

PLS 343

Politics of Sub-Saharan Africa

Week 5:

African states and Africa's states-system

Recap

- Historical legacies +
- Independent-era decisions —>
- Formation of Africa's postcolonial states and states-system

Plan for this week

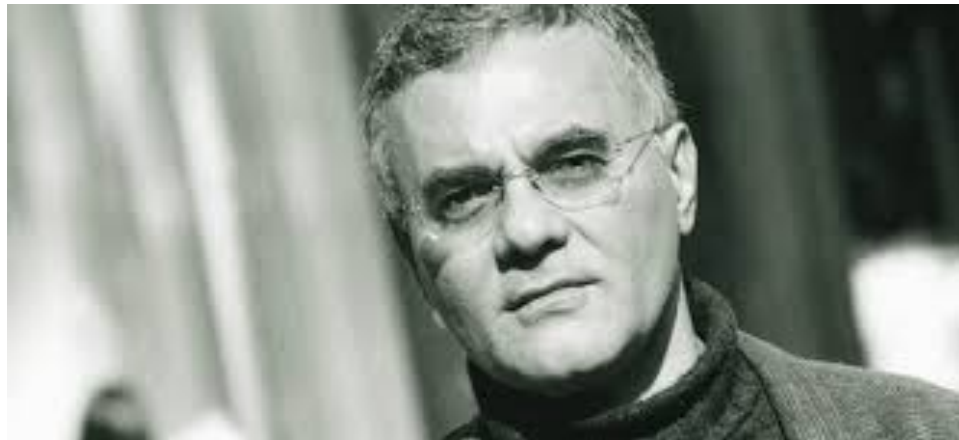
- The nature of Africa's postcolonial states and states-system

Precolonial legacies

- Unevenness of polities' degree of political centralization and ability to project state power
- Limited governing capacity

Colonial legacies

- Imposition of state rule across the continent —> relatively uniform political centralization
- Young, Mamdani, and Herbst's contending perspectives on the nature of the colonial state—and on projection of state power



Postcolonial continuity

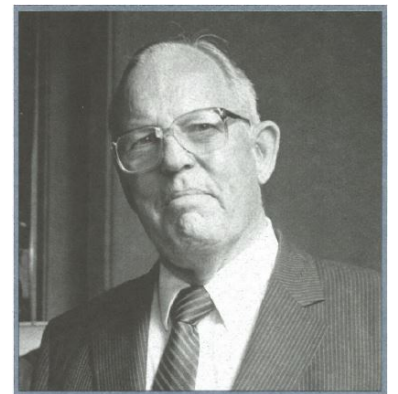
- Young:
 - “A state, once institutionalized, has a formidable capacity for its own reproduction across time...”
- Mamdani:
 - Persistence of decentralized despotism
- Herbst:
 - Unchanged dynamics of state consolidation

Postcolonial states and states-system

- Drivers of state capacity:
 - States-system
 - Projection of state power
- Kinds of statehood:
 - Juridical
 - Empirical

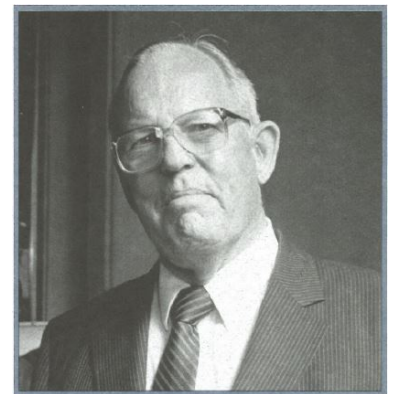
States-system according to Jackson and Rosberg

- Sovereignty:
 - Positive: capabilities “which enable governments to be their own masters” —> empirical statehood
 - Negative: formal legal condition that ensures freedom from external interference —> juridical statehood
- Africa’s postcolonial states-system —> ‘quasi-states’



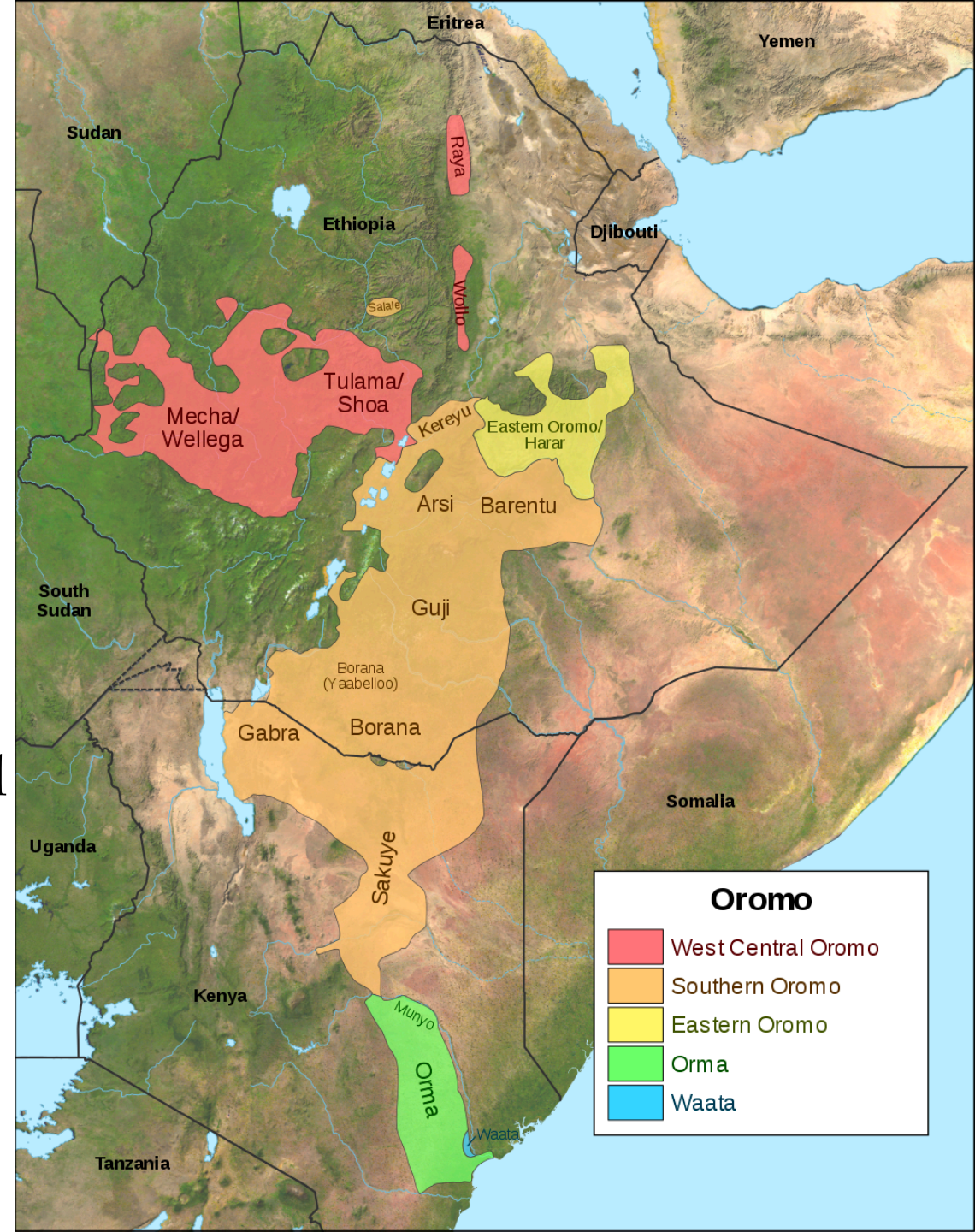
States-system according to Jackson and Rosberg

- Implications:
 - Illegality of self-determination
 - Paucity of interstate military conflict
 - Relatively weak militaries (—> prevalence of intrastate conflict?)
 - State weakness—and limited projection of state power



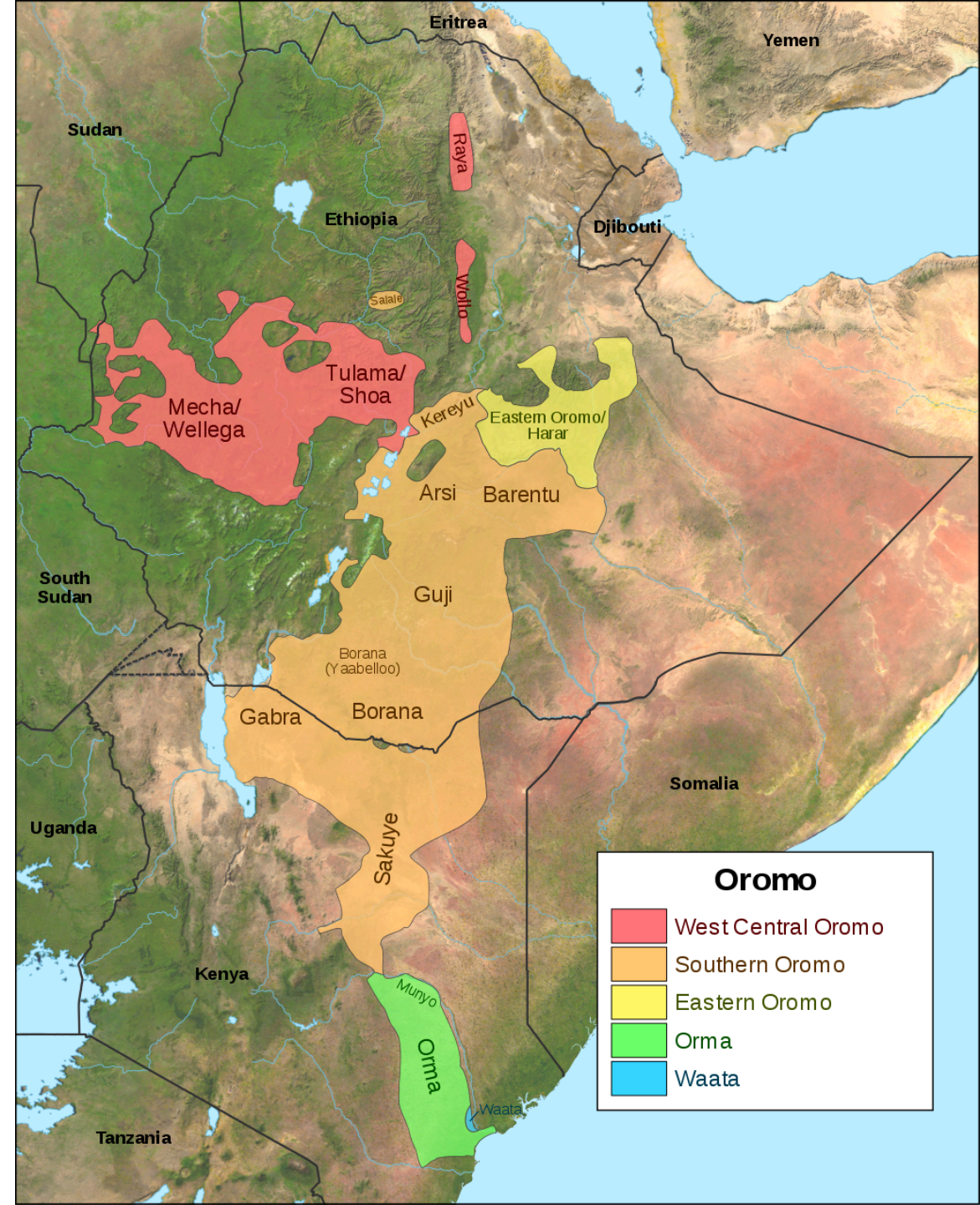
Projection of state power according to Ensminger

- Transformation of the consensus-based political system of the Orma:
 - Economic diversification and inequality → need for property rights enforcement +
 - Erosion of social institutions → erosion of the basis of elders' political power +
 - Collective action problems (private vs. communal benefits of well sales, population growth, free-riding) →
- State incorporation



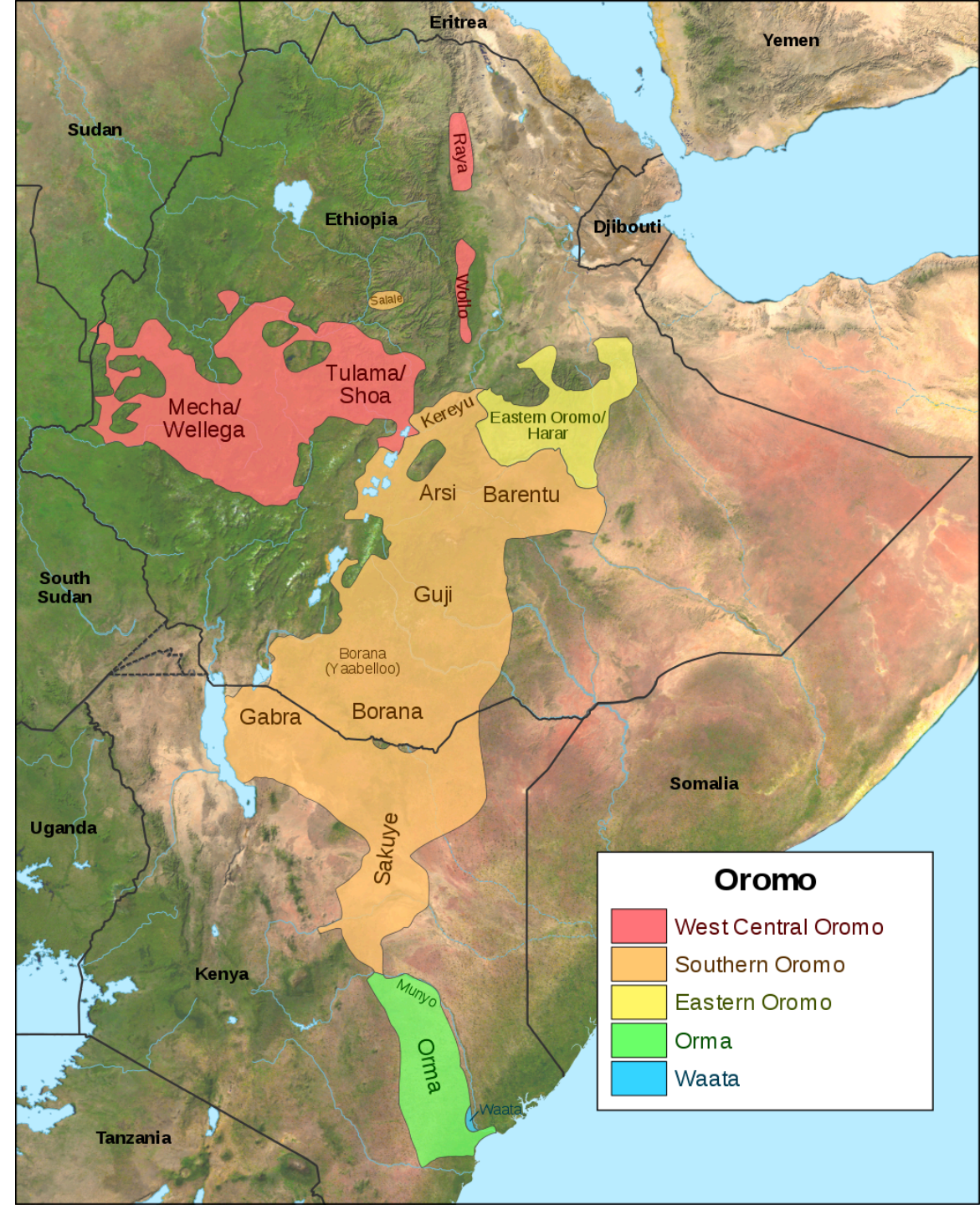
Projection of state power according to Ensminger

- Timing of state incorporation
- Drivers of state incorporation



Projection of state power according to Ensminger

- Benefits of incorporation:
 - Economic alternatives to pastoralism
 - Education and healthcare provision
 - Infrastructure and market access
 - Security
 - Famine relief



Takeaways

- Competing accounts of African statehood:
 - Hegemonic vs. non-hegemonic states
 - Uniform vs. uneven (bifurcation, continuum) projection of state power
 - Juridical vs. empirical statehood
 - Emphasis on historical continuity vs. transformative effect of colonization—and decolonization