

Call for Papers: The Futures Past of the Ottomans, Paris, 12-13 October 2023.

Conceived by specialists of the Ottoman Empire and historians of Republican Turkey, the scientific program of the conference builds on a question: Why does it now seem essential to reorient scientific activities towards the observation of the present time? Mustafa Kemal had purged school curricula of references to the Ottoman Empire. He intended to lead Turkey on the western route and linked the creation of the new Turkish man to a single historical reference: The Turkish peoples of ancient and medieval times. R. T. Erdoğan anchors the country he presides over in a long-term Turkish history, bringing under the same political scope Islamic heritages of medieval times, pre-modern transformations of a sultanate into an empire, and the universal legacy the sultans integrated after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. In doing so, Erdoğan fills his 2023 agenda with commemorative events, claiming to unify the Turkish nation into the civilization of Islam and the futures past of the Ottomans.

Neo-Ottomanism, Erdoganism and Kemalism

Roundly attacked as an analytical concept, Neo-Ottomanism has mainly been examined by political scientists. However, its mechanisms cannot be analyzed without resorting to the historical background it constantly refers to. The parallels between current events and imperial history are numerous, but it is difficult to determine the extent to which scientifically disjoined historicities in the academic field are being mixed up by overlapped and intricate *"régimes mémoriels"* (J. Michel).

The program of the conference intends to examine how Erdoganism brings together 1) anti-Kemalism: revolutionary utopia as the rejection of the old order and the shaping of a new man leads to a multi-faceted (Islamist, nationalist and modern) counterrevolution; 2)

post-Kemalism: just as any land reconquered during the war of national liberation had to be recognized as Turkish, so any formerly Ottoman land should now be known as neo-Ottoman; 3/ Neo-Ottoman Kemalism: modelling on the sultan, the Turkish president ensures the redistribution of resources and the balance of justice; 4) anti-Westernism: the revisionism of international treaties and the support of foreign conspiracy theories nurtures the rejection of the Enlightenment tradition that underpinned Kemalism.

Interdisciplinary contributions and area studies

Addressing the polysemy of neo-Ottomanist narratives, the organizers of the conference welcome interdisciplinary contributions, including literary studies, translation studies or media studies. Exploring the correlations between literary and political dimensions of “post-imperial nostalgia” (H. Yavuz), they also aim to bring together scholars with expertise in political science, sociology or anthropology. In *The Paradox of Liberation*, M. Walzer takes the cases of India, Algeria and Israel together to show how secularized revolutions led to religious counterrevolutions. Truly, if Erdoganism develops specific Turkish characteristics, it also comes under a study of comparative politics. In Asia and Europe, many populists are now in power. A new kind of regime combines elections and attacks against institutions (A. Dieckhoff, C. Jaffrelot and E. Massicard). The conference aims to offer bilateral comparisons with political movements on the uses of the imperial past.

Application Procedure

Organized by the CESSMA (Centre d'Études en Sciences Sociales sur les Mondes Africains, Américains et Asiatiques) and the CETOBAC (Centre d'Études Turques, Ottomanes, Balkaniques et Centrasiatiques) and sponsored by the IUF (Institut Universitaire de France), the conference will be held in English at Université Paris Cité. There is no fee for the conference. Food and accommodation expenses will be covered. Students and scholars with neither travel scholarships nor university funding will be supported.

Papers will be twenty minutes long with ten minutes for discussion. Proposals should include an abstract (max. 400 words) and a short biography (max. 200 words) and should

be sent to Prof. Olivier Bouquet (Université Paris Cité; olivier.bouquet@gmail.com) by **15 Dec 2022**. If participation is accepted, a draft paper of around 8000 words is due three weeks prior to the beginning of the conference. We intend to compile an edited volume of the papers to be published in 2024.

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