

POLI 358

CONFLICT AND SOCIETY IN AFRICA

SESSION 1 : NATURE OF AFRICAN SOCIETIES

Lecturer: Dr. Seidu Alidu

Contact Information: smalidu@ug.edu.gh / seidualidu@gmail.com



UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

College of Education

School of Continuing and Distance Education

2014/2015 – 2016/2017

Session Overview

Africa is a very complex continent; in terms of land size, natural resources, people, language, religion, ethnicity and race. These dynamics are shaped largely by the continent's historical evolution and contacts with the outside world but also by migration, emigration and inter-marriages.

Ali Mazrui (2005) discusses the strength and weaknesses, of both the artificially interactive processes of the continent's historical relations as well as the naturally-laden resources and the distribution of same, for growth and prosperity in a paradoxical manner. In his Reith BBC Lecture Series, Mazrui explains the "African Condition" in six paradox at the time and equally more relevant now just at the time he delivered the Lecture.

Mazrui notes the complex product of the interactive processes of the African continent with three major civilizations (i.e., Islam, Christianity and Africanity) in what he termed the "triple heritage." The reminiscence of Mazrui is also captured by Peter Ekeh (1975) when he wrote about the impact of colonialism in the creation of the "two publics" in Africa.

This complexity is a source of strength but also a potential fault line for conflict in the continent. This session is basically going to explore these dynamics and their implication for conflict and conflict resolution in Africa.

Session Outline

The key topics to be covered in this session are:

- Topic 1: **THE MAKING OF THE AFRICAN SOCIETY**
- Topic 2: **WHO IS AN AFRICAN?**
- Topic 3: **THE SIX PARADOX OF AFRICA**
- Topic 4: **THE “TWO PUBLICS” OF AFRICA**

Reading materials

- Mazrui, A. A., (1969) The African Condition.
- Mazrui, A. A., () Africanity Redefined.
- Ekeh, P. P., (1975) “Colonialism and the Two Republics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement” Comparative Studies in Society and History, 17(1):91-112
- Listen to the BBC Reith Lecture on the African Condition at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00gq1wn/episodes/guide>

Learning objectives

At the end of the session, students should be able to:

- Understand the nature of the African society
- Become familiar with the historical evolution of the current cultural complexity of the African continent
- Articulate clearly the benchmarks for defining an African
- Become familiar with Ali Mazrui's Paradox of Africa
- Become familiar with Peter Ekeh's "Two Publics" of Africa

Topic one

THE MAKING OF THE AFRICAN SOCIETY



THE MAKING OF THE AFRICAN SOCIETY

- The history of Africa dates back to the period of the hunter-gatherers and expanded overtime
- Ali Mazrui classifies these interactive process into five stages as presented below:
 - Stage 1: North Africa as an extension of Europe
 - Stage 2: Interactions with the Semitic, classical Greeks and Romans
 - Stage 3: Contacts with Arabs and the spread of Islam
 - Stage 4: The “Triple Heritage”
 - Stage 5: African Glory

Topic Two

WHO IS AN AFRICAN?



WHO IS AN AFRICAN?

In trying to understand and conceptualize who an African is, academics have employed wide range of parameters to enable them do so.

The discussion will be centered around the following:

- Ethnicity
- Race
- Religion
- Geographical position

Topic Three

THE SIX PARADOX OF AFRICA



THE SIX PARADOX OF AFRICA

At his turn on the BBC Reith Lecture Series delivered in 1979, Ali Mazrui spoke about the African condition in dialectics. He specifically focused on five paradox of Africa that will engage our discussion today; these are:

- Paradox of the “Garden of Eden” in decay
- Paradox of “Humiliation”
- Paradox of “Clash of Civilization”
- Paradox of “Underdevelopment”
- Paradox of “Size”
- Paradox of “Physical Location” in the globe

Topic Four

THE “TWO PUBLICS”



THE “TWO PUBLICS”

In his article about the effects of colonialism on Africa, Peter Ekeh (1975) argues that the experiences with colonialism in Africa have led to the creation of “two publics” in the continent instead of the harmonious and single public that exists in the West.

These publics, that will be the focus of our discussion in this topic, are:

- **The Primordial Public**
- **The Civic Public**

References

- Mazrui, A. A., (1969) The African Condition.
- Mazrui, A. A., () Africanity Redefined.
- Ekeh, P. P., (1975) “Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement” Comparative Studies in Society and History, 17(1):91-112
- Listen to the BBC Reith Lecture on the African Condition at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00gq1wn/episodes/guide>