

## Africa Since 1940

### The Past of the Present

Frederick Cooper's latest book on the history of decolonization and independence in Africa initiates a new textbook series: *New Approaches to African History*. His book will help readers understand the historical processes which have shaped Africa's current position in the world. Covering the last half-century, it bridges the divide between colonial and post-colonial history, allowing readers to see just what political independence did and did not signify. The book follows the "development question" across time, seeing how first colonial regimes and then African governments sought to transform African societies in their own ways. Readers will see how men and women, peasants and workers, religious leaders and local leaders found space within the crevices of state power to refashion the way they lived, worked, and interacted with each other. And they will see that the effort to turn colonial territories into independent nation-states was only one of the ways in which radical political and social movements imagined their future and how deeply the claims of such movements continued to challenge states after independence. By looking at the post-war era as a whole, one can begin to understand the succession of crises that colonial and post-colonial states faced without getting into a sterile debate over whether a colonial "legacy" or the failings of African governments are the cause of Africa's current situation.

Frederick Cooper is Professor of African History at New York University and former Chair of the Department of History at the University of Michigan. He is a well known and much admired figure in African studies worldwide. His recent publications include *Decolonization and African Society*, published by Cambridge University Press in 1996, plus numerous articles on labor, social movements, decolonization, and development.

*New Approaches to African History*

*Series Editor*  
Martin Klein, *University of Toronto*

New approaches to African history is designed to introduce students to current findings and new ideas in African history. Though each book treats a particular case, and is able to stand alone, the format allows the studies to be used as modules in general courses on African history and world history. The cases represent a wide range of topics. Each volume summarises the state of knowledge on a particular subject for a student who is new to the field. However, the aim is not simply to present reviews of the literature, it is also to introduce debates on historiographical or substantive issues, and may argue for particular points of view. The aim of the series is to stimulate debate, to challenge students and general readers. The series is not committed to any particular school of thought.

# Africa Since 1940

## *The Past of the Present*

---

Frederick Cooper



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

## CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521776004](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521776004)

© Frederick Cooper 2002

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2002

13th printing 2016

Printed in the United States of America by Sheridan Books, Inc.

*A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data*

Cooper, Frederick, 1947—

Africa since 1940 : the past of the present / Frederick Cooper.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-521-77241-9 — ISBN 0-521-77600-7 (pb.)

1. Decolonization — Africa — History — 20th century.

2. Africa — Politics and government — 1945-1960. 3. Africa — Politics and government — 1960- 4.3 Africa — Colonial influence. I. Title.

DT30 .C595 2002

960.3'2—dc21

2001043657

ISBN 978-0-521-77241-9 hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-77600-4 paperback

ISBN 978-0-521-53307-2 African paperback edition

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet Web sites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such Web sites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate. Information regarding prices, travel timetables, and other factual information given in this work are correct at the time of first printing, but Cambridge University Press does not guarantee the accuracy of such information thereafter.

Contents

<i>List of plates</i>	<i>page</i> vi
<i>List of figures</i>	viii
<i>List of maps</i>	ix
<i>List of tables</i>	x
<i>Preface</i>	xi
1 Introduction: from colonies to Third World	1
2 Workers, peasants, and the crisis of colonialism	20
3 Citizenship, self-government, and development: the possibilities of the post-war moment	38
4 Ending empire and imagining the future	66
<i>Interlude: rhythms of change in the post-war world</i>	85
5 Development and disappointment: social and economic change in an unequal world, 1945–2000	91
6 The late decolonizations: southern Africa 1975, 1979, 1994	133
7 The recurrent crises of the gatekeeper state	156
8 Africa at the century’s turn: South Africa, Rwanda, and beyond	191
<i>Index</i>	205

## Plates

---

1 South Africa's first non-racial election, April 1994 (©Agence France Presse, Philip Littleton)	<i>page</i> 3
2 Genocide and looting, Rwanda, April 11, 1994 (©Agence France Presse, Pascal Guyot)	3
3 Drying cocoa in Cameroon, 1970 (©Archives de la Documentation Française: Coopération: NAP)	22
4 Rural Christian mission in the region of Ebolowa, Cameroon, 1949 (©Archives de la Documentation Française: Ministère FOM-M. B. Lembezat)	28
5 Charles de Gaulle giving opening speech to the Brazzaville Conference, January 30, 1944 (©Archives de la Documentation Française: Gouvernement de l'AEF)	40
6 Voters depositing their ballots in the legislative elections in Dakar, Senegal, 1956 (©Archives de la Documentation Française: Information AOF)	47
7 Tailors working in a street, Mopti, Mali, 1962 (©Archives de la Documentation Française: M. Boursat)	122
8 Modernizing the African family; clinic in Lagos, Nigeria, 1959 (©Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution)	123
9 The arrival of pilgrims from the Mouride Brotherhood at the holy city of Touba, Senegal, 1956 (©Archives de la Documentation Française: Information Sénégal)	128
10 The faces of war, a very young soldier for the MPLA, Huambo, Angola, 1976 (©Agence France Presse, Pressens Bild Stockholm)	142
11 Forced removals, Soweto, South Africa, 1987 (©Agence France Presse, Walter Dhladhla)	146
12 South Africa on strike, August 1987 (©Agence France Presse, Trevor Samson)	147
13 President Mobutu Sese Seku of Zaire, sitting on a throne, 1984 (©Agence France Presse)	158

List of plates	vii
14 Demonstration of workers in the streets of Accra after the military <i>coup d'état</i> which overthrew President Kwame Nkrumah, March 1966 (©Agence France Presse)	162
15 Patrice Lumumba under arrest in the Congo, December 1960 (©Bettmann/CORBIS)	165
16 Personality and politics: President Jomo Kenyatta watches the unveiling of his statue at a ceremony in Nairobi, December 14, 1964 (©Bettmann/CORBIS)	176
17 A “village of solidarity” ( <i>kijiji cha ujamaa</i> ), Tanzania, 1974 (©Agence France Presse)	179

## Figures

---

1a	GNP per capita and GNP per capita growth in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1960–1998	<i>page</i> 93
1b	GNP per capita in selected African countries, 1960–1998	94
1c	GNP per capita in selected African countries, 1960–1998	94
2a	Africa's cocoa production, 1938–1999	95
2b	Africa's coffee production, 1938–1999	96
2c	Africa's copper production, 1950–1993	102
3	Commodity dependence in the Nigerian economy, 1938–1998	106
4a	Total population and population growth rate in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1950–1995	108
4b	Total population in selected African countries, 1950–1995	108
5a	Life expectancy at birth and infant mortality rate in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1950–2000	109
5b	Life expectancy at birth in selected African countries, 1950–2000	109
5c	Infant mortality rate in selected African countries, 1950–2000	110
6a	Primary education: total number of pupils in selected African countries, 1946–1995	112
6b	Primary education: total number of pupils in selected African countries, 1946–1995	112
6c	Secondary education: total number of pupils in selected African countries, 1946–1995	113
6d	Secondary education: total number of pupils in selected African countries, 1946–1995	113
7a	Urban population as a percentage of total population for selected African countries and Sub-Saharan Africa, 1946–1997	119
7b	Population of selected African cities, 1940–1995	120



Maps

---

1 Africa: countries and cities, <i>c.</i> 2000	<i>page</i> xiii
2 Colonial Africa	17
3 Decolonizing Africa	82
4 Resources for export production	99
5 Railways	101

Tables

---

1 Education: Gross enrollment rates in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1960–1997 (percent)	<i>page</i> 111
2 Literacy rates in selected African countries, c. 1960–1998 (percentage of males and females aged 15 and above)	114

## Preface

---

It is now forty years since the exciting, hopeful days when most French, British, and Belgian colonies emerged as independent states. Still, much writing on politics, development, or other aspects of contemporary Africa treats this period, or the post-World War II era generally, more as background than as a subject for consideration, while most textbooks and many courses in African history treat this period more as an epilogue than as a full part of the continent's history. The present book attempts to meet the needs of general readers, students, and teachers who would like to do more than that, who want to look at the past of the present in a more coherent way. The dividing line between colonial and independence eras is sometimes thought of so axiomatically that no one asks just what difference acquiring sovereignty made – especially given the continued inequalities of the world order – and just what processes unfolded over a longer time frame. In many ways, the time of World War II (really the late 1930s through the late 1940s) is as important a break point as the moment of independence. More precisely, different aspects of African history present different rhythms and ruptures, different continuities, adaptations, and innovations – a theme developed in the “Interlude”. The book is organized to promote discussion of such issues. *Africa Since 1940* is thus intended for readers with an interest in both history and current affairs, to encourage the former to look farther forward – to see that history doesn't come to an end point – and the latter to look farther backward – to see that the unfolding of processes over time is essential to understanding the present. I have written this book both within and against the genre of a textbook. Within, because it is intended for readers, students and others, who seek an introduction to a subject and who are not presumed to have prior knowledge of it, and against, because I have eschewed both the comprehensiveness and the blandness characteristic of textbooks. In putting themes ahead of coverage, readers may find that a part of Africa that particularly interests them, say Ethiopia, is neglected, but they should find that it is easier to obtain specific information elsewhere than it is to find a framework through which to analyze

xii Preface

and debate the post-war period as a whole. The choice of examples is shaped both by what I know – and there is more to know about Africa than any one scholar can assimilate – and by what works well within the thematic structure and space constraints of the book. Such choices should not be taken to mean that one part of Africa is more interesting or important than any other. *Africa Since 1940* is as much an interpretive essay as a textbook, and its contents are intended more to provoke discussion than to be learned. It is argumentative and even opinionated, but I know of no other way to write African history than to do so from my own point of view and to acknowledge that it is one among many ways of approaching the subject.

Each chapter is followed by a short list of suggested readings. However, a more comprehensive bibliography, keyed to the chapters of this book, is available on Cambridge University Press's website at <http://uk.cambridge.org/resources/0521776007>. In addition to allowing a longer bibliography than the constraints of print allow, use of the web allows for periodic updating as new scholarship appears.

It was Martin Klein's innovative idea for a series of modular texts on different themes of African history that inspired me to write this book, and my attempt to make it accessible to students of political science, development, and perhaps world history as well is, I think, compatible with Marty's goals for the series. I am grateful to Marty and to his advisory committee for several rounds of suggestions on my prospectus and the draft of the book. I would also like to thank Mamadou Diouf, Devra Coren, Nancy Hunt, Andrew Ivaska, David Newbury, Luise White, and Jennifer Widner for their helpful critiques of earlier drafts.

Devra Coren's skills in building and using databases and presenting them graphically deserve the credit for the figures and tables presented in chapter 5. I am grateful to Agence France Presse, Documentation Française, Bettmann/CORBIS, and the Eliot Elisofan Photographic Archive of the National Museum of African Art of the Smithsonian Institution for permission to reproduce photographs. I am also grateful to the staff of the Map Room at the University of Michigan Library, and particularly Karl Longstreth and Chad Weinberg, for working with me on the maps.

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-77600-4 — Africa since 1940  
Frederick Cooper  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)



Map 1 Africa: countries and cities, c. 2000