



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Empires: Experience, Memory and Idea



Place

University of Navarra,
Pamplona, Spain



Date

October 1st-3rd,
2025



Organized by:

Institute for Culture
and Society (ICS)

CALL FOR PAPERS

The renewed geopolitical competition among great powers for regional or global hegemony and the revival of the postcolonial critique among Western countries regarding their imperial past and its reverberations in today's societies and international relations have revived the interest among scholars, intellectuals, and policymakers in the model and history of empires. Contemporary discussions extend beyond traditional postcolonial and decolonial frameworks to encompass emerging forms of empire, imperialism, and colonialism. This broadened scope demands a nuanced understanding of imperialism's plurality across time and space. Empires and colonialism, far from being confined to particular civilizations or eras, have manifested in diverse contexts, producing varied experiences, memories, and conceptualizations across civilizations, religions, and cultures. These experiences encompass multiple dimensions: from dynamics of violence and resistance to economics of extraction and trade, from management of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity to politics of governance and assimilation. These experiences continue to shape contemporary debates about imperial legacies and their ongoing impact on global relations and domestic politics.

The tradition of moral, economic, religious, political, or historical legitimations for ongoing or past empires is as long-standing as justifications of resistance against those empires. From some of the Church Father's association of the Roman Empire with the image of the 'katechon' or Zosimus identi-

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cation of Moscow with the Third Rome to John O'Sullivan's messianic defense of the westward expansion as 'manifest destiny', there had been plenty of arguments in political theology and philosophy in favor or against particular empires. The Chinese 'mandate of heaven', the Dutch and British 'terra nullius', and the Arabic and Ottoman 'dar-al-Islam' are just some examples of the conceptualization developed by some empires to validate their existence. In the same vein, the enemies of those empires developed equally intricate arguments to oppose and resist them. These arguments regarding whether or not empires should exist continue today, not just concerning the justification of past empires now gone or declining, but also in connection with current and nascent empires. Connected to these validation disputes are debates on the causes of an empire's rise and fall.

The persistence of imperial powers, patterns, and effects beyond the cessation of formal empires as political entities remains central to understanding global inequalities today. Yet equally significant is the ongoing political struggle over collective memories and memorializations of empires. What should be remembered and what must be forgotten becomes instrumental in constructing individual and collective identities and reproducing modern subjectivities. This process of selective remembrance and forgetting is not neutral but deeply political, shaping how societies understand themselves and their place in the global order.

Contemporary conflicts are frequently shaped by these historical references and framings, while the links between collective memory, identity, security, and trauma traverse individual, local, national, regional, transnational, international, and global lines. This complexity demands an interdisciplinary approach, bringing together diverse perspectives to comprehend how imperial pasts continue to shape our present and future, not just through institutional legacies but through the active work of memory and memorialization. The politics of memory emerges as a contested and affectively charged contact zone where politics, identity, history, emotions, power, law, and the human search for meaning converge. This convergence manifests dramatically in recent years through the contestation of imperial symbols - from the toppling of statues in Africa, Europe, and America to the renaming of buildings and institutions. The architectural, visual, and literary legacy of empires has become a battleground between advocates of preservation, contextualization, and erasure, while educational and cultural systems grapple with representations ranging from nostalgia to shame, celebration to derision.

The intersection of memory politics and imperial legacies manifests in multiple dimensions: from the securitization of collective memory to the role of trauma in international politics; from the influence of past wars on interstate reconciliation to the relationship between memory and ontological security. The politics of memory emerges as a contested and affectively charged contact zone where politics, identity, history, emotions, power, law, and the human search for meaning converge.

This conference seeks to create a space for dialogue across disciplinary boundaries, examining how the force of imperial pasts and the force of present interpretations interact to shape contemporary global politics. It aims to develop new conceptual frameworks for understanding how societies remember and forget their imperial experiences, and how these processes of remembrance and forget-

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ting continue to shape international relations, domestic politics, and cultural production in our post-imperial present. This conference aims to foster dialogue among scholars from Anthropology, Aesthetics, Art History, Comparative Literature, History, Economics, International Relations, Memory Studies, Political Theory, Political Theology, Sociology, and related fields. We particularly welcome approaches that examine the complex interplay between historical legacies and contemporary memory politics in shaping our understanding of empires and that interrogate the experiences, memories, and ideas of imperial and post-imperial spaces.

We welcome papers that address, but are not limited to, the following themes:

- Material and cultural legacies of empire in the present.
- Contemporary imperial formations and great power/geopolitical competition.
- Historical patterns of imperial governance and resistance across civilizations.
- Emerging forms of hegemony and their relationship to historical imperial models.
- Imperial economic structures and resource extraction networks.
- Cultural and religious diversity management in imperial systems.
- Contestation of imperial memory in public spaces.
- Monuments, museums and architectural heritage in post-imperial spaces.
- Political theology and philosophical justifications of empire.
- Literary and artistic representations of imperial power.
- Educational approaches to imperial history.
- Rise and decline narratives of empires.
- Imperial knowledge production and epistemologies.
- Cross-cultural encounters and imperial frontiers.
- Religious dimensions of imperial legitimation.
- The politics of memory in post-imperial spaces.
- Construction of individual and collective identities through imperial memories.
- The role of memorialization and commemorative practices in shaping modern subjectivities.
- Collective nostalgia and critical engagement with imperial pasts.
- Intersection of trauma, memory, and international relations.
- The influence of imperial legacies on contemporary foreign policy.
- Ontological security and collective memory in post-imperial societies.
- The impact of historical memory on interstate reconciliation.

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Submission Types:

- Individual paper presentations (15 minutes)
- Panel proposals (3-4 papers, 90 minutes)

Those interested in participating should send their **submissions before April 30th, 2025**, to the email icsevents@unav.es. We welcome three types of submissions: individual paper presentations (20 minutes), panel proposals (3-4 papers, 90 minutes), and research posters. Submissions will be evaluated by the scientific committee of the conference. **Successful applicants will be notified no later than May 31st, 2025.**

Paper submissions should include the paper title, a 300-word abstract, author's institutional affiliation, and 5 keywords maximum. Panel submissions must include a panel overview (500 words maximum) with a clear panel title, individual paper abstracts (250 words each) with their titles, and complete information for all participants. This includes the chair's name and institutional affiliation, all presenters' names and institutional affiliations, and the discussant's details if applicable.

Accepted authors will have 15 minutes to present their papers. Panel sessions will be allocated 90 minutes. Presentations online will only be accepted if they are considered of outstanding relevance. For panel proposals, each session will be allocated a 90-minute slot to accommodate 3-4 papers, with 20 minutes per presentation and 30 minutes reserved for discussion and Q&A. All panels must include a designated chair, and discussants are optional. Panel proposals should demonstrate thematic coherence while offering diverse perspectives on the topic.

This congress is part of the ICS Challenge 24-25 "[Orientalism and Occidentalism: crossed gazes](#)" of the Institute for Culture and Society of the University of Navarra.

Submissions will be considered from **disciplines within the Humanities and Social Sciences**, including history, political philosophy, international relationships, sociology, social sciences and any other discipline or work that deals with the topics at hand.

To participate, please note the following registration options:

- Standard Registration Fee (no meals): €20.
- Full Registration Fee (includes 3 meals and a dinner): €70.

Contact

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KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Jonathan Israel, from the Institute for Advanced Study, specializes in European and colonial history from the Renaissance to the 18th century. His notable works include *The Dutch Republic and Radical Enlightenment*, focusing on the impact of philosophy on modernity and democracy. His recent research explores the Radical Enlightenment's early critique of European colonialism (1660–1770).



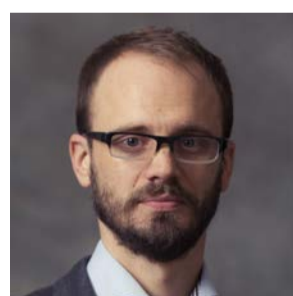
Peter Heather, King's College London. Peter Heather's work concerns the later Roman Empire and its successor states. His books include *The Goths* (1996), *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (2005), *Empires and Barbarians* (2009), and (with John Rapley) *Why Empires Fall: Rome, America, and the Future of the West* (2023).



Julian Go, from The University of Chicago, studies the social dynamics, structures, and impacts of empires and colonialism, alongside postcolonial and decolonial thought. His research also explores global historical sociology and epistemology. His notable works include *American Empire and the Politics of Meaning* (2008), *Patterns of Empire* (2011), and *Policing Empires* (2023).



Maria Mälksoo, University of Copenhagen. Maria Mälksoo's work concerns Critical Security Studies (ontological security, securitization of historical memory); political anthropology (liminality, rituals), and the political practice of deterrence. Her books include *The Politics of Becoming European* (2010), *Remembering Katyn* (2012), and *Handbook on the Politics of Memory* (2023).



Karl Gustafsson, from Stockholm University, focuses on security, power, and the role of collective memory in International Relations. His research examines how memory politics and narratives influence international relations, particularly in East Asia. Notable articles include *Memory Politics and Ontological Security in Sino-Japanese Relations* (2014), *Routinised Recognition and Anxiety* (2016), and *Narrative Power* (2019). His work explores the impact of storytelling on East Asian politics.

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