



## **Workshop: Africa Beyond Brexit: Ideas and Practices of Postcolonial Engagement in a Changing Global Order**

A one-day workshop, organised by the [Department of Politics](#) and the [Interdisciplinary Global Development Centre \(IGDC\)](#), at the University of York on **Tuesday, 10 December 2019**.

This workshop aims to bring together scholars, practitioners and experts to discuss in concrete and specific terms changing ideas and practices of British engagement with Africa in the context of Brexit and a shifting global order. In particular, it aims to generate shared understanding of continuity and change in British relations with key African states such as – but not limited to – Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

### **Background**

The campaign for Brexit and struggles around its implementation have brought ideas of postcolonial engagement to the centre of discussions of British foreign policy. These range from the notion that Britain's accession to the European Union represented a 'betrayal' of the Commonwealth, to suggestions that Brexit represents an opportunity to reinvigorate ties with this group. As home to 18 of 53 Commonwealth states, Africa is both central to these narratives and in some cases marginalised and silenced by them.

In this context, notions of 'Africa' in Brexit debates appear to serve a distinct purpose in helping to articulate a wider understanding of Britain's place in the world. For their part, many African governments hope that the de-linking of the UK from the EU will offer opportunities to shift their relationship with London – through pursuing reconfigured trading relationships, increased investment and greater collaboration in areas of common interest. These changes are playing out in the context of wider shifts in the configuration of global power, in which past imperial ties are seen by some as an important foothold for Britain's continuing global influence.

What this means for practices of British engagement with Africa – and experiences of and responses to this engagement on the part of African regions, states and non-state actors – remain open and under-researched questions. This workshop represents an initial attempt to think through and develop a research agenda on these topics. Specifically, its aim is to explore the place of Africa in understandings of Britain's role in the world in the context of Brexit and a changing global order; and to consider how these are reflected in practices of and responses to British engagement with Africa.

### **Themes**

We invite paper proposals that respond to the following themes and questions:

#### **1. Britain, Africa and the European Union**

- How did EU membership transform the UK's postcolonial ties with Africa, and with what consequences?
- What role did understandings and representations of British and EU relations with Africa play in Brexit debates?

#### **2. Africa in Britain's Post-Brexit Foreign Policy**

- How is Africa imagined, invoked and silenced in post-Brexit 'Global Britain' foreign policy thinking and practice?
- How is the Brexit process shaping the practice of UK engagement with specific African countries and regions?

#### **3. African Responses to Brexit**

- How do African countries and regions interpret post-Brexit British foreign policy and position themselves to benefit from it?
- How do broader global power shifts shape African understandings of and responses to British engagement?

#### **4. Britain, Africa and a Changing Global Order**

- How are contemporary power shifts and new global developments shaping British engagement with Africa?
- What is the place of Africa in understandings of and responses to British 'decline' in a shifting global order?

The organisers welcome a broad range of papers – from case studies and comparative analyses to more theoretical papers – that explore one or more of the issues outlined above, and are open to papers that look at these issues from a variety of academic and practitioner perspectives. Any questions or queries can be directed to Peg Murray-Evans and Nicole Beardsworth at [Brexitafrica.York@gmail.com](mailto:Brexitafrica.York@gmail.com). Please submit paper proposals to this address in the form of a 300-word abstract by **23 September 2019**.