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[Book review] Policing Transnational Protest: Liberal Imperialism and the Surveillance of Anticolonialists in Europe, 1905–1945. By Brückenhaus, Daniel. Oxford University Press. 2017. xi + 300pp. £56.00

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*Published in:*  
History

*DOI:*  
[10.1111/1468-229X.12806](https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-229X.12806)

Published: 01/01/2019

*Document Version*  
Submitted manuscript

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*Please cite the original version:*

Braskén, K. (2019). [Book review] Policing Transnational Protest: Liberal Imperialism and the Surveillance of Anticolonialists in Europe, 1905–1945. By Brückenhaus, Daniel. Oxford University Press. 2017. xi + 300pp. £56.00. *History*, 104(361), 554–556. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-229X.12806>

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**Daniel Brückenhaus: *Policing Transnational Protest: Liberal Imperialism and the Surveillance of Anticolonialists in Europe, 1905–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)**

Daniel Brückenhaus study on transnational anti-colonial activism during the first half of the 20th century constitutes a highly readable analysis and a welcome addition to the ever growing field of transnational history. It is based on an impressive amount of basic research in French, German, British, and Indian archives and it makes a significant contribution to the history of anti-colonial activism in Europe. The focus of the book is twofold: Firstly, it offers an analysis of how British, French and German surveillance agencies and police forces established frameworks for international co-operation through new networks of surveillance and cross border structures for information exchange to find new ways to monitor and suppress anti-colonial activists in Europe. Secondly, it forms a study of these very anti-colonialists and their transnational lives in the European metropolises London, Paris, and Berlin. Brückenhaus' argues convincingly why these two perspectives must be treated as inherently intertwined as the increasing surveillance on the national level pushed anti-colonialists to repeatedly re-locate within Europe. As Brückenhaus demonstrates, the anti-colonial activists were not only moving 'vertically' from the colonies to the European centres of their respective empires. Instead activists e.g. from India relocated between London, Paris and Berlin to avoid persecution. Subsequently an important 'horizontal' movement and transnational networking took place that radically influenced national and international governmental surveillance practices.

The book is divided into six main chapters that follow a strict chronological structure and focuses explicitly on "inner European transnational connections", rather than activism taking place outside of Europe. Brückenhaus shows how international surveillance practices were first expanded within the framework of the Entente Cordiale, 1905–1914, when British and French police forces initiated new forms of co-operation to monitor Indian anti-colonialists active in Britain, France, and Germany. The book illustrates the recurrent dilemma facing the liberal European governments that were upholding authoritarian colonial rule over the colonial world. While anti-colonial activism was grimly suppressed in the colonies and mandates according to the principles of imperial rule, anti-colonial activism taking place in the European metropolises was safeguarded by the liberal principles of government. However, even in Europe anti-colonial activities could be criminalised if they were deemed 'seditious'. Brückenhaus is very effective in breaking

down images of assumed solidarities between all colonial subjects on the one hand, and Europeans on the other. When for example infiltrating the anti-colonial milieus in Europe's metropolises the use of informants of colonial origin was of crucial significance. Without these pro-colonial subjects the surveillance efforts would surely have been much more meagre. Through such measures the circulation of anti-colonial publications could be hampered and the horizontal networks between anti-colonialists in the metropolises and the colonies could be effectively cracked down. However, an important alliance was forged between especially socialists and left-wing politicians in Europe, who sympathised with the anti-colonialists and strived to hinder the authoritarian practices employed by the surveillance and police in Britain, France and Germany.

The book emphasises the central role of Imperial Germany as a common enemy that pushed the British-French surveillance and policing co-operation to new levels. The major fear was that the Germans would secretly support anti-colonial activists working against the British and French empires, or even form a sort of anti-colonial pact. As Brückenhaus reveals, in some cases these fears were also realised when for example Indian activists co-operated with German officials during the First World War to liberate India from British control. It forms one of several important examples to be found in Brückenhaus' fascinating source material that illustrates how the anti-colonialists were able to utilise the political divisions within European contacts to find supporters for their anti-colonial agenda.

The wartime conditions of anti-colonial surveillance is dealt with in the second chapter. Here Brückenhaus shows how especially neutral Switzerland became a centre for espionage and anti-colonialist activity in Europe. However, it forms also an illustrious example of how Britain could put political pressure on the Swiss authorities to take action against the anti-colonialists in order to maintain good British-Swiss relations. Although the alliance between Germans and anti-colonialists veritably ended in 1917, Brückenhaus points out a much longer trajectory of anti-German framing among British and French officials' security reports.

In the third chapter the focus is set on the French colonial surveillance network, 1918–1925. After Germany's collapse at the end of the war, inventive interpretations of the concept of European colonialism were introduced. Nationalist and far right circles in Germany entertained the idea that in the new 'Versailles system', Germany now belonged

to the oppressed peoples of the world. Like the colonies, it needed to be liberated from the oppressive imperialist rule of the British and French, where Germany was even described as a “European India” in the making. Racist perspectives influenced the French interpretations of the anti-colonial movement, as it was deemed impossible that the anti-colonialists themselves were incapable of articulating elaborate anti-colonial agendas. Instead it was assumed to be steered by a secret German or Soviet communist leadership. From a French and British perspective, the major fear was thus a ‘Germano-Bolshevik’ alliance aimed at bringing down in co-operation with the anti-colonialists the British and French empires. In the French context, however, a major concern was also formed by the pan-African movement. Notions of a global black coalition meant that the French surveillance and police were not only confronted with their ‘own’ French Africans, but were dealing with a movement that was not confined to imperial boundaries. The influence of the international communist movement and the pattern of forging alliances of all oppressed peoples caused severe surveillance challenges in Europe. For France it became a necessity to send French agents to Berlin to place the anti-colonialists mobilising against the French empire under surveillance. Significantly, Brückenhaus shows how the African activists in Germany were far from “puppets” of German propaganda efforts, but maintained their own agency. The alliances with the Germans were therefore “fragile and temporary” based on situations where mutual interests converged.

Brückenhaus continues the analysis in the following chapter on police co-operation between France and Britain, 1918–1925. In this time period the British surprised many with its preparedness to co-operate with Germany against the anti-colonialists. For the British-French co-operation there seems to have been much more activity on the unofficial level, compared to official, open co-operation. The new surveillance structures and networks were above all created in secret and free of public scrutiny. The reasons for the secrecy were several, but Brückenhaus makes a strong case for the relevance of a growing fear of public scrutiny of surveillance and policing practices, which in the minds of a liberal European public were illegal or at least highly questionable. Brückenhaus demonstrates convincingly how liberals and socialists argued that the surveillance patterns infringed the very liberal values and principles that their societies were built on and that allegedly separated them from their authoritarian enemies.

It was perhaps only the emergence of a new powerful international threat that enabled the further formal surveillance co-operation between Germany, France and Britain in the 1920s. As Brückenhaus discusses in chapter five, the fight against anti-colonialists converged in a significant way with anti-communist agendas. The League Against Imperialism (LAI) years, 1926–1933. The LAI constituted a significant case in the history of 20th century anti-colonialism when the radical left and many communist and non-communist anti-colonialists strived to find unity in a first global front against the European empires. Significantly, as the LAI conceptualised the anti-imperialist agenda as a way to unite all oppressed peoples in transnational co-operation, it pushed British and French surveillance co-operation into a stronger pro-colonial common front. Brückenhaus makes a valuable contribution to the understanding of the convergence between communism and anti-colonialism in the LAI. It also illuminates the importance of Berlin and Hamburg as a transnational meeting points for international communists and anti-colonial activists. Moreover, especially in the beginning of the LAI's history and during its founding in Brussels in 1927, it formed a platform that united a broad group of the moderate left, who constituted powerful allies due to their ability to create scandals in the public sphere. Brückenhaus elaborates also on the importance of interlinking the LAI's network with other anti-colonial networks such as the Ligue de Défense de la Race Nègre and the International Trade Union Committee against Negro Workers. However, in the early 1930s, the available space for anti-colonial and left-wing activities in Germany were becoming much more limited. For the history of surveillance, the LAI constitutes an significant example, where Brückenhaus can show how differently the British and French reacted to the organisation in comparison to German officials. The German government's initial tolerance towards the LAI and other anti-colonialists enabled the continued organisation and mobilisation against imperialism and colonialism in western Europe.

However, as Brückenhaus shows in the last chapter, the installation of the Nazi rule in Germany in 1933 significantly altered the situation. Most of the left-wing anti-colonial organisations were banned and the key activists were imprisoned or forced to flee the country. Nazi Germany was nevertheless forced to balance its racial policies against maintaining good foreign relations and trade connections. Interestingly, Brückenhaus shows how the British and French officials were first eager to co-operate with the Nazi government in their mutual interest to crack down left-wing anti-colonialist movements and networks. In this respect, Brückenhaus exemplifies how for example the British were prepared to disdain from opposing the Nazi's domestic racial and oppressive politics if

they through surveillance co-operation with the Nazis could help maintain and protect the British empire. Brückenhaus provides the reader with a stimulating analysis of anti-colonial activity in the Nazi era, but surprisingly the effects of the Molotov-Ribbentrop non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union is omitted in the analysis. The pact had had far-reaching consequences for beyond German and Soviet contexts as it forces the international communist movement to re-directed its attention from anti-fascism to a renewed anti-imperialist resistance against Britain and France. Before the pact, the anti-fascism and the Popular Front policy had pushed the anti-colonial agenda to the background, as a secondary goal. As the German-Soviet pact fell apart in summer 1941, the anti-fascist agenda resurfaced again as the main agenda, demanding for example Indian communists to postpone their demands for independence and accept (at least temporarily) an alliance with the British and French empires in the struggle against the Axis powers. These might also have enhanced important parts of Brückenhaus' analysis of the anti-colonialists who during the Second World War were prepared to forge an alliance with the Third Reich both before 1939 and after 1941. It would also better explain the willingness of some anti-colonial activists to join forces with the British authorities. Still, Brückenhaus provides an pivotal analysis of the difficult moral and tactical choices that had to be made between the anti-colonial, anti-fascist, pro-colonial or even pro-Nazi positions.

In his conclusion Brückenhaus makes a strong case for the need to compare the history of early anti-colonial surveillance practices with the modern international surveillance systems. Still, although the book shows the importance of an increasing connection and co-operation between especially French and British surveillance agencies, it would have been interesting to find a more systematic comparison of policing and surveillance practices as a part of Brückenhaus' conclusions. Moreover, it must be noted that the term 'transnational' is partially used in a highly problematic way. Brückenhaus' analyses correctly the anti-colonialist efforts to form transnational networks that crossed borders and continents on a civil society level and engaged in global protest movements. Although temporary strategic alliances with various state powers were made, the activists themselves sustained their own agency and steered their activities towards the liberation of the colonial peoples and de-colonisation. However, although surveillance networks were turning international, they were inter-governmental or 'international' rather than 'transnational' which is a term that should be reserved to describe networks and movements beyond governmental structures. For the benefit of a coherent analysis they

can not be used interchangeably. The introduction of descriptors such as “transnational surveillance” (p. 7 and 81), “transnational governmental surveillance” (p. 212), or “transnational colonial surveillance” (p. 221) are therefore not very helpful for the analytical framework of the book. Although Brückenhaus rightly concludes that the conflict between those fighting against colonial rule and the police authorities took the form of “a feedback cycle in which both sides caused each other to become more transnational in the scope of their networks [...]” (p.4) it remains correct only for the transnational activists - not the governments policing and surveilling them through international co-operation. A closer analysis of the difference between ‘transnational’ and international governmental surveillance and policing would therefore be a very welcome discussion in future such studies.

In summary, Brückenhaus’ study forms an important contribution to the field and shows the importance of researching 20th century transnational protest movements with the help of surveillance sources. This unique body of material provides us with remarkable insights not only into the internal operations of the activists but also into the surveillance strategies utilised on an international and global level to maintain and preserve the European empires throughout the first half of the 20th century.