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A Review of: "African Intelligence Services: Early Postcolonial and Contemporary Challenges" by Ryan Schaffer[1][2]

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Africa has long been characterized by political struggles. Due to its geostrategic importance, a large number of studies have scrutinized the continent's intelligence activities; however, they mostly did that from a colonial or Western perspective. While world powers definitely had the agency at some of the most significant historical moments[i], Africa should not be regarded a passive agent, subordinated only to external pressures. The anthology argues that in contrary to Europe and North America – which have been dominant in intelligence studies – African intelligence have largely been overlooked and understudied.[ii] Researching the colonial legacies and contemporary challenges of African intelligence services may contribute to a better understanding of the nexus of history and security.

African Intelligence Services is an important addition to the academic literature, since the international community has limited knowledge of the role of African intelligence agencies. Studying secret services, especially in Africa, is a huge challenge in itself, so the use of different records and various research methodologies is to be applauded. Through its eleven chapters the book follows a chronological order to depict the evolution of African intelligence services. The first part of the anthology (Chapter 1 – Chapter 4) examines the early postcolonial period, while the second half (Chapter 5 – Chapter 9) is a detailed account of how contemporary events have shaped the studied countries' colonial history. The last two chapters (Chapter 10 – Chapter 11) also deal with contemporary challenges, albeit not from a historical or institutional, but rather a legal perspective.

Chapter 1 illustrates the difference between Kenya's intelligence structure and the country's intelligence apparatus after independence. While the former – preserving its colonial nature – largely remained unchanged, the latter was increasingly filled up by African personnel, slowly becoming the "tool of authoritarian political surveillance" (p. 23). It is peculiar how the Special Branch took up the fight against nationalist movements pre-independence, but then collaborated with these politicians within the same institutional framework. Shaffer argues that Kenya "had a chance to break away from the past of colonial

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structures" (p. 38), however, it can be rather challenging to shake off a 43-year-long legacy.

Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 elaborate on how Cold War competition was exploited by Zanzibar and Tanganyika, and Mozambique and Angola. In order to receive financial, material and educational support and develop their intelligence capacities, Zanzibar started building relations with East Germany, while Tanganyika approached West Germany. Graham is correct in pointing out how little these countries' commitment to non-alignment and anti-colonialism was understood by the Germans (p. 56). As a reaction to Portuguese repression and to protect themselves from liberation movements, Mozambique and Angola turned to East Germany, the Soviet Union and Cuba to help them train their intelligence agencies after independence. Nothing illustrates the influence of these countries better than the example of the official state security service of the GDR. Being the operational model for Mozambican and Angolan intelligence services, the Stasi was able to outlive East Germany (p. 80).

The following three chapters highlight some of the most crucial factors related to destabilization: insurgencies, regional rivalries and neo-patrimonialism.[iii] Chapter 4 argues that only through a unified political-military approach could intelligence be an effective tool of shortening wars and reaping victories. Taking the example of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Cross reasons that although the country had strong intelligence capabilities, intelligence could not bring the expected results in its counterinsurgency. It was relatively late when the "lack of emphasis on military intelligence" (p. 105) was recognized, and even after the establishment of the competent body was the service plagued with problems. Listing the key factors that contributed to the ineffectiveness of Rhodesian intelligence services provides a great summary of understanding the complexity of the issue.

Rwanda in Chapter 5 is an excellent case study for intelligence used for self-interest. It is demonstrated that although the Rwandan intelligence services were controlled by Hutus, there was regional fractionalism in the elite that eventually led to the 1994 genocide. Kegel rightly points out that "regionalism can be an important driver of conflict within mono-ethnic power structures" (p. 137), however, it should be noted that it can definitely be a source of tension in polyethnic societies as well. Chapter 6 offers an intriguing account about the bureaucratization of Liberia's intelligence services over time. In the context of neo-patrimonialism, intelligence structures can be viewed as a "political tool to enhance the leader's grasp on power and/or to undermine real or perceived competitors" (p. 149). Despite their occasional politicization, Spatz and Bollfrass argue that the intelligence service in Liberia was given relative independence and intelligence as such is not more, only *differently* politicized in neo-patrimonial systems.

Studying the Sudanese intelligence services, Chapter 7 illustrates "how bureaucratic institutions often seek to survive in highly unstable political environments" (pp. 182-183). Due to ethnic and religious complexities, intelligence collection in Sudan had to be diversified. With the separation of institutional and state interests, the intelligence services could remain relatively autonomous. However, as Fitsanakis and Brophy emphasize, this development

paved the way for the fragmentation of security agencies through the creation of informal intelligence mechanisms. Chapter 8 draws attention to another trend often discerned in African politics, which is the establishment of overlapping agencies. According to Gwatiwa and Tsholofelo, there was "lack of clarity of roles" (p. 198) between the police and Botswana's intelligence agency. Besides the overlaps in their mandate, the latter lacked credible oversight as a result of political and legal shortcomings, which underpins the authors' claim that intelligence in the country must be understood in historical-legal-social contexts.

Chapter 9 is about the "politicization of the intelligence functions allegedly serving the state" (p. 212). While intelligence dispensation is South Africa can be considered a success strategically, the government and secret services were rife with corruption. It led to lack of trust and the politicization of the intelligence process, which spurred the creation of independent intelligence agencies. Chapter 10 best illustrates how intertwined colonial legacies and contemporary challenges can be by stating that regardless of what rule Nigeria has been under, intelligence has served the ones in power. Although Adeakin is right to explore the connection between intelligence, 'institutional prerogatives' and the degree of civilian and legislative oversight, I would like to point out some shortcomings. The first is of conceptual nature and it concerns Boko Haram, which is translated as "Western values are sin" (p. 249)[iv]. A better translation of 'haram' would be 'forbidden', since Islam refutes the concept of original sin.[v] Besides, the author remarks that outside Nigeria's intelligence services "several multiagencies are engaged in intelligence gathering" (p. 247); however, with the exception of the army and police, nothing is mentioned. It could have been interesting to elaborate on their involvement, activities and whether they complement or overlap the others.

Chapter 11 comparatively analyzes the roles of the regional intelligence, police and security services in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania from a legal perspective. Bailey argues that – despite a common colonial background – a gap exists between theory and practice. Although these East African countries possess sound administrative structures, there are "challenges in legal accountability and shortcomings in institutional capacity" (p. 257). Expanding legal education as a way of increasing judicial oversight is a good solution in theory; the question is how viable it could be in practice.

While each chapter is intriguing and revealing, I feel that apart from the importance of studying modern Africa through the lens of intelligence services, there is no unifying argument holding the book together. Intelligence agencies are not attempted to be put into a broad analytical framework, since as Shaffer correctly points out "a single intelligence theory [would be] too broad for any meaningful contribution or too narrow to be valid across the continent" (p. 7). Being of descriptive nature, I did not miss the empirical approach[vi], however, I have found the anthology format too eclectic. I understand its objective is to draw attention to the diversity and complexity of African intelligence agencies, but by using the term 'postcolonial' more narrowly and focusing on a single approach instead of trying to cope with challenges from historical, institutional and legal perspectives would have made the book even stronger.

African intelligence services is nonetheless a significant contribution to the field of Intelligence Studies. It also provides an excellent overview of the various challenges African intelligence agencies have in the developing world in national, rather than international contexts. Despite the differences in their government systems, histories, politics and populations, the studied countries undoubtedly face very similar challenges. The anthology is the first edited volume that looks at intelligence and security services in Africa from academic and professional standpoints, and as such it could be useful for scholars, students and international agencies cultivating relations with African countries diplomatically and strategically. It could also be of interests to readers who wish to extend their knowledge in topics of security and intelligence in Africa. More importantly, the book offers a new understanding on African intelligence services and encourages researches to further explore the subject.

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[i] See, for instance, Aldrich, R, Rawnsley G. and Rawnsley M (Eds.), 'The Clandestine Cold War in Asia, 1945–65: Western Intelligence, Propaganda, Security and Special Operations', Frank Cass, London, 2000

[ii] However, there are a number of studies that can be considered exceptions, such as Agbiboa, D.E, 'Eyes on the Street: Civilian Joint Task Force and the Surveillance of Boko Haram in Northeastern Nigeria', *Intelligence and National Security*, Volume 22, No. 7, 2018, pp. 1022-1039; Ingiriis, M.H, 'Predatory Politics and Personalization of Power: The Abuses and Misuses of the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) in Somalia', *African Affairs*, Volume 119, No. 475, 2020, pp. 251-274; Ingiriis, M.H, 'Insurgency and international extraversion in Somalia: the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) and Al-Shabaab's Amniyat', *African Security Review*, Volume 29, Issue 2, 2020, pp. 125-151; Sinkó, G and Besenyő J, 'Comparison of the Secret Service of al-Shabaab, the Amniyat, and the National Intelligence and Security Agency (Somalia)', *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, DOI: 10.1080/08850607.2021.1987143, 2021

[iii] Neo-patrimonialism refers to a system, where formal and informal institutions have merged and personal power dominates the bureaucracy, Shaffer, R (Eds.), African Intelligence Services: Early Postcolonial and Contemporary Challenges, Rowman & Littlefield, 2021, p. 144

[iv] Various translations – literate, figurative, linguistic – exist in the current academic literature. While the most common remains 'Western education is forbidden', there are some other noteworthy forms. For instance, it was translated as 'Western education is sinful' (Peters, M.A, ''Western education is sinful': Boko Haram and the abduction of Chibok schoolgirls', *Policy Futures in Education*, Volume 12, No. 2, 2014), or '(traversing) the Western education system is haram' (Murtada, A, 'Jama'at 'Boko Harām': Nasha'tuhā, Mabadi'uhā wa A'māluhā fi Naygeeriyah' [The Boko Haram Group in Nigeria: its beginnings, principles and actions in Nigeria], 2012, p. 4). On top of that, former acting leader of the terrorist group, Mallam Sanni Umaru argued that *"Boko Haram actually means 'Western Civilisation' is forbidden. The difference is that while the first gives the impression that we are opposed to formal education coming from the West… which is not true, the second affirms our belief in the supremacy of Islamic culture (not education), for culture is broader, it includes education but not determined by Western education."* (Onuoha, F.C, 'The Islamist challenge: Nigeria's Boko Haram crisis explained', *African Security Review*, Volume 19, No. 2, 2010, p. 57)

[v] See Lomier, R, 'Boko Haram: The Development of a Militant Religious Movement in Nigeria', *Africa Spectrum*, Volume 47, No. 2/3, 2012, pp. 137-155

[vi] In another review of the anthology, Francois Sennesael remarks that according to his opinion *"the book does not infer from the detailed empirical realities…"*, The London School of Economics and Political Science, November 5, 2021, https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsereviewofbooks/2021/11/05/book-review-african-intelligence-services-early-postcolonial-and-contemporary-challenges-edited-by-ryan-shaffer/