

AEGIS Thematic Conference ‘Power Sharing Agreements in Africa: Implications for Peace, Democracy and Societal Trust’ (conference report, 21 April 2010)

On 1-2 October 2009, the GIGA Institute of African Affairs hosted an AEGIS Thematic Conference in Hamburg on power-sharing in Africa (for the programme see http://www.giga-hamburg.de/index.php?file=aegis_conf_program.html&folder=iaa). The conference was sponsored by the Fritz-Thyssen foundation. A call for papers offering a conceptual framework (http://www.giga-hamburg.de/dl/download.php?d=/content/aktuelles/pdf/aegis_2009_concept_paper-1.pdf) was circulated first among AEGIS member centres and at a second stage to the larger public in late 2008 and resulted in the submission of 15 papers, 13 were in the end accepted, one could not be held, but was distributed among participants. Participants included members of several AEGIS centres: Basel, Hamburg, Madrid, Oxford, but also Antwerp, Cambridge, Duisburg, London, Oslo, Uppsala as well as Nairobi, Khartoum and Gweru/Zimbabwe. Thus, the conditions for an AEGIS Thematic Conference were fulfilled. The composition of the participants helped to foster exchange: researchers preferring quantitative approaches (minority) met qualitative colleagues (majority), political scientists exchanged with lawyers and anthropologists. Two established (female) scholars had just published or co-published books on the topic of the conference, others were promising younger researchers. Discussants did a notable job in pointing to problematic aspects of papers and in drawing up further perspectives. Additionally, the GIGA information centre offered an annotated bibliography to the participants. The quality of the papers was generally good to excellent. Seven papers were later submitted to a special issue of the peer-reviewed open access journal Africa Spectrum, published in Hamburg, six were accepted, partly after profound revisions (see issue 3/2010 <http://hup.sub.uni-hamburg.de/giga/afsp>). Four of them were turned into full research articles, two were cut and appeared as reports. One contribution was submitted to JMAS and accepted. The academic quality of the conference which had at times rather the atmosphere of an editorial workshop was highly appreciated by participants (as expressed by themselves in later correspondence) some of whom met for the first time in Hamburg and established further cooperation ties.

Andreas Mehler