

Book Review: “The Handbook of African Intelligence Cultures” Edited by Ryan Shaffer¹²

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The African continent has experienced a broad range of internal and external security challenges during the last decades. Intelligence services have been utilized as a tool by autocratic or authoritarian leaders to suppress democratic, ethnic, or separatist demands. This book discovers that this has been a common feature of intelligence across the continent. Intelligence continues to play an often unseen but significant role in the lives of Africa’s people. In the book the reader can learn more about African intelligence services that have not been examined as a serious field of inquiry. It is more valuable because the number of academic studies published on the topic is relatively small. This book provides a comprehensive exploration of intelligence cultures in Africa, covering all African countries. The book’s purpose is to provide an introduction to African intelligence services for students and a reference text for scholars. Some of the authors are researchers who have specialized in intelligence for a given African country. Others are experts on a specific country, and their researches are the first English-language studies on a country’s intelligence structures and services.

There are many different approaches to understanding intelligence services. The book’s great advantage is that it sees the diversity of approaches as a strength, rather than imposing a model that might limit inquiry into a subject that is already challenging to research in many African countries. The other advantage that can be emphasized is that this book not only offers readers overviews of each country’s intelligence services but highlights different perspectives and methodological approaches in studying African intelligence. This book explores African intelligence cultures by examining how a state’s internal and also external dynamics influence intelligence services and in turn how intelligence services themselves shape the state, society, and culture. The book also aims to provide an overview of intelligence cultures through diverse and interdisciplinary approaches. Some contributors are historians, political scientists, sociologists, or have government backgrounds.

With some chapters leaning more historical and others delving into current events. They do not necessarily follow the same approach or even define intelligence in the same ways. Indeed, some chapters emphasize security and law enforcement agencies, reflecting the status of countries’ focus, institutions, and sources available. Another valuable part of this book that each chapter provides readers with a country-

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specific overview of intelligence history and systems, national security challenges, international alliances, and intelligence oversight or reform efforts. Human rights are another important aspect in the chapters. It is seen that international relations have been vital to African intelligence since the late nineteenth-century scramble for Africa attracted competition between the great powers for influence on the continent. The Cold War has shaped African intelligence until this day. However, Africa faced different or compounded issues in the Cold War, as many countries simultaneously experienced decolonization and state building during the post-war era. This book covers over fifty-five countries, and while each chapter is centred on similar themes, it does not take a comparative analytic approach in the sense of presenting an overarching theory about African intelligence services.

Given the variety and differences of services, histories, cultures, and governments the authors encourage further research on intelligence in Africa. In my opinion, this book can also help to address the geographical imbalances that exist in intelligence studies. Intelligence services can influence African governments, cultures, and societies. This book describes the specific experiences in well-known and lesser-known African intelligence services. Readers can identify the differences between the intelligence apparatuses in Africa. Furthermore, readers can develop a more diverse understanding of African intelligence, and intelligence in general. This book provides an alternative perspective by approaching fifty-five African countries' intelligence services on their own terms rather than focusing on external actors. In the book we can see that there are some broad commonalities among African intelligence services. First, it is that government and politics are significant influences on many African intelligence services. Whether a country is a monarchy, authoritarian, or a multiparty democracy, government and politics have a significant impact on African intelligence cultures in terms of collection, analysis, operations, and targets. Second, the history of a country also has a significant role on the intelligence community's structure and function. Third, civil-military intelligence relations and bureaucratic demarcation appear to be connected to the size of a country. Less-populated countries consist of smaller intelligence services, which means the intelligence community is smaller and likely has stronger connections between civilian intelligence, military intelligence, and law enforcement. Fourth, many African countries' intelligence services have long been in some state of reform and reorganization, which has been a consistent aspect of African intelligence since the end of the Cold War.

Since national structures and international issues have shifted, African governments have reformed which also has impelled reforms to African intelligence to meet the new legal frameworks. African countries face some common threats from state and nonstate actors. The authors found out that global power competition from foreign countries, in terms of investment and aid, have created security concerns for Africa nations. Nonstate actors, in the form of insurgencies and terrorists, have proliferated across the continent since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The transnational

nature of some of the separatist groups, such as the Islamic State or Al-Qaeda, embodies contemporary challenges influenced by globalization and technology. This has resulted in new African organizations. Notably, the African Union Commission's Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa was established in 2004 for intelligence and security coordination and communication and now includes over fifty countries.

In the book *János Besenyő* addresses the activities of Somali intelligence services that are little known to the international community, as there is no monograph about them, and few other studies have been published. *Nuno Fragoso Vidal* argues that the Angolan intelligence and security services have maintained their foundational purposes and strategic objectives since they were created in 1975. *Juste Codjo* finds out that Benin has struggled to establish a professional intelligence community since it achieved independence from France in 1960. The evolution of the country's intelligence services closely mirrors its political trajectory, which consists of three major historical periods. *Lawrence Ookeditse* explores Botswana's intelligence culture through an appraisal of Botswana's Directorate on Intelligence and Security Services (DIS)'s politicization and oversight of the agency. *Jude Kagoro* explores the intelligence culture in Burundi and offers an empirical and nuanced understanding of intelligence cultures in the context of a sub-Saharan African country characterized by continuous episodes of political violence. *Manu Lekunze* examines Cameroon's intelligence culture and he argues that Cameroon maintains an "all of government," and in some cases, an "all of society" intelligence culture. *Dávid Vogel* provides a brief introduction to Central African Republic's intelligence services and culture by examining key historical events, actors, and issues. *Ryan Shaffer* states that there is little research written about Senegalese security broadly and intelligence specifically. *Ashton Robinson* argues that the intelligence culture of Seychelles has been facing a difficult transition for several years. The intelligence culture seeks to leave behind the former dictatorship's security and intelligence methodology, while reforming to address the strategic pressures arising from piracy, maritime competition, and threats to its critical financial sector. In conclusion, in this book we can have a broad insight to all African countries' intelligence cultures and their different security aspects. The book surveys Africa and provides insight into African intelligence services to examine their roles in the countries. The research demonstrates that there is great diversity between the intelligence services on the continent. It means that there is no single model of African intelligence. The larger countries receive more attention and have a more prominent role in regional issues. Yet it is vital to study all African intelligence cultures if one wants to understand the past, present, and future of national security in Africa.



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