

Self Determination and the Peace Settlements at the end of World War One.

One hundred years ago three of the post-World War One peace treaties were signed: the Treaty of Versailles with Germany, the Treaty of St Germain with Austria and the Treaty of Neuilly with Bulgaria. Two more were signed in the following year: the Treaty of Trianon with Hungary and the Treaty of Sèvres with Turkey. So, as we transition from 2019 to 2020, it would seem to be a particularly good time for Historiana to take a new look at the Paris Peace Conference and its peace settlements and at the global consequences not just of those treaties but also of the principles which underpinned Woodrow Wilson's '*program for world peace*'.

Historiana has already covered the Peace Treaties that followed the First World War in its module on that War (see the section on *The Uncertain Peace*) and the section on *The Inter-War Years* at the beginning of our module on the Second World War. Although we have tried to look at the implications of those Peace Treaties for Europe in particular and the world in general, our historical sources and our interpretation of those sources tend to focus mainly on the broader developments which impacted on international relations. That is, the conflicts that continued after November 1918, the ongoing economic and political instability, the operations of the League of Nations, the rise of independence movements in the Middle East, Asia and Africa, the emergence of Fascism in Italy and National Socialism in Germany, the Anschluss, the Munich Agreement, the annexation of western Czechoslovakia and the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939.

In thinking about how we might mark the centenary of the Paris Peace Conference the editing team at Historiana asked ourselves two questions:

- (1) How can we make our approach to the Peace Conferences of 1919-1923 and their global consequences more transnational and multiperspective?
- (2) How can we help students to develop an overview of the last 100 years which would help them to analyse how decisions **taken and not taken** in Paris continued to impact upon international relations long after World War Two?

We have concluded that the answer to both questions is to collect more historical sources from a wider range of countries that history teachers and their students will be able to draw upon to further contextualise their knowledge of historical events and developments in the 20th century. That will be the theme of our next Historiana Webinar. As many of you will now know, since October 2018 we have been developing a series of Source Collections for Historiana through a crowd-sourcing approach. We have used this approach to collect transnational, multi-perspective sources on the Russian Revolution, the end of the Berlin Wall and the Printing Revolution. In each case we have started with a Webinar to explain the thinking behind the proposed Source Collection and then asked participants to send us relevant sources from their own countries.

Now we are planning a similar crowd-sourcing approach that will focus on:

- the impact and consequences of the Peace Treaties of 1919-1923 – not just in the inter-war years but also from 1945 – 1989 and then in the post-Cold War era;

- the consequences of **applying and not applying** the principle of **self determination** to the demographic patchworks that existed in central and eastern Europe at the end of the war and also existed in Africa, Asia and the Middle East at that time.

We already have a lot of text-based sources (treaties, statements by representatives of the Allied powers, and statements by some of the delegates to the Paris Conference). What we really need is more source material from the former Central Powers; from the new 'successor states' in central and eastern Europe; and from the peoples whose demands for self determination were not recognised (in Europe, in the Middle East and in colonial territories in Asia and Africa).

- How did those countries and peoples react to the peace settlements, the plebiscites, the minority protection treaties?
- What were their expectations, hopes and fears?
- To what extent did the decisions taken and not taken after the First World War continue to have an impact throughout the 20th century in the countries whose boundaries were set at that time and amongst the peoples whose demands for self determination were ignored?

By 'countries and peoples' here we do not just mean governments. We would also like you to look for sources that reflect the perspectives of opposition parties and movements, the media, the minorities and public opinion in general.

As with the previous crowd-sourcing approaches this one will begin with a Webinar, in this case to be held on 5 December 2019. We are not sure yet whether we are talking about one or possibly two distinct Source Collections here. This will probably be determined once we have a good range of sources from Webinar participants.

If you are interested in this topic and would like to contribute to our Source Collection on *Self Determination and the Peace Settlements at the end of World War One*, we invite you to join our **online Historiana Contributors' Webinar on 5 December at 17:00 CET**.

We look forward to meeting you online.

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Historiana

