

Università della Valle d'Aosta - Université de la Vallée d'Aoste

Dipartimento di Scienze Economiche e Politiche

Institute of Historical Research at the University of London

“British rule in Africa between the Empire and the Commonwealth of Nations”

Università della Valle d'Aosta, 23-25 January 2025

The aim of the conference is to reflect more fully on the nature of certain conflicts – ethnic, socio-economic, religious – within so-called British Africa, while pursuing a threefold goal: to highlight their complex and composite nature; to reflect on the different attempts to resolve them; and to shed more light on both British foreign policy and the role of the Commonwealth as an instrument of transnational global governance. Focusing on reasons and modalities of the new British prominence in Africa, therefore, also represents an approach of studying the Commonwealth from an «outside in» perspective and the ways in which its modern structure developed.

Panel I (23 January)

(15.00-18.30)

- Institutional welcome

*British rule in Africa: an overview*

- Luigi Bruti Liberati (Università Statale di Milano): “William Gladstone and Anthony Eden Invade Egypt: 1882 and 1956 compared”
- Saul Dubow (Cambridge University): “The Commonwealth: A century and more of slow, managed decolonisation”
- Philip Murphy (University of London): “Britain and the Commonwealth: Soft Power or Hard Knocks? An Uncomfortable relationship”
- Jan Erk (Université Mohammed VI Polytechnique): “A Federal Casualty of the Journey from the Empire to the Commonwealth”

Discussant: Paolo Gheda (Università della Valle d'Aosta)

Panel II (24 January)

(09.00-12.30)

*Conflicts and Peace Processes in Divided Societies*

- Paolo Gheda (Università della Valle d'Aosta): "The role of Christian denominations within the segregationist regime until the end of apartheid".
- Mario Zamponi (Università di Bologna): "Mugabe's Zimbabwe: Nationalism, land reform and crisis in Commonwealth relationship".
- Paolo Borruso (Università Cattolica di Milano): "Non-Institutional Actors in Peacemaking Processes in West Africa: Area Interconnections between Civil Wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia"
- Paolo Perri (Università della Valle d'Aosta): "*A complex affair*. The history of Anglo-Rwandan relations"

Discussant: Saul Dubow (Cambridge University)

Panel III (24 January)

(15.00-18.30)

*Identity, Nations and Conflicts in British Africa*

- Richard Reid (University of Oxford): "Uganda Perceived. Scenes from the long Twentieth Century"
- Maria Stella Rognoni (Università di Firenze): "*Prova d'orchestra*. The Commonwealth in Africa and the first Congo crisis"
- Paola Pizzo (Università G. d'Annunzio di Chieti-Pescara): "National and Religious identities in post Great War Egypt"
- Carrollann Braum (Institute of Commonwealth Studies): "A Case for Healing in Kenya through Litigating Colonial Era Claims in the UK"

Discussant: Philip Murphy (University of London)

Panel IV (25 January)

(9.00-11:00)

*The African battlefield*

- Mélanie Torrent (Université Picardie Jules Verne): “The Commonwealth of Nations and ‘francophone’ Africa: bridging the colonial divides?”
- Bernardo Paci, Teodoro Tagliaferri (Università Federico II di Napoli): “The Company-State as a Form of British Colonial Projection in Africa. The Case of the British South Africa Company”
- Emanuele Ertola (Università di Siena): “Inventing Originality: Fascist Italy’s Comparative Colonial Discourse with the British Empire”

Discussant: Maria Stella Rognoni (Università di Firenze)

Panel V (25 January)

(11:15-13.15)

*The Aosta Valley between the United Kingdom and Africa*

- Alessandro Celi (Fondation Émile Chanoux): “An ‘English’ Valley? British presences and Anglophiles in Valle d’Aosta between the 19th and 20th centuries”
- Laura Grivon (Centre Interuniversitaire Recherche Voyage en Italie): “English travellers at the Great St. Bernard between 1815 and 1850”
- Joseph Péaquin (Union de la Presse francophone, Aoste): “*Au sud des montagnes, l’Afrique: les Valdôtains en Afrique du sud*”
- Andrea Désandré (Historical Institute of the Resistance): “Valle d’Aosta 1944-45: l’ingerenza britannica prima, durante e dopo la Liberazione”

Discussant: Paolo Gheda (Università della Valle d’Aosta)

Final Round Table (25 January)

(15.00-17.00)

*Intelligence and Africa: the Cold War, the end of Empire and the Commonwealth of Nations*

- Chair: Paolo Perri (Università della Valle d'Aosta)
- Philip Murphy (University of London)
- Saul Dubow (Cambridge University)
- Paolo Gheda (Università della Valle d'Aosta)
- Richard Reid (University of Oxford)
- Paolo Borruso (Università Cattolica di Milano)
- Discussant: Chantal Morosso (Università della Valle d'Aosta)

Scientific Committee:

Paolo Borruso, Saul Dubow, Paolo Gheda, Philip Murphy, Paolo Perri, Mario Zamponi