



Pierre du Bois Annual Conference 2021
Organiser: Cyrus Schayegh

Inter-imperial Relations as Global History

Synopsis

A fascinating development in international history in the last quarter century has been the renewal of imperial history – often, especially in Britain, called “new imperial history.” By the early 2010s, historians pursuing such studies started to get interested also in inter-imperial/trans-imperial histories. This trend critiqued historians’ deeply rooted *national* tendency to focus their empirical research and even conceptual conclusions on one single empire, and as such was firmly and even explicitly transnational or global in nature. Inter-imperial histories have come in different shapes and forms. Among others such forms, five can be mentioned. Some historians are studying cooperation between European empires, be it in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries (and earlier), rather than – as traditionally – focusing on competition. Others have taken a new look at the similarities and differences between (European) presumed sea empires and (Asian) presumed land empires – an exercise that often broached direct linkages between these two categories, too. Yet others have explored how various nineteenth century empires had to ‘nationalise’ themselves to (try to) survive – and how they copied, and learned from, each other in the process. Some also are reconsidering inter-imperial linkages between the anti-status quo states of the interwar period and World War II. Finally, some themes are interimperial not by name – but could be reframed as such. Key examples include the relationship between the early Cold War United States and the still imperial European powers, and the tight relationship between the USSR and the PRC from 1949 to the early 1960s.

A good decade into the rise of interest in such inter-imperial patterns, it is time for stock-taking. The 2021 Pierre du Bois Foundation conference will examine this theme, inviting scholars who have covered all the above, and some additional, inter-imperial histories. A preliminary, still to be completed list of possible invitees would look as follows: Martin Thomas (main focus: France); Michael Thompson (Britain); Maurus Reinkowski (Ottoman Empire); Christof Dejung (“non-colonial” Switzerland); Paul Kramer (US); Ronald Suny (Russia); Artemy Kalinowski (USSR); Pekka Hämäläinen (Comanches); Rebecca Carl (China); Pieter Judson (Habsburg E.); Sebastian Conrad (Germany); and Miguel Bandeira Jeronimo (Portugal). Graduate Institute students will be involved the conference, possibly also in the resulting publication.

It is envisioned that the proceedings be published in an edited volume — but one with many short (4,000 words-long) entries that are driven by one single set of questions. Such an approach, in Professor Cyrus Schayegh’s experience — as in the recently-published *Globalizing the U.S. Presidency: Postcolonial Views of John F. Kennedy* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2020) — ensures that an edited volume indeed finds and commands its audience, possibly in the International History series at Bloomsbury. Parts of the conference would be as well released in the form of a podcast. If funds allow, a dedicated website that provides people interested with additional references and, perhaps, primary sources could be added.