

## Foreword

*By Péter Tamás Baranyi and Péter Marton*

June 2019 saw the 100th anniversary of the conclusion of the Treaty of Versailles. There may have been only a few other international events that had shaped our international environment as profoundly and as pervasively as did the settlement after the First World War. Often termed in Hungarian as “peace treaties concluded in the vicinity of Paris” (that is, as *Párizs környéki békeszerződések*), it is not only a contested accord, but a whole system of interstate contacts. “Versailles” as a concept thus refers both to a treaty between the Entente powers and Germany, and, as a metaphor, to the “world order” that unfolded after the cessation of hostilities. This order has been heavily criticized as well as cautiously praised ever since, with its interpretations varying between descriptions as a dangerous destruction of the balance of power, as the promising beginning of liberal internationalism, and as a hypocritically set up facade for old school great power politics.

The sheer significance of Versailles makes especially striking the fact that the centennial anniversary did not generate much intellectual reappraisal, public debate, or even popular scrutiny. It is, however, easy to explain how the “twenty years’ crisis” of the interwar period, the perspectives of individual nations on the territorial changes, or the brutality of the Second World War eclipsed the public understanding of the “Versailles–Washington System.” This compilation wishes to contribute to the public and academic reflections of this topic with a decided interest on its impact on international relations.

The historiographical sketch by Tamás Baranyi examines recent research and reconstructs the evolution of the evaluation of the treaty, while Kinga Szálkai does the same with a view to the changing interpretation of Versailles in the field of International Relations. The co-authored piece by Zoltán Kelemen and Máté Szalai gives insights into the small state structure in Central Europe that emerged in the postwar period. Even the railway networks were the targets of some of the punitive measures of the peace settlement, as Gergely Péterffy points out in his article assessing the impact on the Hungarian system of railways. New approaches have emerged regarding the role of various countries in the post-war settlement as well as in shaping the politics of what we now call the interwar era: Péter Hevő explains the ongoing reassessment of Gustav

Stresemann's Eastern policy in his piece, while Alessandro D'Onofrio elaborates on how the *translatio imperii* between Britain and the U.S. began and how it was affected by the events of 1919. The piece of Sándor Seremet sheds light, in the meantime, on how the nationhood of Rusyns was formed by the circumstances of the settlement. The articles of Ádám Éva and Péter Marton offer further unique vantage points: the former examines current events in the Middle East region and their connections with the post-WWI narrative, while Péter Marton elaborates on counterfactual history and the conspicuous shortage of WWI-related topics in this genre.

Although it is impossible to even superficially cover the entirety of topics related to the Versailles–Washington settlement in International Relations, this issue of COJOURN uses a variety of geographical, theoretical and topical angles to contribute to a better understanding of this formative international event. The editors' deepest hope is to thus contribute to the continuous reassessment of the Versailles settlement with these articles, which may well be productive in advancing our knowledge regarding many aspects of the legacy of the post-WWI years.