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## BOOK REVIEW

**Strategic Security Issues in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Comprehensive Annotated Bibliography.**  
Michael J. Siler. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004. 727 pp.

Michael Siler, an associate professor of Political Science at California State University-Los Angeles, has produced a massive bibliography of African strategic studies literature. Although this work will be a valuable resource and is comprehensive to a fault, its “mile wide and inch-deep” coverage may leave many readers wishing Siler had given more analysis even at the cost of reduced coverage.

This 727-page bibliography identifies books, journal and newspaper articles, governmental and NGO studies, dissertations, and theses that cover a wide range of continental, regional, and country-specific issues. After a lengthy introduction, Siler begins with a giant 194-page first chapter that serves as a broad survey of Africa strategic studies literature, with separate sections focused on continent-wide issues; American national security issues; weapons trafficking, diamonds, and commodities trading; and the role of private security firms and mercenaries. The next five chapters each cover a different region: Great Lakes/Central Africa, Southern Africa, West Africa, Northeast Africa/Horn of Africa, and Eastern Africa. Here Siler covers every African country from Angola to Zimbabwe. About sixty percent of the sources are journal articles, twenty percent are books, fifteen percent are government and NGO studies, and five percent are newspaper articles. Siler concludes with a final chapter covering dissertations, theses, dictionaries, and other bibliographies.

For those looking for literature on a wide variety of strategic studies subjects, this book will be a useful resource. Siler identifies dozens of works on the many African civil wars since the colonial era, the cold war alignment or non-alignment of the various states, the security issues raised by economic troubles throughout the continent, health concerns (especially the HIV/AIDS pandemic), foreign policy debates, civil-military relations, regional security efforts, and the impact of legal and illegal arms trading, ethnic and religious tensions, dictatorships, and corruption. Unique concerns are covered as well, including such issues as Nigeria's flirtation with a nuclear weapons program in the 1980s. Of course, neither the regions nor the individual countries are covered evenly. The chapters on Southern Africa and Western Africa—with extensive coverage of South Africa, Angola, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ghana, and Liberia—are substantially larger than the others. But Siler has included sections even on a number of other states that, by his own admission, have “no strategic security literature at all” (pp xxv-xlix).

In fact, in the introduction Siler claims that the following states have no strategic security literature: Burundi, Central African Republic, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Togo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Comoro Islands, Kenya, Mauritius, Seychelles, Uganda, and Zanzibar. Despite this admission, Siler gives each of these states its own section. More surprisingly, some of these sections are pages long, as articles on seemingly unrelated topics are included. In other instances, the inclusion of articles on recent or on-going civil wars (Somalia), internal civil-military relations (Togo), the impact of military rule (Ethiopia), and international disputes (Swaziland), make the reader wonder what the author meant when he claimed these states have no strategic literature.

For a bibliography on strategic security issues, these are significant (although not fatal) shortcomings. Throughout the volume, Siler includes numerous entries whose connections to the strategic security debate are unclear at best, and in some cases hard to even fathom. For example, he includes an article on African librarians and information managers (p. 3), books on African contributions to Western religion and culture (pp. 19-20), and case studies in gender relationships (p. 69). It is possible that these pieces have some connection to a broader strategic security debate, but Siler's annotations fail to make the connection. This lack of analysis represents the other major room for improvement in this book.

In a bibliography of this size, it is probably not fair to expect more than a sentence or two on each entry, but those sentences should tell us something about the thesis or conclusion of the piece referenced. However, in most instances, Siler merely states what the article is about, and often in no more detail than the title of the entry. For example, Siler's description of David Kilroy's dissertation, entitled "Extending the American Sphere to West Africa: Dollar Diplomacy in Liberia, 1908-1926," merely adds that Kilroy "examines the U.S. use of dollar diplomacy in Liberia from 1901-1926" (p. 672). Occasionally, Siler gives us the significance or the conclusion of a given entry, but those are the exceptions. Siler includes useful lists of abbreviations and journals, as well as an index, but no map is present.

Despite these shortcomings, Siler has produced a unique and impressively comprehensive resource for those interested in educating themselves on the strategic studies literature on Africa as a whole, as well as on its different regions and states. While readers may have to wade through a lot of entries that seem to have little connection to the strategic studies debates, and will have to read the books and articles themselves to learn about those authors' basic conclusions, they can be thankful to Siler for compiling an impressive list of references that touch on a wide range of African topics.

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