

AFTERLIVES OF THE ATLANTIC CHARTER: SOVEREIGNTY, SELF-DETERMINATION AND SELF-GOVERNMENT IN BRITISH POLITICS SINCE 1941

Appel à communication pour la journée d'études "Afterlives of the Atlantic Charter: sovereignty, self-determination and self-government in British politics since 1941"

Jeudi 10 juin et Vendredi 11 juin 2021
Institut d'Études du Commonwealth,
Londres
Journée d'études en visio-conférence

Online conference

Institute of Commonwealth Studies, Institut universitaire de France, Université de Picardie Jules Verne/CORPUS and Université de Versailles-Saint-Quentin/CHCSC

Confirmed keynote speaker – Stuart Ward, University of Copenhagen: "Cosmologies of our Own: Determining selfhood after empire".

In the context of the 80th anniversary of the Atlantic Charter and Britain's withdrawal from the European Union, this conference seeks to reflect on understandings of sovereignty, self-determination and self-government, their place in public discourse and their translation into British policies – local, national and international.

The Anglo-American Declaration of 14 August 1941, whose wording and interpretation reverberated in Britain and the colonial empires, has already generated a rich body of scholarship. It is to be read in the wider context of past discussions of self-determination, particularly in the aftermath of the First World War (Manela, Pedersen), its ambiguities and exclusions, particularly regarding the European (and specifically British) colonial empires (Ibhawoh; Reeves) and its impact on the creation of the United Nations within an imperial world order (Ryan & Pungong). Concepts of sovereignty and self-determination have also been recast in Adom Getachew's study of "anticolonial nationalists as worldmakers rather than solely nation builders", their projects of global solidarities against racial hierarchies and domination and the eventual fall of self-determination and reinforcement of the nation-state. New research in the history of international law and human rights has also shed light on Britain's contribution to new normative regimes in the postwar world and on the impact of an international legal discourse on rights on Britain's management of its empire and retreat from empire (Drohan; Duranti).

Yet the recent debates on inter/in-dependence and democracy in British politics call for further analysis of the ways in which the memory, reverberations and representations of the Second World War and empire have influenced interpretations of sovereignty, power and influence at the level of governments and administrations but also, more diffusely perhaps, in British culture. One of the objectives of this conference is therefore to shed light on the interplay of decolonisation and devolution (Howe) in reshaping visions of

Britain’s international role and on what “overseas” means in a (post-)imperial context.

Whilst imperial nostalgia and anxieties have certainly played a part in the vote in favour of Brexit (Koegler et al.), diffidence towards the European project is far more complex – as is the European project itself and its imperial roots. In an interview with historian Eric Hobsbawn published in October 1980, the Labour MP Tony Benn, who had championed anticolonialism and campaigned against British membership of the EEC, famously declared : « Britain is now the last colony left in the British Empire. George Washington got out in 1776, Robert Mugabe got out in February 1980. Britain alone it seems is left with a colonial-type administration led by an establishment which is itself defeatist and is actually frightened of the potentiality and strength of the British labour movement working through parliamentary democracy. » While Benn claimed « democratic self-government and liberation [to be] as legitimate an aspiration for the British people as for the people of Zimbabwe or India or Guyana or anywhere else », he equally rejected « nationalism or a nationalist policy » and reiterated his belief in the « international responsibilities » of the British in an interdependent world.

Following the work of historians Martin Thomas and Richard Toye on politics and rhetoric, this conference will discuss the conceptual and practical tensions between the supranational, the transnational and the international, and how issues of sovereignty and self-determination have been mediated to the British people – in the media but also through cultural policies and projects, recasting the state in a multi-layered set of paradiplomatic actors. It will specifically seek to shed light on the connections and faultlines between processes of decolonisation, devolution and (de-)Europeanisation.

Papers are invited in the following areas :

- understandings and practices of the referendum as a means of self-determination across colonial, overseas and home affairs
- the place of overseas territories in the making of British power and identity, particularly after the creation of the FCO in 1968
- connections between (anti-)imperialism, (anti-)Europeanism and conceptions of democracy in political parties, social movements and associations
- the role of professional organisations (particularly legal and press) and non-state actors in setting the national and international agenda on sovereignty, self-determination and cooperation
- the place of sovereignty in cultural narratives of British state and society

Papers reflecting on methodologies and on periodisation are welcome, as are comparative papers.

Please send a short abstract (300-500 words) and bio/bibliography to the organisers by 12 March 2021 at the following address: afterlivesac@gmail.com. The conference will take place over two days to accommodate different time zones. Please indicate when sending your abstract if you need us to take your time zone into account in the programme.

Additional guidelines for abstracts:
1. We are looking for proposals for panel presentations lasting for no more than 20 minutes;
2. We do not expect speakers to submit the text of their presentation ahead of the conference;
3. While we may consider publishing versions of the presentations in the form of an edited book or the special edition of a journal, we will make a decision on this, in consultation with speakers, once the conference has taken place. We are happy to consider proposals from speakers who would not be able to offer a version of their presentation for publication.
4. We would like to record the conference and make the recording available. Speakers will, however, have the right to opt out of having their presentation recorded and broadcast.

Pour télécharger l'Appel à Communications

INFORMATIONS COMPLÉMENTAIRES

Organisers: Marc Chatterji, Amal El Founti, Elias Msaddek, Professor Philip Murphy, Dr Adrien Rodd, Professor Mélanie Torrent.