

## Understanding Sub-Saharan Africa

Virginie Roiron, Maître de conférences en civilisation britannique et du Commonwealth

### Module Summary:

This module is intended to be a first approach to the study of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Since the wave of independence swept through Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1960s, the states of the sub-continent have had to face massive challenges, ranging from nation-building and institutional consolidation to their integration into globalisation processes. In this perspective, the state comes out as a key element to understand issues pertaining to power relations, political change and economic development in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The module will begin with an overview of the colonial and postcolonial history of the sub-continent, which will set the basis for the study of power relations and state institutions in the aftermath of decolonisation. In this perspective, it will assess the weight of colonial legacy by enquiring into how newly independent states developed into structurally weak "gatekeeper" states, with "neo-patrimonial" political systems based on the appropriation, accumulation and redistribution of state resources as political patronage.

The module will move on to explore a number of topics: the state of democracy three decades since the wave of democratic transitions in the 1990s, conflicts and new transnational threats, economic and development issues and Sub-Saharan Africa's agency in international relations. As 2024 stands as a crucial year to observe the democratic process in Sub-Saharan Africa (with 15 presidential or parliamentary elections held or scheduled), more focus will be laid on studying this particular aspect, taking the states concerned as case studies.

### Objectives:

By the end of this module, students:

- will have gained background knowledge of the political theory of the state in Sub-Saharan Africa and will be able to analyse its main features
- should be able to identify the main structural challenges Sub-Saharan Africa states have been through since their creation against the backdrop of the evolution of the international system (sovereignty v. interdependence and dependence).
- should be able to understand how such structural weaknesses have affected Sub-Saharan African states' economic development and ability to control their territories and borders against transnational threats and external interventions
- should be able to assess the impact and limits of democratic transitions
- should be able to understand of how Sub-Saharan African states relate to each other and to the rest of the world politically and economically

### Assessment:

- Students will be assigned a specific country or regional organisation to monitor and will present their observations and analysis to the class about the last election or recent political events. (30%)
- A short paper (in English) summarising the analysis will have to be handed in. (30%)
- An online test (during the semester) (40%)

### **Selected Bibliography**

Chris Alden, *China in Africa*, Zed Books, 2007

Daniel C. Bach, Mamoudou Gazibo (dirs.), *L'Etat néo-patrimonial : Genèse et Trajectoires Contemporaines*, Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 2011

Jean-Pierre Bat, *Le Syndrôme Foccart : la politique française en Afrique, de 1959 à nos jours*, Folio Histoire, 2012.

Jean-François. BAYART "Africa in the world: a history of extraversion" in *African Affairs*, 99, 2000 /

« L'Afrique dans le monde : une histoire d'extraversion », *Critique Internationale*, 1999, 5.

Jean-François Bayart, *L'Etat en Afrique. La politique du ventre*, Paris, Fayard, (1989), 2006

Jean-François Bayart, Achille Mbembe, Comi Toulabor, *La Politique par le bas en Afrique noire*, Paris, Karthala, (1992) 2008

Patrick Chabal, Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa works : Disorder as political instrument*, James Currey, 1999 / *L'Afrique est partie! Du désordre comme instrument politique*, Paris, Economica, 1999

NIC CHEESEMAN « Blondel's African Presidential Republics: proof presidentialism can perform even in the most challenging contexts? », *European political science*, 1, 2024.

NIC CHEESEMAN, LARMER Miles, « Ethnopolitism in Africa: opposition mobilization in diverse and unequal societies », *Democratization*. 2015, vol.22 n° 1.

Nic Cheeseman, *Democracy in Africa: Successes, Failures, and the Struggle for Political Reform*, Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Nic Cheeseman (ed.), *Institutions and Democracy in Africa: How the rules of the game shape political developments*, Cambridge University Press, 2018

Frederick COOPER. *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002 / *L'Afrique depuis 1940*, Payot/Rivages (2008) 2012.

Frederick Cooper, *Africa in the World : Capitalism, Empire, Nation-State*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2014 / *L'Afrique dans le monde : capitalisme, empire, Etat-nation*, Payot, 2015.

Momar-Coumba Diop, Mamadou Diouf (dirs), *Les Figures du politique en Afrique. Des pouvoirs hérités aux pouvoirs élus*, CODESRIA/Karthala, 1999

Ferguson, James. *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

Jean-Pierre Gabas, Jean-Raphaël Chaponnière, *Le temps de la Chine en Afrique : enjeux et réalités au sud du Sahara*, GEMDEV-Khartala, 2012

Mamoudou Gazibo, *Introduction à la politique africaine*, Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2010

Göran Hydén, *African Politics in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006

John Iliffe, *Les Africains : histoire d'un continent*, (1997) Flammarion, 2009

Olivier Mbabia, *La Chine en Afrique*, Ellipses, 2012.

Martin Meredith, *The State of Africa: a history of fifty years of independence*, Public Affairs, 2005.

Mahmoud Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism*, Princeton University Press, 1996

Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, Hachette, 1995

Paul Nugent, *Africa since Independence: A Comparative History*. 2d ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Richard Olaniyan, Ehimika A. Ifidon (ed.), *Contemporary issues in Africa's development: wither the African Renaissance?*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018

Terence Ranger, "The Invention of tradition in Colonial Africa", in Terence Ranger, Eric Hobsbawm (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press (1983), 2012

Crawford Young, *The Postcolonial State in Africa: Fifty Years of Independence, 1960–2010*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012.

### **Contact :**

[virginie.roiron@unistra.fr](mailto:virginie.roiron@unistra.fr)