



Call for Papers:
Africa and the Global Cold War III
Erfurt, 17-19 September 2020

*Erfurt University; Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University; Mekelle University;
University of West Bohemia in Pilsen*

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As Odd Arne Westad put it in his recent monograph: “The Cold War did not decide everything, but it influenced most things, and often for the worse”¹—indeed, especially in Africa, the antagonism between East and West repeatedly fuelled and at times, decisively escalated regional conflicts. But the relevance of the Cold War in Africa goes beyond conflict alone: it closed and opened channels of communication, forged and destroyed international connections, guided global movements, and changed perceptions and worldviews in multiple ways; competing visions of modernity and the struggle for natural resources influenced attitudes towards questions of development and the environment. Hence, the conference “Africa and the Global Cold War III” aims to continue exploring the role of the East-West rivalry in Africa, building upon recent work in the field that places the history of international relations in broader cultural and societal contexts with an eye on trans-national and trans-regional developments.

For this third conference in a series that began in July 2018, we will examine a series of themes centring on geopolitics, the creation and contestation of borders, the establishment of international norms, environmental questions, and the transnational flow of people, ideas, and illicit goods. We aim to discuss the overlapping alignments and realignments on the global, regional, and local level, taking into account the superpowers, other external states, and African governments, but also non-state actors including international organisations such as the UN and Organisation of African Unity (OAU), international NGOs, opposition groups, and members of the civil society. For instance, the border conflicts in the Horn of Africa were characterised by shifting alliances between the superpowers, regional states, and secessionist movements. Furthermore, the OAU and its insistence on the principle of the inviolability of (post-)colonial borders also played an important role. In general, during the Cold War, numerous disputes on

¹ Odd Arne Westad, *The Cold War: A World History*, London 2017, p. 2.



the nature of international norms came to the fore, dealing with myriad topics including: arms supplies and the use of mercenaries; legal and illicit migration and the proper treatment of refugees; desertification, droughts, the proper usage of natural resources, and international environmental standards.

To discuss these themes, we invite proposals for presentations on specific aspects and/or case studies relating to one of the following topics, though presenters are not limited only to the questions posed below.

- Territorial & Border Conflicts: How did the Cold War influence irredentist movements, annexations and secessions? How did regional and local actors harness the global ideological conflict to promote their interests?
- Arms Trade: What pattern of arms deals accompanied the changing alignments and realignments between African and external state actors? How did the Cold War affect the opportunities of non-state actors to acquire military supplies? To which degree did the super power conflict determine the success and failures of arms embargos?
- Transnational Migration: What migrations flows were enabled by ideological alliances between African and external states? What kind of illicit migration coexisted with these official channels? How did the Cold War context shape endeavours to implement international migration norms including the UN and OAU Refugee Conventions?
- Intellectual Exchanges & Knowledge Transfers: How did the Cold War influence the intellectual history of Africa? How did ideological alliances shape cooperation in the field of education? Which kind of knowledge transfers were hidden from the public, for example in the field of espionage and security cooperation?
- Environmental History: Were there differences in the development aid from East and West in respect to environmental standards? How can Cold War conflicts over natural resources in Africa be analysed from an environmental history perspective? Did ecological damage inflicted by East and West in Africa – for example French nuclear testing in the Sahara – act as a catalyst for African actors to resist and organize around the issue of environmentalism?

The conference builds on events previously held in Erfurt and Mekelle.² The first two conferences emerged out of the cooperation between Mekelle University and Erfurt University,

² Philipp Metzler, Conference Review: Africa and the Global Cold War, 05.07.2018 – 06.07.2018 Erfurt, in: H-Soz-Kult, 22.01.2019, <www.hsozkult.de/conferencereport/id/tagungsberichte-8061>; Paul Sprute and Maximilian Vogel, Conference Review: Africa and the Global Cold War, University of Mekelle, March 2019, in: Global Histories 5/1 (2019), pp. 168-175, <<https://www.globalhistories.com/index.php/GHSJ/article/view/314/163>>.



and for this event, they will be joined by the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University, and the University of Western Bohemia in Pilsen as partner organisations.³ Although we aim to keep discussing Cold War developments in all of Africa, this event will have a particular focus on the history of North-East Africa. With regard to the global context, East-South relations will be more prominently discussed than during past events and applications dealing with them are encouraged. All proposals are expected to be based on advanced or completed archivally-based research, since we plan to publish a selection of papers from all three conferences in an edited volume.

Please send your abstract (250-500 words) and a short academic CV until the September 1, 2019, to Christian Methfessel (christian.methfessel@uni-erfurt.de) and Ned Richardson-Little (ned.richardson-little@uni-erfurt.de). We aim to obtain funding to cover the travel expenses of all participants. However, our budget is limited; please indicate if you can assist in covering the cost of travel.

³ On the cooperation between Mekelle University and Erfurt University, see <https://www.uni-erfurt.de/en/geschichte/globalgeschichte/cooperation/>.