



## Teaching Political Science in/on Africa: Where Do We Stand?

The Arab Political Science Network ([APSN](#)) organized on March 15, 2022 a webinar titled: Teaching Political Science in/on Africa. The event was in collaboration with the African Association of Political Science ([AAPS](#)) and brought together four scholars of political science to share their perspectives and experiences.<sup>1</sup> The webinar was moderated by Bassel Salloukh from the Doha Institute, and featured Rania Hussein Khafaga from Cairo University, Zaynab El Bernoussi from New York University Abu Dhabi, and Christopher Isike from the University of Pretoria.

With a systematic and challenging political, economic, and social climate that engulfs different countries across the continent, this discussion comes as an opportunity to revisit what and how Political Science can help us understand these changes. The webinar examined how Africa is situated in political science debates globally and within the continent. It highlighted, based on the speakers' diverse experiences, the different interests, priorities, and challenges facing political science research and teaching in/on Africa. The discussion also looked at the growing debate around decolonizing social and political science and what is needed for scholars from the continent to produce knowledge that challenge longstanding stereotypes and offers new perspectives and approaches to understanding Africa and its politics.

In exploring the pedagogical challenges facing teaching political science in Morocco, Zaynab El Barnoussi, shared her experience in teaching and researching international relations and international political economy in Morocco. She reflected on the challenges such as navigating different languages and cultural barriers, while providing support and motivation to the students who face similar struggles. She noted the growing interest and importance of international studies programs and the need for a broader inclusive mindset in the field of international relations. In this regard, she emphasized the importance of fostering South-South conversations and collaborative projects to decentralize knowledge production and promote emancipatory perspectives. Finally, Zaynab noted the growing and impactful role of digitization on teaching and research, which requires new skillsets for both professors and students.

Rania Khafaga emphasized the need to diversify syllabi and teaching materials by including non-Eurocentric voices and perspectives. Drawing on her personal experience teaching African politics for over a decade at Cairo University, she highlighted the range of courses offered at her institution, allowing students to deepen their understanding of African domestic and international politics and challenge simplistic views. However, Rania acknowledged challenges such as the overrepresentation of Eurocentric literature and the limited inclusion of non-Egyptian scholars of Africa in the reading lists. She also discussed the need for more interactive and diversified pedagogical approaches to engage and stimulate students. Rania's intervention questioned the capacity and contribution of African political scientists' to setting the research agendas and the dominance of qualitative research methods over quantitative

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<sup>1</sup> This commentary reflects only the speakers' views and does not represent those of APSN or its policies. *To watch the recording of the discussion, click [here](#).*

approaches. She highlighted the potential role surveys and big data could play in enhancing our understanding of African politics. Rania also delved into the intersection between empirical and normative political theory within African studies. Ultimately, she connected these themes to the broader discussion on decolonizing academia, highlighting regional differences and similarities in how the discourse is playing out across the continent. She concluded by emphasizing the importance of advancing the debate among different academic and scholarly stakeholders and taking concrete steps toward advancing homegrown African views.

Christopher Isike discussed the lack of African epistemologies in post-colonial African university education, which still reflects the legacy of colonial education and fails to incorporate indigenous knowledge and cultural practices. This perpetuates a Western-centric worldview and hampers Africa's involvement in global affairs. He highlighted the need to transform knowledge production systems and addressed the relevance of political science education in African universities, which often fails to address local political realities and challenges. He suggested practical steps for decolonizing political science, including interrogating the colonial origins of state formation, engaging in the scholarship of teaching and learning, and centering the African student in the learning process. Isike emphasized the importance of decolonizing the African state as a prerequisite for meaningful transformation in universities and argued that political science curricula should be Africanized and digitalized to challenge Western epistemological hegemony. He concluded by highlighting the critical role of a conducive state environment in fostering epistemological diversity in African universities.

The webinar discussion provided valuable insights into pedagogical approaches, research themes, and decolonization efforts within the discipline. The reflections of the speakers shed light on the different challenges and possible opportunities in teaching and researching political science in Africa. Their contributions highlighted the need for diverse perspectives, bridging the qualitative-quantitative divide, critically examining the decolonization discourse, and incorporating interdisciplinary approaches. By integrating these ideas, the field of political science in Africa can continue to evolve and provide a more comprehensive understanding of African politics and society.