

Dr Berny Sèbe Maîtrise (Aix-en-Provence), D.Phil (Oxon), FRHistS, FRGS, FHEA

Lecturer in colonial and post-colonial studies

[Department of Modern Languages \(/schools/lcahm/departments/languages/index.aspx\)](/schools/lcahm/departments/languages/index.aspx)

Contact details

Telephone [+44 \(0\)121 414 6173](tel:+441214146173) (tel: [+44 121 414 6173](tel:+441214146173))

Email b.c.sebe@bham.ac.uk (mailto: b.c.sebe@bham.ac.uk)

Ashley Building
Room 305
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 2TT
UK



About

My research interests revolve around the colonial and post-colonial encounters between European and non-European worlds, in particular in the cultural and political realms. My recent works look at the making of imperial heroes in Britain and France since the era of 'New imperialism' (second half of the nineteenth century), the history of the conquest and decolonization of the Sahara, Franco-African relations since the Second World War as well as the 'Echoes of Empire' which resonate in the European project. I also engage regularly in comparative studies of French, British and Spanish imperialisms.

Biography

I was born in Nice (Provence, France) and partly brought up in the Sahara desert, where I have been travelling since I was a child. For that reason, I was educated through the CNED (National Centre for Distance Learning, France). During that period, I became closely associated to the activities of my father, the French desert photographer and publisher Alain Sèbe, with whom I still regularly publish photographic books. I studied for my first degree (licence) and Master's (maîtrise) at the University of Aix-en-Provence, and for my doctorate at the University of Oxford (D.Phil in Imperial and Commonwealth History). During my time there, I also organised the Oxford University Expedition to Mauritania. My first full-time academic position was at the university of Durham, where I was a lecturer in African and imperial history (2007-8).

Teaching

I teach for both the French Department and the **[European Studies programme \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/lcahm/departments/languages/undergraduate/european-studies.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/lcahm/departments/languages/undergraduate/european-studies.aspx)**. In French, I teach a final-year option on 'Franco-African relations from de Gaulle to Sarkozy' and I contribute to the teaching of the 'Cinema, Media and Visual Culture', 'Politics, Culture and Society' and 'France moderne' modules. Some terms, I also teach prose to fourth-year students. For European Studies, I teach on, and am the convenor of, the first-year undergraduate module 'Approaches to European Cultures', and I teach on the first-year module 'Media, Culture and Communication' and on the second-year module 'Cultural Theory: Analysis and Application' and 'European Media Culture'.

At postgraduate level, I am the Programme co-lead of the **[MA in Colonial and Postcolonial Studies \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/courses/taught/arts-law-inter/colonial-postcolonial-studies.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/courses/taught/arts-law-inter/colonial-postcolonial-studies.aspx)**. I have co-supervised several PhD students (see below under 'postgraduate supervision').

Postgraduate supervision

Dr Sèbe is happy to offer postgraduate research supervision in the following fields:

- Colonial and Postcolonial Studies
- British and French imperial history
- Decolonisation and the End of Empire
- Colonial memory
- Nineteenth and Twentieth French History

He supervises or co-supervises MA dissertation students, and has co-supervised several PhD theses:

- Claire Peters, 'Interdisciplinary approaches to the cultural memory of the Occupation and the Algerian War: Representations of the City in Modiano, Haneke and Maspero' (Completed in September 2013).
- Sophie Tanniu, 'Postcolonial Francophone Literature from West and Equatorial Africa: Colonial Heritage and Postcolonial Histories.'
- Sarah Pymm: '*L'aventure humaine*: Spirituality, myth and power in the travel writings of Louise Weiss'.

Research

My research interests lie mainly in the history of nineteenth and twentieth century European imperialisms, decolonization and post-colonialism, with particular emphasis on the popular reception of imperialism and Empire-related subjects in the metropolitan centres.

My doctoral research looked at the processes of selection, construction and promotion of colonial heroes in Britain and in France between 1870 and the Second World War. It has led me to consider the variety of media which were used to promote the imperial idea in the metropolises, the networks of producers and systems of patronage which sustained them, and the reception of heroic propaganda by various types of audience. Drawing upon a variety of unpublished archives, it also analysed the various political, economic and individual interests which these cultural constructions served. This research has given rise to my book *Heroic Imperialists in Africa: The Promotion of British and French Colonial Heroes, 1870-1939*.

I also work on the legacy of Europe's colonial past upon the EU and in its relations with the rest of the world. Developing comparative approaches to European imperialisms allows us to evaluate the extent to which colonial expansion stemmed from a core of shared assumptions and values while exacerbating political and economic rivalries, and how these conflicting roots and effects are negotiated in the post-colonial world against which the EU took shape. As part of this strand, I have co-edited with Kalypto Nicolaidis and Gabi Maas *Echoes Of Empire: Memory, Identity and the Legacy of Imperialism*.

I am the Principal Investigator of the AHRC-funded research project (2012-15) 'Outposts of Conquest: the History and Legacy of the Fortresses of the Steppe and the Sahara in Comparative Perspective, from the 1840s to the present-day'. Through the case-study of colonial fortifications, this joint project with Alexander Morrison (Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan) analyses the strategies of conquest and administration of two Christian powers which encroached at roughly the same time into arid environments populated by predominantly Muslim nomads. More information on **www.birmingham.ac.uk/forts** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/forts>).

I am the co-investigator of the AHRC-funded 'Hero Project' (2015-16), which explores and re-appraises the role of the hero in twenty-first century Britain. Working with Abbie Garrington (University of Newcastle, principal investigator) and Natasha Danilova (University of Aberdeen, co-investigator), I am particularly interested in the place of the British imperial hero in the post-colonial age.

On a more general level, I am interested in the Third- and Fourth-Republic France, and in Franco-British relations since the mid-nineteenth century. My next project looks at the practice and effects of colonial and post-colonial photography in Africa from the 1860s until the 1970s.

I am a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) and the Higher Education Academy, and I am a member of the AHRC's Peer Review College (2012-15). I am also a Member of the Board of the French charity *La Rahla/Les Sahariens*. In Birmingham, I am an active member of the **FRANCOPOCO Network** (<http://www.french.bham.ac.uk/research/francopoco/>) and of the **Centre for Second World War Studies** (<http://www.secondworldwar.bham.ac.uk/>). I also co-ordinate the **Postcolonial Birmingham** (<http://www.french.bham.ac.uk/research/postcolonial/>) initiative.

Areas of interest

- British and French imperial history; decolonisation; post-colonialism
- British and French popular imperialism
- Comparative European colonialisms
- History of the Sahara from 1880 to the present
- Late modern French history; Franco-British relations

Other activities

I regularly feature on regional, national and international radio and TV programmes, commenting on a range of topics related to French history and politics; European colonial and imperial history; post-colonialism; the history of West Africa and the Sahara as well as current events in the Middle East and North Africa (the so-called 'Arab Spring' and its aftermath: French interventions in Mali and the Central African Republic; the security situation in Libya and the Sahara, etc.).

Publications

Monograph

- ***Heroic Imperialists in Africa: The Promotion of British and French Colonial Heroes (1870-1939)*** (<http://www.manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/cgi-bin/indexer?product=9780719084928>) (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013). ISBN 978 0 7190 8492 8.

Editorship

- ***Echoes of Empire: Memory, Identity and the Legacy of Imperialism*** (<http://www.ibtauris.com/Books/Humanities/History/General%20%20world%20history/Echoes%20of%20Empire%20Memory%20Identity%20and%20the%20Legacy%20of%20Imperialism.aspx?menuItem=1>), co-edited with Kalypso Nicolaïdis and Gabi Maas (London and New York: IB Tauris, 2015). ISBN 9781784530518 (hardback) / 9781784530518 (paperback)
- ***Decolonising Imperial Heroes*** (<http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/fich20/42/5#VG4L6c8GHk>), special issue co-edited with Max Jones, Bertrand Taithe and Peter Yeandle. *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 42:5 (December 2014).

Essays and articles

- 'Exhibiting the Empire in print: The Press, the Publishing World and the Promotion of Greater Britain', in John M. MacKenzie and John McAleer (eds.), *Exhibiting the Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015).
- **'From Post-Colonialism to Cosmopolitan Nation-Building? British and French Imperial Heroes in Twenty-First Century Africa'** (<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03086534.2014.959720#VG4WY4c8GHk>). *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 42:5 (December 2014), pp. 936-68. DOI 10.1080/03086534.2014.959720
- **'Decolonising Imperial Heroes: Britain and France'** (<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03086534.2014.959715#VG4W6Yc8GHk>), with Max Jones, Bertrand Taithe, John Strachan and Peter Yeandle. *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 42:5 (December 2014), pp. 787-825. DOI 10.1080/03086534.2014.959715
- 'From heroes to national symbols: British and French "heroic imperialists" as sites of memory', in Dominik Geppert and Frank Muller (eds.), *Imperial Sites of Memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), pp. 95-114. ISBN 9780719090813
- 'Towards cosmopolitan perspectives on empires and their echoes? The case for a European framework', in Kalypso Nicolaïdis, Berny Sèbe and Gabi Maas (eds.), *Echoes of Empire: Memory, Identity and the Legacy of Imperialism* (London: IB Tauris Publishers, 2015), pp. 123-40. ISBN 9781784530518 (hardback) / 9781784530518 (paperback)
- 'Le rôle des fortifications dans les stratégies de conquête et de pacification des espaces désertiques : les exemples russe en Asie centrale et français dans le « Grand Sud » algérien (XIXe-XXe siècles)' (With Alexander Morrison), in S. El Mechat (ed.), *Coloniser, pacifier, administrer: XIXe -XXIe siècles* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2014), pp. 57-88. ISBN 978 2 271 07976 3
- 'The Making of British and French Legends of Exploration, 1821-1914', in Dane Kennedy (ed.), *Exploration: Reassessing the West's Encounter with the Rest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 109-31. ISBN 978 0 199 75534 9.
- 'A fragmented and forgotten decolonization: the end of European empires in the Sahara and their legacy', in Tony Chafer and Alex Keese (eds.), *Francophone Africa at Fifty* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), pp. 204-18. ISBN 978 0 7190 8930 5.
- 'Les Etats-Unis et la décolonisation du Sahara français : une non-intervention bienveillante?', in Jean Fremigacci, Daniel Lefevre and Marc Michel (eds.), *Démontage d'empires* (Paris: Editions Riveneuve, 2013), pp. 59-88. ISBN 978 2 36013 149 5.
- 'Itinéraires intellectuels et méthodologiques en Grande-Bretagne : de la « Imperial History » aux « Postcolonial Studies » en passant par les « French Studies »', in M. Suchet et al., *Postcolonial Studies: mode d'emploi* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 2013), pp. 51-58. ISBN 978 2 729708573.
- 'The Selling of British and French Imperial Heroes in Africa, 1870-1939', in Wm. R. Louis (ed.), *Resurgent Adventures with Britannia* (London: IB Tauris, 2012), pp. 45-60. ISBN 978 1 78076 057 5.
- 'Justifying "New Imperialism": The Making of Colonial Heroes, 1857-1902', in David Welch and Jo Fox (eds.), *Justifying War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 46-67. ISBN 978 0 230246270.
- 'Exalting imperial grandeur: the French Empire and its metropolitan public', in John M. MacKenzie (ed.), *European Empires and the People* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), pp. 19-56. ISBN 978 0 7190 7994 8 (hardback) – 978 0 7190 7995 5 (paperback).
- 'La puissance de l'Empire britannique, 1815-1931', in Michel Rapoport (ed.), *Les mondes britanniques, 1815-1931* (Paris: Editions Atlande, 2010), pp. 97-131. ISBN 978 2 7011 5410 7.
- **'In the shadow of the Algerian war: the United States and the Common Organisation of Saharan Regions/Organisation commune des régions sahariennes(OCRS), 1957-62'** (<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03086531003743999#VG4XU4c8GHk>). *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 38:2 (June 2010), pp. 303-322. DOI 10.1080/03086531003743999
- **'Porte-drapeaux de l'Empire : la promotion des héros coloniaux français et britanniques de la conquête de l'Afrique à la Seconde Guerre mondiale'** (<http://gerflint.fr/Base/RU-Irlande2/sebe.pdf>). *Synergies Royaume-Uni et Irlande2* (2009), pp. 81-92.
- 'Colonial celebrities in popular culture: Heroes of the British and French empires in the media, 1850-2000', in R. Clarke (ed.), *Celebrity Colonialism* (Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Press, 2008), pp. 37-54. ISBN 978 1 4438 1351 8
- 'Aventurières et voyageuses en Afrique de l'Ouest', in R. Little (ed.), *Actes du Colloque international Lucie Cousturier, Les tirailleurs sénégalais et la question coloniale*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008), pp. 163-186. ISBN 978 2 296 07348 7.
- 'From Thoissey to the Capital via Fashoda: Major Marchand, partisan icon of the Right in Paris', in J. Irons (ed.), *Paris and the Right in the Twentieth Century* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006). ISBN 1 84718 094 9.

Selected non-academic publications

- *Sahara au jour le jour* (with Alain Sèbe) (Paris: Editions de La Martinière, 2010).
- *Tibesti, Sahara interdit* (ed., with Alain Sèbe) (Vidauban: Alain Sèbe Images, 2005).
- *Sahara, the Atlantic to the Nile*, photos Alain Sèbe (London: Hachette Illustrated, 2003).
- *Saharas, entre Atlantique et Nil*, photos Alain Sèbe (Paris: Editions du Chêne, 2001).

Redjem, Libye des grands espaces, photos Alain Sèbe and Berny Sèbe (Vidauban: Alain Sèbe Images, 2000).

- *Alain Sèbe, L'Image du Sahara* (Vidauban: Alain Sèbe Images, 1999).

Conference and seminar papers

- 'The logistics of Beau Geste: French fortresses in the Sahara since the late nineteenth century'. University of Southampton, 22 October 2014.
- 'Looking across the Pyrenees in search for inspiration? The French empire in twentieth-century Spanish colonial thinking'. Workshop *The Politics of Colonial Comparison*, All Souls College, University of Oxford, 29 September 2014.
- 'Partir pour mieux rester? (To leave in order to stay)? Franco-African relations since independence in the light of British strategies in Anglophone Africa (1960s to the present)'. Conference *Britain, France & Africa*, University College London, 9 June 2014.
- 'One people, one goal, one faith'? Balkanisation, Tuareg separatism and Political Islam in the Sahel region. St Antony's College, University of Oxford, 7 February 2014.
- 'Heroic Imperialists in Africa', book presentation, Department of African Studies and Anthropology, University of Birmingham, 15 January 2014.
- 'Conflicts in the Sahara: the many lives of the Tuareg question in Northern Mali, from localized rebellion to global Jihad', Changing Character of War seminar, University of Oxford, 28 May 2013.
- 'Using visual materials to enhance impact', Using Visual Materials in Research/Teaching Study Day, University of Portsmouth, 23 May 2013.
- 'Storm warning on the Maghreb's hinterland: jihadism, counter-terrorism and instability in the Sahara regions'. Modern Maghreb Research Workshop, University of Oxford, 10 May 2013.
- 'Looking for Traces of Empires, from Kazakhstan to Algeria: Military Architecture in Russian and French Colonies', University of Birmingham Culture Festival, 19 March 2013.
- 'Outposts of Conquest: the fortresses of the Steppe and the Sahara in comparative perspective', Oxford Centre for Global History, University of Oxford, 7 November 2012.
- 'Re-thinking the Decolonization of the Sahara beyond Nation-states', Africa History and Politics Seminar, University of Oxford, 5 November 2012.
- 'A fragmented and forgotten decolonization: the end of European empires in the Sahara and their legacy', Modern Maghreb Research Workshop, University of Oxford, 11 May 2012.
- 'Heroic Imperialists : Promoting the Heroes of the British and French Empires in Africa (1870-1939)', University of Newcastle, 10 May 2012.
- 'The call of the desert in the Western world', 'Café des sciences humaines et sociales', Cultural Services of the French consulate in Shanghai, 29 April 2012.
- 'Le Sahara et ses habitants dans l'imaginaire français', University of Nankin, Nankin, 26 April 2012
- 'L'appel du désert dans le monde occidental', Alliance Française, Shanghai, 25 April 2012.
- 'Les forts sahariens et la pacification du « Grand Sud » algérien (1883- 1930)', international conference 'Les Administrations coloniales et la « pacification », XIXe-XXe siècles', Institut d'histoire du temps présent & Ecole militaire, Paris, 23-24 March 2012
- 'The making of the 'hero of Fashoda' and the 'Sudan machine': Metropolitan celebrations of Marchand and Kitchener as 'imperial sites of memory', international conference Imperial Sites of Memory Conference, University of St Andrews, 4-5 September 2011.
- 'Imperial dialogues: British and French conceptions and interpretations of Empire', international conference Colonial Circulations: Colonialism in Comparative Perspective. University of Bristol, 4-5 July 2011
- 'Pour un dialogue franco-britannique autour du passé colonial : les empires comme préalable à la mondialisation ?', Cultures in Dialogue international conference, French Institute, London, 14 May 2011
- 'Representations of Shaykh Ma al Aynin in French and Spanish colonial writings and official discourse between the 1880s and the 1930s', Modern Morocco Research Workshop, University of Oxford, 12 March 2011
- "'Celebrating" British and French Imperialism: The Making of Colonial Heroes acting in Africa, 1870-1939', History Seminar, University of Lancaster, 16 February 2011.
- 'People of the Veil: Depicting the Sahara and its Inhabitants', CWAS Research Seminar, University of Birmingham, 15 February 2011
- "'Celebrating" British and French Imperialism: The Making of Colonial Heroes acting in Africa, 1870-1939', Birmingham Contemporary History Seminar, University of Birmingham, 26 January 2011
- 'Europe and its Colonial Legacies: Negotiating Europe's place in a post-imperial world', with Steffen Prauser, Jose Lingna Nafafe and Natalia Sobrevilla, ERI Cross-College Event organised by Tim Haughton, University of Birmingham, 8 December 2010.
- 'Les revues britanniques et françaises et l'idée impériale : perspectives croisées ?', Journée des revues organised by the Réseau Culture F-B, Institute of Historical Research, London, 26 November 2010.
- 'A fragmented and forgotten decolonization: the end of the French empire in the Sahara', *1960: the 'Year of Africa' and French decolonisation re-visited A 'French solution' for sub-Saharan Africa?* conference, University of Portsmouth, 6 September 2010.
- 'No More Heroes Anymore', Group for War and Culture Studies Seminar, University of Westminster, 23 June 2010.
- 'La décolonisation du Sahara français (1957-1962) : une « fin d'empire » à la croisée des chemins', Annual conference of the French Colonial History Society, 19 June 2010.
- 'Itinéraires intellectuels et méthodologiques de la « imperial history » aux « Postcolonial Studies » (en passant par les « French Studies »)', *Postcolonial Studies: directions for use* conference, Ecole Normale Supérieure Langues et Sciences Humaines, Lyon, 4 juin 2010.
- 'Colonial Partition, End-of-Empire Unification and Chaotic Independence: The Postcolonial Fragmentation of the Sahara and its Peoples, 1951-1989', Seminar 'Independence and Decolonization', Institute of Historical Studies, University of Texas at Austin, 15-17 April 2010.
- 'An image under colonial influence: the legend of Ma Al Aynin in Spain and in France', 'Modern Morocco Research Workshop', St Antony's College, University of Oxford, 12 March 2010.
- 'Les Etats-Unis et la décolonisation du Sahara français : une non-intervention bienveillante?', Conference Démontez les empires coloniaux, Archives d'outre-mer d'Aix-en-Provence, 4-5 March 2010.
- 'Imperial heroes in British and French popular culture, 1850-1939', University of Wales, Aberystwyth, 30 November 2009.
- 'Francophone Postcolonial Studies and Imperial/Colonial History: The merits of cross-fertilization', Annual Conference of the Society for Francophone Postcolonial Studies, London, 20-1 November 2009.
- '*Celebrating* British and French imperialism: the Making of British and French colonial Heroes actin in Africa', University of Birmingham, 17 November 2009.
- 'Under Livingstone's shadow? The making of French imperial heroes under the Third Republic', Modern French History Seminar, Institute of Historical Research, University of London, 11 May 2009.
- 'The Conquest of the French Sahara', 'New directions in French/Algerian history', St Antony's College, University of Oxford, 1 May 2009.
- 'Strategies of Conquest in the Sahara', National History Center panel, American Historical Association Annual Meeting, 4 January 2009.
- 'Justifying "New Imperialism": The Making of Colonial Heroes, 1857-1898', *Justifying War: Propaganda, Politics and War in the Modern Age* conference, University of Kent, 10 July 2008.
- 'Confronting or endorsing French late colonial designs? Algerian and American reactions to the *Organisation Commune des Régions Sahariennes*, 1957-1962', Annual Conference of the Society for the Study of French History (SSFH), Aberystwyth, 4 July 2008
- 'La gloire des empires français et britannique : les représentations des héros coloniaux en Afrique (1870-1939)', Centenary of the Franco-British Exhibition (London 1908) International Conference, Arts et cultures au tournant du siècle, Institut Français du Royaume-Uni (IFRU), London, 25-27 June 2008.
- 'Aventurières et voyageuses en Afrique de l'Ouest', Colloque international Lucie Cousturier, Les tirailleurs sénégalais et la question coloniale, Espace culturel de Port-Fréjus, Fréjus, 13-14 June 2008.
- 'Perspectives on European sea-borne imperialisms: the British and French experiences', Conference "Echoes of Imperialism: Re-Thinking European Colonialisms", University of Oxford, 9 May 2008.
- 'British and French popular culture of Empire', Departmental Seminar, University of Durham, 20 February 2008.
- 'Explorateurs et conquérants du Sahara', Villa aurélienne, Fréjus, 20 November 2007.

- 'L'inscription des héros coloniaux dans le quotidien français et britannique', Marc Bloch Centre for Social Sciences (in partnership with the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), Berlin, 6 July 2007.
- 'Celebrating British and French imperialism: The Making of Colonial Heroes acting in Africa, 1870-1939', Imperial History Seminar, Institute of Historical Research, University of London, 5 February 2007.
- 'Icons of Empire: British and French Imperial Heroes, 1870-1930', 1st Conference in Imperial and Commonwealth History, Sheffield University, 25 May 2006.
- 'Spreading universalities: British and French imperial heroes, 1850-1940', Sixth Harvard Graduate Student Conference, Harvard University, 17-18 March 2006.
- 'L'appel du désert', Ecole Supérieure de Commerce, Clermont-Ferrand, 12 May 2005.
- 'The Making of British and French Imperial Heroes (1870-1930)', Cambridge World History Workshop, St Catharine's College, Cambridge University, 3 February 2005.
- 'Imperial marketing and *entente coloniale*: The making of French colonial heroes (1870-1930)', Society for Francophone Postcolonial Studies, Second annual conference, London, Institut français, 26-27 November 2004.

Expertise

European imperialisms in Africa; historical, political and contemporary issues relating to North and West Africa; the Middle East, especially the Arab Spring and its consequences; crises in the Sahel region of West Africa involving the Tuareg and the Tubu populations, Northern Mali in particular; French history, politics and current affairs; history of the British Empire since the early nineteenth century; popular imperialism in Europe, the memory of colonialism and postcolonialism.

Languages and other information

- French
- Spanish

Media experience

Berry has been a prominent media commentator on the Arab Spring, writing a number of articles on the political and social implications of the wave of revolution across North Africa and the Middle East.

Alternative contact number available for this expert: [contact the press office \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/contacts/index.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/contacts/index.aspx)

Expertise

European imperialisms in Africa; historical, political and contemporary issues relating to North and West Africa; the Middle East, especially the Arab Spring and its consequences; crises in the Sahel region of West Africa involving the Tuareg and the Tubu populations, Northern Mali in particular; French history, politics and current affairs; history of the British Empire since the early nineteenth century; popular imperialism in Europe, the memory of colonialism and postcolonialism.

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