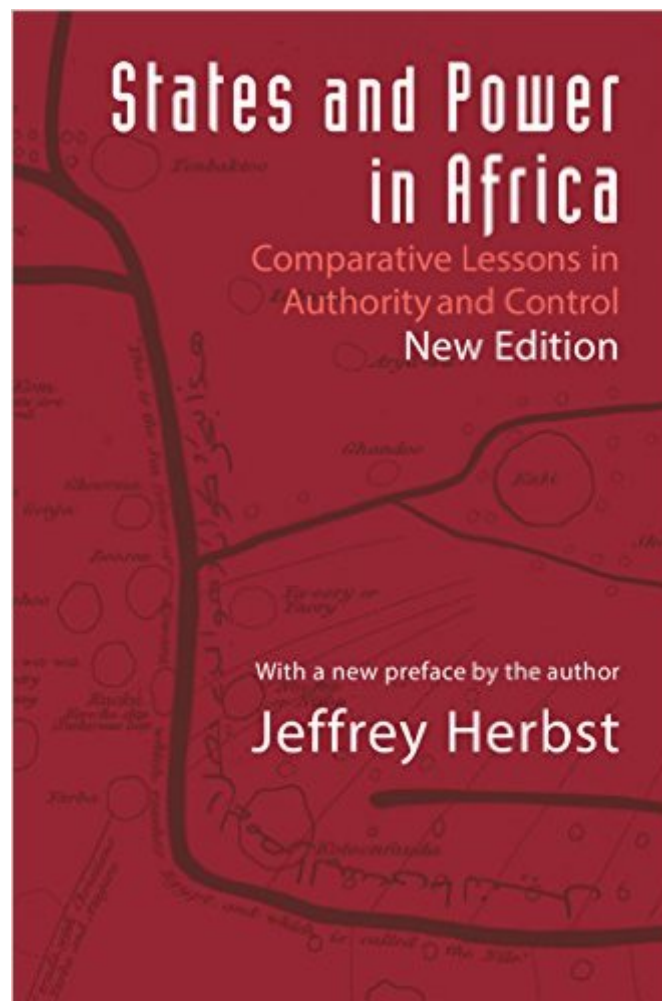


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# States And Power In Africa: Comparative Lessons In Authority And Control (Princeton Studies In International History And Politics)



## Synopsis

Theories of international relations, assumed to be universally applicable, have failed to explain the creation of states in Africa. There, the interaction of power and space is dramatically different from what occurred in Europe. In *States and Power in Africa*, Jeffrey Herbst places the African state-building process in a truly comparative perspective. Herbst's bold contention "that the conditions now facing African state-builders existed long before European penetration of the continent" is sure to provoke controversy, for it runs counter to the prevailing assumption that colonialism changed everything. This revised edition includes a new preface in which the author links the enormous changes that have taken place in Africa over the past fifteen years to long-term state consolidation. The final chapter on policy prescriptions has also been revised to reflect the evolution of African and international responses to state failure.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I published my extensive grad school notes at my For Unofficial Use Only page but I've included a brief summary here. This book is not going to be a thrilling read for most people but its mandatory

reading to begin to study Africa. In this book, Herbst argues that African leaders (pre, during, and post-colonization) have all faced similar issues when attempting to rule and have often come to the same conclusions on how to solve their problems. He compares the formation of African states to Europe. He claims that the consolidation of power over distance, as the dependent variable, is affected by the costs of extending power, the nature of boundaries, and the nature of the state system. These 3 factors matter in every period. He wants to be a thicker structuralist. If everyone makes the same choices due to environmentâthen whatâthe point of examining individuals though. While Herbst says heânot geographically deterministicâhe kind of is as he goes on. His conclusion: If you accept Herbst's argumentâthe incentives that decision makers make (thick sturct) are not directing them toward state building because of high cost of projecting power (substitute potential access to money via foreign AID vs. taxation), borders continue to be recognized (territory not threatened), internal sovereignty is eroded (much more internal intervention). These are all disincentives to state buildingâso we (intl community) need to change these incentives. Cost of projecting canât be directly affected aside from pulling aid and making collection of taxes more important. One could create a new international norm that says sovereign states must act like itâif we decertified Somalia then Somalialand could be recognized.

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