

# POLC42

# Topics in Comparative Politics

# African Politics

Week 1: Introduction to the course and African politics

Welcome to POLC42

# Plan for today



Introductions



Introduction to Africa and African politics



Studying Africa

Why?

Challenges

Approaches



Course details

Topics and  
organization

Grading

Introductions:  
about me



Introductions:  
about you



# Africa: size



<https://matadornetwork.com/read/true-size-africa/>



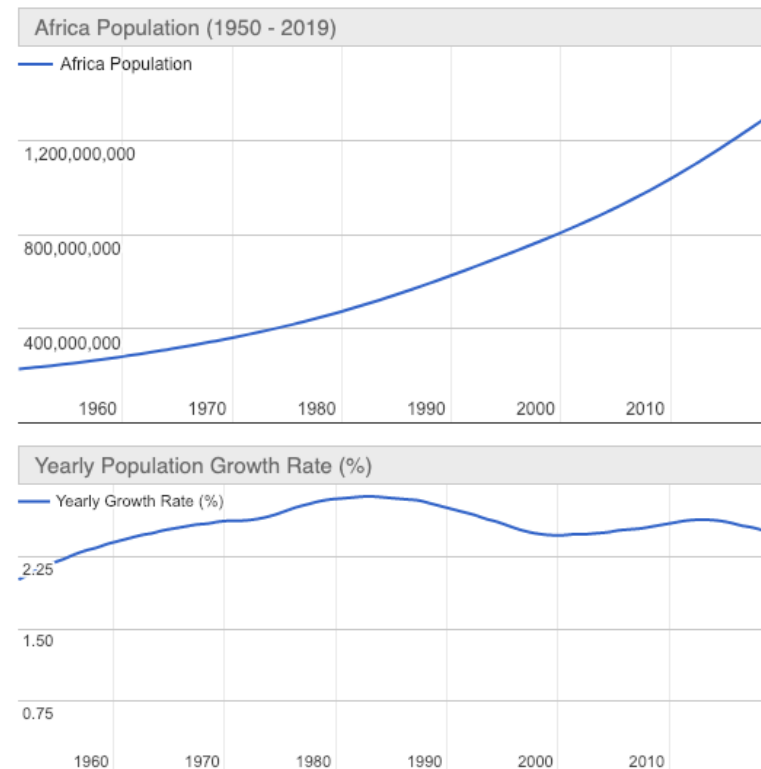
# Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sub-Saharan\\_Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sub-Saharan_Africa)

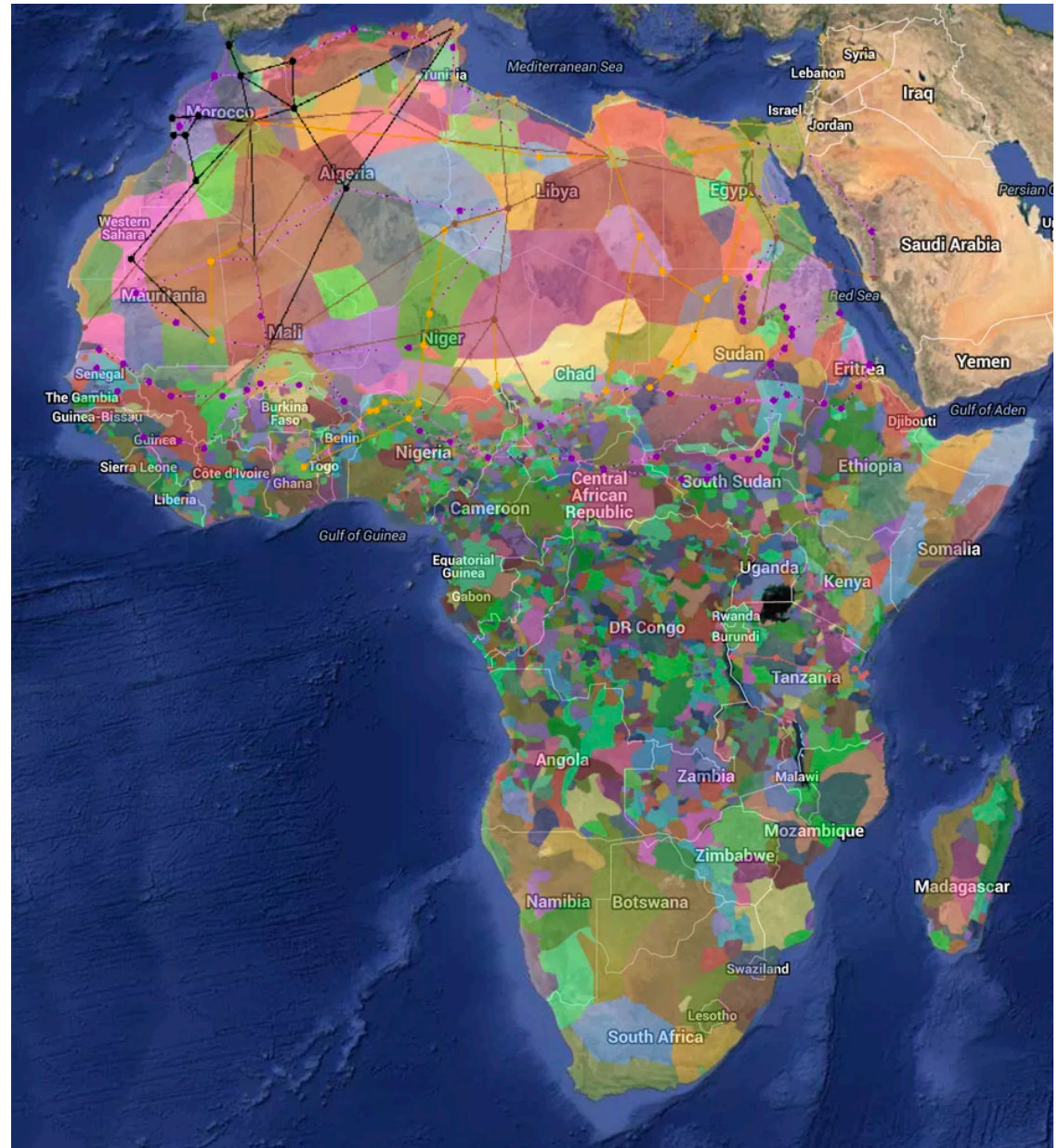
# Africa: population

- 1.3 billion / 1.1 billion in SSA
- 17% (14% SSA) of world population
- Population growth: 2.5% / 2.7% SSA
- Urban population: 41% / 40% SSA
- Median age: 19.4





# Africa: ethnicity



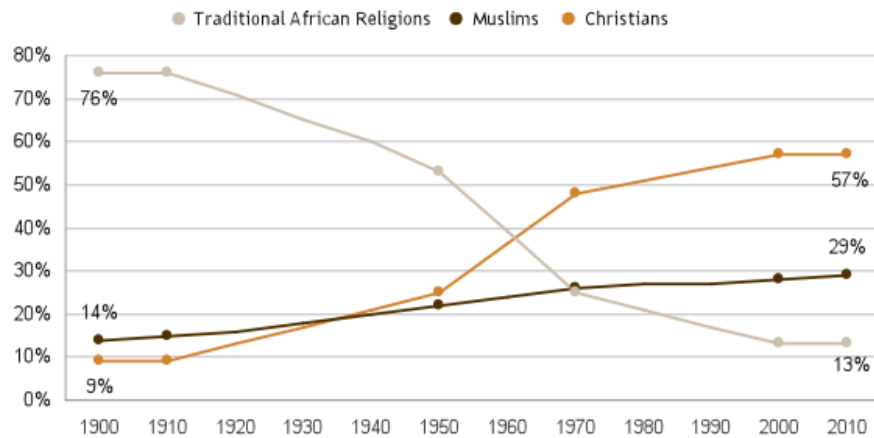
<http://worldmap.harvard.edu/africamap/>

# Africa: languages



# Africa: religions

Growth of Islam & Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa Since 1900

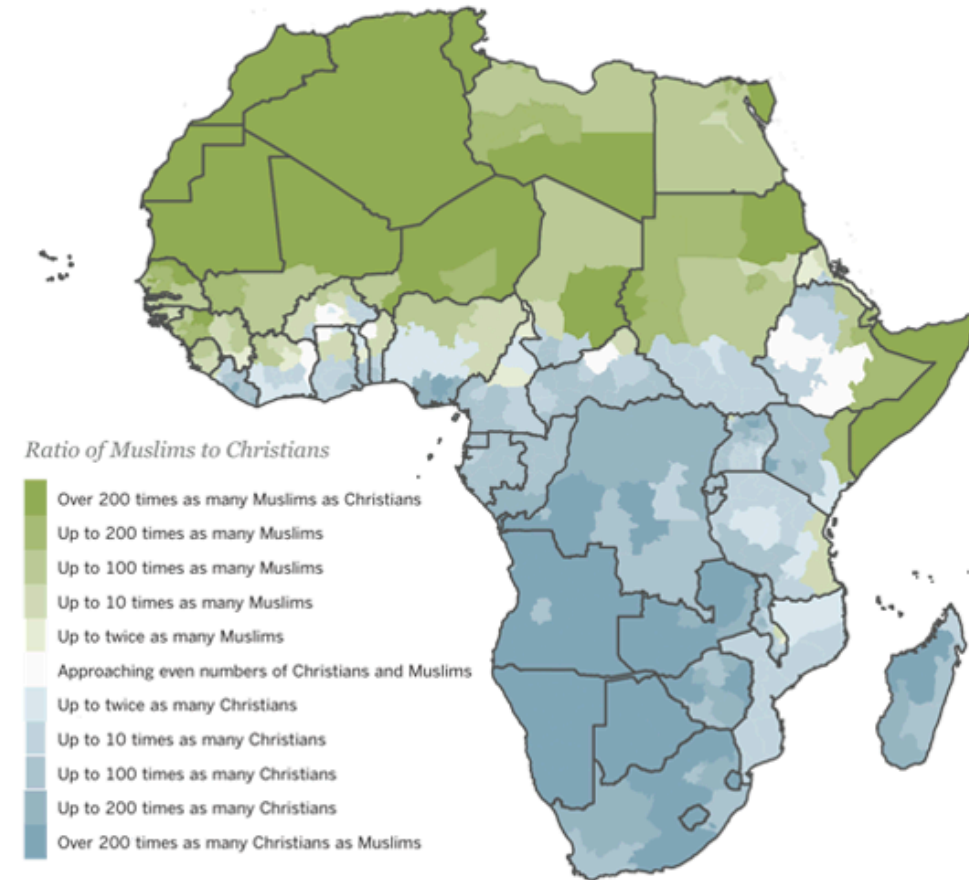


Source: World Religion Database. Historical data draw on government records, historical atlases and reports of religious organizations at the time. Later figures draw on U.N. population estimates, surveys and censuses.

Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, April 2010

## Muslims and Christians in Africa

*This map shows the ratio of Muslims to Christians in each country and province. The north is heavily Muslim, and the south is heavily Christian.*



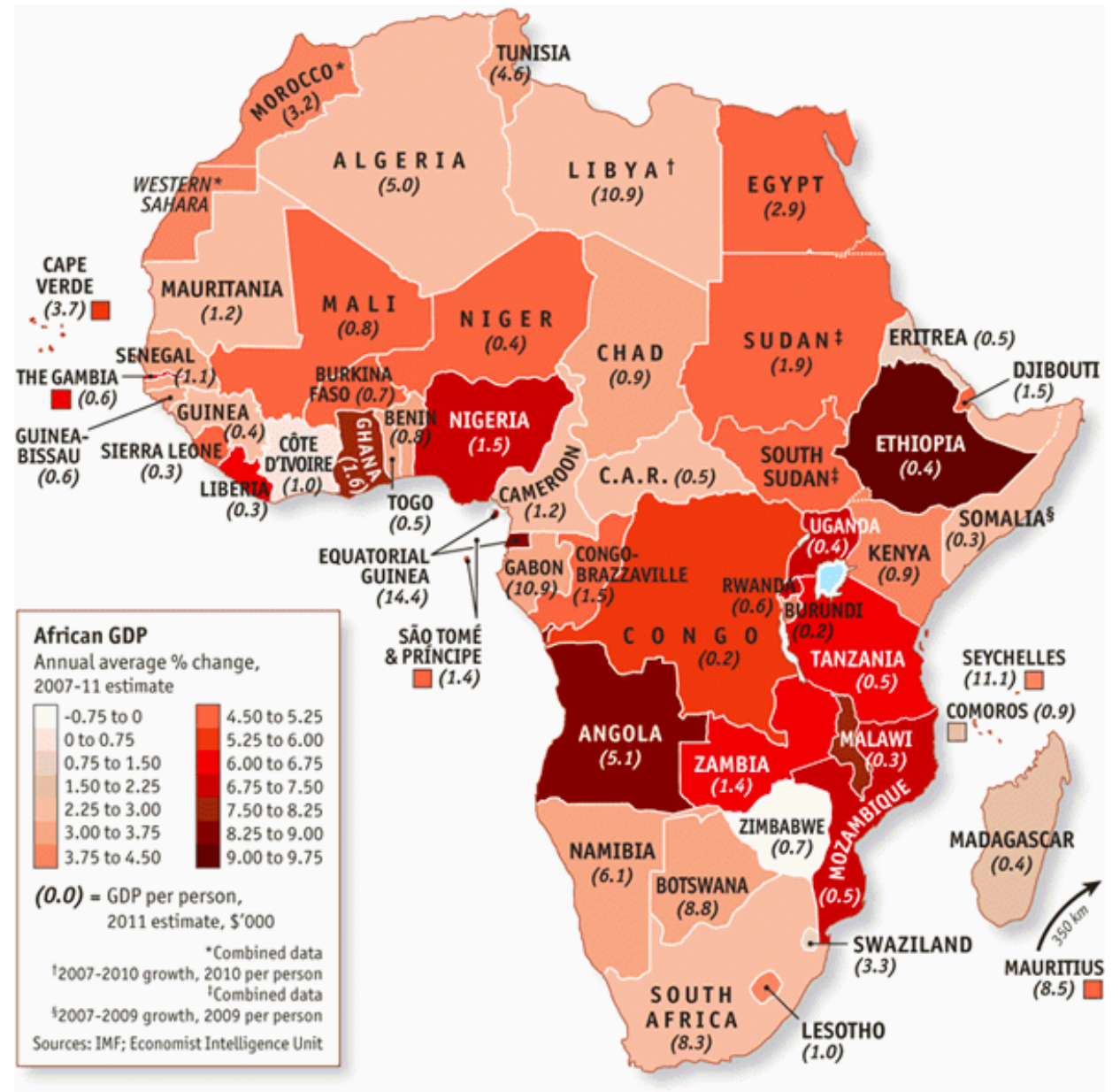
Sources: censuses, demographic and health surveys, and the World Religion Database

Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, April 2010

<https://www.pewforum.org/2010/04/15/executive-summary-islam-and-christianity-in-sub-saharan-africa/>



# Africa: economy



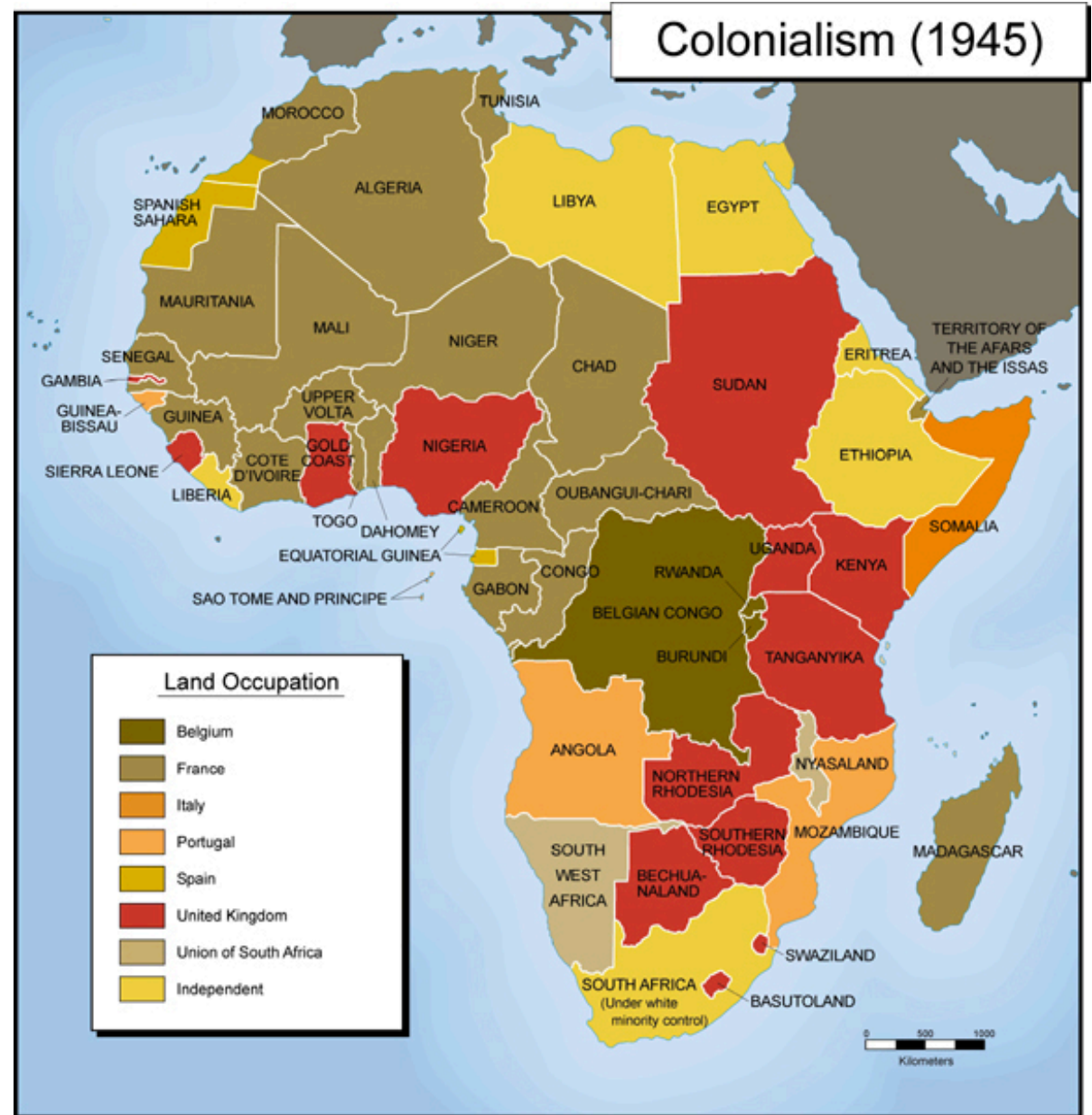
# Africa: economy

- 54 states in Africa
- 46 states in Sub-Saharan Africa



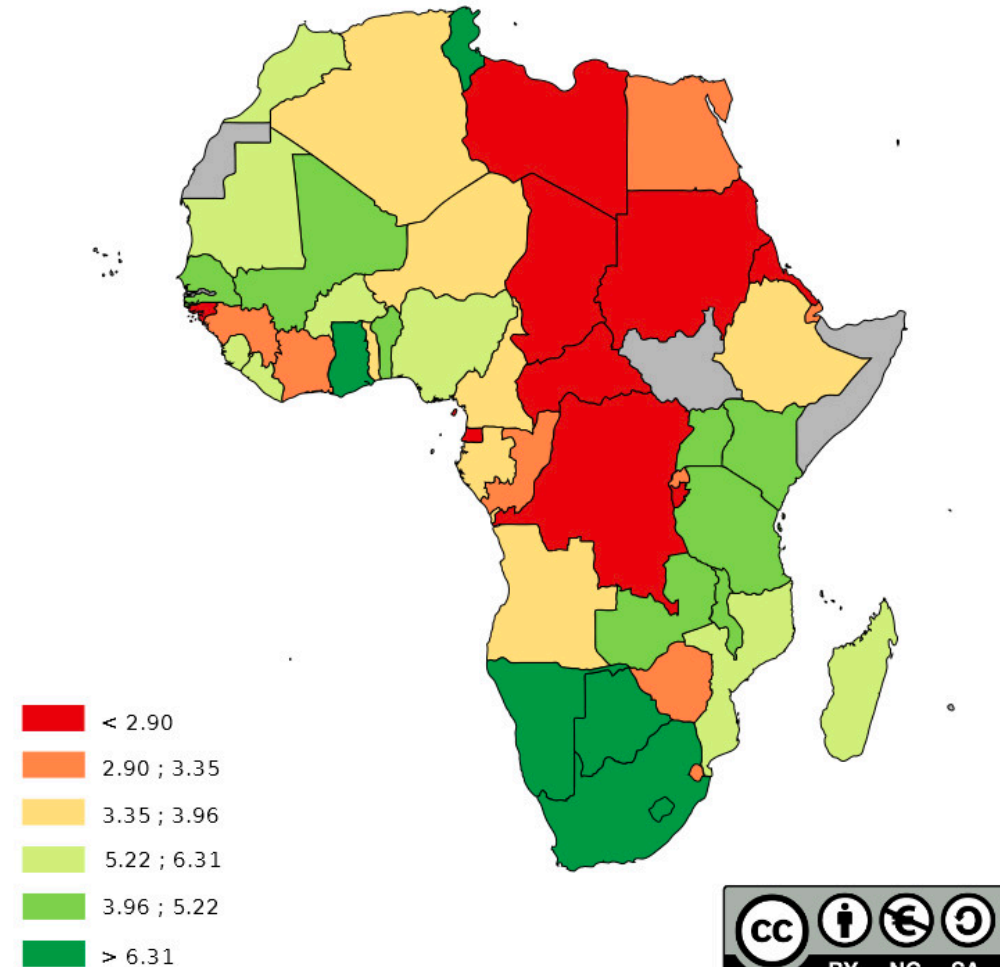
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Africa#/media/File:African\\_continent-en.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Africa#/media/File:African_continent-en.svg)

# African politics: colonial experience



# African politics: regimes

Democracy Index (10 = perfect)



Source : Economist Intelligence Unit - 2015

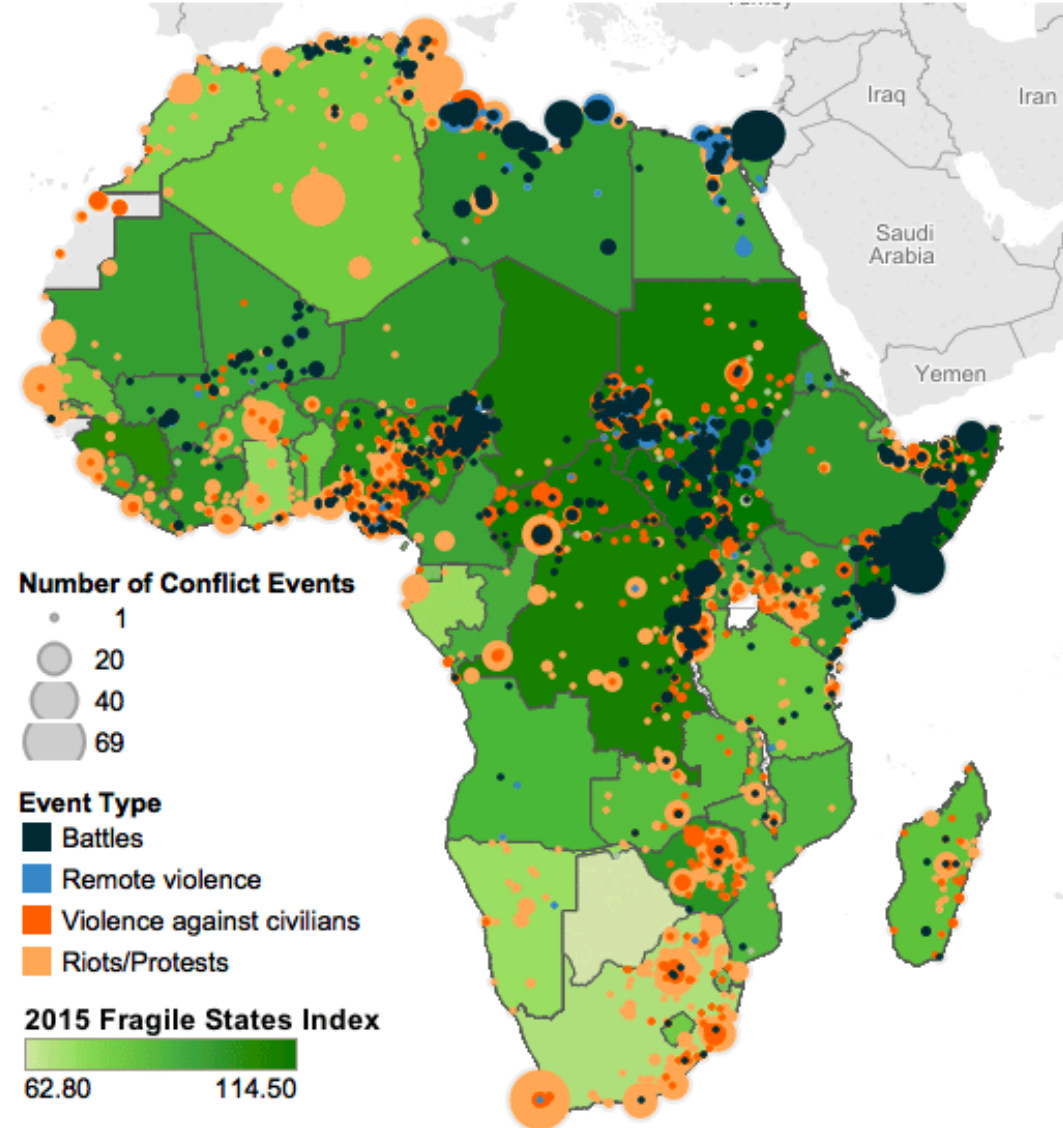
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# African politics: state fragility and conflict

Figure 1: State Fragility and Political Conflict, Africa, 2015



Why study  
Africa?



# Empirical puzzles

Why is Africa poorer than other world regions / continents?

Why have some African countries undergone successful democratic transitions, while democratization failed in others?

Why is Tanzania stable, while neighbouring DRC is riven by conflict?

Why is the Kenyan state relatively strong, while its Somali counterpart disintegrated?

# Inferential leverage

What is the effect of colonialism on economic performance, state capacity, or government accountability?

Does rapid population growth impede economic development?

What is the relationship between ethnic and/or linguistic diversity and conflict?

# Challenges



Data



Access



Ethics

# Ethics of studying Africa



## **Is It Ethical to Study Africa? Preliminary Thoughts on Scholarship and Freedom**

Mama, Amina.

African Studies Review, Volume 50, Number 1, April 2007, pp. 1-26 (Article)

Published by African Studies Association  
DOI: [10.1353/arw.2005.0122](https://doi.org/10.1353/arw.2005.0122)



# Approaches to studying African politics

## Chazan 1999:

- Modernization
- Dependency
- Statist
- Interactions
- Geography (“constraints upon choice”)
- History

## Institutions and institutionalism(s)



# Course topics

## Part 1. Historical legacies:

- Precolonial Africa
- Colonialism
- Decolonization and nation-building
- African states and Africa's states-system

## Part 2. Key issues in contemporary African politics:

- Neopatrimonialism and state-society relations in Africa
- Identity: gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and African politics
- African militaries, coups d'état, and political instability
- Political violence in Africa
- Economic development in Africa
- Democratization and African politics since the 1990s

# Course assessment

## Participation and in-class involvement (10%)

- Kahoot!

## Assignments:

- Map quiz (5%)
- Term test (15%)
- Research proposal (10%)
- Research essay (30%)
- Final exam (30%)

# Contact

Office hours:  
Wednesday, 5.15-6.15  
pm, in HL 502

Skype

Quercus messaging