

Book Review

Reviewer: Lucy Shule

African Security: An Introduction,

New York: Bloomsburg Publishing Plc. March 2020.

Authors: John Siko and Jonah Victor

Pp xi+266, ISBN: 978-1-78831-742-9.

African Security: An Introduction provides a detailed account of an area that is rarely published. As such, it complements African security academic discourse. The book's overall content covers the rich history and practice of African security. In addition to explaining the current African security, the book provides an exposition of the pre – colonial security situation and envisages the future. Even though the authors emphasise that they do not intend to address theoretical – cum – academic issues, the content of the book brings out aspects that challenge existing academic debates on African security.

The main text is divided into three main sections, with a total of 13 chapters, including an overview and a conclusion; the prospects of the latter project for African security and policy options. Part One, which mainly comprises chapters 1 to 4 (pp. 1–52), introduces the book and presents three perspectives that focus on Africa's geopolitics and security challenges. The authors' approach combines experience in both government and corporate sectors with key concepts and analytical frameworks and links them to the understanding of security issues that have continued to inform Africa's history.

The three chapters after the introduction discuss pre – colonial conflicts, in particular southern African liberation struggles. In addition, they also highlight the issue of peace and war in independent Africa, including the geopolitics of North Africa. Chapter Four focuses on North Africa's relations with the rest of Africa, the Middle East, and its role in Africa's security challenges.

Interlude A (pp. 53–98) dwells on identity, armed forces, religious extremism as well as crime and law enforcement in Africa.

The section looks mainly into Africa's armed forces, aware of the fact that they not only influence the security environment but also act as key players in addressing Africa's security challenges. Furthermore, in this section the authors examine the role of religion and religious ideologies in Africa; and analyse the emergence of extremism, terrorist activities, and interreligious conflict. Lastly, this part looks into crime and law enforcement in Africa, particularly the nature of the crime, organized crime, and criminal organisations as well as law enforcement.

Interlude B (pp. 101-188) is specifically structured to guide those who intend to travel or live in Africa for work, business, or any other professional reasons. It comprises six chapters and adopts an anticipatory framework. The chapters are designed to address issues such as anticipating and responding to military coups, anticipating and mitigating election violence, anticipating and preparing for the economic crisis in Africa as well as managing and ending conflicts in Africa. This section concludes by examining the influence and competition of external actors, and future trends in African security, and also suggests policy options.

A notable strength of the book is the authors' proficiency in documenting African security, making it better understood within the global security context. The authors have managed to write a comprehensive account of African security on issues that have over time been treated in isolation: African international relations, conflict resolution, migrations, peacekeeping, crime, law enforcement, militaries, economic crises, identity, religions, and religious extremism, and geopolitics. This style is largely complemented by a combination of factors, including the authors' academic background and experience in both government and corporate sectors. The breadth and depth of the discussion are contributed to by the fact that both authors have pursued doctorate studies on African affairs and

worked in analytic, diplomatic, and policy planning in the US government. In addition, both have lectured courses on African security at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

However, one of the major shortcomings of this book emanates from the absence of a discussion on gender relations in African security. Either the authors have disregarded the aspect, overlooked this fact, or were influenced by the general perception that it falls under the ‘men’s domains. How women have continued to play a key role in African security from the pre – colonial to post – independence period deserved specific attention in the book. For example, during the Mozambican liberation struggles, FRELIMO established a women’s detachment in 1967 whereby, the first group was trained in Nachingwea – Tanzania. Women also transported food and ammunition, and also mobilised the youth into the struggle. Besides, some great women leaders such as Queen Anna Nzinga of Ndombó and Matamba waged war against the Portuguese invasion for almost 30 years, and she is recorded to be one of the skilled negotiators, military leaders, and tactful politicians.

On another note, the authors seem to have been influenced by the negativities that have often been associated with African security. For instance, they argue that they do not focus on the negative aspects of African security that Africa has often been identified with, which according to them, will limit their anticipation of the political, economic, and security developments but on the ground the book largely dwells on security challenges facing Africa. This might have been influenced by the curriculum design and content as the publication is a collection and synthesis of lecture notes, research and lessons learned. Chapter Two, for instance, discusses “African insecurity before independence” which suggests that security threats dominated pre – independence Africa. This leads to an understanding of African security only through the lens of insecurity, which is a negative perception. The same applies to most of the other chapters, and more so in four out of the six chapters of Interlude B. It is important to highlight that there have been positive trends in African

security. Notable ones include the formation of the Sahara Desert in 5,000_{BCE} (approximately 7,000 years ago), which shaped Africa's civilisations, economics, politics, trade, and ecosystem. In addition, the emergence of the city-states – even before the formation of the Greek City States – which evolved in the 8th century _{BCE} around 5,500 years ago, also coincided with the formation of the Sahara Desert.

Lastly, the authors have either generalised or overlooked to appreciate the fact that external interventions in Africa invariably impact African security. They range from the colonial policies that transfigured inter and intra Africa security relations to those of post – independence with international financial institutions, including the 'dependency syndrome' that has continued to impact African security.

Generally, the book remains a substantial reference not only to experts and those interested in African security but also to academicians. It serves as a foundation for understanding the details of African security, especially so during this time when Africa is dominating the world's affairs and the shift from the traditional to contemporary approaches to security studies.