



The First World War witnessed the dramatic collapse of the German, Russian, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, ushering in a new international order that was formalised in the Treaty of Versailles and its associated agreements. The transition from imperial to national states across Europe during this period has long preoccupied historians, and the legacies of empire in those new polities has begun to attract the attention of scholars. The very nature of regional specialisation in historical research, however, has tended to limit analyses of imperial dissolution to individual case studies. As a result, it has been difficult to qualify the magnitude of the transformation which shook the continent in the areas previously dominated by the four empires in question, and to assess the deep and entangled historical roots of the changes that took place.

This conference will therefore bring together scholars from across the field to consider the 'afterlife' of the German, Russian, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires. Participants will compare and contrast the ways in which existing legal frameworks, conceptions of sovereignty and government, and administrative or material infrastructures were repurposed to meet the challenges of imperial collapse; the degree to which business networks suffered, survived or thrived in the chaos of changing circumstances; the extent and impact of conflict, revolution, war and violence, particularly upon minorities and refugees; and the role of international organisations such as the League of Nations in this process of 'transition'. A particular focus of the conference will be on the interaction of everyday experiences of change with the wider political, legal and international restructuring of borders and boundaries. It will also question the chronological framework traditionally associated with this phase of imperial dissolution, and, by extension, the nature of empire itself.

The conference will be held at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, on 18th-20th August 2022. For more information, or if you would like to participate, please contact the organisers:

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