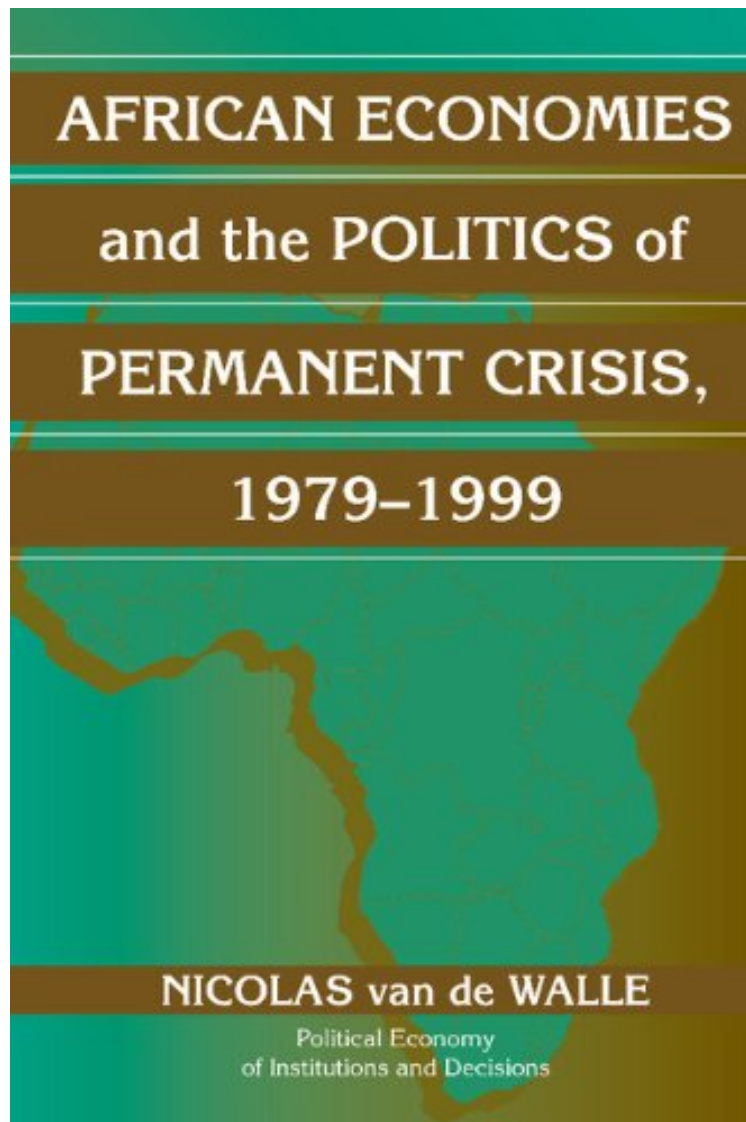


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African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis, 1979ndash;1999 (Political Economy of Institutions and Decisions)

Nicolas Van de Walle

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writtenBy Mihal CeittinOne of the best books on the political economy of Africa ever written. Although it's a bit dated its lessons are as relevant as ever and the writing is straightforward and richly awarding. Perfect for the specialist or average reader with an interest in why Africa remains mired in 'parmanent crisis'.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy RICHARD OKIRIATThank you11 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Best Book on African Development for Many YearsBy TJMThe Politics of Permanent Crisis is simply one of the best books on contemporary Africa to come out for ages. The author, who has been writing sensibly on Africa, political reform, and foreign aid issues for many years, takes on a whole range of often contradictory academic work to help explain why Africa has been unable to grow faster despite increasingly levels of external financial assistance. Van de Walle argues coherently that local politics within many African countries have combined with donor practices to militate against the fundamental changes required for African economies to take-off. Seen in this light, the lack of reforms and disappointing outcomes from foreign aid in Africa are not mysteries, but rather the logical outcomes of the incentives under which the various players operate. This is a seminal contribution to our understanding of Africa's economic and political dilemmas -- and an excellent complement to Bill Easterly's "The Elusive Quest for Growth". If there is any shortcoming in the book, it is a minor quibble that van de Walle seems too dismissive of the role of individual leaders in sparking recovery (e.g., surely, Jerry Rawlings and Yoweri Museveni deserve some personal credit for turning Ghana and Uganda around). This book is a must-read for anyone interested in Africa's development challenges and the role of the international community.

This 2001 book explains why African countries have remained mired in a disastrous economic crisis since the late 1970s. It shows that dynamics internal to African state structures largely explain this failure to overcome economic difficulties rather than external pressures on these same structures as is often argued. Far from being prevented from undertaking reforms by societal interest and pressure groups, clientelism within the state elite, ideological factors and low state capacity have resulted in some limited reform, but much prevarication and manipulation of the reform process, by governments which do not really believe that reform will be effective, which often oppose reforms because they would undercut the patronage and rent-seeking practices which undergird political authority, and which lack the administrative and technical capacity to implement much reform. Over time, state decay has increased.

"This landmark work presents a searching and persuasive political explanation of Africa's failure to achieve development despite two decades of externally imposed economic reform. . . . A major contribution to our understanding of Africa's political economy." Foreign Affairs"Nicolas Van De Walle's [book] deserves to be read by all scholars interested in serious discussion of the issue.... Van De Walle's work...provides a useful road map of a jumbled and bewildering economic world." American Political Science "A valuable contribution to the literature, this book broadens the discussion of current development strategies to include an in-depth analysis of the so-called neopatrimonial state as the potential source of failure of African development." CHOICE