

Neo-patrimonialism and the discourse of state failure in Africa

Zubairu Wai*

Department of Political Science, Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, Canada

This paper is a critical interrogation of the dominant Africanist discourse on African state forms and its relationship with what is seen as pervasive state failure on the continent. Through an examination of the neo-patrimonialist literature on African states, this paper argues that what informs such problematic scholarship, inscribed on the conceptual and analytical landscape of the Weberian ideal-typical conception of state rationality is a vulgar universalism that tends to disregard specific historical experiences while subsuming them under the totalitarian grip of a Eurocentric unilinear evolutionist logic. The narrative that such scholarship produces not only constructs a mechanistic conception of state rationality based on the experience of the Western liberal state as the expression of the universal, but also denies the specificity of the continent's historical experience, by either denying its independent conceptual existence or vulgarising its social and political formations and realities, dismissing them as aberrant, deviant, deformed and of lesser quality. Immanent in this move is the ideological effacement and the rendering invisible, hence the normalisation of the relational and structural logic, of past histories of colonial domination and contemporary imperial power relations within which the states in Africa have been historically constituted and continue to be reconstituted and reimagined. When exactly does a state fail, the paper asks. Could what is defined as state failure actually be part of the processes of state formation or reconfiguration, which are misrecognised or misinterpreted because of the poverty of Africanist social science and ethnocentric biases of the particular lenses used to understand them?

Keywords: Africa; failed states; ideal types; neo-patrimonialism; state formation; state failure; universalism

[Le néo-patrimonialisme et le discours de la défaillance de l'état en Afrique]. Cet article est une interrogation critique du discours africaniste dominant sur les formes d'état africain et sa relation avec ce qui est considéré comme une défaillance persistante de l'état sur le continent. A travers un examen de la littérature néo-patrimonialiste sur les états africains, cet article soutient que ce qui est à la base de ces savoirs problématiques, inscrit dans le paysage conceptuel et analytique de la conception idéal-typique webérienne de la rationalité étatique, est un universalisme vulgaire qui tend à ignorer les expériences historiques spécifiques tout en les subsumant sous l'emprise totalitaire d'une logique évolutionniste unilinéaire euro-centrique. Le récit que ces études permet de produire non seulement construit une conception mécaniste de la rationalité étatique basée sur l'expérience de l'état libéral occidental comme l'expression de l'universel, mais aussi nie la spécificité de l'expérience historique du continent soit en niant son existence indépendante conceptuelle, ou en vulgarisant ses formations et ses réalités sociales et politiques, les rejetant comme aberrantes, déviantes, difformes et de moindre qualité. Immanent dans ce mouvement sont

*Email: zubawai@lakeheadu.ca

l'effacement idéologique et le rendement invisible qui conduisent à la normalisation de la logique relationnelle et structurelle des histoires passées de la domination coloniale et des relations contemporaine de pouvoir impériale, dans laquelle les états en Afrique ont été historiquement constitués et continuent à être reconstitués et ré-imaginés. Quand, exactement, est-ce que l'état échoue, se demande l'article? Ce qui est défini comme état défaillant pourrait-il faire partie du processus de formation ou de reconfiguration de l'état, qui sont méconnues ou mal interprétées à cause de la pauvreté des sciences sociales et les préjugés ethnocentriques africanistes des lentilles notamment utilisées pour les comprendre?

Mots-clés : Afrique; états défaillants; types idéaux; néo-patrimonialisme; formation de l'état; défaillance de l'état; universalisme

I

Questions about African state forms and political realities have over the past two decades been dominated, in mainstream Africanist political science discourses, by two ubiquitous concepts: neo-patrimonialism and, more recently, state failure. While multiple tendencies exist within these two broad conceptual approaches, they have, in their variations, held a totalitarian grip on the interpretation of the continent's postcolonial sociopolitical realities, as well as cast a grim shadow over political possibilities, especially in terms of transformative politics, on the continent. Although these concepts have spurred debates and many critiques have developed targeted at their modalities, most studies, even those critical of them, end up reproducing their problematiques in reading Africa's political realities. Instead of approaching Africa's postcolonial political conditions in terms of these concepts as is common in conventional Africanist studies purporting to explain them, let us take a different route and set our critical sights on the very modalities and epistemological structures of these concepts and interrogate their violent and objectifying discourses on the continent. First, let us proceed by presenting the core features of the state failure and neo-patrimonial literature, then work our way through a critical discussion of their intellectual foundations and core assumptions, as part of a broader critique of the epistemological structures and conditions of possibility of Africanist scholarship, before finally considering their practical power political implications for the continent and its people.

II

In a study published by the Netherlands Institute of International Relations in which he seeks to explain what caused the Sierra Leone civil war, the British Africanist political scientist Christopher Clapham (2003) makes the interesting claim that 'Sierra Leone was by no means an obvious candidate for state collapse' (p. 9). (David Keen, another British political scientist, makes a similar claim in his 2005 volume *Conflict and collusion in Sierra Leone* that 'Sierra Leone was not a particularly likely candidate for civil war' [Keen 2005, p. 8] – which begs the question, what state is a particularly likely candidate for civil war, or what makes a state a likely candidate for state collapse and what does not?) Clapham's reason for this somewhat bizarre assertion is based on certain pre-given criteria which he believes ordinarily allow for successful statehood: Sierra Leone has a favourable political geography in terms of its small size, manageable population, abundant natural resources and good communication networks which largely frees it from some of 'the inherent problems that bedevil massive territories with very poor communication such as Angola, Congo or Sudan' (Clapham 2003, p. 9). But more importantly, it 'experienced an exceptionally long period of colonial administration', which gives it 'a favourable

social endowment' in terms of a long-standing commitment to Western education, and a substantial cadre of indigenous lawyers, academics, administrators and other professionals. Because of these factors, 'if you were looking for an African state with the physical, social and economic infrastructure appropriate to success as an independent state, you would have had difficulty finding a better candidate than Sierra Leone' (Clapham 2003, pp. 9–10).

Implicit in Clapham's claims are extremely problematic assumptions, which though stupendous, are not immediately discernible. First, is the claim to a purported knowledge of what makes a state an 'obvious' candidate for 'state collapse', 'state failure' or 'civil war', and what does not. In Clapham's imagination, (a) the size of a state matters: the bigger it is – e.g. massive states like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sudan – the more likely it is to fail; (b) the duration of colonial rule matters: the longer the colonial experience, the more likelihood of successful statehood; and (c) the level of exposure to Western civilisation, education and lifestyles matters: it helps in bequeathing a favourable political culture and social endowments which contribute to a successful statehood. Irrespective of what his political intentions are, Clapham's notion of statehood is already constructed on the normative orthodoxy of a Eurocentric metaphor that privileges Western historicity, cultural achievements, political organisations and systems of governance over others. Admittedly, exposure to Western civilisation is the key to successful statehood, as if Western states themselves are not sites of violence, woes, distress, domination and disciplinary power and authority.

Second and more important, and this is not unconnected with the first, is the problematic liberal understanding of the political, which holds or pretends that it is possible (and in fact incessantly tries) to separate violence from politics – a move that has allowed for the interpretation of political violence and armed conflicts as a social pathology that develops when politics or the state fails or collapses. This idea, which has in scholarly reflections, policy debates and media representations become the dominant way of understanding southern (especially African) state forms thought to be beset by economic distress, civil strife and political unrest, relies on a particular problematic reading and interpretation of political reality in the south. Armed conflicts are said to be symptomatic of a larger phenomenon of what has now come to be known as 'state failure' or 'state collapse'; a phenomenon that its proponents claim can be understood by focusing on a state's degree of statehood, determined by its nature and capacity to achieve certain pre-given tasks (Gros 1996, Midgal 1998, Rotberg 2004, Zartman 1995).

Since the 1990s, (and especially after 9/11), the phenomenon of 'state failure' has taken centre stage in global politics and international development discourse, and has become, in the dominant academic and policy reflections and debates, the outcome of nearly every form of socio-economic distress, civil strife and political conflict in the south. There is a widespread belief among northern policymakers, strategic actors and academics that state failure poses a security threat for not only the inhabitants of the failed states, but also for international peace and security, and especially northern states – failed states are believed to create 'zones of lawlessness open to exploitation by criminals and terrorists' (Department for International Development 2004, p. iii). The concerns of northern states with understanding, explaining, predicting, preventing or reversing state failure have thus become a major policy concern for northern policymakers, strategic actors and academics seeking to manage globalisation. This linking of state failure in the south to the security of the north has been instrumental in the merging of security and development discourse (Duffield 2001, Wai 2011).

Africa, which since the 1990s has been the theatre of a number of armed conflicts, or 'state failure' as the 'experts' and strategic actors are quick to point out, has become a conceptual and theoretical staple and the 'guinea pig' for testing the various international

policy prescriptions that have developed in response to the phenomenon. Depending on the specific political interests and ideological commitments of the scholars involved in relation to what they define or see as a state's claim to, or exercise of authority over, its territory and its citizenry, as well as its capacity to achieve certain specific economic, social and political outcomes, a semantic field of concepts (all of which are inscribed on a pejorative landscape) has emerged to describe and portray these state forms: failed/failing state; collapsed/collapsing state; fragile/weak state; quasi-state; shadow state; felonious state; captured state; warlord state and so on (Bayart, Ellis and Hibou 1999; Boas 2001; Carment 2003; Chege 2002; Clapham 1998, 2003; Goldsmith 2000; Gros 1996; Helman and Ratner 1993; Hopkins 2000; Jackson 1987, 1990, 1992, 2000; Keen 2005; Mazrui 1995; Menkhaus 2003; Migdal 1988; Reno 1995, 1998; Rotberg 2004; Warner 1999; Zartman 1995).

Despite what might appear as conceptual and theoretical differences between the numerous scholars who use the conception of state failure to explain what they see as the political failures of southern societies, and the different situations in which they have come to apply the different labels with which they have come to describe the phenomenon, they take the capability of states to perform certain functions or achieve specific outcomes as central to conceptualising the phenomenon of state failure. These functions or outcomes are usually defined in terms of social contractarian yardsticks and what they describe as the coercive and non-coercive functions of the state. The coercive functions of a state are usually conceptualised in Weberian and Hobbesian terms: i.e., in terms of a state's capacity for monopolistic control over violence and, with that, the capability to enforce contracts, maintain law and order, and provide security within a given territory. The non-coercive functions are conceptualised in terms of the provision of social goods and services, the durability and efficacy of a state's governance structures and its social and economic redistributive functions. A state that performs these functions is successful; those that are unable to perform them are failed states (Hill 2005).

According to Jean-Germain Gros (1996) for example, failed states are those 'in which public authorities are either unable or unwilling to carry out their end of what Hobbes long ago called the social contract but which now includes more than maintaining the peace among society's many factions' (p. 456 ff.). Like Gros, I. William Zartman (1995) conceptualises state failure in terms of a state's capacity to properly perform those basic functions that he claims are required for a state to qualify as one. When a state can no longer, with traditional, charismatic, or institutional sources of legitimacy, properly perform its basic functions, or claim legitimacy to govern, and when it has lost control over its own political and economic spaces, it has failed. The legitimacy of a state then is derived from the functions it performs, thus a state fails when 'it has lost its right to rule', i.e., when 'the structure, authority (legitimate power), law, and political order have fallen apart' (Zartman 1995). To Robert Jackson (2000, p. 296), a state fails when it 'cannot or will not safeguard minimal civil conditions for their populations: domestic peace, law and order, and good governance'. Legitimacy in this conception then is derived mainly from the functions a state performs or the outcome it is capable of achieving. (By these conceptions, the colonial state, for example, would be legitimate insofar as it performs those functions that by the conception of these scholars give states their legitimacy.)

Conceptualised thus, a hierarchical stratification of states along a continuum that ranges from strong to fragile/weak to collapsed/failed state is erected (in the same way in which human beings, societies and cultures are classified and placed on a falsely constructed and imagined temporal hierarchy of human progress and social development). Robert Rotberg for example, constructs this hierarchy in terms of what he calls 'performance criteria', i.e., the capabilities of states to effectively deliver the most crucial political goods (security,

political freedoms, economic well-being and social welfare such as health care etc.): ‘strong states may be distinguished from weak states and weak states from failed or collapsed ones’ in accordance with the degree of their performance and capabilities to deliver these goods (Rotberg 2004, p. 2 ff.). Joel Migdal, one of the early proponents of this phenomenon, also constructs this hierarchy based on capability: strong states are those with high capabilities to complete the tasks of successfully penetrating society, regulating social relations, extracting resources, and appropriating or using resources in determined ways, while weak states are on the low end of a spectrum of such capabilities (1988, pp. 4–5).

With specific reference to Africa, where the phenomenon of state failure is supposedly pervasive, the economy of discourse which has emerged since the 1990s has tended to largely account for this phenomenon in another ubiquitous concept: a crisis of neo-patrimonialism (Bayart 1993; Bayart, Ellis and Hibou 1999; Boas 2001; Boyle 1988; Bratton 1989; Bratton and van de Walle 1994; Callaghy 1984, 1987; Chabal and Daloz 1999; Chazan 1988; Chege 2002; Clapham 1982, 1985, 2003; Englebert 2000; Jackson and Roseburg 1984; Joseph 1984; Keen 2005; Reno 1995, 1998; Richards 1996; Sandbrook 1985, Le Vine 1980; van de Walle 2001). Coming in various guises and forms, neo-patrimonialism has become a catch-all conceptual staple in Africanist scholarship for accounting for and explaining nearly every perceived African sociopolitical malaise, difficulty or problem – corruption, institutional decay, communication breakdown, authoritarian rule, development failure, economic dysfunction, poor growth, civil and political unrest and especially armed conflicts (all of which are the markers of so-called state failure). Based on certain shared assumptions about what in these studies is an undifferentiated African state rationality and the political behaviour of its ruling classes, the neo-patrimonialist literature is united by the idea that it is the rent-seeking behaviour among African political actors faced with neo-patrimonial pressures that accounts for crisis on the continent: it is this behaviour that

produced the decline in African economies, obstructed the full realisation of the goals of IMF/World Bank structural adjustment programmes, nurtures a culture of informality/conviviality, and prevents the emergence of reform-minded coalitions able to initiate and govern far-reaching change in the form of economic and political liberalisation. (Olukoshi 2005)

Neo-patrimonialism depicts African states as aberrant political formations, pathological constructs, dysfunctional entities and, recently, criminal enterprises (Bayart, Ellis and Hibou 1999), which are said to be governed by corrupt, tyrannical and authoritarian regimes of ‘big men’ whose greed, rent-seeking behaviours and the intense politics of patronage that they engage in, more than any other factors, have led to the criminalisation of the state and stymied its development into full-blown modern, rational-bureaucratic states and capitalist economies. In the words of William Reno (1998) for example, ‘These rulers reject pursuit of a broader project of creating a state that serves collective good or even creating institutions that are capable of developing independent perspectives and acting on behalf of interests distinct from their rulers’ personal exercise of power’ (p. 1). Through personal patron/client relationships and informal political and economic networks which function more like criminal enterprises than legitimate political organisations (Bayart 1999), these big men have turned functional states bequeathed to the various national entities that emerged as independent states into dysfunctional entities. They have personalised, criminalised and badly weakened state institutions through corrupt and shadowy business dealings. It is these processes and practices that have created or accelerated conditions for fragility and weakness, which in turn have ultimately led to state collapse or failure.

Two major tendencies have been identified in this body of literature: the state-centric and society-centric approaches, both of which, Mahmood Mamdani (1996) tells us, are united by their inability to come to terms with the specificity of African historical reality and as such have resorted to problematic Eurocentric evolutionist lenses that cast them in the shadow of the evolution of Western states and societies. Whether privileging the state or society in their analyses, both approaches see rent-seeking and corruption as inherent African pathologies which are central to the problem of governance and the building of viable state structures on the continent. Adebayo Olukoshi (2005) summarises both tendencies thus:

The society-centric approach, best illustrated by Bayart's notion of the politics of the belly, points to practices and norms in African society that prevent the embrace and sustained application of 'rational' policy choices capable of promoting economic development and political liberalisation. By contrast, the state-centric approach locates the problem of neo-patrimonialism not in the society but in the state itself, pointing to the ways in which the state constitutes a burden on society on account of the politics of predation which it nurtures. In this connection, various theses of the shadow state or the state within the state have been advanced. Neo-patrimonialist pressures are [thought to be] also fuelled by the insatiable craving of the power elite for popular legitimacy. For this reason, layers and networks of patron-clientelism pervade the entire socio-economic and political system. (Olukoshi 2005, p. 9 ff.)

Irrespective of the explanation privileged by the different scholars on the nature of rent-seeking and patron/client relations, there is consensus among them that Africa's political and socio-economic development has been obstructed because of such practices. Olukoshi tells us:

The intellectual roots of Afro-pessimism can be traced to this perspective insofar as it represents a frame which, in treating rent-seeking behaviours, neo-patrimonialist practices and post-colony syndromes as ubiquitous and all-pervasive, almost sees no way out of the 'dead end' to African development. For, if existing policy frames have failed because of the adverse consequences of the logic of rent-seeking, the economy of affection, the politics of the post-colony, and neopatrimonialism, reform efforts have also foundered for the same reasons. (Olukoshi 2005, p. 9)

III

At the basic level (and on its own terms), the neo-patrimonialism is based on a problematic logical circularity that posits or infers the cause and effect of weakness and failure from the same source: rent-seeking behaviour of African political classes and their pursuing of power, influence and wealth through patron/client relationships and informal networks. It also posits a single conceptual framework to explain a multiplicity of complex and varied sociopolitical realities, and in doing this, makes the concept impossibly elastic, having an insatiate appetite for explaining everything: from the form of the state to the nature of politics and the behaviour of the political classes, through economic performance, processes of accumulation and economic rent distribution as well as development practices and failures, to civil strife, political unrest, armed conflicts and so-called state failure. This desire to explain everything, however, becomes an end in itself, for in its overambitious quest, neo-patrimonialism fails to explain anything other than construct the continent as a monument of the truth its proponents will (Mkandawire 2001).

While this should ordinarily make such a concept collapse under the weight of its own problematic and inconsistent formulations, as well as the weight of its selective applications of historical lessons and the fuzzy thinking on the part of the commentators invested in

its use, it has, on the contrary, allowed them to absorb or deflect criticisms through conceptual stretching and analytical elasticity, whereby a whole range of disparate and contradictory logics and explanations are continuously added to its frame. Thus stretched beyond its analytical capacity, every political reality on the continent can be, and has been, finessed to appear consistent with a variant of the neo-patrimonialist logic: the state is too strong; it is too weak; it is suspended above society and does not sufficiently penetrate it; it over-penetrates society and constitutes a burden on it; conversely, society convolves with the state and does not hold it accountable; it predates on the state and constitutes a burden on it; it prevents the embrace of rational practice and the development of independent bureaucratic perspective in government, and so on. And these multiple and contradictory realities, as already pointed out above, are posited as both the cause and the effect of the rent-seeking behaviour of the ruling classes and the clientelist politics that they practise.

One would have expected that after almost three decades of trial and error, the proponents of the neo-patrimonial thesis would have figured out exactly what is included in and what is left out of their framework. However, they still have not been able to make up their minds about what to embrace and what to anathematise in their analyses of African state forms and the behaviour of the political classes on the continent. As it stands, while everything applies to their framework, nothing, save perhaps the rent-seeking behaviour of the political elites and the clientelist politics they practise, is consistent in their analyses. While this may appear as a problem associated only with the neo-patrimonialist framework, it is in fact symptomatic of a more fundamental problem associated with the very condition of Africanist knowledge, to which I turn presently.

Another major problem with the neo-patrimonialist literature is a vulgar universalism that disregards specific historical experiences while subsuming them under the totalitarian grip of a Eurocentric unilinear evolutionist framework. Explicitly or implicitly, this evolutionist framework produces a particular notion of history which holds that African phenomena can only really be understood as mirroring an earlier European history. This notion of history which Mahmood Mamdani (1996) has called 'history by analogy', 'privileges the European historical experience as the touchstone, and as the historical expression of the universal' (Mamdani 1996, p. 9 ff.). Relying on this conception of history which I have identified elsewhere (Wai 2010) as a crucial epistemological stance of Africanism and Africanist scholarship, neo-patrimonialism has been unable to come to terms with historically specific African realities, and as such, has not only failed to comprehend, and therefore incorrectly or problematically interpreted these realities, but also produced a particular mechanistic conception of history abstracted from the experience of Europe conceptualised as the historical expression of the universal that offers prescription for all to emulate. The narrative produced in this way tends to denigrate social and political realities in Africa, thereby reinforcing the image of the continent as the place for the absurd, the aberrant or inadequate, occurring in the shadow of earlier European experiences. In the process, the independent conceptual existence of the continent is denied, and its aberrance is named. While its history is reduced to or interpreted as an imperfect recurrence of, or deviation from, earlier patterns or stages in the evolution of European societies, its future, which can only really make sense, or can only really be valid if modelled on the trajectories of the evolution of Western societies, is supposed to be already determined (Mamdani 1996).

Immanent in this move is the ideological effacement and the rendering invisible, hence the normalisation of the relational and structural logic, of past histories of colonial domination and contemporary imperial power relations within which the states in Africa have been

historically constituted and continue to be reconstituted and reimagined. Indeed those scholars who have relied on these conceptual and methodological models and have elevated the Western liberal state to the position of normative model of state rationality against which the nature of African states are understood, do so precisely because it allows them to write over the historical constitutive relationship between the continent's historical experience with Europe, while privileging the West, without accounting for or questioning the sociohistorical structures of domination constitutive of the relationship between the two. What this has led to is the casting as deviant or aberrant the resultant sociopolitical formations which emerge out of these relational trajectories, while internalising the source of the perceived pathology in the societies in which these forms are found.

It is interesting that even in their use of Eurocentric unilinear evolutionist lenses to understand African state forms, these scholars do not honour their own injunctions but instead selectively apply the historical lessons which they hold have universal relevance for understanding the nature of the state anywhere. For example, the US Civil War occurred about a hundred years after the so-called revolutionary war and US Independence, yet that event (the US Civil War) is understood as a pivotal moment in the evolution of that state as a political formation (when the US had to decide the form it would take and the economic system it would adopt, at least in relation to slavery), and not a moment of state failure. Similarly, the French Revolution is regarded as the single most important moment in the formation of the modern French state. From the initial storming of the Bastille in July 1789 to the defeat of Napoleon III's army and his capture at the Battle of Sedan in September 1870, France was in a permanent state of turmoil, civil strife and political disorder. Yet, there is hardly a study that describes the French state during this period as a failed state; rather, this period is treated as the most important moment in the formation of the modern French state. African states on the other hand have on average been independent for 50 years, that is, half the time it took the US or the French to configure their respective states, and yet they are already conceptualised as failed states.

Which begs the question, when exactly does a state fail? What is the relationship between state formation and state failure: when exactly does one end and when does the other begin? These types of questions are hardly considered in studies purporting to explain 'state failure', in part because of the problematic assumption that the states that emerged out of the colonial imposition in Africa were complete and fully functioning political entities on the eve of independence. But what if they were not? What if they were unfinished political projects? Can they still be said to be failed states when they are in existence and being reconfigured or contested? The reason these questions are important is in part because of the history of the colonial genesis of the states in Africa which were arbitrarily and hastily put together under concrete conditions of political domination. Partly because of this history of constitution, the basic but fundamental questions about the nature of the state, the purpose it should serve, as well as questions about citizenship and political membership, especially in these societies with multi-ethnic populations hastily and arbitrarily forced into states that were intended to serve the interests of the colonial masters who created them, remain unsettled, and remain firmly situated at the heart of political struggles and contestations over the states everywhere in Africa. There is hardly a conflict on the continent (even in extreme cases such as the Rwandan genocide) that does not involve these questions as a central aspect. Rather than taking them seriously, the numerous Africanists who have come to rely on state failure and neo-patrimonialism as analytical concepts have tended to not only write over these questions, but have also ignored their own very theoretical injunctions, while jumping to hasty conclusions about civil wars or political crises on the continent.

Part of the problem is linked to the conception of state that these scholars privilege and base their analysis on. Like the reality of state failure it purports to explain, neo-patrimonialism has as its conceptual point of departure the Weberian ideal-typical state, and the history of the evolution of Western societies as its conceptual and analytical touchstone. William Reno in *Warlord politics and African states* writes that:

My definition of state borrows from Max Weber's observation that states vary in their degree of resemblance to an ideal type in which they enforce regulations backed up with a monopoly of violence. I find throughout the four case studies that the exercise of political authority in these countries [Liberia, Sierra Leone, DRC and Nigeria] represent nearly the opposite of the Weberian ideal. (1998, p. 5)

A state's 'degree of stateness', Jean-Germaine Gros (1996) maintains, can be determined by 'using both the classical Weberian definition of the state and its non-coercive public services delivery capacity' (p. 456). Even those scholars who claim to interpret African states and societies on their own terms – e.g. Jean-François Bayart (1999) or Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz (1999) – still privilege the Weberian ideal-typical state as foundational, being the modern normative model against which state rationality and performance can be modelled, analysed, inferred, referenced, compared and contrasted.

The fact that no modern state has ever, either conceptually or empirically, met the criteria of the Weberian ideal-typical model of statehood seems to be lost on the numerous scholars who scramble scurrilously to uncritically apply its conceptual parameters to African states. In fact, even Weber himself regarded his ideal-typical constructions only as abstract methodological and explanatory devices intended to help bring out the significance and meanings that humans give to their actions (as well as a guide to conducting comparative studies of phenomena, institutions etc.), and not a description of any empirically grounded or actual existing reality. However the proponents of the neo-patrimonial and state failure theses have turned abstract methodological or explanatory models into 'real' existing types and prescriptive norms of state rationality, constructed and based on a specific rendition of history, the West's historical experience as the universal from which conceptual lessons are extrapolated for understanding every other form of state rationality and behaviour.

How do we move from abstract methodological constructs to actual empirically existing types? The answer lies in part in Weber's scholarship and its complicity in the fostering of a Eurocentric vision of the world. His definition of state, though supposedly based on abstract ideal-typical constructions, defines a framework which is expressed in the service of political formations in the so-called Occident. In this framework, a particular type of state is privileged and celebrated as the universal standard of statehood. This imposition of a universalising logic on the nature of political formations and the struggles and histories they encompass, negates or denigrates specific historical realities of state formation, and minimises or writes over the specificities of the historical contexts within which they emerge, while disguising the systemic and structural power-political webs in which they are enmeshed. V.Y. Mudimbe's (2009) question in another, but related, context is pertinent to inscribe here: can any phenomena – in this case the political – be theorised from the throes of a universalism that claims to transcend all transhistorical lines and their variations, when the very category masquerading as the 'universal' has now been sufficiently exposed to be a very specific localism with its own ethnocentric biases?

Indeed what may appear as a misuse of Weber's methods and concepts is not an accident, for as Kieran Allen (2004) tells us, Weber himself was 'deeply ideological' with the

very ideas informing his conceptual presuppositions grounded in specific Western local sociohistorical realities. This immediately recalls Enrique Dussel's (1995) point that Weber was a hopeless Eurocentric ideologue whose ethnocentric biases blinded him to other historical realities, a factor which pushed him to pose the question of world history from the certainty of a Eurocentric metaphor: that of Europe as the ultimate Hegelian historical subject and, as such, that which offers us conceptual and historical guidance. 'Which chain of circumstances', Weber asks in the introduction of his most famous book *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* (1958), 'has resulted in the fact that on western soil and only there cultural phenomena have been produced which, as we represent it, show signs of evolutionary advance and universal validity?' (cited in Dussel 1995, p. 10). Europe, Weber believed, is the touchstone of world history and only its historical experiences have universal validity to abstract from: 'Neither scientific, artistic, governmental nor economic evolution have led elsewhere to the modes of rationalisation proper to the Occident' (cited in Dussel 1995, p. 145, n. 9).

In fact there is a conspicuous absence of questions about colonialism in his work. *The Protestant ethic* for example, completely ignores capitalism's bloody history and legacy of slavery, genocide, of violent appropriation, of European imperial expansion and colonial domination of non-European societies. Rather, it falsely locates capitalism's origins in a rigorous morality of a so-called Protestant ethic (Allen 2004). Those of *The religion of India* (1958) and *The religion of China* (1951) which were written as part of his sociology of region, but also as inquiries into why capitalism developed in Europe and not Asia, contain some of the most vexatious orientalist views on Asia in any era. They are extraordinary in their caricature of Indian and Chinese religious and cultural beliefs, which he posits as responsible for their economic stagnation in the same way as the Protestant ethic is responsible for the development of capitalism in Europe. Throughout these texts, there is a conspicuous absence of the discussion of the colonial question and its impact on these societies.

This writing over of the colonial question should however not be explained away simply as a nominal oversight on Weber's part. Rather, it should be seen as expressive of a larger problematic; that of his ideological and ethnocentric commitment to European superiority, from which he could not free himself. As Allen (2004) reminds us, Weber was self-admittedly 'a class conscious bourgeois' who advocated for empire (believing for example, that Africans were 'kulturlos' i.e. uncultured or uncivilised, and could be legitimately colonised). He ardently supported the carnage of the First World War, regarding Germany's enemies in that war as 'composed increasingly of barbarians' and 'the flotsam of African and Asiatic savages' (Allen 2004, p. 6). His sociology however disguises its own political hierarchies and ethnocentric biases by defining itself as neutral and value-free science, while presaging some of the most disturbing orientalist ideas on non-Western societies. But, Allen tells us, 'far from offering an "objective" value-free account of modern society, Weber's sociology should more essentially be seen as deeply ideological' and 'passionately political':

His own injunctions about the need for 'value-free' sociology were honoured more in breach than in the observance. Weber was an ardent German nationalist and a free-market liberal. His crude endorsement of nationalism offers few attractions for academics of today and so has often been ignored. When Weber, for example, writes at length in his classic book *Economy and society* about 'the great powers and the inevitability of imperialist expansion displacing 'pacifist' forms of free trade, many sociologists simply ignore the passage. Their focus is on the more general remarks that apply to many different historical societies rather than concrete stances that Weber took. Weber has a tendency to write in generalities even while promoting the most specific political position. His overall style indeed lent itself to an apolitical reading of

his texts. The problem though, is that this abstract reading of Weber as the pure academic carries its own undeclared political punch. (pp. 4–5)

There are real problems associated with appropriating abstract methodological conceptions such as ideal-types as analytic devices to understand African states' forms. To begin with, such an appropriation, as already pointed out, tends not only to ignore the violence built in its universalistic pretensions, but it also obscures the sociohistorical experiences and realities of the societies under investigation, while privileging Western liberal ideas of governance and state rationality as the normative model against which all other realities are measured and understood, without, as suggested above, accounting for the structural webs of power relations within which both are intricately interconnected and bound. It is this Eurocentric universalistic pretension, for example, that underpins the failed state and neo-patrimonialist literature and it is what potentiates the pathologisation of African state forms in the same way as the African human person is pathologised as the deviant and rejected Other of the rational Western thinking subject who is erected and promoted as the normative self. Jonathan Hill (2005, p. 148) sums it up thus:

Identification of failed states is achieved through the construction of a [normal or successful] state/failed state dichotomy built on a fixed, universal standard of what constitutes a successful state. Success is defined as the possession of certain capabilities and by the nationhood of the population of that state's population. Western states represent the normative, universal standard of success and it is the inability of certain African states to replicate the political, economic, social and cultural conditions within western states that has, according to the failed state literature, resulted in their failure. Even those African states not described as failed are portrayed as inauthentic and 'ramshackle', as being somehow undeserving of the statehood that most of them achieved in the aftermath of the Second World War, precisely because they lack the requisite capabilities and their populations did not constitute real nations. It is the western universalism underpinning the failed state literature that leads it to position African societies as the West's deviant Other. (p. 148)

This problematic hierarchical classification of states reinforces a paradigmatic binary opposition between what is constructed as normal and what is pathological: if what is Western is defined as normal, then the non-Western (in this case African) Other has to be abnormal, inadequate, deviant or pathological. This abnormality or deviance is in turn always explained in negative terms, and, remaining faithful to the conceptualities of what Mudimbe (1988, 1994) has called the colonial library – the body of texts and systems of representations which have over the centuries collectively invented and continues to invent Africa as a paradigm of difference and alterity (Desai 2001), draws on particular enduring images of the continent as the bizarre, the laughable and the negation of every 'normal' human experience. Indeed, it is in relation to Africa that notions of 'absolute otherness' are taken to their farthest possible extremes (Mbembe 2001, p. 2).

We now know how these ideas of Africa have had historical, and continue to have constitutive functions for both Western identity as well as its intimate but rejected African Other (Mudimbe 1988, 1994). Indeed, as Mudimbe suggests, Africa may be an empirical figure yet, as imagined and constituted by Africanism, it is and has always been by definition, perceived, experienced and promoted as the sign of absolute otherness, so that changes in the signs and symbols of its representations have never really fundamentally changed the meaning of Africa in the Western imagination. In this sense, Africa is a text that writes itself. The imaginary 'Africa', the mention of that name, immediately evokes or conjures up some of the most perverse and disturbing, yet powerful, images with which the name of the continent has come to be strongly associated: poverty, disease, crime, corruption,

repressive regimes, corrupt and incompetent governments, tribalism and tribal conflicts, failed states, hunger and famine (bloated-bellied, fly-covered, malnourished and emaciated children dying in the arms of their powerless and apathetic mothers), uncivilised or semi-civilised tribes inhabiting jungles with beastly animals and safaris (of the *Madagascar* and *Lion King* types).

The neo-patrimonialist and state failure literature are part of the textual reproduction of Africa and they constantly invoke, create and use these perverse images, even where they pretend to be against them. Jean-Francois Bayart (1999) is a case in point; while claiming to interpret Africa on its own terms, he reproduces and reinforces some of the most offensive, obtuse and cynically prejudicial stereotypes, which not only ridicules and disparages the continent's political and social formations, but in fact calls into question the very humanity of the African person. Coarsely homogenising states on the continent under the pejorative moniker 'felonious state' (other such offensive labels include 'vampire state', 'gangster state', 'warlord state' and 'shadow state') where the logic of rule is based on criminality and a 'politics of the belly' (Bayart 1993, 1999) (as if only a single undifferentiated rationality governs the logic of rule and the behaviour of the political classes on a continent with over 50 diverse states), Bayart claims, in a statement that is as hare-brained and ludicrous as it is offensive and prejudicial, that the essence of Africanness is perversity and criminality. He writes: 'the "social capital" of Africa appears to display a marked affinity with the spirit of criminality' (Bayart 1999, p. 34). It is this spirit of criminality as an innate character of Africans, as well as their perverse cultural predisposition that, he claims, allows for, or aids the emergence of clientelist politics of big men who, with no interest in (or by deliberately jettisoning) the building of strong and viable bureaucratic institutions, make corruption and shadowy business practices pursued through trickery and felonious activities as a social value, and informal networks the norm rather than the exception of state behaviour and rationality on the continent.

This is partly why Mudimbe (1994) insists that the issue with Africanism cannot be reduced to questions of theory versus empirical collection or of methods versus concepts in the production of Africanist knowledge. In vain do we worry about how the empirical aspect of a discourse attests to the truth of its theoretical formulation. Rather, we should be concerned be 'about the silent and a priori choice of the truths to which a given discourse aims' (p. 39). For there is always, he tells us, 'beyond the dichotomy between rudimentary and scientific knowledge, illusion and truth [the differences between conceptual, methodological, theoretical and empirical choices] ... a major problem concerning the very conditions of knowledge' (Mudimbe 1994, pp. 39–40). Insofar as it incessantly deploys tropes that implicitly or explicitly pathologise the continent, its people and its political, social and cultural formations; and insofar as it vulgarises the continent's historical experiences while disguising racist and stereotypical veneers in conceptual mumbo-jumbos that give academic respectability to the most perverse, absurd, vexatious and preposterous Eurocentric representations, images, biases and prejudices against the continent and its people, the neo-patrimonialist/state-failure literature should be called for what it really is and discarded or rejected for its ethnocentric biases, which are emergent from within and faithfully dependent, with almost religious devotion, on the conceptualities of the colonial library which epistemologically is the locus of Africa's invention (Mudimbe 1988, 1994).

Returning to ideal-types, they are not real; and even though they are usually uncritically deployed based on what their proponents construct as the certainty of the normative orthodoxy of the historical experience or reality of European states as the universal, they conceptually are not, and do not correspond to any historical or actually existing or empirically grounded reality. Rather, they are a-priori and ahistorical constructs which lay waste to

historical specificities and contingencies. The narratives that they produce do not necessarily correspond to the way life is. For example, by enabling the erection of ‘formal categories around which large segments of history are grouped’, specific sociohistorical contents of particular societies are over-written, ignored or negated (Allen 2004, p. 80). Anyone can, through the construction of ideal-types, easily make arbitrary connections between very diverse and disparate activities, events or phenomena in completely dissimilar sociopolitical conditions, and historical epochs under one rubric – for example, pharaonic Egypt and socialism could be linked together under the term bureaucracy; or ‘the ideal type “charisma” [can] connect revolutionary leaders and Hindu shamans’ (Allen 2004, p. 80). The real dangers with these arbitrary and artificial comparisons however is that they lead to the production of a ‘formalistic’ and formulaic social science instead of a processual one that, rather than seeking to understand historical, social and political transformations in societies as processes, focuses instead on a desire to ‘set up typologies and arrange historical phenomena in [accordance with] these typologies’ (Allen 2004, p. 80). What this does is allow for the production of a formalistic and/or formulaic social science (and for our present purpose, the construction of a mechanistic conception of state rationality) that writes over, distorts, obscures, silences and negates (or reproduces in particular ways) specific experiences, realities and histories.

This is partly what Mamdani (1996) calls into question with his critique of history by analogy. It is what Kamil Shah (2009) points to when he suggests that ‘the ontological primacy conferred on the [Weberian] state renders complex trans-boundary social and political relations – *and the struggles they encompass* – invisible.’ Such a move, which is ‘premised on an ahistorical reification and naturalisation of the western liberal state’, he tells us, ‘is incapable of registering the possibility that the very [historical] processes of state formation and [contemporary strategies of] state building [favoured by the West and international policy community] may themselves be implicated in the production and reproduction of insecurities’ (Shah 2009, pp. 16–19). Indeed, as Shah insists, there is a co-constitutive, almost parasitic, relationship between states in the West and the so-called Third World, which were constituted under concrete conditions of Western colonial domination and which have remained immersed in the politics of global economic and sociopolitical structures of unequal power relations that produce wealth and affluence on the one hand and conditions of dependence and insecurities on the other. This immediately recalls Frantz Fanon’s timeless and incisive observation of a structural relation of power and violence in which the West and non-West are entangled: ‘Europe is literally the creation of the Third World’, Fanon (1963, p. 102) writes, ‘The wealth which smothers her is that which was stolen from the underdeveloped people.’ What Fanon is drawing attention to is the intimate relationship between the West and the non-West and how they co-constitute each other: the structural power which produces Western power, wealth, affluence and identity on the one hand is implicated in the reproduction of non-Western wretchedness and insecurities on the other.

The sociohistorical context of this political reality is usually ignored or written over and the manifestation of the violence that it potentiates is excised from the realm of the political and placed in the realm of the aberrant or pathological. Through this, conflicts, political unrest or so-called state failure become an aberration which has nothing to do with the politics of past histories and current manifestations of colonial domination; or the structural manifestation of contemporary imperial power relations of unequal exchange, violent appropriation and exploitation (what David Harvey [2004] has called ‘accumulation by dispossession’); or the violence that is an integral part of everyday social and power relations in a colonial state; or the tensions inherent in power-political struggles over the state, or the violence built in the process of state formation; but as a result of some primordial

orientalist/Africanist pathologies and conflictual instincts innate to the very nature, character and culture of Africans, instincts that outwardly and more explicitly get expressed in the form of tribalism, unrestrained religious fervour, rapacious greed and corruption, administrative ineptitude, rampant political failures, all of which are hallmarks of neo-patrimonial 'big man' politics (the worst expression of which is warlord politics).

The implications of these violent and objectifying discourses are grave. To start with, they internalise the causes of the so-called state failure in the states and societies under study. Indeed, whatever explanation is privileged as the cause – poverty or underdevelopment, neo-Malthusian pressures or resource competition, ethno-identitarian rivalries or tribalism, youth marginalisation, social exclusion or criminality, neo-patrimonial 'big man' politics, corruption or poor governance, authoritarian misrule, weak and dysfunctional institutions or lack of democratic accountability, lack of rule of law or human rights abuses, rebel greed or political grievance, and so on – the proponents of the state failure thesis broadly agree that it is a product of some inherent political, economic, cultural and/or social pathology, malaise or dysfunction that is endogenously produced within these societies and these are what constitutionally define their 'static', 'backward' and 'unchanging' social environment and historical reality. The underlying assumption (which is sometimes explicitly stated, though most times implicitly immanent) of these violent and objectifying narratives is that the 'development' or 'progression' of these states and societies from conditions of backwardness, poverty, ignorance and insecurity to one of enlightenment, modernity, development, prosperity and security, can only be set in motion and driven by the historically dynamic external agency of the West: Western political, economic, social, cultural and knowledge systems; Western development assistance; international financial institutions and aid agencies, international NGOs, corporate-led foreign direct investment, and so on.

The vision of this 'atomistic social ontology' (Dolek 2008), which sees 'state failure' mainly in terms of the outgrowth of an inherent internally generated pathology of the states and societies in which they occur, becomes a discursive ploy, a legitimating trope and political strategy that is deployed in the service of the hegemonic global systems of control, power, violence and domination. It serves, among others, the purpose of justifying and legitimating past and ongoing imperial power relations and impulses (sometimes disguised under the cloak of humanitarianism) as the West intervenes and pursues its aim of controlling and shaping the histories and destinies of these societies by imposing its preferred political, social and economic policies and systems on them. Moreover, it helps in absorbing the West and the global system of exploitation, domination and control that they preside over from any complicity in the so-called 'state failure' and instead holds the states and societies in which they occur as responsible for its occurrence.

In addition to the tropes they construct for legitimating current and ongoing imperial power relations, the narratives that these power/knowledge systems produce, the regimes of truth that they construct, the politics that they make possible in terms of policy interventions, the very modalities of those interventions and the power relations that they potentiate, also help in providing a radical revisionist lens through which past histories, past imperial relations of power, past systems of exploitation, in essence past colonial regimes of violence and domination, appropriation and exploitation are viewed, reinterpreted, and reinscribed as the solution to problems the genesis of which are situated in their very modalities.

IV

Achille Mbembe (2001, pp. 5–9) has referred to an extraordinary poverty of the political science literature on Africa: a poverty that is seen in 'the crisis of its language, procedures

and reasonings'. Stuck in the thralldom of the teleologies of theories of social evolutionism and ideologies of modernisation, this literature has undermined the very possibility of understanding African economic and political life. I have tried to demonstrate how the concepts of neo-patrimonialism and state failure, which enjoy near hegemonic status in Africanist scholarship, symptomatise this poverty of Africanist scholarship. But this poverty, I have suggested, is not merely a conceptual, methodological or even theoretical problem, but a power-political one situated at the very heart of the epistemological structures and conditions of possibility of Africanism and Africanist scholarship. Indeed, as Mudimbe (1988) has powerfully demonstrated, what Mbembe sees as a theoretical inability of Africanist political science to come to terms with African phenomena is not an accident, but the very condition of possibility of Africanist knowledge: a body of knowledge concerned not with understanding the continent, but with inventing Africa as a paradigm of difference while 'producing its own motives, as well as its objects, and fundamentally commenting upon [and justifying] its own being' (Mudimbe 1988, p. xi).

Fixing my critical gaze on these two ubiquitous concepts, their contradictory logics, problematic methodological formulations, their ideological and power-political postures, and the practical implications of the discourses they fashion for the continent and its people, I have tried to demonstrate how the neo-patrimonial and state-failure scholarship and the discourses they fashion on African political formations and realities are a function of a power which erects the continent as a monument of the truth it wills. These concepts and the discourses which employ them create a reality that is in the service of the hegemonic power which makes them possible. Neo-patrimonialism and failed states, I have argued, are not merely theoretical concepts; they are also power-political tropes for normalising relations of domination and exploitation, past and ongoing. None of those who employ these concepts to study Africa can therefore claim to stand outside of the power relations within which Africa is reproduced, because Africanist knowledge, especially those that employ such violent and objectifying narratives, is always already implicated in the politics within which Africa is fashioned or reproduced. Its will to truth is indissociably connected with a will to power that potentiates it and produces Africa as a paradigm of difference, an object of Western colonial fantasy, and 'a polemical argument for the West's desperate desire to assert its difference from the rest of the World' (Mbembe 2001, p. 2; Mudimbe 1988, 1994).

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank V.Y. Mudimbe, Ananya Mukherjee-Reed, Pablo Idahosa, Anna M. Agathangelou, Nathan Okonta, Bikrum Gill, Deepa Rajkumar, Omme-Salma Rahemtullah and Foday Mannah for commenting on earlier versions of this paper.

Note on contributor

Zubairu Wai is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science, Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada.

References

- Allen, K., 2004. *Max Weber: a critical introduction*. London: Pluto.
- Bayart, J.F., 1993. *The state in Africa: the politics of the belly*. London: Longman.
- Bayart, J.F., 1999. The 'social capital' of the felonious state: or the ruses of political intelligence. In: J.F. Bayart, S. Ellis and B. Hibou, eds. *The criminalisation of the state in Africa*. Oxford: James Currey, 32–48.

- Bayart, J.F., Ellis, S., and Hibou, B., 1999. *The criminalisation of the state in Africa*. Oxford: James Currey.
- Boas, M., 2001. Liberia and Sierra Leone – dead ringers? The logic of neopatrimonial rule. *Third World Quarterly*, 22, 697–723.
- Boyle, P.M., 1988. A view from Zaire. *World Politics*, 40, 269–287.
- Bratton, M., 1989. Beyond the state: civil society and associational life in Africa. *World Politics*, 41, 407–430.
- Bratton, M. and van de Walle, N., 1994. Neo-patrimonial regimes and political transitions in Africa. *World Politics*, 46, 453–489.
- Callaghy, T.M., 1984. *The state–society struggle: Zaire in comparative perspective*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Callaghy, T.M., 1987. The state as lame Leviathan: the patrimonial administrative state in Africa. In: Z. Ergas, ed. *The African state in transition*. Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 87–116.
- Carment, D., 2003. Assessing state failure: implications for theory and policy. *Third World Quarterly*, 24, 407–427.
- Chabal, P. and Daloz, J.-P., 1999. *Africa works: disorder as political instrument*. Oxford: James Currey.
- Chazan, N., 1988. State and society in Africa: images and challenges. In: D. Rothschild and N. Chazan, eds. *The precarious balance: the state and society in Africa*. Boulder, CO: Westview, 325–360.
- Chege, M., 2002. Sierra Leone: the state that came back from the dead. *Washington Quarterly*, 25, 147–160.
- Clapham, C., 1982. Clientelism and the state. In: C. Clapham, ed. *Private patronage and public power*. London: Frances Pinter, 1–35.
- Clapham, C., 1985. *Third world politics: an introduction*. London: Helm.
- Clapham, C., 1998. Degrees of statehood. *Review of International Studies*, 24, 143–157.
- Clapham, C., 2003. *Sierra Leone: the political economy of internal conflict*. The Hague: The Netherlands Institute of International Relations.
- Department for International Development (DFID), 2004. *The Africa conflict prevention pool: an information document*. London: DFID.
- Desai, G., 2001. Subject to colonialism: African self-fashioning and the colonial library. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Dolek, C., 2008. The myth of ‘failed state’ in Africa: a question on atomistic social ontology? [online]. *Journal of Turkish Weekly*, 29 April 2008. Available from: <http://www.turkishweekly.net/op-ed/2360/the-myth-of-failed-state-8217-in-africa-a-question-on-atomistic-social-ontology.html> [Accessed 17 October 2008].
- Duffield, M., 2001. *Global governance and new wars: the merging of security and development*. London: Zed Books.
- Dussel, E., 1995. *The invention of the Americas: eclipse of ‘the other’ and the myth of modernity*. New York: Continuum.
- Englebert, P., 2000. *State legitimacy and development in Africa*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Fanon, F., 1963. *The wretched of the earth*. New York: Grove Press.
- Goldsmith, A.A., 2000. Sizing up the African state. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 38, 1–20.
- Gros, J.-G., 1996. Towards a taxonomy of failed states in the new world order: decaying Somalia, Liberia, Rwanda and Haiti. *Third World Quarterly*, 17, 455–471.
- Harvey, D., 2004. The new imperialism: accumulation by dispossession. *Socialist Register*, 40, 63–87.
- Helman, G.B. and Ratner, S.R., 1993. Saving failed states. *Foreign Policy*, 89, 3–20.
- Hill, J., 2005. Beyond the other? A postcolonial critique of the failed state thesis. *African Identities*, 3, 139–154.
- Hopkins, A.G., 2000. Quasi-states, weak states and the partition of Africa. *Review of International Studies*, 26, 311–320.
- Jackson, R.H., 1987. Quasi-states, dual regimes, and neoclassical theory: international jurisprudence and the Third World. *International Organisation*, 41, 519–549.
- Jackson, R.H., 1990. *Quasi-states: sovereignty, international relations, and the Third World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jackson, R.H., 1992. Juridical statehood in sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of International Affairs*, 46, 1–16.

- Jackson, R.H., 2000. *The global covenant: human conduct in a world of states*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jackson, R.H. and Roseburg, C., 1984. Personal rule: theory and practice in Africa. *Comparative Politics*, 16, 421–442.
- Joseph, R.A., 1984. Class, state and prebendal politics in Nigeria. In: N. Kasfir, ed. *State and class in Africa*. London: Frank Cass, 21–38.
- Keen, D., 2005. *Conflict and collusion in Sierra Leone*. Oxford: James Currey, New York: Palgrave.
- Le Vine, V.T., 1980. African patrimonial regimes in comparative perspective. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 18, 657–673.
- Mamdani, M., 1996. *Citizen and subject: contemporary African and the legacy of late colonialism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Mazrui, A., 1995. Blood of experience: the failed state and political collapse in Africa. *World Policy Journal*, 12, 28–34.
- Mbembe, A., 2001. *On the postcolony*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Menkhaus, K., 2003. State collapse in Somalia: second thoughts. *Review of African Political Economy*, 30, 405–422.
- Migdal, J.S., 1988. *Strong states and weak states: state–society relations and state capabilities in the Third World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Miller, C.L., 1985. *Blank darkness: Africanist discourse in French*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.
- Mkandawire, T., 2001. Thinking about developmental states in Africa. *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 25, 289–313.
- Mudimbe, V.Y., 1988. *The invention of Africa: gnosis, philosophy and the order of knowledge*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, Indianapolis, IN: James Currey.
- Mudimbe, V.Y., 1994. *The idea of Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press; Indianapolis, IN: James Currey.
- Mudimbe, V.Y., 2009. About a will to truth: a meditation on terror. In: P. Nkashama Ngandu, ed. *Itinéraires et trajectoires: mélanges offerts à Clémentine Faik-Nzuji-Madiya*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 227–236.
- Olukoshi, A., 2005. Changing patterns of politics in Africa. In: A. Atilio and G. Lechini, eds. *Politics and social movements in an hegemonic world: lessons from Africa, Asia and Latin America*. Buenos Aires: Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales, Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, 177–201.
- Reno, W., 1995. *Corruption and state politics in Sierra Leone*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Reno, W., 1998. *Warlord politics and African states*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Richards, P., 1996. *Fighting for the rain forest: war, youth and resource in Sierra Leone*. Oxford: James Currey.
- Rotberg, R.I., 2004. *When states fail: causes and consequences*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Sandbrook, R., 1985. *The politics of Africa's economic stagnation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shah, K., 2009. The failure of state building and the promise of state failure: reinterpreting the security–development nexus in Haiti. *Third World Quarterly*, 30, 17–34.
- van de Walle, N., 2001. *African economies and the politics of permanent crisis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979–1999.
- Wai, Z., 2010. Interpreting African conflicts: power, knowledge and the discourse of violence on the Sierra Leone civil war. PhD dissertation. York University, Toronto.
- Wai, Z., 2011. Elections as a strategy for democratisation and conflict transformation: liberal peace and the 1996 elections in Sierra Leone. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 5, 229–244.
- Warner, C.M., 1999. The political economy of ‘quasi-statehood’ and the demise of 19th century African politics. *Review of International Studies*, 25, 233–255.
- Weber, M., 1958. *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*. Trans. T. Parsons. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Zartman, I.W., 1995. Introduction: posing the question of state collapse. In: W. Zartman, ed. *Collapsed states: the disintegration and restoration of legitimate authority*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1–14.