

# 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?

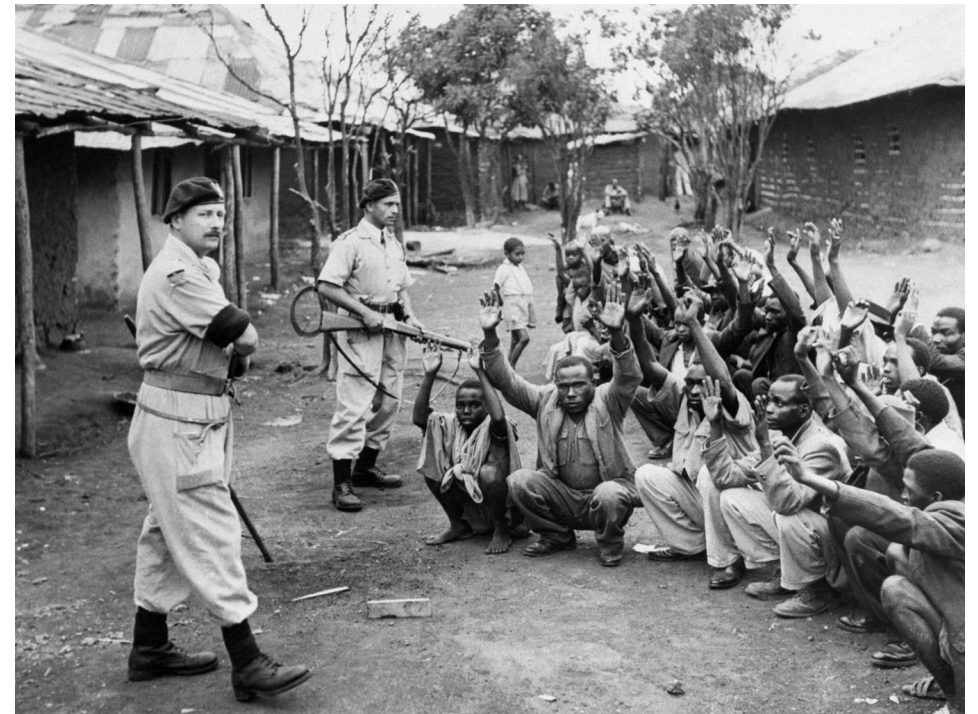
# What explains decolonization?

- 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?

# What forms did African political mobilization take?

- 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



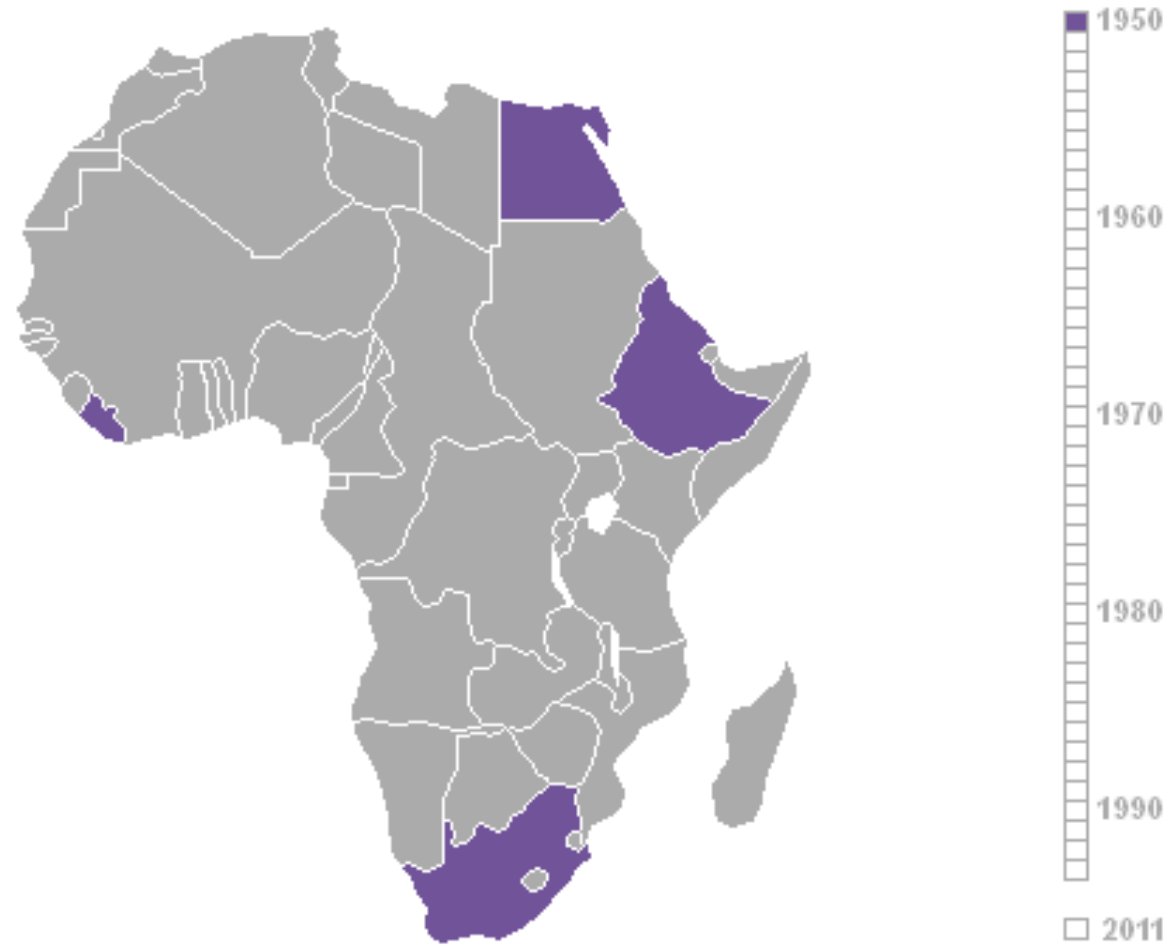
What explains the politicization  
of African peasantry?



# What explains the politicization of African peasantry?

- 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?



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

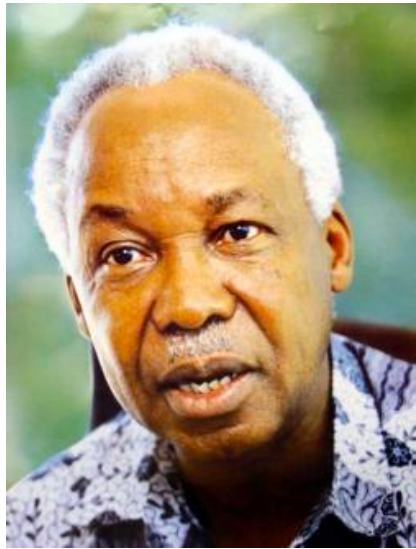
- The nation-state as a powerful template:
  - Association with modernity
  - International legitimacy and organization membership
  - Elite interests:
    - Sylvanus Olympio: “Political unification is only desired by those political leaders who believe they could come out on top in such unions.”
      - 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