
Echoes of Imperialism: Re-thinking European Colonialisms

Friday 9 and Saturday 10 May 2008
at the History Faculty, the Maison française d'Oxford and the European Studies Centre

An inter-disciplinary workshop jointly sponsored by the Modern History Faculty (Commonwealth History Research Seminar), the European Studies Centre, the Maison française d'Oxford and the European Research Group

Convenors: Jan-Georg Deutsch, Judith M. Brown, John Darwin, Kalypso Nicolaidis, Berny Sèbe, Rahul Rao

PROGRAMME

Friday 9 May:

Morning: Modern History Faculty, Old Boys' School, George Street

Afternoon: Maison française d'Oxford, 2-10 Norham Road

- 9.15 am Welcome by conference organisers
- 9.20 – 10.15 am **Opening statement**
John Darwin (History, Oxford)
Echoes of Imperialism: A Research agenda
- 10.15 – 10.30 am *Tea and biscuits*
- 10.30 am – 12.45 **Session 1 – European Imperialisms: The Present of the Past**
- Kalypso Nicolaidis (Politics & IR, Oxford) and Juri Viehoff (Politics & IR, Oxford)
Echoes or Transcendence? From Standards of Civilisation to EU Conditionality
- Luisa Pinto Teixeira (History, Camões Institute Portuguese Centre, Oxford)
Hidden Empire: memory in the making of a Lusophone world
- Jean-Frédéric Schaub (History, EHESS, Maison française d'Oxford)
Monarquía, imperio, república, repúblicas: Latin American and its imperial past
- Chair and discussant: Berny Sèbe (History, Durham University and Maison française d'Oxford)*
- 12.45 – 1.00 pm *Participants walk to the Maison française d'Oxford*
- 1.00 – 1.45 pm *Buffet lunch at the Maison française d'Oxford*
- 1.45 – 3.30 pm **Session 2 – Colonialism and modernity in Africa and in Asia**
- Jan-Georg Deutsch (History, Oxford)
Colonialism and Modernity in Africa
- Dane Kennedy (History, George Washington University, Washington DC)
Empires and the Parasitism of British Exploration in Africa
- Yasmin Khan (History, Royal Holloway, University of London)
Nehruvian modernity and the decolonization of the South Asian state
- Chair: Rahul Rao (Politics & IR, Oxford)*
Discussant: Jean-Pascal Daloz (Political science, Maison française d'Oxford)

3.30 – 3.45 pm *Tea and biscuits*

3.45 – 5.30 pm **Session 3 – Sea-borne imperial visions**

Christopher Harding (History, University of Edinburgh)
*'A Dagger At Our Backs':
Self-Defence, Self-Cultivation, and the Question of Modern Japanese Imperialism*

Berny Sèbe (History, Durham University and Maison française d'Oxford)
*'Civilising mission' vs 'Gentlemanly capitalism'?
The French empire against the gauge of its more successful British counterpart*

Alessandro Triulzi (University of Naples)
Italian perspectives on Empire

Chair: Jan-Georg Deutsh (History, Oxford)
Discussant: Dereck Duncan (Cultural Studies, Department of Italian, Bristol)

Saturday 10 May
European Studies Centre, 70 Woodstock Road

9.00 – 10.45 am **Session 4 – Land-based imperial visions**

Alexander Morrison (University of Liverpool)
Between western universalism and eastern practices: the Russian Empire

Nora Onar (Politics & IR, Oxford)
*Echoes of a universalism lost:
Rival representations of the Ottomans in contemporary Turkey*

Rana Mitter (Oriental Institute, Oxford)
Imperial China

Chair: Judith Brown (History, Oxford)
Discussant: John Darwin (History, Oxford)

10.45 – 11.15 am *Tea and biscuits*

11.15 am – 1.00 pm **Session 5 – Imperial legacies in the EU project**

Dimitar Bechev (Politics & IR, Oxford)
From myths of empire to EU hegemony

Robert Howse (Politics & IR, University of Michigan Law School)
European imperialism, Kojève and the global trade agenda

Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann (History, Oxford)
German colonial history and post-war development policies

Chair and discussant: Kalypso Nicolaidis (Politics & IR, Oxford)

1.00 – 2.00 pm *Lunch*

2.00 – 3.45 pm **Session 6 – The post-colonial agenda : A normative panel**

Rahul Rao (Politics & IR, Oxford)
Postcolonial Cosmopolitanism: then and now

Ali Parchami (History and IR, Sandhurst Royal Military Academy)
The abuse of history: the normative effect of Pax Romana on modern imperial thought

Robert Young (English and Comparative Literature, New York University)
From the Anti-colonial Movements to the New Social Movements

Chair: Dane Kennedy (History, George Washington University, Washington DC)
Discussant: Taraq Barqawi (Political science, Centre of International Studies, Cambridge)

3.45 – 4.30 pm **Concluding remarks**

Jacques Frémeaux (History, University of Paris IV)
Andrew Thompson (History, University of Leeds)

4.30 – 5.00 pm *Tea and biscuits*

Workshop aims

Oxford University's Modern History Faculty, the European Studies Centre, and the Maison française d'Oxford are convening an inter-disciplinary workshop on *Echoes of European imperialisms* in comparative perspective. Its core aims are to bring together specialists of different areas or 'empires' as well as historians and political scientists from Oxford and beyond, to encourage better synergies between imperial history and area studies and discuss the relevance of imperial history to today's global affairs. We believe one of the ways to achieve this is by 'de-centering' our understanding of imperialism from the 'centre' to the 'peripheries' and identifying differences and similarities in 'colonial' patterns of relationships between peoples and states then and now. The workshop is an integral part of the Commonwealth History Research Seminar and will link this seminar with the project 'Re-Thinking Europe in a Non-European World' led by the European Studies Centre.

Research about nineteenth and twentieth century imperialisms has suffered from two major shortcomings. First, it has narrowly focussed on imperial traditions based upon the history of the nation-state at the expense of a broader vision acknowledging the shared features of a phenomenon that swept through Europe at approximately the same time and against the same world historical backdrop. Secondly, historiography has all too often been Eurocentric. It has thus tended to overlook both the reciprocal effects of the contact between European and non-European worlds that colonial practice inevitably brought about, and the peripheral, non-European imperialisms which remain misrepresented or ignored.

The conference will address these issues comparatively across different European imperial traditions and link them to present concerns. A 'decentered' approach implies examining both non-European forms of imperialism and European imperialisms from a non-European perspective. To what extent were imperialisms originating in Europe based upon the same political and social principles and practices? How did European colonial theories and practices compare with their Chinese, Japanese or Ottoman counterparts? What is the impact of imperial legacies on today's international relations and more particularly on the principles and workings of the EU? How can the global study of European empires provide a better understanding of current discourses and practices, including that of Europe as a 'normative power'? And normatively, what would a truly post-colonial approach to global affairs look like today?

Through this workshop, the convenors hope to initiate a dialogue that will continue in the years to come and foster cross-disciplinary debates about the colonial and post-colonial condition. By combining their tools of enquiry and sharing their research agendas, historians and political scientists can hopefully better tackle what remains a highly sensitive and contested episode of human history.

Sessions

Session 1 – European Imperialisms: The Present of the Past

Contemporary inquiries brought about by globalisation have tended to cast a shadow on the main assumptions of post-modern and post-colonial thinking. However, only a few decades have elapsed since the demise of the European empires which blossomed in the nineteenth century and it is arguable that the legacy of colonial times remains palpable in post-colonial Euro-American initiatives, as well as in the reaction of the former colonised peoples to these initiatives. The third and fourth papers, which expand the timeline of the workshop in order to include the case of Latin America, consider the long-lasting influence of Portuguese and Spanish imperialism on countries which have been independent from mainland Europe for nearly two centuries. They provide examples which will complement those of the second panel.

Session 2 – Colonialism and modernity in Africa and in Asia

Colonial rule projected directly African and Asian colonies from a pre-industrial stage to the post-colonial era; imperialism therefore appeared as a powerful agent of modernity in most of these former colonies. The three papers intend to analyse the ideas, practices and concepts of modernity in former colonies which (unlike the British Dominions) left the Western world at independence. Not only do they intend to summarize the impact of the colonial past on two continents which display non-European identities, but they also place into context the meanings of the 'post-colonial' and 'post-modern' concepts.

Session 3 – Sea-borne imperial visions

Session 4 – Land-based imperial visions

By adopting an approach based on the geographical modus operandi rather than the classic distinction between European and non-European empires, the third and fourth panels intend to radically 'de-centre' the study of imperialism and evaluate to what extent colonial projects and practices were dictated as much by factors internal to the conquering power as by the conditions that prevailed in the conquered territory. Presenters will be invited to bear in mind the following questions when producing their papers:

- 1) Is there genuinely a pan-European idea of imperialism?
- 2) Is there a distinctively European tradition of imperialism?
- 3) Were there fundamental differences between land-based and sea-borne empires?

Session 5 – Imperial legacies in the EU project

This panel will draw on the preceding ones and confront their insights with an analysis of the EU's policies and narratives today. It will ask to what extent the EU still carries within itself the "colonial DNA" of some of its member states or to what extent on the contrary it has been able to transcend these imperial legacies. Alternatively, since structures of power asymmetries are a given in our world order, are certain patterns of hierarchical relationship inevitable irrespective of a colonial past? And what is the impact of the difference in legacies present in the different member states?

Session 6 – The post-colonial agenda: A normative panel

This panel will explore the normative constitution of the ideas and practices of imperialism and resistance thereto. What sorts of normative influences do imperialisms of the past exert on those of the present? Similarly, does the normative thinking of earlier resistances to imperialism have any bearing on contemporary struggles and movements?