

Call for Papers

Settlement and Unsettlement: The Ends of World War I and their Legacies (2018 Annual Conference of the Max Weber Foundation)

Venue: German Historical Institute (GHI) Washington DC

Conveners: Max Weber Foundation, German Historical Institute (GHI)
Washington DC, American Historical Association (AHA) with the
National History Center (NCH), German Historical Association
(Verband der Historiker und Historikerinnen Deutschlands, VHD)

Date: March 22-24, 2018

Deadline: March 31, 2017

URL: <https://www.ghi-dc.org>

The armistice of November 11, 1918, is widely commemorated as the end of World War I, but that event was only part of a protracted process with far-reaching consequences. A series of peace treaties, starting with Brest-Litovsk in 1918 and continuing through Lausanne in 1923, brought the war to a stuttering conclusion. The 1919 Paris Peace Conference and the agreements it produced rank as the most prominent and most controversial aspect of that process. Scholarly debate has long focused on the Paris conference in the context of debates on war guilt, the burdens imposed on defeated Germany, or President Woodrow Wilson's failure to realize his vision of a liberal world order. This focus was in line with addressing questions such as the rise of fascism, the causes of World War II, or the roots of the Great Depression. Yet the postwar settlements reached far beyond West and Central Europe. They shaped a new global order that, some hoped, would prevent another disastrous global war.

Many consequences of that reorganization are still being felt. The postwar order and the new respect paid to the right of self-determination sparked hopes and expectations while setting up the forces that would deflate them. Regardless of whether the postwar settlements led directly to the renewal of world-wide conflict in the 1930s, as many have charged, they created structures in which the later conflicts arose. A century later, participants in conflicts across the world still trace their grievances back to the pivotal period 1917–1923.

The centenary of the 1918 Armistice in 2018 provides a perfect occasion to reassess the postwar settlement's global repercussions in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In light of the fresh scrutiny historians have recently given to the world these settlements

created, the time is ripe for such a reassessment. That scrutiny commonly centers on the consequences of the Paris Peace Conference itself, the clash of different visions of an international order in full view of a newly assertive global public. The peace settlements created new forms of international organization and global governance. They spelled the end of centuries-old continental empires—the Habsburg and the Ottoman empires—and stripped Germany of its overseas colonies and important parts of its European territory. They initiated the remaking of the political landscape not only of Europe and the Middle East but also of colonized regions far from the wartime fronts, leading to forced population movements and “minority problems” of an unprecedented kind and scale. Political turmoil in Russia and parts of Central Europe brought about the specter of revolution and triggered Western military interventions in paramilitary conflicts and civil wars. International organizations, above all the League of Nations, came into existence after the war that were intent on overseeing interstate relations and creating political, economic, legal, labor, and other codes to regulate them. At the same time, a wide range of groups resisted the postwar political order and advocated alternative systems of sovereignty and sources of power.

With the Armistice, the idea of national self-determination began its global career as a pivotal principle of world order as it fed hopes of peoples around the world for an end to alien rule. The Wilsonian program inspired and mobilized people as far from the negotiations in Paris as East Asia. Enduring problems arose from the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, and challenges to colonialism evolved in response to the creation of the League of Nations’ Mandates Commission. Disappointment with the international order would fuel conflicts for decades.

Events and decisions linked to the end of World War I continue to resonate throughout the world today. The 1920 Treaty of Trianon, for instance, remains a point of reference in nationalist rhetoric in many of the successor states to the Hapsburg Empire. The refusal by the U.S. Congress to ratify the Treaty of Versailles and to approve membership in the League of Nations is still held up as the textbook example of the country’s deep-seated ambivalence about its role as a world power. The Greek-Turkish “population exchange” sanctioned by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne initiated a century of mass expulsions. The reorganization of the Middle East into several proto-nation-states sowed the seeds of regional conflicts that now, a century later, seem as firmly rooted as ever.

In view of exciting new and emerging scholarship on the legacies of World War I, the Max Weber Foundation, the German Historical Institute (GHI) in Washington DC, the American Historical Association (AHA) with the National History Center (NHC), and the German Historical Association propose to convene a conference that takes a fresh look at the events of 1917–1923, at the immediate post-Versailles period and at the cultural, social, and political ripples that the postwar settlements sent across the globe in subsequent decades. The conference seeks to reassess the global dimensions of the postwar moment and to

examine both the short- and long-term consequences of the end of World War I from comparative and transregional perspectives.

Themes to be discussed at the conference include, but are not limited to:

- *the suite of treaties and international agreements* that sought to bring the military conflicts between belligerent states to an end and their lasting consequences for the states and regions whose boundaries and relations they codified;
- *the regime of international organizations* that were created or strengthened to oversee postwar relations between states, among them the League of Nations, its Mandate Commission, the International Labor Office, the International Red Cross, and the international court in The Hague;
- *the idea of national self-determination as a founding principle of the postwar world order*, its reverberations and consequences in different world regions and for different population groups, and its uses by different groups of actors;
- *the postwar expansion and transformation of imperial rule* by the victorious powers and the struggle against that rule by subject peoples;
- *the plans for social and economic postwar order and responses to expectations of disadvantaged and disempowered social groups*: demobilization and demilitarization, postwar economic order, gender order, etc.

The conference will take place from March 22-24, 2018 in Washington, DC, at the German Historical Institute. The conference language is English. The organizers will cover travel and lodging expenses.

Please send a short abstract of no more than 400 words and a brief academic CV with institutional affiliation in one file by March 31, 2017 to HUDSON@GHI-DC.ORG.

