



## **GNOSI: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Human Theory and Praxis**

Volume 5, Issue 2, July - December, 2022

ISSN (Online): 2714-2485

### **Unleashing the Potential for Promoting Socioeconomic Development in Africa: The Role of Intelligence Services**

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(**Received:** May- 2022; **Accepted:** December-2022; Available **Online:** December -2022)



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#### **ABSTRACT**

During the pervasive and protracted Cold War, states developed intelligence services as secret organisations to achieve international prominence and resist foreign influence domestically. Parallel to the globalisation process, states' intelligence agencies are expanding far beyond military exercises to encompass intelligence collection, safeguarding persons and information, defining and authorising sanctions for infractions, and establishing the standards for unconstitutional conduct. Nonetheless, a common perception of contemporary African intelligence organisations is that they are essentially extensions of the occasionally autocratic government under which they operate. This allegation is based on the apparent access, power, and influence of African intelligence and security services by both domestic and international actors. This paper examines the role of intelligence services in encouraging social and economic growth in Africa. In this study, context and historical analysis research methodologies are used in both primary and secondary sources. This paper relates the issue with African intelligence services to their colonial origins. This work also reveals the delicate image of intelligence services in Africa and the issue of global infiltration. This article argues that African intelligence services, like their western counterparts, must live up to their obligation to safeguard Africa politically and economically. This highlights the necessity for African intelligence agencies to contribute to political stability through the development of several channels. This work proposes a strategic reorganisation of the intelligence agencies in order to enhance their image and efficacy in supporting the socioeconomic development of the continent.

**Keywords:** Intelligence agencies; Africa; economic growth; political stability

## INTRODUCTION

“Knowledge is power” is a common phrase. According to Haas et al. (2018), the phrase means that man is powerful because of his capacity for knowledge acquisition, preservation, and transmission to the next generation. Thus, with “knowledge,” man has power over the forces of nature and can use them to his advantage. The phrase has also been increasingly acute since the Second World War, when a number of intelligence agencies were formalised and significantly expanded. Over the past year, intelligence agencies and departments have been established in practically every nation since the Second World War to deal with security threats. Large investment in intelligence organisations has become a crucial part of countries’ national security frameworks. For instance, the National Intelligence Program in the United States received \$65.7 billion in funding for Fiscal Year 2022, while the Military Intelligence Program received \$24.1 billion in funding (Sharp, 2022). According to the House Committee, the budget for Nigeria’s intelligence agencies was cut from N221. 7 billion in 2022 to N195. 18 billion in 2023 as a result of the country’s present economic situation (Ushie et al., 2021a; Ushie et al., 2021b; Morka & Aliku, 2022). The budget for Russia’s intelligence agencies for 2022 was 3.51 trillion rubles (\$57.4 billion), but once the all-out invasion started, it increased to 3.85 trillion rubles (Zegart, 2022). Additionally, 2.82 trillion rubles were allocated for law enforcement and national security (NSLE). For Australia, \$14.554 million was made available through Appropriation Bill No. 3 (2021–2022), and \$0.105 million will be obtained for Intelligence Service collecting through Appropriation Bill No. 4 (2021–2022) (Zegart, 2022).

According to Vellani (2006), the identification and mitigation of vulnerabilities to national security, the rapid and effective reporting of such threats to decision-makers, and the accurate and timely assessment and forecasting of potential conflicts or threats are the core duties of intelligence services. Military intelligence, secret police, domestic and international intelligence, the criminal investigation department, and many more organisations that fit into the same category may all be considered intelligence agencies. Accepting this model makes sense since it enables us to understand problems with intelligence agencies in nations with several agencies. For instance, when discussing intelligence agencies in the United States, many only bring up the CIA and FBI, despite the fact that the US intelligence community is made up of seventeen (17) additional institutions (Agrawal, 2017). There are now five (5) sub-bodies in Indonesia (Wahyudi & Syauqillah, 2022) and ten (10) in the Australian Intelligence Community (AIC) (Walsh & Harrison, 2021). In Tanzania, there are the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Tanzania’s Drug Control and Enforcement Authority (DCEA), Tanzania Intelligence and Security Service (TISS), and others related to defence forces (Makangara, 2022). South Africa has the South African Secret Service (SASS), the National Defense Force Intelligence Division, the National Intelligence Agency (NIA), and a few others (Dombroski 2021).

Intelligence agencies are intended to gather information and intelligence using espionage to ensure the survival of a nation (Mishra, 2014). According to Buchere & Jonyo (2011), “Intelligence is one of the most globalised public institutions, with networks the world over.” “And since they are a key asset for national sovereignty, they are usually off-limits to interference by external powers, hence the secrecy surrounding the operations of the institutions” (p. 17). Consequently, African countries have created intelligence agencies to collect, analyze, and exploit information to support law enforcement, national

security, and other policy objectives that can be classified as local or international (Ehirim et al. 2021; Mrabure & Awhefeada, 2021; Akujobi, & Awhefeada, 2021). The institutions ought to be tools for maintaining peace and security in their respective countries. As Africa's importance to the global economy continues to rise, well-functioning intelligence agencies are needed to help the continent advance its interests internationally and strengthen its internal ability to serve its people. Nonetheless, African intelligence agencies have a tainted history and face numerous challenges that limit their contribution to content development. The institutions appear to have lost focus and have reserved efforts to develop the continent. They have also turned into agents of torture, chaos, and instability in several places in Africa.

In this light, this paper explores the shortfalls of these institutions and the untapped role that these institutions have not played in promoting social, economic, and political development and prosperity in Africa. It explores the plausibility of these agencies helping various governments in Africa fight poverty, corruption, political and economic instability, and health-related issues like pandemics. It argues for the need for legal and strategic oversight of these institutions in order to avoid past mistakes. This is important as it is well known that issues related to intelligence agencies are rarely discussed in Africa and are mostly left as the business of those who occupy the highest echelons in the corridors of power. The paper's insights might inform how to improve the institutions' performance for the prosperity of Africa. The following subsection presents the haunting past of intelligence in Africa and its prospects.

### **TAINTED BACKGROUND OF INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES IN AFRICA**

The history of modern intelligence agencies in Africa cannot be discussed without referring to their background. The history of colonialism in Africa can be traced back to ancient, medieval, or even contemporary times, depending on how the term "colonisation" is interpreted. Ancient Greeks, Romans, Arabs, and Malays all founded colonies on the African continent, some of which lasted decades (Parker & Rathbone, 2007). In common vernacular, discussions of African colonialism mainly centre on the European conquests of the New Imperialism and the Scramble for Africa (1884–1914) eras, followed by slow decolonization following World War II. However, Britain, France, Germany, Portugal, Spain, and Italy are the major forces involved in contemporary African colonialism. Practically all African nations use the language imposed by their colonial masters in government and media, despite the existence of native African languages in these countries.

Soon after independence, many African countries formed intelligence services to help nation-build and maintain peace and tranquility (Oriji et al., 2011; Ushie et al., 2019). However, the cold war gave these foundations a weak foundation, which has continued to haunt them to date. These institutions were largely linked to the two opposing camps during the Cold War era. On the one hand, there was the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), an intergovernmental military alliance led by the United States of America (USA), and on the other hand, there was the Warsaw Pact, which was originally part of the Warsaw Treaty of friendship, cooperation, and mutual assistance led by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), generally known as the Soviet Union (Crump, 2015). These Western intelligence agencies assisted several African countries in establishing intelligence institutions and have continued to influence their operations to some extent in recent times. This implies that the nature of African intelligence agencies,

to a great extent, reflected the camp with which they were aligned and the nature and intention of the covert operations they were pursuing.

For example, Ethiopia's modern intelligence agency has its origins in the Communist regimes of the late 1970s and 1980s (University of Glasgow, 2020). The Ethiopian Public Security Organization (PSO), which was established in 1978, was linked to the Soviet Union and its allies, and it received training and other logistical support from the East German State Security Service (STASI) (University of Glasgow, 2020). Its main duties included but were not limited to gathering information from inside and outside the country, counterintelligence actions, surveillance, and direct intervention (University of Glasgow, 2020). Furthermore, after its independence in 1960, the Congolese government under Patrice Lumumba briefly tried to establish links with the West (Iandolo, 2014). However, when it did not work, he turned to the east. As a result, he was assassinated, and a pro-Western government led by Joseph Désire Mobutu took control (Kies, 2015). From there onwards, the Congolese intelligence services, which started as a series of small police units tasked with maintaining order and state security, were highly influenced by the CIA and other western intelligence agencies (Pateman, 1992). Likewise, Malawi, led by the pro-Western government of Kamuzu Banda, was firmly under the control of the CIA (Pateman, 1992). In countries such as Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, and a few others, the Soviet Union and its allies, through the KGB, had a big influence on intelligence services and other related institutions (Besenyó, 2019).

Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, was deposed in a military coup in 1966 while he was abroad. He later felt that the United States played a hand in his downfall, and former CIA intelligence officer John Stockwell (1978) claims in a 1978 book that an official approval for the coup does not exist in the American Central Intelligence Agency papers, but he adds that "the Accra station was nevertheless encouraged by headquarters to maintain contact with dissidents" (cited in Kinni, 2015, p. 82). It was given a large budget and kept in close contact with the plotters as the coup was planned. John Stockwell claims that the CIA became more involved in Ghana and that its operatives were given "unofficial credit" for the final coup (Mwakikagile, 2015). A released United States government document reveals knowledge of a scheme to destabilise the presidency but no official support (Kabwato, 2019). Another released memo issued after the coup refers to Nkrumah's assassination as a "fortuitous windfall." Nkrumah was undermining our interests more than any other black African (Kabwato, 2019).

From 1975 through 1990, the Directorate of Information and Security of Angola was the communist People's Republic of Angola's secret police (John, 2002). Stockwell (1978), the chief of the CIA's covert operations in Angola in 1975, says that the United States security agency opted to fight the communist People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) because it was perceived to be closer to the Soviet Union and instead backed the National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA), despite the fact that they both received aid from communist nations. According to Mr. Stockwell in a film documentary, the CIA then assisted, with the assistance of some members of the Directorate of Information and Security of Angola, in the secret importation of weaponry, including 30,000 rifles, through Kinshasa in neighbouring Zaire, now known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Farah & Braun, 2007). Stockwell also claims that CIA officials prepared fighters for an armed confrontation. A released US government document outlining a conversation between the CIA's director, the secretary of state, and others demonstrates the CIA's backing for the troops battling the MPLA (Blum, 2003). In the

same way, Israel and Romania assisted Holden Roberto's faction in Angola. It is also reported that North Korea and Israel engaged in some collaborative arrangements in Zaire (Pateman, 1992). South Africa's State Security Agency has even been accused of corruption by a judicial commission (Rapanyane, 2021). These accusations represent a complete collapse of corporate governance. Throughout the years, this charge has had a significant impact on the agency's operational performance, national trust, reputation, and international information sharing arrangements (Rapanyane, 2021).

In light of this context, African security and intelligence agencies have continued to face a crisis that jeopardises peace and development. The agencies are tied to citizen oppression and specialise in defending autocrats' interests in their own nations. As a result, African intelligence institutions cannot afford to be out of date and disconnected from civilians. It requires transformation to suit the demands of this era, in which intelligence information is utilised not just to fulfil security goals but is also vital for attaining economic goals. As a result, intelligence services on the continent must adapt their operations and, more crucially, be strategically reformed in order to assist African countries in achieving social and economic growth. In this light, this essay addresses critical challenges concerning African intelligence agencies. It investigates how these vital and distinctive institutions might contribute to the continent's social, economic, and political growth.

### **THE PERPETUATION OF THE NEGATIVE IMAGE OF AFRICAN INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES**

Basically, intelligence agencies in any state aim at defending the state and society, which includes protecting democratically elected leaders who deliver as per their political mandate. Nonetheless, it has been documented by many scholars that African intelligence services have remained tools of regime security (Dehez, 2010). In other words, they have largely limited their responsibility to protecting the ruling regime, regardless of its legitimacy or acceptance. They have defended autocratic leaders who do not work for national interests in many places in Africa. To borrow from Aldrich and Shiraz (2019), most of these agencies are highly fragmented and are led by family members, hence the massive divisions between different security agencies within the country (Osonwa & Ushie, 2009). Foreign intelligence services were hard at work helping their countries gain, just as their African counterparts were hard at work helping leaders amass wealth at the expense of their subjects. As if this were not enough, these important institutions came to be feared after neglecting their role of protecting the population, the state, and its institutions. They changed into vehicles of oppression and all kinds of mistreatment of the local population, especially those who were on the wrong side of the ruling clique. According to Ingrass (2020), when the interference between surveillance, patronage, and politics occurs, the logical outcome is mostly the persecution of political opponents. They have been linked to cases of torture, murder, and extortion against the very people they are supposed to protect (Africa & Kwadjo, 2009). One intelligence chief once said, "Such organs have thus come across as instruments for regime survival rather than for promoting and consolidating democracy and (the) national interests, defined by allegiance to the presidential person and political clientelism" (Africa & Kwadjo, 2009).

This, in turn, has isolated the institutions from a large part of the population and rendered them useless and irrelevant to the very people they were created to serve. The impact of the marginalisation and even "minorization" of certain groups by the political

elites or autocratic regimes makes it harder for citizens to support efforts by security services to maintain peace and stability, as these institutions are considered to be proxies of those regimes rather than national institutions tasked with the role of maintaining peace and stability. In these circumstances, these institutions have become a burden to Africa and therefore deserve our scrutiny. The failure of security intelligence services in Africa has had catastrophic consequences, pushing the continent to the brink of disaster and making social and economic progress on the continent nearly impossible. Chaos in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Somalia, and many other African countries can only be attributed to the failure of intelligence services to identify danger and work towards mitigating factors that are prerequisites to the chaos. Interrogation of the literature shows that Africa has continued to be a place where powerful international actors continue to influence policies through the very intelligence services that protect these countries against undesirable internal and external influence. The concern of this paper is that these acts do not stabilise countries but rather destabilise them. The acts only temporarily help the regime and the president to stay in power, but in the long run, they destabilise the country and lead to chaos and the socioeconomic meltdown of the country and its population. When security services are solely aligned with the regime and ignore the population's interests, it is indeed absurd and dangerous and does not by any means translate into the stability and security of the state, let alone its population (Dehez, 2010). Over-politicization of these institutions has indeed led to instability in many parts of the continent and consequently retarded social and economic development.

Security services' actions in Africa have generated confusion and disgrace, as in the case of former Zaire. Likewise, the regime of Charles Taylor in Liberia used Special Security Services (SSS) to target opponents by torturing or even killing them (Ingriss, 2020). In short, these institutions appeared to be of no use to the local population and its interests.

### **THE UNFULFILLED ROLE OF AFRICAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICES IN STABILIZING ECONOMIES**

The African continent still lags behind other continents in economic prosperity. Reports show that 35 of the 50 poorest countries in the world are in Africa, and even worse, Africa occupies the top ten positions on the list (Global Finance, 2019; Giovetti, 2019). This indicates the enormity of the problem and calls for these strategic institutions, like the intelligence services, to remedy the situation swiftly. As Małeckı (2017, p1) argued, national security is now redefined to put economic security at the centre stage. African countries, among other things, need to realise the importance of having well-processed information from the internal and, most importantly, external environment to reduce poverty in Africa and achieve social and economic prosperity.

African countries must understand that national security is much better guaranteed if economic security is safeguarded. Many institutions can help achieve this objective, the first being the intelligence services. Africa must realise there is always competition for opportunities globally, hence the need to utilise economic intelligence to aid strategic decision-making. Intelligence agencies must gather strategic knowledge to help African nations identify markets and negotiate better deals with multinational companies and other business partners (Cioc & Ursacescu, 2012). If countries like the US and others are using their intelligence services to support commercial firms in their

various activities and particularly in competing for markets around the world (DeConcini, 1994), Africa has no alternative but to follow the same path with the necessary urgency.

### **AFRICAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICES AND POLITICAL STABILITY**

Economic growth and political stability are deeply interconnected (Hussain, 2014). Africa needs to realise that when there is no political stability, it is impossible to attract investment from within and outside. Hence, intelligence services in Africa must strive to bring about peace and stability in their respective countries. Africa is likely the least developed economy of the existing continents, as it is also the most politically unstable continent. It is, for instance, very difficult for its people to work, save, and invest (Hussain, 2014), which are prerequisites for any society's social and economic development. It is observed that many alternative political parties in Africa are weak, disorganized, and do not have any agenda that can be termed "developmental." Even worse, intelligence agencies that should have strengthened the parties greatly contribute to weakening them, irrespective of the fact that ruling parties are deeply fragile and particularistic. This situation does not help the continent in its efforts to promote economic growth that will, in turn, help pull the masses out of extreme poverty. In such a situation, when change suddenly happens, the inexperience and lack of stability and agenda in those parties lead to an unstable political environment that contributes to economic uncertainty.

This underscores the need for African intelligence services to contribute to political stability by devising several mechanisms. First, intelligence agencies should take a prominent role in ensuring that the ruling and opposition parties are stable and well-positioned to safeguard national interests. They should help their countries vet candidates for different political positions, provide information to shape their ideologies, and, in some special circumstances, train them in issues related to the national interest, such as national security. Secondly, intelligence services must ensure that all political parties, both ruling and opposition, work towards achieving national interests despite their different approaches to achieving their different agendas. They should build strong alternative political parties to take advantage of the weaknesses of the ruling party whenever an opportunity arises. Moreover, it is of strategic importance for national intelligence services to ensure that there are alternative and viable opposition parties to rule the country when events call for such a situation. It is dangerous, naive, and even reckless for intelligence agencies to work on the assumption that the status quo will prevail forever. Such negligence has led to political instabilities in many African countries, resulting in an economic meltdown.

The above reasoning should not at any time be interpreted as a push for intelligence services to negatively interfere with the freedom of political parties to operate in a conducive political environment. It should be noted that the suggestion here is to put in place balanced mechanisms that will make political parties vehicles of a stable political system, a prerequisite for social and economic prosperity. Lessons can be learned from some African countries that have well employed their intelligence services to ensure political stability. These include Ghana and Senegal, where the political transition has been peaceful. The same can also be said of countries like Namibia, Botswana, South Africa, and Tanzania, which have some degree of political stability.

### **URGENT NEED FOR REFORMING AFRICAN INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES**

Sections of this paper have demonstrated weaknesses in African intelligence agencies that do more harm than good to the continent. In order to change this bad image of the African intelligence communities, governments need to reorganise them and strengthen their institutional ability to provide security for the state and its population, protect the political order, and be vehicles to help African countries transform into essential players in the global arena. Such transformations are only possible if strategic reorganisation is made or Security Sector Reforms (SSR) are embraced to accommodate the new realities on the African continent and, indeed, in the globalised world. SSR must transform intelligence services in four broad areas, namely, the political, economic, social, and institutional dimensions (Brzoska, 2000; Wulf, 2000; and Williams, 2005, cit. in Buchere & Jonyo, 2011; Ushie & Jonah, 2022). The transformative processes will broadly enable intelligence agencies to be properly governed, staffed, and funded. This will develop an institutional ability to help Africa address a multitude of threats that were identified earlier, such as mass poverty, environmental degradation, food and water shortages, potential epidemics and pandemics, cyber-attacks, economic sabotage, and many other threats that pose great danger to the population and the state.

It is imperative for “SSR to address the twin challenges posed by security services and security sector governance by transforming military forces to defend their countries against foreign foes and enemies, while at the same time trying to institutionalise civilian oversight and parliamentary control” (Dehez, 2010). The transformations advocated by SSR must enable these institutions to acquire the ability to discharge their duties with the highest level of professionalism, integrity, and discipline. SSR must also transform intelligence agencies into institutions that employ the best brains in their countries in all fields and reward them accordingly. This will provide stability and enable these institutions to contribute strategically to critical sectors of these countries. The strategic reorganisation must take into consideration the new realities of our time. It accepts new paradigms that inform national and international security issues in ways other than the traditional ones. At the core of our discussion is the concept of human security, which shifts the focus of the state as the referent object from humans to individuals (Gazizullin, 2016). The realisation is that people and individuals have a lot at stake when it comes to issues of national security, and that national security is an extension of an individual’s security to that of the community, hence the importance of human-centric approaches to national and international security (Kerr, 2003).

Reorganization, which may take the form of Security Sector Reforms (SSR), must now recognise the needs of the citizens, who are both beneficiaries and facilitators of a stable society. With this approach, insecurity can be addressed by focusing on nontraditional threats such as mass poverty, economic shocks, poor governance, weak institutions, environmental degradation (Buchere & Jonyo, 2011), and health (the potential for pandemics like Corona) without ignoring traditional threats. Other challenges include climate change, which is linked to a shortage of food, water (or an excess of it), and other necessities; the dangers posed by terrorism of all kinds and in all parts of the world; the dangers posed by cyber wars from nation-states and nonstate actors; the challenges of managing the ever-expanding influence of social media and issues related to it, such as misinformation and “fake news”; and a variety of others, such as international drug trafficking.



Reforms must ensure the recruitment, training, and remuneration of intelligence officials are all aligned with the main goal of securing the economic security of the country. As Maecki (2017) put it, Africa must put up a system to help with “identification, search, assessment, production, and distribution of information on financial, economic, and corporate matters, which are particularly important for public institutions and companies.” Such a system will only work when the intelligence services on the continent are reformed to meet the conditions that would allow them to provide processed information suitable to inform the economic objectives of the country and consequently contribute to the social and economic development of African countries.

This will only be possible if decisions are made to modify the tasks, structure, and function of these public institutions responsible for national security, including but not limited to diplomatic services and intelligence agencies (Maecki 2017). African countries need and must reform their intelligence services for them to perform their role of collecting, processing, analyzing, and disseminating information on threats to the state and its population (Lokaj & Sadiku, 2015). This exercise must play an important role in improving the performance of the state and, particularly, the lives of the people. Contrary to what is seen in many African countries, reforms in this sector must go beyond the protection of regimes and focus more on the prosperity of the nation as a whole. To achieve that, reforms in the sector will inform policy objectives aimed at taking advantage of opportunities within and outside those specific countries. For example, many African countries are well endowed with natural resources. It is the duty of different intelligence services to collect and analyse information about this particular industry to help governments on the continent negotiate better deals with multinational companies and other partners in the extractive sector.

At the state level, reformed intelligence agencies must have well-trained individuals in all areas of expertise. Efforts must be made to get the best minds to accept positions in these institutions. Recruited individuals must have the right skills and mental ability to handle complex operations and remain discrete (Ushie & Imbua, 2006). Governments in Africa have to make sure that these institutions operate professionally, and this will only be possible if SSR is done to enable the recruitment process to be as objective as possible. The tendency to employ relatives with questionable credibility by those in power in collaboration with superiors in those agencies has made these institutions dysfunctional when confronted with complex national security issues. Employment of family members creates divisions and makes them highly fragmented (Aldrich & Shiraz, 2019) and consequently less equipped to deal with all kinds of threats, domestic or external, let alone provide information that will help inform economic policy objectives; this must change quickly. While strengthening these institutions must be an exercise for individual countries, it should also fully involve regional bodies.

From the above, it follows that challenges at the regional level cannot be addressed without strengthening the ability of the intelligence services of member states that form different regional blocks. These include the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), among others. Collaboration and cooperation among the intelligence agencies of countries in these bodies can help reduce insecurity in places like Northern Nigeria (Ushie et al., 2022), the Central African Republic (CAR), South Sudan, and many others in Africa. Efforts to reduce insecurity, coupled with collaboration in protecting rivers, lakes, and

oceans in Africa, have the potential to promote the blue/marine economy and consequently contribute to ending extreme poverty and increasing the income and welfare of the poor in a sustainable way (World Bank, 2018). It is this collaboration that has to take advantage of the advanced training and technology that exist globally to improve the gathering of strategic information, analyse the same, and provide a quality end product in the form of information to be disseminated to the relevant authorities for the ultimate goal of making effective policies that will help in taking advantage of the economic opportunities that exist globally.

### **THE NEED FOR THE OVERSIGHT OF AFRICAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICES**

Following our discussion above, there is no denying that intelligence services have an important role to play in Africa's social and economic development. However, as it has been pointed out by many other scholars (Kwadjo, 2009; Aldrich & Shiraz, 2019), there is a lot to be done to improve the performance of these institutions on the continent. Examples of misuse of their mandate have been reported in different parts of Africa. The regimes of President Hissène Habre of Chad, that of Mengistu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia (Pateman, 1992), and most recently that of the ousted president of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir, all used intelligence agencies to commit all kinds of crimes against humanity. These and other shortcomings call for the need to reform intelligence agencies on the continent so that they are positioned to contribute strategically to the social and economic development of the continent.

It has been observed that issues of accountability and oversight are being overlooked under the guise of secrecy and national security. It is not surprising that many intelligence agencies have no legal existence whatsoever (Kwadjo, 2009). It should be noted that I am not suggesting that intelligence agencies should not operate in such a manner that important information, their staff, and their operations are concealed. I am suggesting that, despite their secretive nature, ways should be found to make members of the public and other government branches hold them constructively accountable. If governments of advanced democracies like the US are faced with demands to make more efforts to improve oversight of intelligence agencies by Congress (The Hill, 2017), then Africa has to take this issue even more seriously as oversight of these institutions is, at best, superficial. Oversight must benefit the executive, intelligence agencies, and people (through the parliament). Moreover, oversight of intelligence agencies will ensure that these agencies observe the rule of law.

Additionally, oversight will enable members of the public to insert themselves in the value chain by discussing various issues, including what is a threat to security and how to address the threats, and will be able to hold them accountable to a reasonable extent (Africa & Kwadjo, 2009). It is also argued that “establishing mechanisms of regulation and accountability of intelligence services would be in the interests of both intelligence services—which would benefit from institutional legitimacy—and society more broadly, which would have dependable and non-partisan professional services to entrust their national security” (Kwadjo, 2009).

To achieve that, SSR must focus on enhancing the ability of different stakeholders to understand the functions of intelligence services and engage constructively without jeopardising national security. Oversight must carefully balance the need for these agencies to be accountable to the people through their elected representatives (Mallya, 2017) while maintaining the required independence and discretion to protect national

interests. Such a delicate balancing is only possible with SSR, which focuses on providing education to various stakeholders, particularly intelligence officers, the top leadership of intelligence, members of parliament, especially the intelligence oversight committee, and, in some circumstances, the general public (Buchere & Jonyo, 2011).

Ideally, reforms and oversight would institute a system that would make intelligence services accountable to the executive and parliament while at the same time isolating these institutions from abuse by political authorities or from within the institutions themselves. The goal of a functional system of democratic oversight is, accordingly, to provide enough oversight to ensure that intelligence is firmly under executive control while at the same time isolating intelligence from abuse by political authorities or from within the institution itself (Gill, 1994).

Further, reforms and oversight must ensure procedures exist that put legal limits on intelligence activities to ensure they serve the public interest within the rule of law (Gill, 1994). Finally, reforms and oversight will only work if intelligence officials are properly recruited, given a clear mandate to work with goals and objectives to achieve, and, importantly, their work is recognised by, among other things, remunerating them accordingly.

## CONCLUSION

Africa needs to modernise its institutions to achieve socioeconomic development. The need to modernise and reform intelligence agencies is even more important given their role and the continent's multitude of challenges. If these institutions are reformed and properly monitored, they will potentially contribute to the social and economic development of the continent. Their contributions can range from reducing crime to improving political stability. This will help various countries in Africa compete for opportunities in the international arena compared to now. By harnessing these institutions' potential, Africa will have a greater chance of making progress and consequently achieving social and economic development for its people. This should be underscored by policymakers too.

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