

Call for Papers & Posters:

Maritime Conflicts and Promises in History and Present

An interdisciplinary Conference
on 19 & 20 November 2021
at the TU Darmstadt

*»Ah! how they still strove through that infinite blueness
to seek out the thing that might destroy them!«*

– From: *Moby-Dick* by Herman Melville

Conference Outline

Why we need to talk about maritime Conflicts and Promises

Even the pre-capitalist forms at the beginning of the formation process of the modern state have been accompanied by forms of maritime expansion. Since the emergence of modern statehood under the auspices of capitalist economies, the aspects of sea power, presence on the world's oceans, and maritime expansion were considered to be of paramount importance for the maintenance and further development of wealth, political influence, and military power. Moreover, the sea functioned both in the sense of an order-creating and in the sense of an order-relating instance in relation to the modern state and the global state system. This ambivalent character is indicated, among other things, in the narratives of the British Empire as a maritime power and in the pirate utopias of the 18th century. Right up to the age of modern imperialism, the sea was considered both a place where conflicts between states came to a head and a place that promised a bright future.

Furthermore, the maritime element can also be understood from the perspective of refugee and human migration movements. Not infrequently, seas connect places of departure with imagined places of promise of a better life. This includes the so-called voyages of discovery, the Polynesian settlement of the Pacific islands, waves of emigration for religious, social or economic motives, the ongoing refugee movement across the Mediterranean or violent migration such as the slave trade.

But what role do maritime topics play in the various global crises and in the socio-political and scientific discourses of the present? It is well known that these debates, especially in Europe, are characterised by »sea blindness«, because the importance of the oceans is often either not acknowledged or simply ignored.

In view of the steadily increasing global interconnectedness and fragmentation of production processes and markets up until today, however, the sea seems to have gained in importance. To

cite just one figure: 90 per cent of world trade is now transacted via sea lanes. This steadily increasing potential of the sea seems promising, but at the same time it harbours new conflicts. The conflict between the world's economic powers and especially between China and the USA is increasingly emerging – in continuation of navalist traditions – as a conflict on the oceans.

The use of the Northwest Passage, made possible by climate change, can be a lucrative shortcut for commercial shipping. The resources in the Arctic region that are becoming accessible due to the melting of the ice also awaken promising economic desires. But global warming, rising sea levels, (deep-sea) mining and resource overexploitation pose existentially threatening future scenarios for other people and states that could potentially lead to further maritime conflicts. However, maritime conflicts are also becoming increasingly relevant from another aspect of climate policy. The oceans are currently still the most important sink for greenhouse gases. However, if the oceans warm up in the course of climate change, they will become increasingly acidic and, in the worst case, the largest source of greenhouse gases.

Moreover, flight and migration increasingly appear as a sign of the ambivalence of maritime forms of conflict and promise, using the example of the »refugee crisis« in the Mediterranean. Ever more frequently, refugees only find death in the Mediterranean, which consequently has to become a central object of the political debate on human rights and order. It is therefore urgent to analyse which conflicts arise when refugees die in the Mediterranean and in which field of tension of power and powerlessness the voluntary sea rescue aid stands in connection with adjacent problem fields around the maritime world.

Last but not least, the working and living conditions at sea offer an insight into an almost isolated power structure. From a labour and tax law perspective, the topic also offers exciting opportunities for discussion in today's societies, for example, when one thinks of the circumstances and consequences of flagging out.

Aims and Issues of the Conference

The conference focuses on approaching an understanding of the connection between shipping and the concrete forms of modern development. From the nature of sea power to maritime trade routes as important lifelines of global society, there is a thread running through modern development. Starting with seafaring, the maritime can be defined as a point of convergence of technology, economy, politics, culture, military, migration, etc. In view of the much lamented »sea blindness«, the question will be explored as to where maritime conflicts and forms of promise can currently be identified and how a look into the past can be helpful in this context. For the current discourses, the challenges of climate change and the conflicts that accompany it should also be analysed. Furthermore, the maritime element is to be placed in the focus of global crises such as the »refugee crisis«.

The conference offers an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary platform for all researchers who want to engage with the conference topics. We explicitly encourage advanced students and doctoral researchers to contribute.

The range of topics includes, but is not limited to, questions of conflict and peace research, political philosophy, security policy, world trade, hegemony and empire building, maritime resource and climate conflicts, maritime migration movements, sociology, historical case studies or cross-epochal considerations. The focus is on the following key questions:

- ◆ How has the cultural space of the sea developed as a source of intellectual and cultural inspiration?
- ◆ To what extent were maritime conflicts and forms of promise constitutive for national imperialisms, colonial regimes and state-building processes?
- ◆ To what extent does the sea (still) play a role today in the development of non-domestic raw materials, markets and labour pools?
- ◆ How important are the seas for contemporary societies and the global state system in light of a much lamented »sea blindness«?
- ◆ How does state power relate to sea power in general and in individual cases?
- ◆ To what extent will the major conflicts of the world economic powers be fought out at sea in the future – and what characterises these conflicts in historical comparison?
- ◆ To what extent does the view from the sea to the land create a different political perspective?
- ◆ What challenges and potentials lie in the oceans as a source of raw materials and as a factor influencing climate change?
- ◆ What roles do seas play in relation to flight and migration?
- ◆ To what extent is there an ambivalent character of the maritime in such conflicts and forms of promise?
- ◆ Can specific power and exploitation relationships be identified at sea, e. g. in the organisation of work?
- ◆ What could be the contribution of a maritime perspective in the context of the global challenges and the growing global and communicative interdependencies?

Keynotes

There will be two thought-provoking keynote speakers:

Prof. Dr. Jürgen Elvert, Jean-Monnet-Chair for European History at the University of Cologne, Germany, and author of *Europa, das Meer und die Welt: Eine maritime Geschichte der Neuzeit* (2018).

Maurizio Albahari, PhD, Associate Professor of Anthropology & in the Keough School of Global Affairs, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame (IN), USA, and author of *Crimes of Peace: Mediterranean Migrations at the World's Deadliest Border* (2015).

How to participate

Submission of an Abstract

We invite all those interested in the conference issues to present a research paper or a poster. Please submit an abstract of up to 400 words or a poster proposal of one page by 21 July 2021.

An abstract for a research paper includes the research question, the methodological and theoretical approach, first interim results, its relevance in the research context and 5 keywords. A poster proposal includes a short description of the poster, a detailed outline of the expected content and remarks on the relevance of the topic.

In both cases, we request a meaningful title, the name of the author(s) and, if applicable, the institutional affiliation and an email address. In addition, we ask for a few lines with the most important data on your previous academic career.

Following the conference, selected papers may be published in a revised form and after a peer review in an edited volume.

Important Information on Participation

The conference will be held partly in German and partly in English. English-language contributions are very welcome. But translations cannot be provided.

There will be no conference fee.

Depending on the course of the pandemic, the conference will take place in a hybrid form in compliance with the then applicable requirements of the authorities, i. e. with some speakers and participants on site in Darmstadt and simultaneous online participation. If even a limited on-site presence is not possible due to the authorities' requirements, the conference will take place entirely online. We will inform you about this in due time.

We offer all contributors free accommodation in a hotel, including breakfast, and a subsidy for travel costs. We also provide conference drinks, fruit and cake, as well as childcare if required. All other meals and costs are to be financed by the participants themselves.

Participation without an own contribution is, of course, possible at your own expense.

Important Dates

- 21 July 2021 Deadline for abstracts and poster proposals
- Mid-August 2021 Notification of acceptance
- 31 October 2021 Submission of your research paper or poster and registration via email to:
maritime.konferenz21@web.de
- 5 November 2021 Publication of scientific programme

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