

Colonialism Now:
Political discourse and practice of history
in contemporary post-colonies

A **Center for International History** Workshop

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While European empires have become the object of scholarly obsession over the last two decades, current political discourse on colonialism in formerly colonized parts of the world has virtually escaped notice. In places where the ties between history and nation-state are fraught and uncertain, where recent sovereignties are seen as fragile, and where the boundaries of political communities remain in flux, the contemporary world order is often thought to bear an uncanny resemblance to the old one. Thus, for example, leaders in Sudan, Cote d'Ivoire, and Zimbabwe mobilize their followers against what they see as colonial incursions under the guise of humanitarian or peace-keeping interventions. What modes of historical thought and discourse enable—or indeed disable—such analyses? How in turn might such discourse shape historical thought? Does the practice of history contribute to current political discourse on empire, occupation, and re-colonization, whether in former colonies or past empires? How does it do so? What place do historians themselves occupy in such scenarios? Avoiding false analogies and inexact comparisons, the proposed workshop will take as its starting point the recognition that thinking clearly about politics requires thinking clearly about history.