

POLC42

Topics in Comparative Politics

African Politics

Week 4: Decolonization and nation-building

Plan for today

- Late colonialism in Africa
- Decolonization
- Formation of independent African states and Africa's postcolonial states-system

Late colonialism in Africa

- 'Second colonial occupation'
 - Low, D. Anthony and John M. Lonsdale. 1991. "East Africa: Towards a New Order, 1945-1963" in *Eclipse of Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Intensification of white settlement
- Colonial developmentalism:
 - Creation of marketing boards and cooperatives
 - Agricultural schemes:
 - Office du Niger, French Sudan (Mali)
 - East African Groundnut Scheme, Tanganyika (Tanzania)



Late colonialism in Africa: colonial developmentalism



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0AgLOtaQ-m4>

Late colonialism in Africa

FRIDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 28, 1961

CONGO'S BASIC PROBLEMS III

**Prime Need Is Education;
Only 19 Native Congolese
College Graduates There**

What explains decolonization?

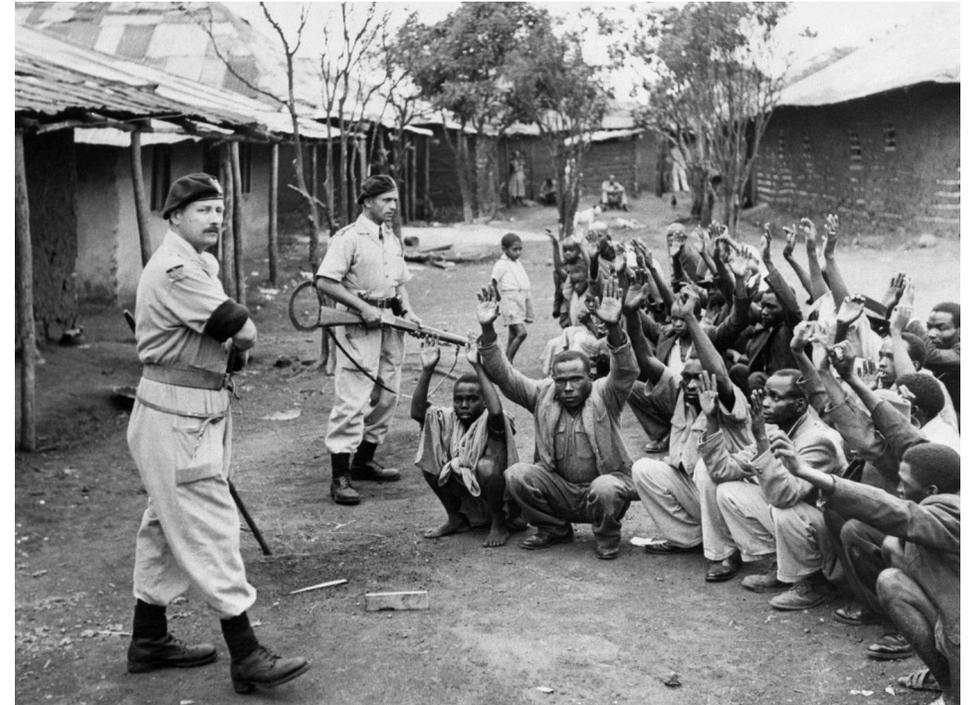
What explains decolonization?

- Destruction of World War II and costs of empire
- Colonial powers' defeats in Asia and the success of Asian nationalisms
- Cold War and US / USSR influence
- United Nations Charter and changing norms → neocolonialism
- African nationalism and political mobilization

What forms did African political mobilization take?

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- Political organization:
 - E.g. Kwame Nkrumah in Gold Coast (→ Ghana), Julius Nyerere in Tanganyika, Hastings Banda in Nyasaland (→ Malawi), Léopold Sédar Senghor in Senegal
- Armed struggle:
 - Mau Mau uprising
- Trade unionism and industrial action
- Peasant unrest:
 - Noncooperation and sabotage
 - Resistance to agricultural 'improvements'
 - Tax resistance

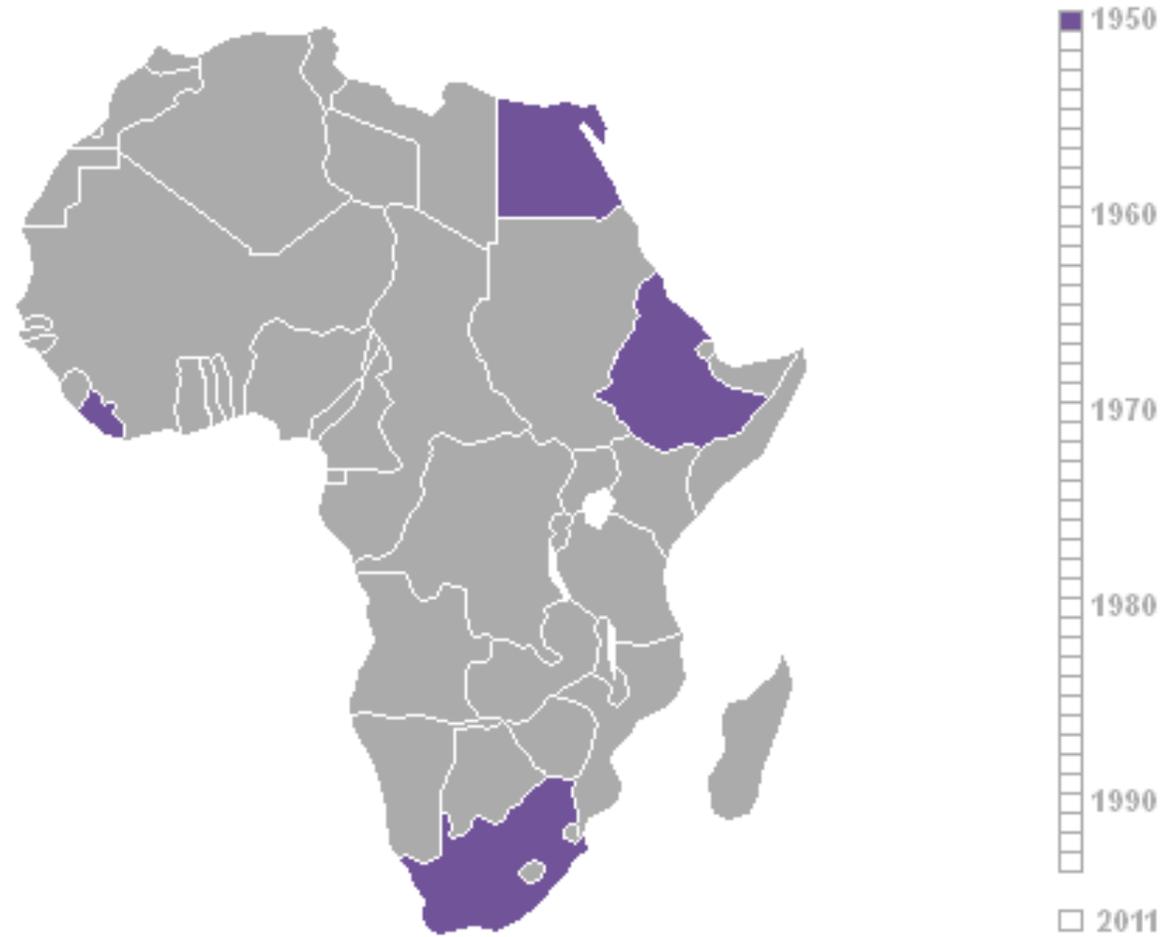


What explains the politicization
of African peasantry?

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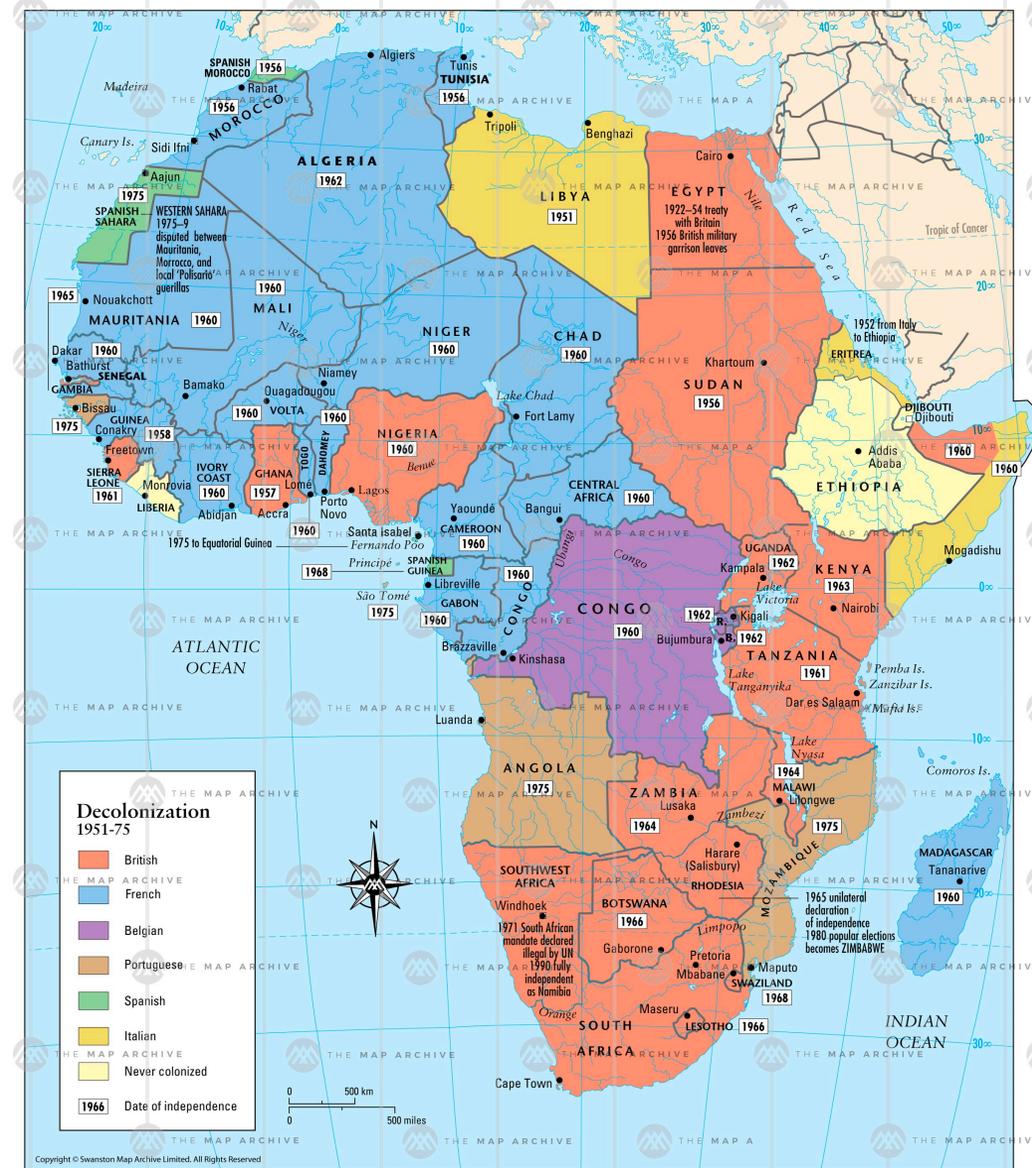
- Diversion of profits
- Negative externalities:
 - Erosion
 - Crop diseases
 - Collective rights to grazing and fisheries
 - Quality standards
- Disputes over land rights:
 - White settlement
 - Seizure of 'waste' land
 - Corporate concessions
 - Collective vs. individual land ownership
- Taxation:
 - Head tax
- → Antagonism towards colonial governments

Dynamics of decolonization



Dynamics of decolonization

- Conflict:
 - Settler colonies vs. others
- Speed:
 - Rapid decolonization of former Belgian, British, and French colonies
 - Protracted independence struggle against Portugal (and Spain)
 - Special cases of South Africa (and South West Africa → Namibia), Rhodesia (→ Zimbabwe), Western Sahara, Chagos Islands



Formation of postcolonial states-system in Africa

- Pan-African movement
- All-African Peoples' Conference, Accra, 1958
- Organization of African Unity, 1963
- Attempted international federations:
 - Mali Federation
 - East African Federation
 - Ghana-Guinea-Mali Union
 - Senegambia



Kwame Nkrumah

Formation of independent African states

- Momentous decisions to retain:
 - The nation-state as the exclusive unit of organization
 - Colonial-era boundaries (with some exceptions)



What explains the acceptance of the nation-state and colonial-era boundaries?

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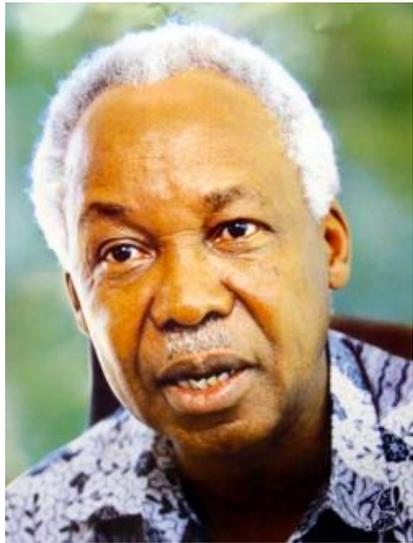
- The nation-state as a powerful template:
 - Association with modernity
 - International legitimacy and organization membership
 - Elite interests:
 - Sylvanus Olympio: “Political unification is only desired by those political leaders who believe they could come out on top in such unions.”
 - Olympio, Sylvanus. 1961. “Reflections on Togolese and African Problems,” in *Africa Speaks*, ed. James Duffy and Robert A. Manners. Princeton: D. Van Nostrand: p. 75.
- Existence of administrative structures
- India’s partition



Sylvanus Olympio

Formation of independent African states

- Models of state-making in early post-colonial Africa:
 - African socialism: Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Ahmed Sékou Touré in Guinea, Thomas Sankara in Burkina Faso
 - 'Conservatism': Jomo Kenyatta, Hastings Banda, Félix Houphouët-Boigny in Côte d'Ivoire



Julius Nyerere



Thomas Sankara



Hastings Banda



Jomo Kenyatta

Formation of independent African states: legacies of colonialism

- Economies and infrastructure geared towards extraction and export of raw materials / cash crops
- Low levels of development and public goods provision
- Extractive institutions
- Recent creation of states + lack of internal cohesion
- Weak state-society relations and limited state accountability / legitimacy
- Nature of African elites

Formation of independent African states: legacies of colonialism

- Mamdani:
 - Continuation of decentralized despotism after independence →
 - Ethnicization: rural and urban popular resistance to decentralized despotism inevitably took an ethnic form as 'tribal' political organization →
 - Government response to resistance: either continuation of decentralized despotism or attempt to reform it through centralization, resulting in centralized despotism →
 - Varieties of authoritarianism →
- Continuation of patterns of colonial rule, but limited external enforcement

Consequences of decolonization-era decisions

- Structure of Africa's states-system
- Nature of the African state
- Neopatrimonialism and extraversion
- Prominence of ethnic politics
- Incidence of coups and conflict
- Limited economic development
- Persistence of authoritarianism