IP33520 - Power, Conflict and Development in Africa

Semester Two, 2011-2012

Module Handbook
IP33520 Power, Conflict and Development in Africa

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Many of our images of Africa are of famine, corruption, civil war and ethnic hatred. While there is no denying the prevalence of deprivation and violence on the continent, these images often obscure more than they reveal about contemporary African politics. Africa is also a place of dynamic change and of economic, political and cultural transformations, as evidenced by the transitions to multi-party democracy across the continent in the 1990s, the post-apartheid transformation of South Africa, and the launch of the revamped African Union (AU) and the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). This module provides students with the theoretical and conceptual tools for analysing recent developments in sub-Saharan Africa, and covers some of the main debates and issues in the study of politics on the continent. It draws on examples and case studies from a wide range of countries, and students are encouraged to develop their knowledge of both continent-wide trends, and specific countries and regions.

The module is roughly divided into two parts. Lectures 1-7 address continuities in African politics, such as the colonial legacy, the African state, conflict and corruption. Lectures 8-16 address more recent changes including democratization, development partnerships, and rising powers and a ‘new scramble’ for African resources. Common themes across these topics include a focus on the relationship between state and society, as well as between domestic and international politics. The module is also broadly informed by postcolonial approaches to international relations, and seeks to address the role of Western societies and lifestyles in reproducing aspects of African underdevelopment and political life, as well as the importance of ‘African’ realities and stereotypes for Western identities.

The module examines the difficulties of establishing political legitimacy and constructing nation-states in the emergence from colonialism, when African countries were in many respects states before they were nations. The topics covered include the various results of the state’s quest for hegemony, most notably neo-patrimonialism, clientelism, and authoritarianism. We explore the prevalence of conflict and critically evaluate contemporary explanations of conflict, warlordism and ‘state collapse’. The module seeks to illustrate the inter-linkages of domestic and international politics by showing how global forces influence African state-society relations, for example through structural adjustment programmes, the end of the cold war, and ‘the war on terrorism’.

The module also investigates the response of African societies to state politics, including the ‘wave of democratisation’ on the continent. Special attention is focused on the transition to democracy in South Africa, and the search for reconciliation and transformation in the post-apartheid period. The ‘new politics’ of development are assessed critically, including poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs), the Millennium Development Goals, participatory development programmes, transboundary environmental governance, NEPAD and the African Union. The module ends by considering what factors are likely to shape Africa’s immediate and medium term future, including mineral-led economic growth, Chinese investment, and climate change.
Objectives

On completion of the module, students should be able to
- identify the main challenges to state- and nation-building in sub-Saharan Africa
- explain the development and prevalence of neo-patrimonialism, clientelism, and authoritarianism on the continent
- critically assess the extent to which recent transitions to democracy, as well as other developments in African politics, have transformed state-society relations
- account for instances of conflict and state collapse on the continent
- describe some of the ways in which global forces impact on domestic state-society relations
- critically evaluate the role of Western societies in producing postcolonial African politics
- apply the general concepts and theories of African politics to specific empirical examples

Teaching Methods

The module consists of 16 lectures and 8 seminars. In seminars students are expected to take an active part in discussions and will be asked to talk about the readings they have done in small groups or to the whole class. It is essential that students prepare in advance of the seminars, and select and read relevant literature suggested in the reading list.

Reading

There is no textbook that covers the entire module, but the books listed below offer a useful and informative introduction to the topics discussed. Students are advised to buy one of these. In addition, a STUDYPACK containing a number of the essential readings is available for purchase before the start of term. As far as possible, the articles on the reading list are available on the internet or through the Voyager catalogue.

NOTE: Between the textbooks, the studypack and internet access to journal articles, there is NO excuse for being unprepared for seminar discussions! Every student will be asked in every seminar what they have read, and should be prepared to give a short summary of their reading.
The studypack

The studypack contains key readings from books in short supply or not available in the Hugh Owen. It contains the following pieces:

General texts (recommended for purchase, as an introduction to the course):

Thomson, A. *An Introduction to African Politics*, (London; Routledge, 2010).

The following general texts are also useful for many topics, or as background:

Cooper, F. *Africa since 1940: The Past of the Present*, (Cambridge; CUP, 2002).
Englebert, P. *State Legitimacy and Society in Contemporary Africa*, (Boulder; Lynne Rienner, 2002).
Harrison, G. *Issues in the Contemporary Politics of Sub-Saharan Africa*, (Basingstoke; Palgrave, 2002).
Tordoff, W. *Government and Politics in Africa*, (Basingstoke; Palgrave, 2002).

General textbooks on Third World Politics (good background reading, especially if you have not taken *Introduction to the Third World* in the first year):


There are many more in the library – check them out and let me know if you find any that are particularly useful.
NOVELS:
Africa has a rich literary tradition. Often novels can teach us as much about life, politics and society as academic texts, and you are advised explore this aspect of Africa in your spare time. Below are a few favourites:

Chinua Achebe (Nigeria)  
- Things Fall Apart
- A Man of the People
- Anthills of the Savannah

Ngugi wa Thiong’o (Kenya)  
- Petals of Blood
- Matigari
- The Devil on the Cross

Mariama Ba (Senegal)  
- So Long a Letter

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Nigeria)  
- Purple Hibiscus
- Half of a Yellow Sun

T. Dangarembgra (Zimbabwe)  
- Nervous Condition

Camara Laye (Guinea)  
- The African Child

Ayi Kwei Armah (Ghana)  
- The Beautiful Ones are not Yet Born

Binyavanga Wainaina (Kenya)  
- One day I will write about this place

J.M. Coetzee (South Africa)  
- Waiting for the Barbarians
- Disgrace

Nadine Gordimer (South Africa)  
- Get a Life
- Guest of Honour

Andre Brink (South Africa)  
- A Dry White Season

Wole Soyinka (Nigeria)  
- The burden of memory, the muse of forgiveness

J.E. Aqualusa (Angola)  
- The Book of Chameleons

Other

Ryszard Kapuściński  
- The Shadow of the Sun: My African Life

Charles Larson  
- Under African Skies: Modern African Stories
THE WEB:
The World Wide Web now contains many useful sources of information on politics in Africa. In order to relieve the pressure on library resources and practice your research skills, you should make the most of the web, which is also much more up-to-date than many books and journal articles. You can also read daily newspapers from a number of African countries on the Web. The following websites are good starting points. You will undoubtedly find many more during your research:

News and country information:
The Foreign and Commonwealth Office: [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)
Pambazuka news: [www.pambazuka.org](http://www.pambazuka.org)
www.oneworld.net
http://allafrica.com/

Organisations and research institutions:
The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa: [www.codesria.org](http://www.codesria.org)
The Royal African Society: [www.royalafricansociety.org](http://www.royalafricansociety.org)
The Institute of Security Studies: [www.iss.co.za](http://www.iss.co.za)
World Development Movement: [www.wdm.org.uk](http://www.wdm.org.uk)
The Nordic Africa Institute: [http://www.nai.uu.se/](http://www.nai.uu.se/)
The UN: [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)
The Africa Union: [www.africa-union.org](http://www.africa-union.org)
NEPAD: [www.nepad.org](http://www.nepad.org)
Afrobarometer survey data: [http://www.afrobarometer.org/](http://www.afrobarometer.org/)
International Crisis Group [http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=1098&l=1](http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=1098&l=1)
Africa Spectrum [http://hup.sub.uni-hamburg.de/giga/afsp](http://hup.sub.uni-hamburg.de/giga/afsp)
Democracy in Africa [http://www.democracyinafrica.co.uk](http://www.democracyinafrica.co.uk)

The National Library:
The National Library houses a number of resources not found in the Hugh Owen, including reference works like *Africa South of the Sahara*, *The Africa Review* and *Africa Research Bulletin*. All students can obtain a reader’s ticket, so please make use of this excellent library and wonderful reading room.
ASSESSMENT AND ESSAY QUESTIONS
The module is assessed on the basis of a one short report and two essays. The report accounts for 20 percent of the total mark, and the essays for 40 percent each. The maximum length of the report is 1,000 words, while the essays should be no more than 2,500 words. Both should be based on individual research, and in addition to the suggested reading students are expected to make full use of the specialised journals in the library as well as on the web.

The deadline for the report is 20th February 2012. The deadline for the 1st essay is 22nd March 2012. The deadline for the 2nd essay is 3rd May 2012. For all pieces of work upload an electronic copy onto Blackboard by 2.30pm and submit a hard copy by 4.30pm. Please see further guidelines on the Department website.

The Report
The Foreign Affairs Committee in Parliament frequently travels abroad in order to gather evidence for its inquiries. Members need to be armed with a short country brief for these visits. Imagine that the Committee is shortly to visit a country of your choice in Africa. You have been asked to prepare the brief.

Your task is to write a country briefing note explaining a key issue (or set of linked issues) for UK parliamentarians before they visit the country. It should be specific, detailed, and accessible.

The brief – no more than 1,000 words – does not set out a suggested programme of meetings, nor can it provide a comprehensive history of the country, or survey of its politics. Instead it should be a guide for parliamentarians about the subjects they might want to raise in the course of the visit (limit yourself to one key topic, or several linked topics), with some indication of the likely stance of key domestic figures, parties or institutions on these issues. It should be concise but comprehensive, well researched but readily accessible by the parliamentarians (some of whom might have no knowledge of the country). It can contain focused background information about areas relevant to the key topics you have selected, and should note any issues of vital importance regarding the country’s relationship with Britain, where relevant. You may use any source of information available to you, and your sources should be made clearly evident in a short bibliography appended to the report (which is not included in the word count). It is designed for a policy audience, not an academic audience, however.

(NOTE: This is drawn from an actual written exercise given to applicants for the post as committee specialist with the Foreign Affairs Committee)
The First Essay (due 22 March 2012)
Choose one of the titles listed below. Use examples to illustrate your answer.
1. To what degree does the colonial legacy still hang over African politics?
2. How far did African nationalists succeed in ‘nation building’?
3. What do you understand by the phrase ‘a moral economy of corruption’?
4. “Europeans believed Africans belonged to tribes; Africans built tribes to belong to.” Critically discuss this statement.
5. How can the frequency of conflict in Africa be best explained?
6. Are African states fundamentally different to states elsewhere in the world?

The Second Essay (due 3 May 2012)
1. What impact did a) the Cold War OR b) structural adjustment programmes have on state-society relationships in Africa?
2. What have been the successes and limitations of the democratisations of the 1990s in Africa?
3. Critically analyse the implications of transnational development partnerships in Africa.
4. How appropriate is the phrase ‘a new scramble for Africa’ in describing competition for African resources?
5. Tony Blair described Africa as “a scar on the conscience of the world” (2001). Is this typical of how Africa tends to be represented in mainstream discourses of international politics?
6. CHOOSE YOUR OWN TITLE. You must confirm this title with me, in writing, by 30 March 2012.
Course overview

Lectures

1. Introduction
2. Colonialism and its Legacies
3. African Nationalism, Class and Gender
4. The Postcolonial State
5. Corruption and neo-Patrimonialism
6. The Politics of Ethnicity
7. The Political Economy of War
8. Africa and the International I (Cold War to 9/11)
9. Poverty and Structural Adjustment
10. The Third Wave of Democracy
11. Reconciliation and Transformation in the Rainbow Nation
12. Africa and the International II (post 9/11)
13. Partnerships and the Politics of PRSPs
14. Trans-boundary Conservation in Africa
15. A new scramble for Africa?
16. Conclusion

Seminar Programme

The seminars will require active student participation and thorough preparation.

See pages 27-30 of the handbook.

1. Introduction
2. The Colonial Legacy
3. Corruption
4. The Politics of Ethnicity
5. Conflict and the Failed State
6. Democracy and ‘the Revenge of Civil Society’
7. Development and Aid
8. Reading and writing African Politics
Lecture Programme and List of Readings

Lecture 1: Introduction

Have a look at one (or more) of the following. There will be a quiz on ‘Africa’ in the lecture!

Thomson, A. An Introduction to African Politics (London; Routledge, 2010), chapter 1: Introduction.
Lecture 2: Colonialism and its Legacies

Essential:
Thomson, A. An Introduction to African Politics (London; Routledge, 2010), chapter 2: History.

Recommended:
Cooper, F. Africa since 1940, (Cambridge; CUP, 2002), chapters 2, 3, 4.
Vail, L. The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa, (Berkeley; University of California, 1989).
Lecture 3: African Nationalism, Class and Gender

Essential:
Davidson, B. The Black Man’s Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State, (Oxford; James Currey, 1992), chapter 6 [STUDYPACK]
Thomson, A. An Introduction to African Politics, (London; Routledge, 2010), chapters 3 & 5.

Recommended:
Yeros, P. (ed.) Ethnicity and nationalism in Africa: constructivist reflections and contemporary politics, (Basingstoke; Macmillan, 1998), Chapter 4: Ethnicity and nationalism in the Horn of Africa.
Lecture 4: The Postcolonial State

Essential:

Recommended:
Engleber, P. *State Legitimacy and Society in Contemporary Africa*, (Boulder; Lynne Rienner, 2002).
Smith, A. *State and Nation in the Third World: The Western State and African Nationalism*, (New York; St Martin’s, 1983).
Tordoff W. *Government and Politics in Africa* (Basingstoke; Palgrave, 2002).
Lecture 5: Corruption and neo-Patrimonialism

Essential:

Recommended:
Lecture 6: The Politics of Ethnicity

**Essential:**

**Recommended:**
Lecture 7: The Political Economy of War

Essential:

Recommended:
Ballentine, K. and Sherman, J. (eds) *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict: Beyond Greed and Grievance* (Boulder; Lynne Rienner, 2003), chapters 1, 2 and 3.
Richards, P. *Fighting for the Rain Forests: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone*, (London; IAI, 1996), Introduction and Chapter 1, in particular.
Lecture 8: Africa and the International I (Cold War to 9/11)

Essential:

Recommended:
Easterly, W.R. *The White Man’s Burden: Why the West’s efforts to aid the rest have done so much harm and so little good*, (Oxford: OUP, 2007).
Taylor I. and Williams P. (eds) *Africa in International Politics: External Involvement on the Continent*, (London; Routledge, 2004), introduction and others.
Lecture 9: Poverty and Structural Adjustment

Essential:

Recommended:
Easterly, W.R. *The White Man’s Burden: Why the West’s efforts to aid the rest have done so much harm and so little good*, (Oxford; OUP, 2007).
Houngnikpo, M. C. *Africa’s Elusive Quest for Development*, (Basingstoke; Palgrave, 2006).
Lecture 10: The Third Wave of Democracy

Essential:
Thomson, A. *An Introduction to African Politics*, (London; Routledge, 2010), chapter 11.

Recommended:
Gyimah-Boadi, E. (ed.) *Democratic Reform in Africa: The Quality of Progress*, (Boulder; Lynne Rienner, 2004).
Lecture 11: Reconciliation and Transformation in the Rainbow Nation

**Essential:**


**Recommended:**


Meredith, M. *Coming to terms: South Africa’s search for truth*, (New York; Public Affairs, 1999).


Sparks, A. *Tomorrow is Another Country: The Inside Story of South Africa’s Road to Change*, (Chicago; University of Chicago Press, 1996).


Lecture 12: Africa and the International II (post-9/11)

Essential:

Recommended:
Furley, O. and May, R. Ending Africa’s Wars: Progressing to peace, (Aldershot; Ashgate, 2006).
Zartman, W. Collapsed States: The disintegration and restoration of legitimate authority, (Boulder; Lynne Rienner, 1995), Chapter 1 [STUDYPACK] and others.
Lecture 13: Partnerships and the Politics of PRSPs

Essential:

Recommended:
Lecture 14: Trans-boundary Conservation in Africa

Essential:

Recommended:
Lecture 15: A new scramble for Africa?

Essential:

Recommended:
Easterly, W.R. The White Man’s Burden: Why the West’s efforts to aid the rest have done so much harm and so little good, (Oxford; OUP, 2007).
Lecture 16: Conclusion

Seminar programme and list of readings

1. Introduction

Please be prepared to briefly introduce yourself, why you chose this course, and whether you've ever been to Africa before. We will also discuss the course requirements and our expectations, the reading lists, and assessments. The second part of the seminar will involve small group discussions of some initial questions, which we will return to at the end of the course, and may help you in your preparation for the essays.

2. The Colonial Legacy

Essential reading: Mamdani, M. Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism, (London; James Currey, 1996), Chapter 3 [STUDYPACK].

Recent debates over the question of colonial abuses, responsibilities and reparations have ensured this perennial issue remains at the heart of understanding contemporary African politics. During 2011 reparations for colonial-era abuses in Kenya once more made headlines, casting doubt on Gordon Brown's 2005 assertion that 'The days of Britain having to apologise for its colonial history are over'. In 2007 Nicholas Sarkozy told Cameroonian scholars that 'The tragedy of Africa is that the African man has never really entered history'. Based on these comments [see readings below] and other examples of such debates that you might find, we will have a group discussion in this seminar on the role of the colonial experience in shaping postcolonial African politics.


3. Corruption


In this class we will discuss corruption in Kenya. Corruption is often regarded as one of the most damaging features of the neo-patrimonial state and of African politics. It has also been argued that it was/is an essential part of the political order of African states and societies, a way of linking clients to patrons, and hence a form of legitimacy. Through the discussion of the sources below, and your own readings of key texts such as de Sardan (1999), we will discuss to what extent ‘corruption’ can also be seen as part of the functioning of the neo-patrimonial state, and how it impacts on politics and society in contemporary Kenya.

There is a vast amount of news on corruption issues in Kenya. Below are a few relevant links. You will find John Githongo’s report, accessed at the last link, fascinating reading:


4. The Politics of Ethnicity


In this class we will discuss the Rwandan genocide. In the media and in popular opinion the genocide in Rwanda is frequently understood as a tribal war, rooted in ancient ethnic hatreds and rivalry. Most academic interpretations suggest that this is a fundamentally misleading approach, which fails to explain both the Rwandan genocide and ethnic conflict in African politics more broadly. The discussions will address the Rwandan government’s manipulation of ethnic sentiment, the role of the media in Rwanda, and the international dimensions of the crisis.

Further resources: The Hugh Owen and National Libraries have an excellent range of resources. In particular the Hugh Owen Library contains the Linda Melvern archive – a range of original primary sources assembled by Linda Melvern, an investigative journalist, author, and Honorary Professor in the Department.
5. **Conflict and the Failed State**


In this class we will discuss the conflict in Sierra Leone. As well as providing some historical context for this complicated regional war, we will engage closely with the theoretical debates in the literature on conflict in Africa. Can these civil wars be understood in terms of ‘greed and grievance’? What are the weaknesses of this approach? What is a ‘political economy of conflict approach’? What are the implications of seeing conflict through the lens of the ‘failed state’ thesis?

You might also be interested in the following article by Elisa Dari from OpenDemocracy in October 2011. Available at [http://www.opendemocracy.net/elisa-dari/bound-to-violence-young-lives-in-freetown](http://www.opendemocracy.net/elisa-dari/bound-to-violence-young-lives-in-freetown)


6. **Democracy and ‘the Revenge of Civil Society’**


In this class we will discuss democracy in South Africa since 1994. Nelson Mandela’s long walk to freedom, the largely peaceful negotiated transition between 1990 and 1994, and the emergence of an apparently free, tolerant, internationally respected and admired ‘Rainbow Nation’ in South Africa seems one of the continent’s success stories in the last two decades. The experience of democracy in South Africa provides a useful point of comparison with democratisation elsewhere on the continent, and an interesting test case for claims about the ‘democratisation of disempowerment’ (Ake, 1995) and the liberal bias of democratisation theory. Through your own readings, this class will discuss the successes, limitations and future prospects of democratisation in Africa.

See also [http://www.democracyinafrica.co.uk](http://www.democracyinafrica.co.uk)
7. Development and Aid


This class will take the form of a roundtable discussion on Tanzania. All students will be assigned roles including a large international NGO, a small local NGO, the World Bank, a Tanzanian government delegation, and the UK government (donor). Based on a briefing card (supplied) each group will make a five minute presentation detailing their view of the causes, and necessary responses, to poverty in Tanzania. The session will finish with each group evaluating the others’ performances, and assessing their likely impact on Tanzanian politics. There are plenty of articles on the reading list dealing with Tanzania, so have a look at some before the seminar to familiarize yourself with the issues.

Please also read the chapter in the studypack by Nicholas van de Walle, who presents a penetrating and critical analysis of the role of foreign aid in African economic crises.

8. Reading and writing African Politics


Many of the topics discussed on this course invoke recurring metaphors or images of what politics in ‘Africa’ is all about: the ‘spectre’ of conflict, the ‘disease’ of corruption, the ‘failed state’, the ‘dark continent’, the ‘Rainbow Nation’ and so on. Such images are in some ways unavoidable, since thought and communication inevitably rely upon metaphors, but their use can be deeply political. This final class will consider these representations of Africa as well as their political effects, and reflect on to what degree we reproduce them in our own writing. Students will be expected to bring their own examples of representations of ‘Africa’ – such as in novels, poetry, films, TV programmes, adverts etc – and we will discuss them in small groups.

Please also read the article by Rita Abrahamsen which discusses some potential areas of interconnection between postcolonial theory and African politics. This is a very readable and accessible account of postcolonial theory, and it places many of the issues we have discussed on the course in a revealing context. It may also stimulate some of you into pursuing some of these theoretical avenues and authors further.