

**Call for papers**  
**Deadline for submission of proposals: 4th September 2023**

**INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM**  
**1974-2024. The history of contemporary international relations.**  
**A discipline in transition**

**Paris, 23-25th May 2024**

On the eve of its fiftieth anniversary in 2024, the journal *Relations internationales* intends to undertake a thorough survey of the changes that have affected the history of international relations as a discipline of the historical sciences over the past half-century, under the effect of multiple epistemological "turns". The dilution of disciplinary boundaries, due in part to the rise of *studies*, the transnationalisation and 'globalisation' of many objects of study, have called for a rethinking of its identity, objectives and methods. The historian cannot underestimate the force of the event or events: inscribed in a very particular context, marked by the global health epidemic of the coronavirus and the outbreak of war in Ukraine, this anniversary also invites us to question once again a founding alternative of the international debate, between cooperation and national confrontation, and the relationship between two perspectives, the cultural and the political, of international relations, which have tended for forty years to be lived in an antagonistic mode.

The call for papers is therefore open not only to internationalist historians, but also to those who claim the internationalisation and transnationalisation of their field of research. The conference aims to encourage dialogue on the epistemological premises, reading frameworks, vocabularies and methods of each, around a case study or a more general presentation. Its objective is not commemorative, but prospective: the challenge is to open up new perspectives.

Five fields of reflection are proposed.

### **The concepts**

One of the negative characteristics applied to the history of contemporary international relations has been its so-called 'ascetic reluctance' with regard to the exposition of its epistemological and conceptual premises, reproached by Hans-Ulrich Wehler to Klaus Hildebrand in 1996<sup>1</sup>. It has, however, its founding concepts, linked to its original state paradigm (system, order, grandeur, power, national interest), and concepts from more diverse interpretive perspectives (deep forces, dynamics). It has always had a strong relationship with the social sciences, particularly political science. Nevertheless, we note that its historians have still too rarely shown an interest in reflecting on their categories of analysis and in the debates engaged by the history of ideas and concepts.

Taking as a starting point Reinhart Koselleck's distinction between concepts inherited from the past, which can be used as a heuristic approach to grasp past reality, and those elaborated *ex post* by historians of the present to analyse the facts of the past, we encourage interventions focusing on redefinitions and new utilizations of concepts of the discipline (such as "foreign policy" or "power") or on recent analytical categories (e.g. "circulation", which have already been the object of analysis<sup>2</sup>), or discursive notions, expressions and metaphors at the heart of the discourse of the actors themselves (like "peace", "solidarity", "development", "security", "norm" etc., and which have been taken up and integrated (or not) into the analytical lexicon of historians (questioning the metaphorical trajectory of the 'Three Circles' from Churchill to Nasser is one example).

### **The spaces**

For a long time, the places of the international scene were implicitly identified with diplomatic places (ministries, embassies and consulates, headquarters of international organizations, etc.). Since its inception, the journal *Relations internationales* has studied other 'actors' alongside states (and their components): companies,

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<sup>1</sup> Hans-Ulrich Wehler, "'Moderne' Politikgeschichte? Oder: Willkommen im Kreis der Neorankeaner vor. 1914", *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 22/1 (1996), pp. 257-266, here p. 258.

<sup>2</sup> Stephanie Gänger, « Circulation: Reflections on circularity, entity, and liquidity in the language of global history », *Journal of Global History*, 2017/3, 12, p. 303-318.

non-governmental organizations, cultural, academic and sporting organizations, etc., appear as other places of the international. It would be good to think of them also as places, as other places of the international. In addition to places of governance, encounter and exchange, places of suffering and inequality have also begun to emerge as objects of contemporary international relations: zones of combat, refugee camps and those of prisoners of war, the mines of the global South where forced labor reigns to the benefit of northern consumers, places where indigenous peoples encounter capitalism, as well as places of North-South dialogue and cooperation.

In addition to institutional spaces there are spaces escaping the logics of statehood, which can either become institutionalized or emancipate themselves from national or State logics. Urban spaces like Puerta del Sol in Madrid, the place Tahir in Kairo, the Maidan in Kiev, or Tiananmen in Beijing, can be mentioned as examples. Marked by demonstrations with various objectives, but all tied in some degree to the idea of democracy, these places have become spaces of the circulation of collective emotions, slogans and practices that were commented or adopted by others.

We encourage very diverse proposals on topological places, but also geographical and imaginary spaces, which have been interlinked by inter- and transnational dynamics and/or debates on the organization of the international system.

### **The actors**

Traditional diplomatic history had identified the individual with a heroic figure, the 'statesman'. From the 1960s onwards, some of its adherents began to shift their focus to the entourage of the 'statesman' in the light of decision-making studies, while others participated in the 'eclipse of the actor' behind anonymous structures. In the 1980s, moving closer to social and cultural history, the history of international relations 'rediscovered' the individual through a transnational perspective based on the notion of 'milieu'. We encourage interventions reviewing the decision-making process, the study of the entourage or groups of councilors. As the participation of women in international relations has been the subject of a number of pioneering studies, proposals that combine the history of international relations with a gender perspective will also be welcome.

A new stage was reached in the 2000s with the affirmation of new 'figures' of the international. These "social figures", in the sense defined by Sebastian Moser and Tobias Schlechtriemen, and no longer heroic, can, among other things, be considered as "emergence phenomena", symptoms of the changes that have taken place on an international scale, and also bearers of an experience<sup>5</sup>. The individual is therefore grasped in a given situation, in his or her (inter-)national, imperial or colonial context and can only act within the framework of a function. The figure of mediator, civil or military expert, lawyer, doctor, artist, head of a giant corporation (GAFA), imperial representative, activist of a movement or an NGO or member of an international secretariat could be examined from a biographical or group portrait perspective. The figure of victim of armed conflict could be examined from the point of view of its capacity for action in international relations.

Presentations in those perspectives and renewing the approach to actors in the history of international relations will be welcome.

### **Temporalities**

While wars have long structured the time of international history into a "before", an "after" and an "in-between", the questioning of a chronology of a political nature, structured by a legal vision, has led, since the 2000s, to question traditional periodizations and to focus on periods of transition, on the overlapping of different temporalities, which make it possible to grasp continuity in discontinuity, and depending on the point of view adopted, to read in it the end of an era or, and this is the tropism of a presentist XXI<sup>e</sup> century, to seek in it the premises of our time.

We encourage papers that focus on 'thresholds', 'turning points', 'moments' and other 'transitions' in the history of international relations, and that reflect on the relevance of specific caesuras (a reflection on the 'end' of the 20th century would thus be welcomed).

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<sup>5</sup> Sebastian J. Moser and Tobias Schlechtriemen, 'Social figures - between societal experience and sociological diagnosis', FMSH-WP-2018-140, December 2018: <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01972078/document>,

### **Emerging sites of research**

Over the last twenty years or so, entire new sites of research have emerged in the contemporary history of international relations. For example, women and children, humanitarian action, the environment, emotions, the digital age and cybersecurity, inter-imperial relations, forced labour and the regulation of labour in international relations, international legal practices, procedures and norms as object or red thread of historical analysis.

New interfaces have been established between our discipline and economic history, political history and military history, which are also undergoing important changes.

Furthermore, new reflections on identifying and mobilizing new bodies of sources, including, visual, audio or numeric sources could be pursued.

In short, the editorial board welcomes and encourages any original proposal that deepens the understanding of an area of international relations, identifies a new site of research or suggests a new type of approach.

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### **How to submit texts**

1) Brief proposals for articles (in French or English), indicating in approximately one page the subject, the field and the documentation envisaged, may be sent to the editorial secretariat of the journal before **4 September 2023** at the following address: [badel@univ-paris1.fr](mailto:badel@univ-paris1.fr) ; [Matthias.Schulz@unige.ch](mailto:Matthias.Schulz@unige.ch) ; [secretariat.ipr@univ-paris1.fr](mailto:secretariat.ipr@univ-paris1.fr).

2) The provisional papers have to be submitted one week before the conference.

3) The final papers shall be published in the journal *Relations internationales*, after evaluation by the board of editors, external expertise, and subject to validation by Catherine Nicault and Robert Frank. They must be submitted by 30 June 2024 and should not exceed 40,000 characters (including space and notes). The editorial charter of the journal is available on [the PUF website](#).

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The organisers will provide transport and accommodation for participants.