

CfP: Panel Proposal 2018 World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies (WOCMES): "Beyond the 'Great Powers': Foreign Relations, Secondary States and the Ottoman Empire in the Modern Age" (Seville, Spain, 16–22 July 2018)

Discussion published by Alloul Houssine on Thursday, October 5, 2017

Dear colleagues,

We are putting together a panel proposal for the Fifth World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies (WOCMES) in Seville, Spain, 16–22 July 2018. The panel is entitled *Beyond the 'Great Powers': Foreign Relations, Secondary States and the Ottoman Empire in the Modern Age*. Below you find a more detailed Call for Papers. Please circulate in your networks.

Thanks and best wishes,

Houssine Alloul (University of Antwerp)
Giampaolo Conte (University of Rome III)

CALL FOR PAPERS

**Panel at the *Fifth World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies (WOCMES)*
Seville, Spain, 16–22 July 2018**

Panel title

Beyond the 'Great Powers': Foreign Relations, Secondary States and the Ottoman Empire in the Modern Age

Session outline

The historiography of the relations between the late Ottoman Empire and its foreign allies and foes is dominated by studies of the five 'Great Powers' of the time: Britain, Russia, France, Prussia/Germany, and Austria[-Hungary]. Without denying the scope and pervasiveness of Great Power meddling in Ottoman affairs, the historiographical preoccupation with these states is not entirely satisfactory. Not only are these narratives often teleological—Ottoman 'decline' and collapse seem inevitable—they also reveal a Eurocentric research agenda primarily interested in Great Power 'high diplomacy', which lacks a serious engagement with the Ottoman viewpoint. No less problematic a feature in much of the scholarship is the unremitting emphasis on and overrating of the actual power of 'Western' empires in shaping and influencing Ottoman rule and foreign policy. As some scholars have argued, this betrays a flawed belief in Western-induced modernity. The undifferentiated concern with the five

major powers also risks perpetuating the misleading idea that all Ottoman interstate dealings were by default predicated on an unequal power relationship. Such representations obscure the variegated histories of Ottoman military, diplomatic, economic, and cultural collaboration (or antagonism) with plenty of other 'secondary' states. Indeed, Istanbul entertained (official) relations with many different Western and non-Western polities, quite independently from the Great Powers. Some of these relations dated back to early modern times as in the cases of Iran, Spain, Oman and Sweden-Norway. Others were of fairly recent creation such as those with the U.S., Greece and post-1878 Balkan states. If some of these bilateral relationships were largely maintained out of mutual courtesy and did not reflect serious political or economic interests, in other cases they were dynamic and of great importance.

In order to construct a new perspective that avoids the abovementioned historiographical pitfalls, this panel invites papers that investigate the histories of Ottoman relations with small and medium powers during the period 1800–1914 and which adopt either the Ottoman or non-Ottoman perspective or both. We specifically seek paper proposals dealing with one or more of the following themes in the intersections with international history:

- Economic diplomacy
- (Finance) Capitalism and international relations
- Private—public relations
- Corporate power
- Military cooperation
- Banking, bankers and sovereign debt
- (In)formal arms trade
- Trade policy
- Diplomatic and consular lives
- Diplomatic ceremonial and protocol
- Cultural diplomacy
- Informal diplomats
- Intelligence and secret services
- Propaganda and mass-media
- (Christian/Islamic) Missionary activities and the state
- Internationalism and scientific collaboration

We especially encourage contributions that challenge Eurocentric accounts of international relations by investigating the [in]formal engagements between the late Ottoman Empire and non-Western polities like the new Latin American states, Iran, Japan, China, Morocco, and the Sultanates of Oman and Zanzibar.

Depending on the quantity and attributes of paper proposals, one or two panels will be organized. Papers will be pre-circulated among all panel participants and a discussant will comment on each paper. The organizers intend to edit and publish selected papers in a special issue of an internationally peer reviewed academic journal.

Organizers

Giampaolo Conte, University of Rome III, giampaolo.conte@uniroma3.it.

Houssine Alloul, University of Antwerp, houssine.alloul@uantwerp.be.

Chair(s) and discussant(s) *To be confirmed.*

Abstracts

Please send an abstract (max. 400 words) no later than 30 November 2017 to giampaolo.conte@uniroma3.it and houssine.alloul@uantwerp.be.

All practical details for how to prepare your stay in Seville can be found on <http://wocmes2018seville.org/web/index.php/en/>.