for readers of this journal, the question of whether the book adds to our understanding of German history might be more pertinent. There are two aspects in particular that historians of Germany should find useful. Most importantly, while the study is structured chronologically, moving from Imperial Germany to the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich, it highlights continuities rather than the obvious political breaks. The focus on information policy and infrastructure shows that Wilhelmine civil servants, Weimar democrats and Nazi ministers all subscribed to the 'news agency consensus'. They shared the belief that information control equalled political control and all German governments, openly as well as secretly, invested heavily in information infrastructure. The resulting continuities even extended to the very staff that manned the many institutions controlled by successive German governments.

Another important strength of the book is its global perspective and its masterful interweaving of national and international perspectives. German information policy was never only about exerting control at home, but also about furthering the country's international clout. Successive German governments pinned high hopes on information technology and its control, even if they were rarely fulfilled. Wireless, in particular, promised to give Germany the opportunity to break Britain's control over global cable communications. For example, in 1920, the German government set up *Eildienst*, a wireless economic news agency, not only to shore up business confidence at home and combat the gathering economic crisis but also to rebuild Germany's economic influence abroad at a time when the country was an international pariah. However, while *Eildienst* became a commercial success, it did not really deliver on either front. There is also a brilliantly conceived chapter about the fate of a German news agency correspondent in 1920s Istanbul, who was effectively used as an undercover cultural diplomat by the Foreign Office. By telling these stories from both a national and international perspective, the book sheds new light on the history of German politics and the country's role in the world.

In her focus on media infrastructure and the way the state used it, Tworek sometimes seems to overemphasize the role of the media in historical change. Early on, she argues that in 1918, the news agency communiqué about the abdication of Wilhelm II, sent by Prince Max von Baden without the Kaiser's confirmation, 'set off a chain reaction of events that would end World War I and create the new democratic Weimar Republic' (p. 72). However obvious this might sound, it is still important to acknowledge that the Kaiser was dethroned not by a news report but by his own subjects rising up against his regime.

Later on, Tworek argues that the Nazis could establish control over the press so quickly only because preceding governments, from Wilhelmine times to the democratic Republic, had kept a tight grip on news distribution and thus had prepared the ground for the *Gleichschaltung* (forcible coordination) of the press after 1933. It certainly helped the Nazis that, as part of the government, they gained control over the major news agencies and radio. However, such a focus obscures the ruthlessness with which they moved against privately owned news companies once they were in power. Extortion, intimidation, bans, physical violence and the compliance of many media professionals, rather than existing media policies, were the tools the Nazis relied on for the subduing of the German press.

These two instances aside, Tworek's argument strikes a fine balance between infrastructure, institutions and individuals. Her elegantly written book makes an important contribution to our understanding of how German governments operated domestically and internationally during the first half of the twentieth century.

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***Embers of Empire: Continuity and Rupture in the Habsburg Successor States after 1918.* Edited by Paul Miller and Claire Morelon. New York and Oxford: Berghahn. 2019. X + 332 pp. $135.00 (hardback).**

The 2018 centenary of the end of World War One posed some awkward dilemmas for a number of countries in Central and East Central Europe. Several were confronted with the question of how to commemorate the founding of two states that no longer existed Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia (or the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, as it was initially known). Questions of historical memory, national narratives, continuity and rupture come to the fore at such moments, which makes the appearance of this fascinating collection of essays especially welcome. Editors Paul Miller and Claire Morelon bring together an admirably diverse group of scholars from Europe, Great Britain and the USA in order to examine the volume's key question, as to whether 'the structures and the *habitus* linked' to the Habsburg Monarchy's institutions lasted 'even beyond the collapse of the *ancien régime* in 1918' (p. 2).

After Morelon's concise introduction, four essays in Part I examine national politics in the transition to the successor states. Gábor Egry's characteristically incisive piece analyses how the post-imperial transition was negotiated at the regional level by comparing former Upper Hungary/Slovakia in the new Czechoslovak Republic and Transylvania in the Kingdom of Romania. In doing so, the author questions assumptions about a seamless implementation of 'central orders and regulations' at the local level after 1918 (p. 16). Exploring the transition in these diverse, multi-ethnic areas allows Egry to highlight convincingly the difficulties the new states experienced in asserting government authority and the 'national interest'. Thus, 'a combination of limited resources, executive constraints, and above all the persistence of local political and social structures often produced exceptions that challenged or even violated the nationalizing regulations' (p. 32). Claire Morelon's own chapter switches to the heart of Czechoslovakia, examining continuities and questions of legitimacy in the