



MAKERERE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL RESEARCH



MISR Graduate Students' Conference - 2025

Call for Papers

Conference Theme: “Rethinking Political Identity in Africa”

Ethno-nationalism on the African continent advances the logic that ethnic difference should be harnessed in the organisation of the postcolonial state in Africa, and it remains a vocal demand among its subscribers. Illustrated by the *federo* movement in Uganda, demands for *majimbo* (regionalism) in Kenya and Tanzania, and agitations for true federalism in Nigeria, the assumption is widely held that these identities are real and thus deserve to be given constitutional recognition as the basis for territorially delineating the state in Africa. Where postcolonial elites failed to accede to demands for ethnic and regional autonomy, such failings were often cited as justifications for secession by separatist movements. As demands for ethnic federalism gain momentum, the travails of postcolonial state formation in Ethiopia are a poignant forewarning of its pitfalls. Any inquiry into to the historical and contemporary political basis of these demands for identity-based states (whether ethnic federations or nation-states) ought to begin with dissecting the assumptions and presuppositions on race, gender, class, ethnicity and religion that are embedded within and have shaped these discourses, as a decolonial imperative.

With the above in mind, we invite papers that critically examine discourses animating these demands under any of the following **sub-themes**:

- Identity formation in the pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial periods;
- Popular narratives (including the myths, folktales and cultural symbols) mobilised by political movements;
- Gender and feminist critiques of the political imaginations of ethno-nationalist groups;
- Critical examination of the political visions of ethno-nationalist movements from intersectional standpoints;
- Secularist and/or religious outlooks of political movements;

- Economic ideologies or doctrines (whether capitalist, socialist or populist) espoused by ethno-nationalist movements, particularly their response to issues such as land, class differentiation, peasant, pastoralist and other environmental and ecological questions;
- Alternative pathways for constituting political community amidst ethno-nationalism;
- Intellectual, conceptual and/or political histories of movements, ethnic intelligentsia and/or patriots.

We welcome papers/dissertation chapters between **5000-7000** words from advanced graduate students who have conducted archival, ethnographic and or other forms of fieldwork and are now in the process of developing their dissertations. Papers may deploy an interdisciplinary approach crisscrossing the disciplinary fields of Literary and Cultural Studies, Political Economy, Historical Studies and Political Studies. The conference will offer each participant opportunities for mentorship from MISR faculty. Travel and full board accommodation will be provided by MISR for presenters based on the African continent. English will be the principal medium of communication for this conference.

Important Dates:

- a) Deadline for Submission of abstracts (300 words maximum): **30th January 2025**
- b) Notification of abstract acceptance: **15th February 2025**
- c) Deadline for full paper/chapter submission: **23rd March 2025**
- d) Conference Dates: **10-12th April 2025**

Please send submissions or questions to: gsc1.misr@gmail.com

For more information visit: <https://misr.mak.ac.ug/>



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