

BOOK REVIEW

Ryan Shaffer, ed. *African Intelligence Services: Early Postcolonial and Contemporary Challenges*: Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield, 2023. vii + 224 pp. Bibliography. Maps. Index. \$42.99. Paper. ISBN: 9781538150849.

Africa is the most culturally, ethnically, and geographically diverse continent, making it extraordinarily difficult to synthesize overarching themes about its history, even on a subject as discrete as intelligence. Moreover, intelligence is by nature difficult to write about. Ryan Shaffer's *African Intelligence Services: Early Postcolonial and Contemporary Challenges* faces these challenges admirably in this ambitious, richly detailed anthology. Spanning eleven chapters, *African Intelligence Services* examines the continent's intelligence agencies, highlighting the roles these institutions play from the postcolonial period through the Cold War to the near present. The book reflects the continent's diversity, including chapters on the intelligence services of Kenya, Zanzibar and Tanganyika, Mozambique, Angola, Rhodesia, Rwanda, Liberia, Sudan, Botswana, South Africa, and Nigeria.


The anthology brings in an equally diverse group of academics and practitioners. While the authors are given latitude to tackle their respective subjects, the format of the chapters is generally consistent, beginning with the early postcolonial period, and exploring how colonial structures influenced newly independent intelligence services. For example, after Kenya achieved independence in December 1963, Kenya's Special Branch maintained a significant continuity in methodologies, tactics, and intelligence structures for over a decade. Similarly, after Nigeria's independence, British officers continued to hold key positions in the intelligence services, protecting the ruling political class and the economic interests of the elites. A similar pattern is seen in other countries where dismantling the architecture of the colonial intelligence services was never seriously considered when it could be coopted to protect and empower the new leadership.

The Cold War era is another critical focus, illustrating how African regimes leveraged superpower rivalries to their advantage. Often depicted in the historical record as passive participants in the Cold War, *African Intelligence Services* shows how deftly the continent's leaders navigated the competition to bolster domestic regimes and secure resources. No country leveraged the rivalry better than South Africa, which tasked its spies with the destruction of the liberation movements. It sold these movements as indistinguishable from the West's struggle against communism. Despite scandals involving the intelligence services in the 1970s that nearly brought down the government, the collaboration between the security forces and clandestine services effectively merged as the anti-apartheid struggle intensified. Postapartheid, the challenge was to develop an effective South African intelligence apparatus while integrating former

African National Congress (ANC) intelligence and military operatives into the existing structures, a struggle paralleling other sectors in South Africa. In Angola and Mozambique, the leadership also leveraged the Cold War, using ties to the communist bloc to build intelligence services more formidable than anything the Portuguese fielded during the colonial period. When the Soviet Union collapsed, Mozambique and Angola scrapped their East German-based security ministries, creating new frameworks that separated domestic, external, and military intelligence into different agencies.

The final larger theme of the book addresses contemporary challenges facing African intelligence services. In John Burton Kegel's excellent chapter, "The Role of the Forces Armées Rwandaises Intelligence Services and Parallel Power Structures During the Rwandan Struggle for Liberation," the author details the role a group of radicalized officers in the intelligence services played in destabilizing the government and undermining the peace process that eventually led to the genocide. The rivalries were not just ethnic. When the Tutsi were forced from the country in 1961, the Hutus fractured along regional lines, with the northeastern officers monopolizing power. These officers focused on regional rivalries at the expense of foreign intelligence, leaving the country vulnerable to external security threats. In Rhodesia, building an effective military intelligence capability was slowed by a focus on counterinsurgency. That legacy of illegal arrests and torture of political dissidents continued in postindependence Zimbabwe, where the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) continued in service of Prime Minister Mugabe and his ZANU political party.

In conclusion, the greatest strength of *African Intelligence Services: Early Postcolonial and Contemporary Challenges* is the incredible breadth and level of detail the authors bring to the work. That source of strength might also be the book's greatest weakness. Jumping from country to country, there are occasions when all but the most dedicated readers will find themselves lost in the maze of names, organizations, and events. Given the scope and ambitions of the book, this was perhaps inevitable. Despite this small quibble, *African Intelligence Services: Early Postcolonial and Contemporary Challenges* is a groundbreaking work that expands our understanding of African history and international relations during a critical period. It is a must-read for any academic in the fields of intelligence and security studies as well as academics and general readers interested in the role intelligence services played in shaping the continent's modern history. As Africa finds itself increasingly at the center of new global rivalries with the attendant impulse to divide into rival blocs of countries, policymakers in the West, China, Russia, and most importantly, the continent, could do worse than to read Ryan Shaffer's anthology to get a sense of what the future of African intelligence could look like in a new Cold War.

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