

The contrasting outcomes to HIV/AIDS prevention and mitigation processes in sub-Saharan Africa have not been adequately investigated or explained. Specifically, few scholars have attempted to root the responses to HIV and AIDS within the socio-economic and political realities of those countries severely impacted by the disease. This article seeks to explain the ambivalent political response to HIV and AIDS in Kenya in the context of the neopatrimonial leadership of former president Daniel arap Moi, between 1983, when the disease was first identified, and 2002, when Moi finally left office. The article relies on rigorous interpretation and corroboration of secondary and primary data collected between 2004 and 2006. The findings suggest that the slow and inadequate response to HIV and AIDS in Kenya during Moi's presidency was primarily dictated by the need to maintain the structures of his neopatrimonial leadership.