Further Events Summer Term 2021

Wednesday, 5 May 2021, 17:00
Book presentation & Discussion

Power and the Presidency in Kenya

Book presentation & Discussion
Wednesday, 5 May 2021, 17:00
Online Event broadcasted via Livestream

Pictures
Title: Iconic statue of the late Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, Kenya’s first president. It is located at the heart of KICC grounds. The Monument has the wmk-identifier number 203 © Dexxe via Wikimedia commons | Inside: Book cover with photo: Mau Mau leader of Kenya African National Union (KANU), Jomo Kenyatta, holds the official document of Kenyan independence, 13 December 1963 in Nairobi as he becomes President of Kenya. At the left is Prince Philip of Edinburgh representing Queen Elisabeth for the ceremonies. © Photo by AFP via Getty Images

Imprint
Universitätsbibliothek Wien, Universitätsring 1, 1010 Wien
About the Book

Whenever an African president is elected, re-elected, leaves power or dies in office, the almost unlimited scope of presidential powers in African countries is, once again, on the agenda. Media reporters regularly publish lists of the longest-serving African presidents and political scientists have offered a myriad of tools to explore presidential systems in African countries. But why did, upon independence, almost all African states adopt a presidential system of rule? Put differently: what are the historical origins of presidential power in postcolonial African countries?

Based on extensive archival research, Power and the Presidency in Kenya: The Jomo Kenyatta Years retraces how Jomo Kenyatta became the first president of independent Kenya (in 1963) and shaped the most powerful state institution: the Office of the President. Few expected Kenyatta to become president; even fewer expected Kenya to become a presidential republic with almost unlimited power allocated to the president, while the national assembly and provincial administration were deprived of any significant power. Kenyatta knew he had more enemies than friends; he also knew he could use state resources to hold an extremely divided political elite together.

Kenyatta’s role was to hold a fragile presidential system together while staying aloof from popular discontent. Far from the myth of the omnipotent father of the nation, big man or dictator, the strength of the Kenyan presidential system was built on divisions and uncertainty. This book shows that African presidencies have their own history, one that calls for reconstructing the actors’ agency in negotiating presidential powers, for the worse or the best of their interest, yet always with a refined political intelligence.


Programme

Wednesday, 5 May 2021, 17:00
Online Event
Broadcasted via Livestream: go.univie.ac.at/buch

Welcome

Birgit Athumani Hango
Head of the African and Middle Eastern Studies Library, University of Vienna

Discussion

Anaïs Angelo
Post-Doc at the Department of African Studies, University of Vienna

with

Kirsten Rüther
Professor at the Department of African Studies, University of Vienna

About the Author

Anaïs Angelo is a post-doctoral researcher at the Department for African Studies, University of Vienna. Originally trained as a political scientist in Sciences Po Paris, she specialized in African studies at the University of Michigan and completed her Ph.D. at the Department of History and Civilization at the European University Institute.

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