Around the end of the Middle Ages significant changes gradually appeared in the conduct of international relations and diplomacy: these included the increased establishment of permanent embassies as well as a burgeoning sense of professionalism coupled with an appreciation of the importance of expertise. Moreover, the Ottoman presence in Southeast Europe and in the Mediterranean stimulated new approaches to diplomacy, and, in the long term, contributed to the formation of the professionalized diplomacy which was based on elaborate decision-making procedures.

The conference herein advertised, hosted by the Institute for Habsburg and Balkan Studies of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (IHB ÖAW) and the Institute for History of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IH PAN) seeks to examine the problem of this diplomatic decision-making in the context of the multi-faceted political and cultural contacts between the Ottoman Empire and the rest of early modern Europe. Firstly, its main scope focuses on both power
conflicts and conflict-management practice in Central Europe, Southeast Europe and the Mediterranean. In light of political actions, it shall also reflect the significance of cultural exchange in the directly affected regions, as well as the growing interest in the Ottoman Empire and the Near East in Europe. Secondly, in order to enrich this increasingly popular research field by new approaches, this event centers the procedure of decision-making which has been largely under-investigated in the field of European-Ottoman relations so far.

It is necessary to emphasize the principle that decisions are here interpreted as a kind of specific practice of communication. As the latest research outcomes of relevant scholarship also demonstrate, “decision” can be understood not only as an individual act based both on rational consideration and personal motives, but also as a procedural form of a social action. Decision-making is increasingly defined as a culturally and temporally determined phenomenon which points to a final choice with (presumably) the highest potential for the most optimal solution from among a range of options. From this perspective it is not so much the decision itself, but instead the path that leads to it that becomes the focus of interest.

Considering recent endeavors in contemporary historiography, our conference is expected to expand the scope of investigations and models beyond the borders of early modern Europe in many ways. It shall provide us with a better understanding of the functioning of European-Ottoman relations and decision-making strategies of the early modern era at the same time. Therefore, we invite scholars to rethink the relationship between the Ottoman Empire, European states – which shall also include Persia and Ottoman tributary states – from the particular perspective of decision-making mentioned above. However, this focus shall not only include European decisions on Ottoman issues, but, vice versa, papers analyzing Ottoman decision-making in European issues are welcome as well.

In aiming to create a solid understanding of the general conditions for reaching a political decision connected to the complex problem of early modern European-Ottoman relations, we invite proposals for papers which address primarily the following questions:

❖ The early modern theory of decision-making: what did “decision” in the field of European-Ottoman diplomacy precisely mean? In other words, how was diplomatic decision defined by contemporary authors and how can it be related to political interest in early modern European-Ottoman contacts?

❖ Practicing early modern decision-making: What forms of decision-making procedures can be revealed in special cases with Ottoman or European relevance respectively? What different alternatives were taken into consideration and to what extent was contingency characteristic while reaching a decision? To what extent were the decision-making procedures formalized in early modern European-Ottoman relations?

❖ What sources of information were diplomatic decisions based on, how was knowledge gained and circulated in order to create a solid base for a significant diplomatic decision? What role did espionage play?

❖ What informal (e.g. spies, advisors) and formal actors (e.g. diplomats, kings, state officials) contributed to the development and execution of a diplomatic decision in different geographical and political areas? How were these actors linked to the monarch?

❖ Where were the relevant decisions made and through what formal or informal ways? What was the role of institutions in counselling the monarchs and to which extent were representative bodies or other institutions (e.g. parliament, local assemblies, administrative organs) involved in the decision-making procedure? How did decision-making in European-Ottoman relations evolve from informal councillors towards formal institutions?
The mediality of decisions: What kind of narratives and symbolic-communicative characteristics of the decision-making procedure can be revealed in European-Ottoman encounters? How, and through which media, were diplomatic decisions communicated for the broader public in order to reach the highest possible legitimation (if such legitimation were important to the decision-makers)?

Please send an abstract of up to 250 words for twenty-minute papers and a short biographical note to splendidencounters11@gmail.com Deadline for submission is 15th October 2022. The applicants will be notified of the acceptance of their proposal by 4th November 2022. All queries should be directed to Dr Zsuzsanna Cziráki (Zsuzsanna.Cziraki@oeaw.ac.at) or Dr Anna Kalinowska (akalinowska@ihpan.edu.pl).

Splendid Encounters is a series of international and interdisciplinary conferences that aims to bring together scholars from different fields of study to consider diplomacy and diplomatic activities in the early modern period within the broadest possible framework. After nine successful meetings in, among others, Warsaw, Bath, Budapest, Prague, Toulouse, Florence and Lisbon we invite you to join us for another event, this time hosted by the Institute for Habsburg and Balkan Studies of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (IHB ÖAW) in Vienna.