

Jonathan Fisher, *East Africa After Liberation: Conflict, Security and the State since the 1980s*. Cambridge University Press, 2020. 287 pp., 8 maps, notes, Bibliography, index. \$45.00 Paperback. ISBN: 978-1-108-71431-0

Crises span across Africa, aiming to establish a postcolonial political order through revolutionary movements (1). In these countries, liberation from colonial rule failed due to a mix of one-party dictatorships, military coups, and independence struggles. Studying Africa during this period of liberation helps historians understand how personal, identitarian, ideological, and sociological legacies shaped the desires of political elites for liberation (5).

Enter Jonathan Fisher's *East Africa After Liberation: Conflict, Security, and the State since the 1980s*. This well-structured work describes the revolutionary regimes that reshaped East African politics. Fisher uses a variety of sources, including interviews, newspapers, online media, manuscripts, and other materials, to tell the untold story of these liberation movements. He explains that this book combines the struggles of these individuals with the desire to promote patronage across Africa and to reshape the political order in the image of the people. Specifically, Fisher offers a grounded analysis of the perspectives and approaches of East African liberation regimes and politico-military groups aiming to improve the nation.

Jonathan Fisher is a writer focused on African liberation. He examines the connection between global security and political struggles in post-colonial Africa. Over the years, his research has centered on peacekeeping efforts in Africa and on developing effective political communication across the continent. These ideas, which he explores in his books, continue to inform his studies as he investigates the foundations of democracy and the challenges faced by Africans seeking to reshape their political landscapes.

In *East Africa After Liberation*, Fisher examines how "post-liberation governing elites of Eritrea, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Uganda approached and dealt with challenges of moving from domestic rebellion to regional statecraft" (3). Fisher emphasizes the importance of exposing and examining the underlying challenges faced by African post-liberation states as they work to restructure and transform their political power. He highlights the importance of understanding African international relations and its role in state-building and policy development (6).

In the introduction, Fisher presents his argument while reviewing the structure of the book. He discusses the background information for each chapter, ultimately connecting each chapter's foundation to the book's main argument. Throughout the introduction, Fisher provides a clear overview of the argument. He demonstrates how political agendas and security were not always prioritized over the well-being of the people of East Africa after the European regions gained independence. Specifically, those who were deeply concerned about the long-term effects of colonialism.

Chapters one and two introduce the four movements, focusing on their key ideologies. Each movement's history and founding are examined through their struggle for power. These four movements include the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the Natural Resource Management (NRM), and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) (71). These chapters also "delineate the factors and characteristics which render these four movements a unique and distinct collective (30)."

Chapters three and four explore how former rebel movements shift toward greater cooperation and the increasing tensions within East African governments from 1986 to 2000. In chapter three, Fisher discusses how Uganda, Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Eritrea are moving their insurgents toward diplomacy, while also trying to share revolutionary ideas to build stronger trust among the people, grounded in national interests (156). These governments initially formed alliances to create a new regional political system, but differences and rivalries among nations led to issues related to their individual priorities. Chapter four, however, will show how these tensions unfolded and resulted in external conflicts in places like the Congo and Sudan. Overall, this section highlights how

early efforts at cooperative liberation among these nations and movements eventually gave way to conflict, exposing the challenges that arise when pursuing political revolution in regions where state interests and issues differ.

Chapters five to six examine the collapse of movement alliances and emphasize regional cooperation and the desire to eliminate internal political struggles. In chapter five, Fisher explains how these four movements aimed to collaborate but were divided by mistrust and conflicting national interests (231). This marked the end of shared visions of liberation and the rise of individual regimes. Chapter six focuses specifically on how these individual movements responded to their leaders' reactions to comments about instability in their nations and a desire for political change. Overall, part 3 highlights that broken external alliances lead to internal crises but also facilitate nations developing their own power to challenge authoritarian governments.

Fisher's final section of the book takes a reflective approach to examining the scope and features of these movements in transforming Africa after independence (33). As a conclusion, it highlights the importance and influence of all four movements in shaping a political framework in East Africa. It also prompts readers to question when a government or group claiming to be liberated truly represents a liberated system (287). Fisher's study also advocates for the older members of East African communities, who faced frontline assaults by authorities while striving to build a movement aimed at eliminating factionalism and securing more patronage and rights for the people.

The book's main strength is Fisher's ability to tell this overlooked story of liberation through interviews, newspapers, online media, manuscripts, and other sources. If *East Africa After Liberation* has any weakness, it's that the book could benefit from a more focused look at micro-communications struggling for liberation in the post-colonial era and the long-term effects they face as they build their own political powers. Overall, Fisher's work is an accessible study that will appeal to all African historians and anyone interested in the development of political systems after European colonial rule. Additionally, Fisher's study opens the door for more historians and researchers of African history to focus more on the conflict and security challenges faced by countries during their sections of liberation and the post-colonial development of political power.

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