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# Advancing Military Professionalism in Africa

by Émile Ouédraogo



**AFRICA CENTER**  
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by Émile Ouédraogo

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## Executive Summary

Vivid examples of weak military professionalism in Africa are regularly evident in news accounts of instability on the continent. Militaries collapsing in the face of attacks by irregular forces, coups, mutinies, looting, human rights abuses against civilian populations, corruption, and engagement in illicit trafficking activities are widespread. This pattern persists decades after the end of colonialism, despite billions of dollars of security sector assistance and longstanding rhetoric on the need to strengthen civil-military relations on the continent. The costs for not having established strong professional militaries are high: persistent instability, chronic poverty, deterred investment, and stunted democratization.

The reasons for the ongoing inability to establish effective, respected militaries in so many African countries are complex but largely stem from political incentives. African militaries created in the colonial era were intended to protect the government *from* rather than *for* citizens. To do this, ethnic minorities were often disproportionately recruited into the militaries as a check on majority groups. These patterns persisted in the post-colonial period as military leaders from minority groups had strong incentives to resist a transition to democracy and majority rule. Lacking systematic checks and balances, the interweaving of political, military, and economic interests has endured and, in some cases, intensified in the decades since the end of colonialism. Control of the military has been seen as the vehicle to power and wealth in Africa. Corruption has flourished. This has fostered a politicization of the military and ongoing competition and collusion among politicians and security leaders seeking to gain the upper hand. In addition to systematically weakening the capacity of the military, these patterns have bred deep fear and distrust of the security sector by the general population, further fueling instability and limiting popular support in combating insurgencies.

Breaking this spiral of vested interests that undermines efforts to build military professionalism in Africa will require more than capacity building. Rather, sustained initiatives are needed to address the fundamental political disincentives to reform and establish constructive civil-military relations. Business as usual will not suffice. National security reviews that include the general public are required to redefine the mandate of Africa's militaries in an era when many threats are internally based. Reorganizing security force structures to better match identified threats and integrating missions into a comprehensive and coherent defense policy will enhance the relevance, operational capacity, and prestige of Africa's militaries.

As part of this process, the responsibilities of the nation's armed forces to its citizens must be specified. A clear code of conduct, supported by a sustained effort to assimilate ethical values across the force, is needed to establish and reinforce norms of constitutionalism, integrity, service, and respect for human rights. To reinforce this, military ombudsmen, outside the chain of command, should be established and strengthened to ensure there is accountability for violations of military conduct. Likewise, stronger sanctions are needed for military and political leaders engaged in the politicization of the security forces. In other words, efforts to strengthen military professionalism must address political as well as military leaders.

More robust internal and external oversight mechanisms of the military are also needed to ensure funding is being appropriately expended in the interests of national security. Of particular priority is the need for more hands-on strategic oversight of the security sector by the responsible legislative bodies. African legislators must more actively debate the purpose, goals, policies, budget, spending, promotion practices, and performance of the military. Nonstate actors, primarily civil society and the media, also have an important oversight function by raising awareness of the role of the military among the general public and drawing attention to areas of reform.



Military professionalism is consistent with African values. This is clearly visible in select African countries where the ties between politics and the security sector have been broken and the military is a respected institution and welcomed as a defender of the people. It is the aspiration of nearly all African citizens that these attributes become the norm throughout the continent. Breaking the spiral of instability, poverty, and misgovernance depends on it.

## **A Litany of Challenges for African Militaries**

The 2012 military coup d'état in Mali plunged the country and the West African region into a political and military crisis. It took just a handful of noncommissioned officers and other enlisted men to topple Mali's elected president and derail 21 years of democratization and efforts to build professional military institutions. In addition to triggering a constitutional crisis, the seizure of the government by the military put at risk the territorial integrity of the Malian state, provided an inroad for radical Islamists across the region, and required the military intervention of French and West African forces to stabilize the situation. The economic costs and loss of private investment to Mali will be felt for years to come.

Unfortunately, a persistent lack of military professionalism has been a recurring theme across the continent. In some cases, the military directly interrupts the democratic process. Since independence, for example, no democratically elected leader of the former Portuguese colony Guinea-Bissau has ever completed a term in office. The People's Revolutionary Armed Forces of Guinea-Bissau, which is widely viewed as corrupt and heavily involved in the illicit drug trade,<sup>1</sup> has a history of installing and ousting governments that threaten the military leadership's interests, including a coup in 2012 on the eve of the second round of presidential elections. Revealingly, the militaries of both Mali and Guinea-Bissau asserted political power

just prior to presidential elections when legitimately elected leaders would be empowered vis-à-vis the military.

Other times, weak military professionalism is evidenced by repeated mutinies. The largest and most serious mutiny on the African continent over the last decade occurred in Burkina Faso. Turmoil caused by noncommissioned officers and other enlisted men lasted throughout the first half of 2011. The resulting pillaging, rapes, and other serious human rights violations created unprecedented fear and insecurity among the civilian population whom the armed forces were supposed to defend and protect. Madagascar was shaken by numerous military mutinies when Andry Rajoelina, the former mayor of the capital Antananarivo, took power from a democratically elected government in 2009 with strong military support. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, numerous military defections and mutinies put considerable strain on the process of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration.

Other examples of breakdowns in military professionalism in Africa abound. Allegations of human rights abuses against civilians by the Nigerian military in the course of their deadly battle with the Islamist fundamentalist group Boko Haram suggest weak command and control capabilities.<sup>2</sup> They also undermine the broader objective of stabilizing Nigeria's northern region. The alleged complicity of the Ugandan People's Defence Forces in wildlife trafficking reflects a lack of discipline in the face of economic opportunism.<sup>3</sup> Allegations that the Kenyan Defence Forces engaged in massive looting of the Westgate Mall in Nairobi following the shocking terrorist attack by al Shabaab that left more than 60 dead in 2013 provide further cause for reflection about the state of military professionalism in Africa.<sup>4</sup>

To be sure, certain African countries have made laudable efforts to improve the professionalism of their militaries. However, half a century after most African states gained independence, African societies need to reassess how they can establish professional armed

forces, not only to face their security challenges but also to help build and consolidate their nascent democracies and foster development. By examining the gap between aspiration and reality, this paper aims to delve into the obstacles of enhancing professionalism in African militaries.

## **Principles of Military Professionalism**

Military professionalism is commonly grounded in several overriding principles: the subordination of the military to democratic civilian authority, allegiance to the state and a commitment to political neutrality, and an ethical institutional culture. These principles are enshrined in values that distinguish the actions of a professional soldier such as discipline, integrity, honor, commitment, service, sacrifice, and duty. Such values thrive in an organization with a purposeful mission, clear lines of authority, accountability, and protocol. Despite the disappointing track record, these same principles and values of professionalism resonate deeply with African military leaders and ordinary citizens alike. The problem has been that in too many African countries the adaptation and implementation of these concepts have been disrupted.

### **Democratic Sovereign Authority**

A democratic political culture is typically the foundation of professional militaries. In Samuel E. Finer's classic *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics*, the level of democratic political culture in a country is determined by the extent to which there exists broad approval within society for the procedures of succession of political power and a recognition that citizens represent the ultimate sovereign authority.<sup>5</sup> Democratic processes also need to be protected by state institutions, such as the armed forces. The

notion of military professionalism in democratic states, therefore, must embody basic values such as acceptance of the legitimacy of democratic institutions, nonpartisanship in the political process, and respect for and defense of individuals' human rights. In a strong democratic political culture, legitimately elected civilian authorities are fully responsible for managing public and political affairs. The armed forces implement the defense and security policy developed by civilian authorities.

A majority of African states have duly adopted these democratic values and basic principles of military professionalism in their various constitutions and military doctrines. They are shared and accepted by the majority of African countries that have transitioned or are in the process of transitioning to a democracy. Moreover, many military leaders have been exposed to these values and principles through trainings in Western military academies and staff colleges. It is important, too, to note that these values are rooted in African culture. Protection of the kingdom, submission to the king, loyalty, and integrity vis-à-vis the community were core values of African ancestral warriors. It was only during the colonial and neo-colonial eras that this civil-military relationship foundered and these values eroded. The newly created African states set up armies to symbolize their nations' independence, but these militaries essentially provided security just to the new regimes. Since then, we have witnessed an ongoing struggle to recapture the historical values of military professionalism.

### **Allegiance**

Building professional militaries is dependent upon establishing a clear and balanced allegiance to the state and respect for civil society and not interfering in the oftentimes robust political discussion between the two. Democratization is a turbulent process, one that can

be exploited by certain actors to create temporary domestic instability. Without a military's steadfast support for neutrality and democratic sovereign authority, the process of democratic self-correction and consolidation will be difficult.<sup>6</sup>

One African military that has adhered to this principle is the Senegalese Armed Forces. Since independence, Senegal has never experienced a coup d'état. The Senegalese democratic culture has been periodically tested by political tensions, but the military has not challenged the constitutional order. Having passed these tests, Senegal's democratic culture has grown stronger over the years.

In addition to Senegal, Botswana, Cabo Verde, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia, and a few others are part of a small group of African countries whose governments have never been toppled by a military coup.<sup>7</sup>

Countries that have experienced a coup d'état pay a steep and long-term price for their militaries' misplaced and sometimes cyclical interference in political discourse. Once the precedent of a coup has been established, the probability of subsequent coups rises dramatically. In fact, while 65 percent of Sub-Saharan countries have experienced a coup, 42 percent have experienced multiple coups.<sup>8</sup> Most African coups were directed against an existing military regime that itself had come to power through a coup. Between 1960 and 2012, 9 of the attempted coups in Sudan were against military regimes as were 7 of the 10 in Ghana during the same time period. Once in place, such precedents become a burden that is difficult to throw off and have contributed to the collapse or destabilization of some states. Reflecting a degree of progress, while the threat of coups remains a real concern in Africa, the frequency of successful coups has diminished considerably (and has been concentrated in West and Central Africa) since the mid-2000s compared to previous decades (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Number and Type of Military Coups in African Countries, 1960-2012**

Year	Successful	Failed/Attempt
1960	1 (DRC)	1 (Ethiopia)
1961		1 (Somalia)
1962		1 (Senegal)
1963	3 (Togo, Congo, Benin)	1 (DRC)
1964		4 (Ghana, Tanzania, Gabon, DRC)
1965	5 (Benin, Algeria, DRC, Benin, Benin)	1 (Burundi)
1966	8 (CAR, Nigeria, Uganda, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Nigeria, Burundi)	2 (Togo, Sudan)
1967	3 (Togo, Sierra Leone, Benin)	1 (Ghana)
1968	3 (Sierra Leone, Congo, Mali)	
1969	4 (Libya, Sudan, Somalia, Benin)	
1970		3 (Congo, Togo, Guinea)
1971	1 (Uganda)	4 (Sierra Leone, Uganda, Sudan, Chad)
1972	2 (Ghana, Madagascar, Benin)	2 (Congo, Benin)
1973	2 (Swaziland, Rwanda)	1 (Côte d'Ivoire)
1974	3 (Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Ethiopia)	5 (Uganda, Uganda, Angola, CAR, Madagascar)
1975	2 (Chad, Nigeria)	3 (Benin, Sudan, Mozambique)
1976	1 (Burundi)	6 (CAR, Nigeria, Niger, Uganda, Mali, Sudan)
1977	1 (Seychelles)	6 (Benin, Sudan, Congo, Chad, Angola, Uganda)
1978	3 (Comoros, Ghana, Mauritania)	3 (Mali, Somalia, Sudan)
1979	3 (Ghana, Equatorial Guinea, CAR)	2 (Chad, Ghana)
1980	5 (Mauritania, Liberia, Uganda, Guinea-Bissau, Burkina Faso)	1 (Zambia)
1981	2 (CAR, Ghana)	4 (Mauritania, Equatorial Guinea, Liberia, Ghana)
1982	1 (Burkina Faso)	5 (Mauritania, CAR, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Ghana)
1983	2 (Burkina Faso, Nigeria)	5 (Equatorial Guinea, Liberia, Ghana, Cameroon, Niger)

Year	Successful	Failed/Attempt
1984	2 (Guinea, Mauritania)	2 (Ghana, Cameroon)
1985	3 (Sudan, Uganda, Nigeria)	3 (Liberia, Guinea, Liberia)
1986	1 (Lesotho)	1 (Equatorial Guinea)
1987	2 (Burundi, Burkina Faso)	2 (Sierra Leone, Comoros)
1988		1 (Uganda)
1989	2 (Sudan, Comoros)	1 (Ethiopia)
1990	1 (Chad)	2 (Nigeria, Zambia)
1991	2 (Mali, Lesotho)	4 (Djibouti, Togo, Chad, Togo)
1992	2 (Sierra Leone, Algeria)	3 (Burundi, Benin, Comoros)
1993	1 (Nigeria)	2 (Guinea-Bissau, Burundi)
1994	1 (The Gambia)	2 (Burundi, Liberia)
1995		3 (São Tomé & Príncipe, Comoros, Sierra Leone)
1996	3 (Sierra Leone, Niger, Burundi)	3 (Guinea, CAR, Sierra Leone)
1997	1 (Sierra Leone)	1 (Zambia)
1998		1 (Guinea-Bissau)
1999	3 (Niger, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire)	
2000		3 (Comoros, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire)
2001	1 (DRC)	5 (Côte d'Ivoire, Burundi, CAR, Burundi, Comoros)
2002	1 (Côte d'Ivoire)	
2003	3 (CAR, São Tomé & Príncipe, Guinea-Bissau)	1 (Mauritania)
2004		4 (DRC, Chad, DRC, Equatorial Guinea)
2005	1 (Mauritania)	
2006	1 (Chad)	2 (Madagascar, Côte d'Ivoire)
2007		
2008	2 (Mauritania, Guinea)	
2009		1 (Madagascar)
2010	1 (Niger)	2 (Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar)
2011		3 (DRC, Niger, Guinea-Bissau)
2012	2 (Mali, Guinea-Bissau)	

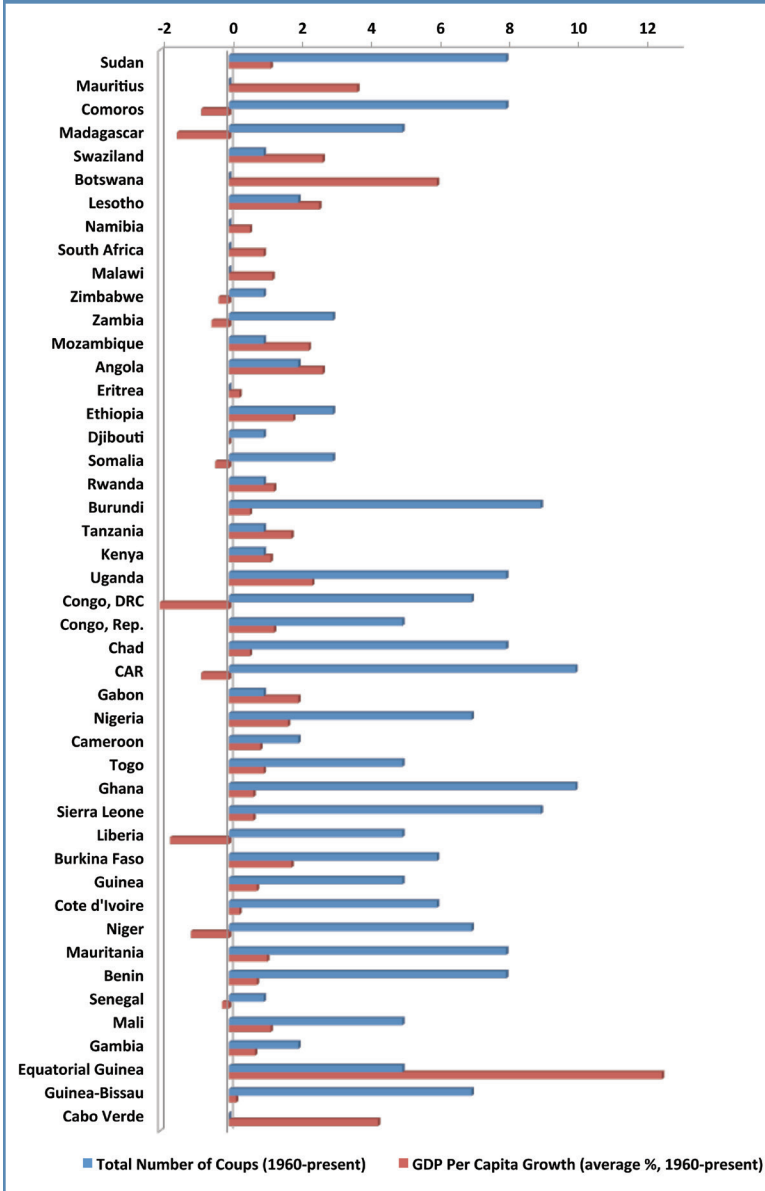
Source: Barka and Ncube, September 2012.<sup>9</sup>

Factors such as political and economic weakness, corruption, and a lack of institutionalized democratic structures create openings for military forces to justify overthrowing political leaders. Unsurprisingly, Sub-Saharan countries with low per capita gross domestic product (GDP) growth since independence have experienced more military coups than countries with higher per capita GDP growth rates.<sup>10</sup> Yet, with very few exceptions, military coup leaders fail to restore stability and hand power back to civilians. Unfortunately, military-led governance is likely to be ruinous for a country's economy. Thus, the vicious cycle is perpetuated. Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, and Nigeria have all seen their real GDP shrink more than 4.5 percent following military coups.<sup>11</sup> Figure 1 highlights the negative correlation between multiple coups and a country's long-term per capita GDP growth. Repeated coups have thrown some African countries, such as Burundi, the Central African Republic, Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Guinea-Bissau, into prolonged periods of economic contraction. Apparent exceptions like Equatorial Guinea, in fact, reflect natural resource-driven growth that has not translated into improved living conditions for the general population. Instability deters investment and development. In contrast, non-resource-rich states that have realized the highest levels of sustained growth are almost uniformly those with few or no coups.

Samuel Huntington argued that military interference in governmental affairs was more a political than a military problem, an observation that remains particularly relevant for most African countries.<sup>13</sup> In the absence of well-established rules and strong institutions regulating political processes, labor unions, students, clergy, lobbies, and the military all engage in political competition for the control of state power. This characterized the post-independence political environment in many African countries. Given their size and inherent influence, militaries in Africa thus became major players on the political scene — and held onto this privilege.



**Figure 1. GDP per Capita Growth and Number of Military Coups (Successful and Attempted) in Selected Sub-Saharan African Countries, 1960-2012**



Source: Barka and Ncube, September 2012.<sup>12</sup>

With the emergence of alliances between top military, political, and economic leaders (including, at times, foreign partners) around shared financial interests, militaries' intrusion into the economic sphere also became more diffuse and complex. In Angola, for example, members of the military participate in contract negotiations with foreign companies, sit on corporate boards, and are majority shareholders of telecom companies.<sup>14</sup> The various military administrations that governed Nigeria also entangled themselves in the economic sphere. Appointments of military officers to company boards of directors and to top political posts, such as state governors, made these individuals immensely rich and politically powerful. Even in retirement, many of these officers remain powerful actors in Nigerian politics.

In 1999, when the Nigerian people elected the democratic government of Olusegun Obasanjo, a retired general, they ended 16 years of military rule. The new government understood what years of military involvement in commercial enterprise had done to its reputation and effectiveness. The government quickly swept many officers into retirement, revoked oil licenses, and reclaimed plots of land suspected to have been illegitimately allocated to senior military officers.<sup>15</sup> Such efforts to improve security sector governance in Nigeria are ongoing.

The subversion of the profession of arms for financial enrichment distorts the incentives for public service required of an effective, professional military. It simultaneously undermines a military's commitment to protect the country and its citizens. Plato noted some 2,400 years ago that the meddling of soldiers into other professions will "bring the city to ruin."<sup>16</sup>

## Egypt's Complex Civil-Military Relations

"Egypt's second republic will only come to life when the officers' republic ceases to exist."<sup>17</sup> This somber warning reflects decades of complicated civil-military relations in Egypt. Egypt became a nominal republic in 1952 when the military deposed King Farouk. The country's first president, Gamal Abdel Nasser, was a former military officer. So were successive leaders, Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak, amassing 59 years of de facto military governance. The military was effectively the power behind the power in Egypt, intimately involved in policymaking and maintaining the status of the incumbent. The military took over state-owned enterprises,<sup>18</sup> controlling many economic ventures—from running daycare centers and beach resorts to managing gas stations. And it reported none of this income to the government.<sup>19</sup>

The events of the Arab Spring in 2011 precipitated a break in this pattern. The massive scale of the protests led the military to conclude that stability of the state was threatened, and it orchestrated the arrest and deposal of Hosni Mubarak in February of that year. The military earned widespread plaudits from Egyptians and the international community during this time for the restraint it demonstrated in not responding with violence against the largely peaceful demonstrations. The military effectively took control of the government at that point, ruling under the auspices of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF).

Facing a spiraling economy and numerous domestic and international pressures for change, the SCAF organized a hasty process for drafting a new constitution and a timetable for parliamentary and presidential elections. Parliamentary elections were held in late 2011 with the Peace and Justice party, representing the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood, emerging as the dominant political actor.

Eager to protect the military's many political and economic privileges from a new head of state, the SCAF issued a supplemental constitutional declaration just days before presidential elections in June 2012. In it, SCAF assumed control over all military affairs and gave itself a significant role in the committee charged with drafting the new constitution.

After Mohamed Morsi became Egypt's first democratically elected leader, he purged the generals who had issued the constitutional addendum, but he was unable to roll back the powers and privileges the SCAF had bestowed upon itself. The military and the new civilian leaders appeared to have reached an uneasy governing arrangement with the military retreating from a public governance role and even acceding to the replacement of top generals by President Morsi.

The constitution that subsequently passed through referendum in December 2012 made the military's autonomy official. It required that the minister of defense be a

military officer. Parliament did not have oversight of the defense budget. Instead the budget was placed under the purview of the National Defence Council—a 15-member authority, 8 of whom were military<sup>20</sup>—leaving the public and government in the dark about how the military would spend its annual budget allocations and expenditures. It also meant that the military could continue to earn untold levels of revenue through its economic privileges. From television sets to olive oil, the military's vast economic ventures pay no taxes, use soldiers as laborers, and buy public land on favorable terms.<sup>21</sup>

The exclusive governing style of President Morsi, his assertion of expansive and ill-defined powers, continuing economic turmoil, deepening divisiveness borne of fears that Islamists were seeking to dominate Egyptian society, and ongoing uncertainty over the legality of the 2012 constitution led to steadily growing tensions within Egyptian society. Massive protests in late June 2013 again created an opportunity for the military to intervene. On July 2, the military ousted the sitting president, again on the justification of maintaining national stability. In the subsequent protests by Morsi's supporters the military opted to use force to disperse the protesters and arrest leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood. This crackdown claimed over 1,000 lives.

In the ensuing year, the military further expanded its control, arresting an estimated 20,000 people perceived as a threat to the military and clamping down on endent media and civil society.<sup>22</sup> Through a new constitution passed by referendum in 2014, the military affirmed autonomy over its budget, immunity for its members from prosecution outside of a military court, and the power to arrest and try civilians in a military court. The military, moreover, not only reasserted but expanded its control of the economic sphere from basic items, such as bottled water and furniture, to larger infrastructure, energy, and technology projects.<sup>23</sup> The military simultaneously paved the way for its commander, General Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, to run for and win one-sided presidential elections in 2014 (garnering 96 percent of the votes cast), formalizing his role as head of state.

While the military no doubt views these events as a return to the military's rightful role as the dominant institution in Egyptian society, it is clear that the Egyptian military failed to uphold the principles of military professionalism: subordination to democratic civilian authority, allegiance to the rule of law, and an ethical institutional culture. As the events in Egypt reveal, when a military is unable to adhere to one of the pillars of professionalism, it finds itself in conflict with all three.

## An Ethical Institutional Culture

In addition to democratic civilian control of the military and allegiance of the military to the nation, an ethical culture is a prerequisite for building a professional military. This entails values such as merit-based promotion, accountability of military leaders and soldiers for their actions, as well as demonstrating competent, impartial, and humane security enforcement. These institutional values do not come naturally. They must be taught. Soldiers must be inculcated with specific training in ethics, just as they learn discipline, law, and combat – all within the bigger picture of the military’s role in a democratic society.

A soldier’s ethos is an essential pillar of the institutional culture of the military and to the success of its mission. Along with proper training, soldiers need the courage to defend society’s interests before their own. The bravery, dedication, sacrifice, and sense of duty to protect and serve fellow countrymen should motivate recruits as much as any paycheck. Soldiers must have a calling to their profession. Being a professional soldier is not for everyone.

This ethos is important for building and maintaining a professional military. In Botswana, for example, citizens and members of the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) see the military as “the most capable of the country’s ‘disciplined services’.... Its members believe they are faithful stewards of resources entrusted by the nation to their care.”<sup>24</sup> Thanks to this prestige, the BDF has the luxury of picking from a large pool of qualified candidates and has become increasingly selective in order to achieve the institutional culture it desires: highly disciplined, educated, and led by competent leadership. “In 2004 the BDF sought 80–100 new officers and received some 3,000 applications. It sought 500 enlisted recruits and received over 15,000 applications for these positions.”<sup>25</sup>

Significant steps have also been taken at the regional level to develop normative instruments to prevent military interventions in the political processes of African states. These include frameworks, such as the African Union's (AU) "Common African Defence and Security Policy," the "Framework for an African Union Response to Unconstitutional Changes," the Southern African Development Community's "Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation," and the Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS) "Draft Code of Conduct for Armed and Security Forces." The evolution of these explicit regional standards reflects a growing recognition of the need to improve the institutional culture of militaries on the continent. If upheld, these standards will have far-reaching implications for Africa's political development.

## **Obstacles to Military Professionalism in Africa**

### **The Legacy of Colonialism**

The simple starting point for why and how many African militaries have habitually interfered in economic and political matters is rooted in the colonial history of the continent. Built from the ashes of colonial forces, African militaries inherited the seeds of ethnic bias sown by the colonists that paved the way for a deficit of professionalism. Typically, minority ethnicities constituted the bulk of the colonial armed forces in order to counterbalance historically more powerful ethnicities. For example, the Tutsi minority in Burundi and Rwanda and the minority pastoralist peoples from the northern parts of Ghana, Nigeria, and Togo were predominant in the French and British colonial forces prior to independence.

This initial ethnic bias had a major impact on the formation of post-independence militaries. The wave of coups d'état that swept aside some of the first post-independence regimes was, in many cases, carried out by military officers from these ethnic minorities. A few notable leaders of this pattern include Étienne Eyadéma of Togo in 1963, Sangoulé Lamizana of Burkina Faso (then known as Upper Volta) in 1966, Jean Bédel Bokassa of the Central African Republic in 1966, and Idi Amin Dada of Uganda in 1971. Recognizing that their privileged position would be threatened by majority rule, these minority-led militaries had no incentive to support democratic change. Meanwhile, colonial forces saw little benefit in preparing African officers for a transition of rule. Thus, there were few qualified officers to assume command.

Fifty years later, the colonial legacy can no longer justify the persisting lack of professionalism among so many African militaries. After independence, African-led governments had the opportunity to build new and truly national militaries by reforming the structure, operations, and recruitment methods inherited from the colonists. Instead, post-independence leaders chose to exploit these shortcomings to create and maintain autocratic political systems. This has led to a myriad of ongoing challenges to military professionalism in Africa, including ethnic and tribal biases in the armed forces, persistent politicization of the military, and weak operational capacity.

### **Ethnic and Tribal Biases**

A military organized around ethnic or tribal biases cannot defend the republic, much less the population. Instead, it can only defend the interests of its ethnic group or tribe. It lacks the popular trust, legitimacy, and competency of a merit-based force, hindering its effectiveness. Unfortunately, in many African countries the structure of the armed forces is still based on ethnic or tribal considerations.

For example, the army in Mauritania is split by racial, ethnic, and cultural divides. While a minority constituting less than a third of the population, the Arab-Berbers have dominated political, economic, and military institutions since independence.<sup>26</sup> After allegations of an ethnically charged coup plot in 1987 threatened this dominance, Mauritanian President Ould Taya began a near-complete “Arabization” of all branches of the Mauritanian armed forces.

Similarly, in Chad, the ethnic composition of the armed forces is not reflective of the country as a whole. The Zaghawas, President Idriss Déby’s ethnic group, have dominated the army and key military posts ever since 1990 when they ousted Hissène Habré from power. The Togolese armed forces provide another example. Seventy-seven percent of the military personnel come from the northern part of the country. Of these, 70 percent are Kabyens, the same ethnic group as the President, including 42 percent who come from the President’s native village of Pya. Yet, the Kabye ethnicity makes up just 10-12 percent of the population of Togo.<sup>27</sup>

Recruiting the military predominantly from the ethnicity of the president is an all too common practice in Africa. Officers under such a chain of command are more loyal to the president than to the constitution. This practice undermines the professional standards of the armed forces while pitting the armed forces against one another on an ethnic basis. Such divisions were vividly exposed in the internal fighting that suddenly erupted in South Sudan in December 2013, severely setting back the security sector institution-building process in Africa’s youngest country.

A military composed of troops from communities across the country, on the other hand, can create a strong foundation upon which a democratic state can be built. A diversified force also creates conditions favorable to the professionalization of the armed forces as advancements are more likely to be merit- rather than ethnic-based, and allegiance would be to the nation as a whole rather than to a



particular ethnicity. An example of an ethnically diverse military that is more representative of its society is found in Tanzania.

When the 6th Battalion of the King's African Rifles was raised by British administrators at the end of World War I, soldiers were recruited from widely dispersed ethnicities across the country, including those who served under Great Britain's adversary, the German Colonial Army. No ethnicity held dominance.<sup>28</sup> Since Tanzania (then known as Tanganyika) was not considered to be suitable for colonial development, the British made no effort to create an ethnically biased military to control the majority population.<sup>29</sup> Upon independence, Tanganyika's first president, Julius Nyerere, purposefully maintained a professional distance from the military as he saw it as a tool of colonial repression. It was not until 1964, when Tanganyika and Zanzibar united to form Tanzania and the military faced a mutiny of soldiers seeking better pay and the removal of British officers that Nyerere changed his view. He subsequently set out to create a national identity among the military in order to prevent any destabilizing political interference.<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, in Zambia, the British recruited a military from different ethnic groups from across the country (then known as Northern Rhodesia). Thus, no ethnicity dominated Zambia's military. Unlike Nyerere, however, Zambia's future president, Kenneth Kaunda, collaborated closely with African officers of the colonial army at the outset, so there was little distrust between civilian and military leaders when Zambia attained independence in 1964. After independence, Kaunda continued a policy of "tribal balancing" at all levels of the government in recognition of the impetus that ethnoregional imbalances played in military interventions across Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>31</sup>

A modern example of a military that became more inclusive is the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). A concerted post-apartheid effort successfully created a military of men and

women from formerly belligerent forces. Under the pressure of a political transition, the military transformed itself to represent and reflect the diversity of the South African people. The government, military, and civil society continue to maintain inclusivity as a part of South Africa's national security policy.

The Burundian military also undertook extensive quota-based integration and enforced a retirement age to better reflect the Burundian population in the military. Under the strong commitment of its leadership, the military began an integration of mostly Hutu rebels into the Tutsi-dominated army after the 2003 ceasefire. This integration occurred at all levels of the military with soldiers from diverse ethnic backgrounds living and training together out of the same barracks. In 3 years, ethnically based prejudice in the military had been reduced dramatically, especially among young troops. The Burundian military has become more cohesive as a result.<sup>32</sup>

### **Politicization of the Military and Militarization of Politics**

The politicization of the military is the tip of an iceberg that very often conceals an active competition among politicians for military support. In fact, a majority of military coups that have occurred in Africa were backed by competing political actors. When these competing interests are within the ruling party, "palace revolutions" instead of a complete interruption of constitutional order are more likely to occur. In Togo, for instance, upon the death of President Gnassingbé Eyadéma in 2005, his son Faure Gnassingbé replaced him after generals loyal to his father denied the leader of the National Assembly from taking over as prescribed by the constitution.

Some political parties will try to find sympathizers within the military with the aim of usurping power during times of crisis. Tellingly, the 2012 military coup in Mali gained support from several political parties despite unanimous condemnation

from the international community. In Côte d'Ivoire, loyalists to former President Laurent Gbagbo continued to enlist the support of sympathizers within the military to help undermine President Alassane Ouattara's authority.<sup>33</sup> These politico-military imbroglios are illustrations of a common African theme: political actors relying on the military rather than the populace for support of their causes.

While high levels of military professionalism in certain Western countries have made obsolete the notion that individual politicians can subvert the security apparatus, the manipulation of military allegiances remains common in many African countries. But such an approach is inherently unstable. This was vividly illustrated in the experience of Côte d'Ivoire. When Côte d'Ivoire's first president, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, assumed control of the security sector, he reduced its size and created a militia loyal to the party consisting mostly of Baoulé (Houphouët-Boigny's ethnic group). Furthermore, he practiced a form of manipulation of the military by paying military officers high salaries compared to other civil servants and by giving top officers positions in the party and other perquisites.<sup>34</sup>

This imbalanced patronage paved the way for the subsequent spiral of political instability and insecurity in Côte d'Ivoire. Upon Houphouët-Boigny's death in 1993, the president of the National Assembly, Henri Konan Bédié, seized power with the help of a few officers of the gendarmerie belonging to his tribe. By this act—unprecedented in the political and constitutional history of Côte d'Ivoire—the security forces cast aside their image of unity and neutrality and, from that point on, became central players in the political game.<sup>35</sup> The same gendarmerie, subsequently better equipped and trained than the rest of the Ivorian armed forces, later installed Laurent Gbagbo as head of state following the 2000 elections in which his rival presidential candidate, the late General Robert Guéï, proclaimed himself winner. As in other African countries, elements of the security forces had become kingmakers.

The consequence of such relationships is a military that is more partisan and less professional in the eyes of society, thereby diminishing respect for the institution—something that is necessary in order to recruit committed, disciplined, and talented soldiers. The need for military support, meanwhile, explains why politicians are often willing to tolerate and, at times, encourage military leaders' use of public resources for personal enrichment. The reality represents not only a politicization of the military but also the "militarization" of politics.

### **Presidential Guards: A Force Behind Nondemocratic Regimes**

Presidential guards are a major political actor in Africa. In Burkina Faso, during the mutiny of 2011, the situation was relatively under control until members of the presidential guard joined in the protests. As a result, Prime Minister Tertius Zongo and his government were forced to step down, key military leaders were dismissed, and the demands of some mutineers were met. With those concessions, the same presidential guard led a forceful and definitive end to the mutiny of the soldiers.

The events in Burkina Faso illustrate the important role played by presidential guards in regime security and stability in Africa. In practice, presidential guards serve as a counterweight to the rest of the military and frequently play a central role in the various coups and countercoups launched in Africa. In Mauritania, President General Ould Abdel Aziz commanded the Autonomous Presidential Security Battalion (BASEP) for more than 15 years. While heading up this elite unit of the Mauritanian Army, he foiled two attempted coups d'état before leading one himself in 2008. In many African militaries, then, real power is in the hands of the presidential guard.

Presidential guards in Africa are generally better equipped, trained, and supervised than the rest of the armed forces. Because most African presidential guards are not controlled by the defense ministry or the armed forces' chief of staff, they are commonly considered an army within an army. They are often highly politicized and in some cases have a strong ethnic bias. In other words, they bear all the hallmarks of unprofessionalism seen in African armed forces, yet are in an even more influential position relative to political power. As such, officers of the presidential guard are regularly the origin of poor security sector governance. In the interest of

maintaining their pivotal role, such presidential guards are allergic to any reform that could call into question such privilege. Because they are under the direct control of the head of state, they act as a deterrent to the rest of the armed forces.

Some presidential guards have succeeded in helping African regimes maintain power through repression. In the 2012 elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, the presidential guard was active in rounding up key opposition figures, negating the legitimacy of this process. Ultimately, rule through repression is not sustainable. Instead, these actions undermine public trust and institutional integrity until the government reaches the point of collapse. Such was the case of Niger. In 1999, President Ibrahim Bare Mainassara was assassinated by his presidential guard. The guard's commander, Major Daouda Mallam Wanké, assumed control of the country. Elections later that year put an army officer supported by the presidential guard, Mamadou Tandja, into power. Ten years later, in 2010, President Tandja was removed from power by a coup led not by the presidential guard, which had remained loyal, but by Army Major Salou Djibo after Tandja suspended government and announced that he would rule by decree.

Recognizing that their power is dependent on the head of state, many presidential guards in Africa are loyal and devoted to their benefactor's cause irrespective of the constitutionality of his actions. They generally do not feel constrained, therefore, by legal strictures on human rights abuses committed under the guise of national security. In Guinea, for example, opposition protests in 2009 against the military junta leader, Captain Moussa Dadis Camara, ended in a bloodbath after members of his presidential guard opened fire on unarmed protesters in the national stadium during their rally. At least 157 people were killed, around 1,200 were injured, and at least 63 women were raped.<sup>36</sup> Later, Camara himself was the victim of an assassination attempt initiated by the head of his presidential guard.

### **Weak Operational Capacity: A Sign of Militaries Without a Mission**

The professionalism of a military relies on effective command and control systems, skills, and resources to carry out successful missions. The weak operational capacity within many African militaries renders them unable to play this role, calling into question their very relevance. The rout of the Malian military by Islamist rebels in 2012, the capture of Goma by the now defunct M23 rebel group in the Democratic Republic of the Congo the same year, and the disintegration of the Central African

Republic military following the rapid and easy conquest of Bangui by Seleka rebel forces in 2013, are illustrative of the weak operational capacity of many Sub-Saharan militaries. Among the multitude of reasons that could explain this inefficacy, the following issues stand out: gaps in the chain of command leading to indiscipline, inadequate oversight of procurement practices, weak resource management diminishing operational capacity, poor morale, and a misaligned or obsolete mission.

*Gaps in chain of command leading to indiscipline.* A functional chain of command is a prerequisite for any military institution. It reflects good leadership and discipline and promotes accountability. Unfortunately, reports from around Africa paint a picture of militaries whose left hand does not appear to know what the right hand is doing. There is apparently very little connection between official military policy and the acts of the rank and file. One such example is in northern Nigeria where soldiers fighting Boko Haram insurgents have been accused of atrocities by civilians.<sup>37</sup> Senior Nigerian military leaders have been at a loss to explain these actions despite being articulate in their understanding of the potential exacerbating effects that heavy-handed domestic security measures can cause among local populations.

The vast majority of African militaries are governed by legislative texts, such as the armed forces' staff regulations and the military disciplinary code. However, criminal acts committed outside the barracks often go unpunished due to gaps in the chain of command and in the disciplinary protocol, perpetuating a view that military personnel in some countries are above the law. This reinforces a culture of impunity that undermines a military's reputation and fosters deviant behavior among troops.

In Côte d'Ivoire under Laurent Gbagbo, no sanctions were taken against the perpetrators of a massacre in 2000 – when soldiers loyal to Gbagbo killed civilians contesting the legitimacy of Gbagbo's election. Nor was there any accountability for the killings during protest

marches in 2004. After the democratic regime of Alassane Ouattara came to power in 2011, those perpetrators were indicted. However, the Ouattara government has yet to do the same with soldiers under its authority who committed crimes in the aftermath of the disputed 2010 elections.

There are exceptions, of course. In Benin, the judiciary on several occasions arrested detectives from the gendarmerie and the police for unlawful imprisonment and ill-treatment of citizens in police custody. In Burkina Faso, 566 soldiers involved in the mutiny of 2011 were discharged from the army, and 217 leaders of the mutiny were arrested, prosecuted by a military tribunal, and jailed for dishonoring the armed forces, causing public disorder, and violating human rights.<sup>38</sup>

*Inadequate oversight of procurement practices.* Another visible manifestation of poor governance in the military is in the procurement of supplies and equipment for the forces. Most troops will complain that life in the barracks is inhospitable, pay negligible, and opportunity for advancement nonexistent. Yet, the budget for the military is larger than most other public services. In Nigeria, for example, many military barracks remained in serious disrepair even after the military spent almost N12 billion (approximately \$76 million) on barrack rehabilitation and construction.<sup>39</sup> Allegations of corruption in the procurement of inferior equipment and diversion of supplies to Boko Haram have further eroded trust in the Nigerian military and directly compromised its effectiveness.

One reason for this disconnect is that defense ministries' financial and administrative affairs departments are commonly just empty shells—severely understaffed and lacking the means to carry out their duties. The resulting weak oversight of procurement contracts by defense ministries enables widespread corruption and creates a governance problem. For example, in an assessment of 19 African defense sectors, Transparency International found 90 percent scored in the bottom two quintiles for transparency in the procurement cycle

(see Table 2). Even if administrative procedures are respected in the early phases of the budget-making process, it only takes a stamp of “secret” or “classified” on these tenders to bypass audit by the public finance units. And while some military procurements may need to be confidential for national security purposes, the vast majority do not.

**Table 2. Anti-Corruption Scores for Select Categories of Defense Sector Financial and Administrative Affairs in 19 African Countries, 2013**  
(4=high transparency, 0=low transparency)

	Anti-Corruption Grade	Budget Transparency & Detail	Budget Scrutiny	Budget Publicly Available	Internal Audit	External Audit	Percentage Secret Spending	Legislative Access to Information	Secret Program Auditing	Off-budget Spending in Law	Off-budget Spending in Practice	Information Classification	Transparent Procurement Cycle	Oversight Mechanisms
Kenya	D+	2	3	0	1	1	0	2	1	2	3	1	0	1
South Africa	D+	3	2	3	2	2	1	4	3	2	2	1	1	2
Ethiopia	D-	1	1	1	1	2	0	1	1	1	2	1	1	2
Ghana	D-	2	-	-	2	2	0	1	2	0	1	1	1	3
Rwanda	D-	2	2	2	1	2	0	1	0	1	0	1	2	0
Tanzania	D-	1	1	2	1	1	0	2	2	0	2	1	1	2
Cote d'Ivoire	E	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	2
Morocco	E	1	1	2	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0
Nigeria	E	1	1	2	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	2	2
Tunisia	E	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	1
Uganda	E	2	2	1	1	2	0	1	2	0	0	1	1	2
Zimbabwe	E	1	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Algeria	F	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Angola	F	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cameroon	F	1	-	-	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	1
DRC	F	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
Egypt	F	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Eritrea	F	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Libya	F	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	1	0	0	0

Source: Transparency International Defence and Security Programme, 2013.<sup>40</sup> Anti-corruption grades are based on an assessment of scores across 77 categories of corruption risk.

In too many countries, military procurement decisions are concentrated in the hands of a political and military oligarchy allied with domestic and foreign commercial partners, making



procurements more a function of business interests or self-enrichment than of addressing the armed forces' true needs. In 2007, the bribe for military supplies in Africa was around 10 percent of the value of a contract.<sup>41</sup>

Bribery and kickbacks commonly lead to the procurement of overpriced equipment that is defective or ill-suited to the needs of the armed forces. In Uganda, for example, General Salim Saleh, a former guerilla and President Yoweri Museveni's half-brother, was implicated in a number of political financing scandals before stepping down from his post as Senior Advisor to the President on Defence and Security.<sup>42</sup> He procured not only spoiled food rations for the Ugandan army, but also defective and unusable T-54 and T-55 tanks, helicopters, and MiG-21 fighter jets. In exchange, the upper echelons of the military received a steady stream of bribes.<sup>43</sup> In 2010, Cameroon's former Defence Minister Remy Ze Meka was arrested on charges of embezzlement of funds for military operations and development projects during his tenure from 2004 to 2009. In 2013, the South African government of President Jacob Zuma was still trying to address evidence of kickbacks and bribery from an overly expensive military procurement package with international defense companies dating back to 1999 at a cost of more than \$6 billion.

Certain African countries have put in place internal governance oversight mechanisms. For example, the majority of francophone countries in Africa have created inspection services departments under their defense ministries. This department is charged with monitoring, advising, and testing the operational capacity of the armed forces as well as the application of government policy. The department's main tasks are to:

- ◆ control the application of laws, rules, and ministerial decisions regarding administrative and financial aspects of the armed forces

- ◆ participate in the development and implementation of military doctrine
- ◆ submit periodic reports on the management of human resources, equipment, training, and needs of the armed forces.

While inspection services departments are an important institutional innovation, unless they are empowered, they can be easily circumvented. Such is the case when inspection services exist only to round out a defense ministry's organizational chart and are simply dead-end appointments for former armed forces' chiefs of staff or high-ranking military officers. These appointments, moreover, create conflicts of interest as the inspector general may end up reviewing contracts and decisions made by either himself or close colleagues while he had been in office. In some cases, personal relationships or ego influence the inspector general's approach to the job, undermining the impartiality of this oversight function and negatively impacting operational capacity.

It is very rare in Africa for the legislative branch or civil society to question military leaders or become involved in opaque procurement processes. Typically, parliaments do not oversee military spending because, in most African countries, there is a belief that such inquiry would harm national security. For example, while Kenya ranks seventh among African countries in terms of defense budget expenditures,<sup>44</sup> only in 2012 did it enact a law requiring the military to submit its financial reports to the parliament and president and to subject its accounts to audit.

Other African countries with relatively high levels of military spending, like Angola and Algeria, have laws in place requiring parliamentary oversight yet they do not appear to enforce them fully. In Ghana, there are three select committees of its parliament that deal with security and military-related issues, and the Defence and Interior Committee is chaired by the leader of the largest opposition

party. This should provide a check on the security budgeting process. Yet, apparently when the issue of the budget is brought up, objection to its discussion for reasons of “national security” is commonly raised and not challenged.<sup>45</sup> In Togo, 25 percent of the budget has typically been allocated to the military, making it the country’s largest line-item expense, but also the sector with the least external control.<sup>46</sup> In other countries, such as Nigeria, the operational budget is decentralized, with the army, the navy, and the air force each having authority to handle its own procurement contracts for recurrent expenditures.<sup>47</sup> This makes oversight even more challenging and creates more opportunity for the misappropriation of funds.

In contrast, countries like Senegal and South Africa have a robust civilian management structure within the defense ministries that contributes to a relatively high degree of accountability for the use of funds.<sup>48</sup> In Burkina Faso, South Africa, and Uganda there is active legislative oversight in the formulation of the defense ministries’ budgets for adoption. And in countries like Nigeria, South Africa, and Uganda, when political interference compromises either the ministry or the legislature, there is a vocal civil society to call the government to task. In 2012, for example, South African Minister of Defence and Military Veterans Lindiwe Sisulu was fired after the public became aware of her secretly negotiating a R2 billion (approximately \$200 million) deal to purchase business jets for President Zuma and Deputy President Motlanthe.

*Weak resource management diminishes operational capacity.* Effective administration is indispensable to successful military operations. Only a sound management apparatus can harness the meager resources of African militaries and apply them to maximum effect. A lack of such capacity is perceptible at all levels in African militaries’ management of human resources, equipment, and logistics.

Politically and ethnically based promotions have upended the officer ranking pyramid in some countries. Before the crisis, the

Malian army had more than 50 generals for about 20,000 troops: 1 general for every 400 men.<sup>49</sup> Neighboring Niger had 1 general for every 600 men. In contrast, a typical NATO infantry brigade consists of approximately 3,200-5,500 troops and is commonly commanded by just 1 brigadier general or senior colonel. This disproportion of brass to rank and file is a common problem for African militaries. Typically, the larger the ratio of officers to enlisted soldiers makes an army more ineffective. Officer inflation is a source of inefficiency in the command and constitutes an extra burden for the defense budget. It is also a source of indiscipline at the top of the hierarchy as it engenders frustration among senior colonels who, seeing promotions go to other officers for political rather than professional reasons, sometimes disobey or refuse to take orders from new generals thereby sowing seeds of disobedience and indiscipline among the troops. This breaks the chain of command. The swift rise through the ranks of Uganda President Museveni's son Brigadier General Muhoozi Kainerugaba (who became commander of Uganda's elite Special Forces Command after only 15 years in service), for example, has raised the specter of nepotism and political gamesmanship.<sup>50</sup>

Disrepair of rolling stock and lack of maintenance have also contributed to the growing paralysis of Africa's armed forces. African air forces are disappearing. The disengagement of international partners from costly technical maintenance coupled with a drastic reduction of defense budget allocations has grounded most planes. The majority of fighter pilots have, consequently, left the military. The lucky ones became commercial pilots for VIP flights, which have become the primary mission of Sub-Saharan air forces. Similarly, only South Africa still has significant operational "blue water" maritime capacities. This is not necessarily a negative development as the primary maritime threat faced in nearly every case is in coastal waters and exclusive economic zones (waters within 200 nautical miles of the coastline).<sup>51</sup> However, small navies like those of Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Kenya,

Senegal, and Tanzania suffer from obsolescence and maintenance problems.<sup>52</sup>

A major decline in the operational capacity of many Sub-Saharan militaries occurred in the 1990s after the end of the Cold War. It is not that these pre-Cold War militaries were any more professional. However, they at least had the bare minimum of serviceable equipment. This equipment was donated and serviced through generous cooperation agreements intended to support the ongoing superpower rivalry. The sudden end of the Cold War sounded the death knell for these outlays. Deprived of the support from both Western and Eastern Blocs, the Sub-Saharan militaries were unable to maintain the illusion of cohesion and operational capacity. In Burkina Faso, for instance, 1999 signaled the end of German cooperation programs that had strengthened the engineer corps. The withdrawal of funding dramatically restricted the activities for this unit, which had been contributing immensely to the opening of Burkina Faso's rural areas by constructing and rehabilitating roads.

The conflict in Mali in 2012-2013 revealed the management challenges within neighboring states' militaries. Despite its past peacekeeping experience in the region, ECOWAS could not set up and deploy a reliable force to stop the rapid advance of jihadist forces. After observing ECOWAS' hesitation to deploy its standby forces, France intervened, backed by UN Security Council Resolution 2085, to restore the territorial integrity of Mali and to prevent the militant groups from strengthening their positions in the region. The truth is that few West African countries had the logistical capacity to deploy a battalion on their own without external support.

Not all African militaries are in such a state of obsolescence. The armed forces of Algeria, Morocco, and South Africa generally have effective and well-trained militaries capable of carrying out combined (intermilitary) operations and providing logistical support for a conflict. Credit must also go to the armed forces of the AU Mission in Somalia

(AMISOM). Comprised of contingents from Uganda, Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Sierra Leone, AMISOM restored order and stabilized the main cities in Somalia.<sup>53</sup> Likewise, the Chadian Armed Forces were able to deploy on short notice 2,000 desert-trained troops to engage militant Islamist forces in the Adrar des Ifoghas region in northern Mali during the 2012 multinational intervention. Nigerian forces, similarly, played a critical role in the stabilization effort of northern Mali. The 3,000-troop UN Force Intervention Brigade in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)—comprised of troops from South Africa, Tanzania, and Malawi—was decisive in the 2013 defeat of the M23 rebels who had been a major destabilizing force in eastern DRC.

*Poor morale.* African militaries do produce highly competent and professional officers trained in the world's best military schools. Unfortunately, these officers are unable to flourish in an environment where competence and professionalism are not rewarded with promotion or rank advancement. Resulting idleness and professional stagnation eat away at the motivation of even well-trained and competent officers. This lays the groundwork for recurring mutinies among troops who feel directionless and abandoned by their military and civilian leaders.

Morale is vital on the battlefield. Without it, defeat is unavoidable. The lack of motivation of Malian troops to fight against militant Islamists and Tuareg separatists in 2012-2013 was due to a combination of factors, including political instability caused by the military coup, allegations of corruption at senior levels in the chain of command, and minimal support and equipment to frontline troops tasked with combatting the militants.

Corruption at the top of the chain of command undermines the morale of the troops, making them increasingly prone to participating in or condoning corrupt practices themselves.<sup>54</sup> In countries where pay is paltry and irregular, soldiers are tempted to extort money or in-kind payments from the local population or turn to profit-oriented

activities to survive. As in other African militaries, Malian military officers allegedly “recruited” more troops than actually existed while simultaneously selling the equipment and pocketing the pay issued to such “ghost” troops.<sup>55</sup> Sometimes, soldiers simply go on strike. In the DRC, for example, media reports linked the nonpayment of troops deployed in the eastern region to corruption at the top. These troops, in turn, failed to protect villages against incursions from the Lord’s Resistance Army of Uganda.<sup>56</sup>

The most reckless soldiers are all too willing to turn to organized crime. Following the nonpayment of salaries in the 1990s, the top brass of Guinea-Bissau’s military began selling weapons and landmines to Casamance rebels before turning to drug trafficking. The political and military upheavals and bloody score-settling that have been destabilizing Guinea-Bissau ever since are closely tied to the drug trafficking that has corrupted the government and military leadership.<sup>57</sup>

The same drug trafficking cartels have infiltrated other West African countries and compromised their political and military leadership in other ways. The former Malian leader, Amadou Toumani Touré, attempted to exploit the organized crime syndicates as a way of exerting influence in the north.<sup>58</sup> Members of Mali’s military were offered up to provide temporary leadership to the private armies of smugglers.<sup>59</sup> Sometimes Malian officials were even directly involved in clashes between criminal syndicates.<sup>60</sup> Though not an excuse to depose a democratically elected government, its ties with organized crime set the Malian regime up for a loss of legitimacy and an erosion in its effectiveness.

*Misaligned or obsolete mission.* Stanisław Andrzejewski posited that “an unoccupied military, with no external threat to address, was more likely to interfere in domestic politics.”<sup>61</sup> This rings true for Africa, where many militaries suffer from a lack of vision and clear objective. In this way, obsolete rolling stock and ill-prepared,

unmotivated troops are merely symptoms of a larger challenge. There are only a limited number of African countries with a defined national security strategy. A security strategy is essential to align resources to identified national priorities, to coordinate multi-institutional efforts, and to foster a shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities of all branches of government for the benefit of the state, the military, and civil society.

For the majority of African armed forces, the guiding doctrine of the military is still founded upon the defense of the nation from a foreign enemy. Yet, there have been few interstate conflicts in Africa, particularly over the last several decades. Moreover, African states have managed to use international mechanisms to resolve border disputes peacefully. Border disagreements between Nigeria and Cameroon, Burkina Faso and Mali, as well as Benin and Niger have all been resolved through the International Court of Justice at The Hague.

Africa's threats, instead, are nearly entirely domestic in nature. Boko Haram and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta have been defying Nigerian authorities for a number of years. The governments of Angola and Senegal have been struggling for decades to defeat the tenacious separatist forces in the Cabinda and Casamance provinces, respectively. Tuareg separatists, aided by an assortment of militant Islamist groups, took advantage of the political uncertainty in Bamako to make gains in their fight for control of northern Mali. Ugandan warlord Joseph Kony and his irregular forces have committed heinous crimes against the Ugandan, Congolese, and Central African populations for decades despite the efforts of their respective national militaries. The violent extremist group al Shabaab persists as a risk to stability in Somalia.

These homegrown insurgencies underscore the disconnect between military mandate and actual security threat. In some countries, the irregular forces confronting the government forces are better



equipped, more mobile, and have better knowledge of the terrain.<sup>62</sup> African security forces, therefore, must become demonstrably more competent and professional in order to prevail. Until African leaders identify a clear mission for their security institutions and incorporate this into their strategic planning processes, they will be unable to resource and train their troops for the real security challenges they face.

## **Priorities for Building Professional African Militaries**

In light of the many and seemingly insurmountable challenges, the professionalization of African militaries may seem like a pipe dream. But there is hope. Realizing progress will require advancing reforms in three overarching areas: repurposing the military's mandate and role in the security sector; depoliticizing the environment in which the military operates; and institutionalizing ethics and accountability into military culture.

### **Repurpose the Military's Mandate**

Militaries are expensive. A professional military needs to be educated, trained, equipped, and maintained. It is best to know, then, what is expected of the military so that resources are not wasted. The majority of African militaries are designed and organized mainly to confront foreign aggression and cannot respond appropriately to nontraditional security threats such as internal conflicts, transnational crime, maritime piracy, terrorism, and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. This mismatch is a key factor in African militaries' ineffectiveness. Increasingly, militaries are deployed for policing activities—a function far different than military combat. This, in turn, contributes to poor human rights records and a lack of professionalism. To better respond to countries' actual threats as well as enhance the

professionalism of their militaries, African governments must change their view of the security sector. Reorganizing security force structures to better match the identified threat and integrating those missions into a comprehensive and coherent defense policy will enhance the relevance, operational capacity, and prestige of Africa's militaries.

*Redefine the mission.* The goal of a country's defense policy should include a military that is apolitical, accountable, capable, and affordable.<sup>63</sup> A military, in turn, should be modeled to meet its mission. If there is no clear need for a large externally facing military, government should streamline its armed forces to make them more efficient and responsive to the actual security needs of the country.<sup>64</sup> A key element of this process is developing national security strategies that bridge the gap between foreign and domestic threats.

One of the problems faced by many African governments is what to do with their militaries when they are not engaged in combat. The Ghana Armed Forces (GAF), as most African militaries, has not had to defend its country against an external aggressor for a long time. To make use of and maintain its skills, the GAF has supported domestic security agencies when needed as well as participated in various international peacekeeping operations. The GAF is well organized and equipped to provide assistance—from transport and communications to maintenance of law and order—during certain types of national disasters. Its medical personnel and military hospitals provide care to Ghanaians in need and assist the government with disease eradication and health education programs. The GAF assists the police to restore law and order in cases of intercommunal violence that threaten stability and contributes to joint military-police patrols in urban areas to respond to armed robbery and other violent crimes.<sup>65</sup> The GAF has also supported the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources to protect forest reserves and parks from illegal poaching and lumbering.<sup>66</sup>

Senegal, too, has involved its military in some public works projects through a popular civil-military collaboration known as *Armée-Nation*. Through *Armée-Nation*, the Senegalese Armed Forces supports infrastructure development, national service, and environmental protection. Working with civilians to improve their lives while remaining apolitical and professional has created a self-reinforcing cycle of goodwill, respect, trust, and pride between the Senegalese people and the military.<sup>67</sup>

While the goal of building ties with local communities is desirable, the military must focus on its areas of comparative expertise. Development projects executed by the military, for example, are often more costly, and they inhibit economic development in the private sector. More importantly, most African countries face serious security threats, including those that are transnational in nature. Given the limited availability of resources, the security sector's focus should be on addressing these threats.

Recognizing the many competing priorities, precision of policy is important. Search and rescue, fighting narcotics trafficking, and maritime piracy are areas where the military can apply its expertise. Addressing such threats, however, should be carefully coordinated with and led by other security sector actors and government agencies.<sup>68</sup> Likewise, in most circumstances military leaders should refrain from playing anything more than a supporting role in countering domestic terrorism. Police, intelligence, and paramilitary organizations are better trained for the focused responses such threats require.<sup>69</sup>

Meanwhile, the majority of African militaries have seen the benefits of participating in international peacekeeping operations. Such operations respond to general security challenges on the continent, thereby preventing cross-border spillover and the resulting national security threats. They also build the expertise, purpose, and pride of the troops involved.

*Support soldier development.* The current disrepair of rolling stock, the lack of appropriate equipment, and the shrinking capabilities of air forces and navies can present an opportunity for many African militaries. The goal of any security force is to prevent security threats from arising at all, and then to respond effectively to threats that do materialize.<sup>70</sup> Achieving that goal does not necessarily require more tanks, jets, and ships. As most contemporary operations will be constabulary or counterinsurgency in nature, the military's mission must focus on defending and protecting citizens. To do this, priority must be given to strengthening the manpower of the military—developing individuals and units that are competent, compassionate, and respected. Having constabulary operations will require a continued presence in communities, hence the need to include members of the military who represent the communities they protect. There is no better way to fully understand the local context and build respect and trust between the military and the community. And in the face of decreasing budgets, modern and leaner security deployments are going to have to rely more on smarter fighting strategies—balancing capabilities with deep knowledge of communities to preempt or deter security threats.

African militaries should focus more on the kind of soldier they want than on the quantity. This leads back to the ethos of the soldier. The military is no ordinary profession. It requires great integrity, skill, dedication, loyalty, and sacrifice. Part of professionalizing Africa's armed forces will require smaller but better trained and equipped forces. This will contribute to building pride and greater professionalism, while raising the caliber of recruits.

*Focus on education and training.* One of the challenges many African militaries face is that academic qualifications and combat training have not been considered necessary for advancement or promotion. This needs to change. Professional military education and training is crucial. South Africa's SANDF institutionalized a basic

training program for all its soldiers and incorporated three levels of training for its officers. Lieutenant training included socialization (to become militarily minded), armed combat training, and military education (understanding the military's proper role in a modern democratic society). To attain the level of colonel, officers then had to tackle military management curricula. Finally, to attain the level of general, officers' curricula focused on the politico-military environment in which generals find themselves.<sup>72</sup>

### **Reform Presidential Guards**

Protection of high-ranking officials and political institutions is essential to the continuity and survival of the state. However, most presidential guards in Africa tend to be sizeable military units with comparatively advanced equipment and capable of prolonged operations. Presidents and other senior officials require a more discrete force capable of deterring and repelling immediate threats. Any lengthier or enduring threat should fall under the purview of the police, gendarmerie, military, or other relevant security agency.

A presidential guard must retain a republican mission and not be limited to an ethnically biased armed unit protecting a particular regime. Ideally, to ensure a national allegiance, the presidential guard should be composed of military officers, police officers, and gendarmes, and should demographically represent all of society. These small, integrated units would receive specialized training, building their capacity and professional pride in the process. Once this approach is instituted, it will create a buffer from the abuses of praetorian guards. The reduction in the grossly overstaffed and overpaid presidential guard will also save resources by refocusing a country's security resources on the security priorities of the state.

This is not to say that there is not a role for elite security forces, something that South Africa failed to fully appreciate with respect to its commandos in the post-apartheid transition. Upon creating the newly integrated SANDF, South Africa disbanded the country's commando system. These paramilitary units had protected urban or rural communities from organized threats with the use of community participation. They were disbanded because of their apartheid origination. Unfortunately, however, the vacuum left by their departure has contributed to the skyrocketing criminality.<sup>71</sup>

Education and training also plays a crucial role in bringing belligerent forces together in contexts undergoing disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration. The experience in post-conflict Burundi has shown that integrating forces and exposing them to the same training and living quarters led to shared experiences and enhanced unity.<sup>73</sup>

The role of the military as educator can also improve a military's reputation with the general population. By providing equal access to education to its members, a military can model equity in the allocation of public resources while building a sense of ownership across communities. A more educated security sector in turn is likely to be better able to demonstrate the restraint, judgment, and adaptability so critical in facing the societally based threats that typify many African security challenges.

In 2010, a snapshot survey was taken in Liberia to gauge how citizens, both inside and outside the Armed Forces of Liberia, perceived the professionalism of the military 6 years into a comprehensive security sector reform program.<sup>74</sup> On the whole, the results were very positive about the ethos of the soldiers and the respect they received in return from the civilian population. Both soldiers and civilians alike saw the role of the soldier as a protector of the people and duty-bound to respect the rule of law. A common theme was that the education provided to the troops, especially on matters of rule of law and human rights, had contributed to more dignified and respected soldiers.

### **Depoliticize the Environment in which Militaries Operate**

A provision found in nearly all African constitutions is that the civilian-elected president is also commander-in-chief of the armed forces. To inculcate civilian control of the military, politicians must be more transparent and involved in security sector reform, including formalizing the framework in which the military operates so that civil society can learn to contribute and collaborate as well.

The African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance is a good point of reference. It provides principles of democratic development and respect for popular participation as well as the prohibition of unconstitutional changes of regimes. Toward this end, while security sector reform assistance has generally been applied only to the security establishment, attention also needs to be directed at political actors who can also undermine military professionalism.

*Define the roles of military and political actors.* The dynamic of politicians seeking military support suggests that weak democratic institutions provide an opening for opportunistic politicians to engage in the manipulation of the military. Stronger strictures on political behavior can reduce this negative factor on military professionalism.

To start, the training legislators receive on defense policy and military spending should include participation in ethics courses and the establishment of a common understanding of corruption so that the consequences for abuses can be discussed openly.<sup>75</sup> A focus on creating transparency across all institutions will enhance integrity and will enable better monitoring of political behavior throughout government.

The legacy of the intermingling of the armed forces and politics in Africa underscores the need for the adoption of a clear framework within which African militaries can operate. The constitution and national defense laws should clearly spell out the chain of command in war, peace, and national emergencies. There should be no ambiguity as to the role of the military in decisionmaking—from the level of acceptable political involvement by military brass to the method for which civil-military relationships may be conducted. This framework should also contain a review and revision of national security sector legislation in order to identify and clarify roles and mandates of the different institutions involved in security. This should include a defined mediating mechanism for disagreements between institutions as well as specific sanctions for politicians who attempt to subvert these authorities.

In the process of assisting the post-transition government in Tunisia to identify priorities for its security sector, the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces succinctly enumerated the benefits of an effective, efficient, and accountable security sector framework:

- ◆ It defines the role and mission of each security organization
- ◆ It defines the prerogatives and limits the power of each security organization and their members
- ◆ It defines the role and powers of institutions, which control and oversee security organizations
- ◆ It provides a basis for accountability, as it draws a clear line between legal and illegal behavior
- ◆ It enhances public trust and strengthens legitimacy of government and its security forces.<sup>76</sup>

*Civil-military collaboration.* Once the framework is in place, the military needs a transparent and collaborative political environment to effectively follow its mandate. For example, civilian leaders must be able to explain to military leaders political, social, and economic justifications for the defense budget. By the same token, political leaders should seek the expertise and advice of military leaders in determining and prioritizing various aspects of the security strategy. A robust legislative involvement in defense issues is a valuable indicator of democratic civil-military relations.<sup>77</sup> A gradualist approach built on compromise and regular dialogue can enhance prospects for successful democratic consolidation and civilian control over the military.

Lesotho and South Africa provide examples of how to set the framework for an effective security institution and, consequently, democratic civil-military relations. The Defence Force Act, enacted by the Lesotho Parliament in 1996, provides for the structure, organization, and administration as well as discipline of the armed



forces and matters related thereto. Establishment of the Ministry of Defence in 1995 institutionalized civilian control of the forces by an elected civil authority as well as the enhancement of accountability of the forces to the executive and legislative branches. The removal of the armed forces from partisan politics made the military more professional in its execution of national duties. Such separation made the government more democratic as well.<sup>78</sup>

The South African constitution encouraged a dialogue between the armed services, the judiciary, and the legislature by mandating that the security services teach their members to act in accordance with the nation's laws and constitution as well as with relevant international conventions. In addition, SANDF was asked to design and implement a civic education program on "defence in a democracy" for military and the members of the Department of Defence.<sup>79</sup> This encouraged both civilian and military leadership to seriously consider the military's mandate and role in society. It also initiated an independent defense review process that solicited input from the public, ultimately leading to a new defense policy more aligned with South Africa's national security priorities.

*Partnerships with the international community and civil society.* For many African countries, international assistance in security sector reform is crucial. The international community can provide much needed technical, legal, and political assistance in depoliticizing the military and building its professional acumen. Unequivocal condemnation of coups d'état followed by sanctions from the regional economic communities (RECs), the AU, and the global community is important to quelling the interference of a military in the political affairs of an African country. It is also important for African democracies to become directly involved in supporting the consolidation of the principles of democratic security sector accountability. Security sector reform assistance from partners, such as Botswana, India, and South Africa, helped entrench

Lesotho's democratization process and discipline within the Lesotho Defence Force.<sup>80</sup>

An active and informed civil society, similarly, enhances the entrenchment of democratic values and deters military adventurism. Coups are likely to fail where civil societies are active and involved beyond elections. By increasing societal capacity, a country increases accountability and transparency. A free media is essential for facilitating a broader public dialogue on security issues and military affairs. Such a process also builds confidence between society, the state, and the armed forces.

In Liberia, for example, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's government made great strides to rebuild civil society in a country torn by conflict. In 2010, President Johnson Sirleaf enacted a freedom of information law to enhance transparency and accountability of the government to the public.<sup>81</sup> Through the media, the general population learned of the security sector reform process. Education regarding rule of law and the role of the military as protectorate of the nation and human security reached the general population through radio programs. This helped not only to draw motivated recruits but also to inform the population about how to hold military personnel accountable.<sup>82</sup>

As noted by one Liberian soldier:

*There's nowhere in this world where a military man is not subject to civil laws. This is why when we get out there [in public] we are advised to behave ourselves. If you do anything stupid you can be arrested by the police and if the police find out that you are guilty, you will be sent to court and tried. This was lacking during the old army, but in this new army things are different.*<sup>83</sup>

Many African countries have been slow to pass such freedom of information legislation. Moreover, even in places where such laws have been adopted, resistance remains strong. Mauritania passed a press freedom law in 2011 that eliminates imprisonment for journalists. However, journalists can be fined for publishing “wrong information that could spread chaos and disturb the discipline of the armed forces.”<sup>84</sup> Likewise, despite having passed a freedom of information law in 2011 after a decade of consideration, the Nigerian government has faced criticism from the press for not actually complying with any requests under the law.<sup>85</sup> In South Africa, which has the right to freedom of information in its constitution, Parliament passed a bill restricting the reporting of what it deemed “government secrets” in 2011, though this bill was rejected by President Zuma in 2013.<sup>86</sup>

With histories of secret operations, undisclosed budgets, and backroom power deals, many African militaries have a lot of work ahead of them to repair the strained relationships they have with civil society and the media. And as changing missions require the military to interact with civilians more frequently, the need for African militaries to learn how to communicate with the media is all the more important. Media training aimed at building constructive relationships would go a long way toward ameliorating levels of mistrust between African militaries and the general public.

### **Institutionalize Ethics and Accountability into Military Culture**

Security is not just the purview of the military. It includes other ministries, the judicial branch, the legislature, and civil society. As such, a professional army must maintain relationships with all key security actors in order to perform its duties effectively. The military, thus, has an obligation to institutionalize an ethical and accountable culture in order to build the trust and respect of society.

*Strengthen military discipline and duty.* African military courts have generally been inefficient and ineffective in prosecuting perpetrators of human rights abuses. A priority for military leadership then should be to strengthen the military judicial system in order to restore discipline inside African barracks.

To start, African militaries should revisit their Uniform Codes of Military Justice (UCMJ), the procedural and substantive laws that guide the military justice system. The UCMJ should provide clear guidance on offenses ranging from minor disobedience to the most serious offenses such as murder. Typically, the latter types of offenses are handled through a trial system. To limit perceptions of interference, leadership should also consider having some or all criminal prosecutions conducted independent of the military chain of command.

Making sure military justice systems are compatible with human rights standards is crucial. Most European military laws are informed by the European Convention on Human Rights.<sup>87</sup> The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights provides a similar point of reference to ensure African military justice systems are compliant with domestic legislation and international laws. If legal expertise is unavailable to do this in-country, governments and militaries should look to partners from their RECs, the AU, and globally.

For less serious offenses, military disciplinary boards often serve well. In Liberia, where the military justice system was nonexistent amid an overwhelming number of cases, it was decided that all military criminal cases should be heard before civilian courts until a fully functional courts-martial system was reinstated.<sup>88</sup> This practical approach could be useful for other post-conflict countries like Côte d'Ivoire where confronting urgent military offenses may be delayed due to competing pressures on a military judicial process undergoing reform.

The indiscipline and injustice observed within many barracks in Sub-Saharan countries is an indicator of the inadequacy of certain military disciplinary boards. Very often, the system is inconsistent and favorably prejudiced toward cases involving officers, particularly senior officers. The impossibility for a soldier to appeal unfair and prejudiced judgments discredits the board. Provisions must be made within UCMJs for appeals from military disciplinary boards to a military court or to the ministry of justice for purposes of due process.

***Reward integrity and strengthen accountability.*** Establishing an ethical military culture will entail changing incentives within the armed forces. Integrity should be a prominent criterion in personnel promotions, appointments, and rewards. This can be reinforced by strengthening human rights values and codes of conduct, training, and education.<sup>89</sup>

Similarly, opportunities for corruption must be minimized. Regardless of size, military supply offices require competent professionals and strict adherence to a sound procedural structure. Procurement is a professional skill. Thus, it is important that ministries build a strong team of procurement specialists. The experience of many countries is that it is better to have a centralized procurement office (one for the entire armed services) outside of the military as this establishes an additional layer of accountability for this frequently exploited functional area. Maintaining procurement decisions under the hierarchical system in the military creates powerful temptations for senior officers to influence the procurement process. Involving civil society (either in a monitoring role or as a participant in the protocol) in corruption-prone areas, such as procurement, would boost transparency and the integrity of the process.

Many internal dysfunctions found in African militaries could be remedied if the oversight role of militaries' inspection services were strengthened and made more autonomous. Instead of being an

office for former armed forces' chiefs of staff or high-ranking military officers, the inspection services department should be populated with a mix of both military and civilian auditors, lawyers, and policy analysts who publish reports on the state of the armed forces with respect to their various mandates. These reports would be useful for policy and management purposes as well as for considerations of promotion, appointments, and awards among officers in management roles.

These initiatives should be reinforced by a well-defined ethical framework that delineates the codes of conduct, values, and behavior expected of military personnel. Transparency International identified five key elements of such a framework:

- ◆ A single, easily accessible code of conduct for all personnel, firmly rooted in ethics and values, with accessible (non-legalistic) text
- ◆ Clear guidance on accountability, including who is responsible for the ethics program, how to report suspicions of corruption and where further advice can be found
- ◆ Regulations on bribery, gratuities, gifts and hospitality, conflicts of interest, and post-separation activities (by an individual who has left the military), ideally with case studies
- ◆ Regular ethics training and refresher courses to contextualize the regulations in real-life situations
- ◆ Periodic updating of the code and its implementation program.<sup>90</sup>

The international community could also be of help providing training in military affairs management and oversight. African militaries could share with one another their lessons learned, something on par with the African Peer Review Mechanism, which shares best practices in governance among its nation-state members. To institutionalize the lessons, techniques, and procedures gained

from these collaborations, African militaries should create a center for lessons learned in their military colleges.

*Create a military ombudsman as an independent military oversight mechanism.* Attempts at military reform are often top-down, internally driven processes, leaving the concerns of many ordinary soldiers and citizens out of the equation. Having an integrated military oversight mechanism like the inspection services department also means that the military is responsible for its own oversight, which can create conflicts of interest quickly undermining its usefulness.

An alternative or even a complement to inspection services would be an independent military ombudsman helping the military to observe the principles and practices of good governance. It would have the advantage of focusing solely on military issues but would be staffed only by civilians, with the intent of making it independent and impartial. In Canada and Germany, military ombudsmen address complaints about improper and abusive behavior in the military as well as shortcomings in military procedures and recommend corrective action in reports not only for the attention of the military but also for the legislature and the public.<sup>91</sup> Their effect is to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the military by making it accountable and responsive to its constituencies.

More than half of the countries on the continent already have an ombudsman office but they are mostly confined to civilian oversight. Like legislatures, many lack the necessary expertise for dealing with the defense sector. The key to making a military ombudsman office work would be to ensure its operational independence. It should be physically located apart from the military staff so that it can conduct its own investigations and publish reports independently of other government departments. It should also have substantial political authority – from a legal mandate to access information necessary to conduct investigations to the responsibility to issue recommendations for civil and military leadership that would require official and public responses. Most importantly, civilians who have legal, investigative,

and research experience related to the defense sector as well as top security clearance should staff the office.

The findings and recommendations published by the military ombudsman office would help strengthen parliamentary oversight and build greater transparency and accountability of the military. A military ombudsman, similarly, could be a vehicle to empower citizen interests for everything from complaints regarding conduct to identifying particular gaps in military procedures.

*Strengthen parliamentary control and institutionalize external audits.* As corruption and mismanagement in the military have far-reaching implications for national security and confidence in the entire government, external audits over the administration of public monies in the armed forces should be a national priority. Strengthening parliamentary controls over defense spending can improve the internal governance of militaries and may go a long way toward resolving the problem of accountability. Most African legislatures have a constitutional mandate to monitor the use of resources and to ensure that resources for defense are used efficiently. In South Africa, legislators are trained in the area of military spending. In addition, experts are included in parliamentary committees to help advance the debate and negotiation. Both South Africa and Uganda rely on public accounts committees to keep ministers accountable. This control by the legislature is an important line of defense against corruption and misappropriation of public monies when the inspection services or internal controls within the military and ministry of defense fail. No doubt this will take some work, especially in countries with little history of active civilian involvement in military matters, but building stronger civilian oversight is an essential component to instilling military professionalism.

Many military leaders are also involved in commercial enterprises, which not only conflict with their security mandates but also divert undeclared revenue from the public to the military. Senior



military leaders should be required to declare their assets annually to ensure they do not represent a conflict of interest as well as to facilitate monitoring. A parliamentary inquiry or fact-finding mission can be another useful tool in identifying and tracking military income and expenditure. Anti-corruption programs that target defense expenditures tend to improve management of government spending overall. These measures introduce competition, transparency, and oversight in procurement and efforts to reduce patronage.<sup>92</sup> Keeping the defense budget confidential for national security interests should not be the repeated pretext for hiding poor military governance. Defense is a public service and as such, the public deserves to know how and why its funds are spent by the military.

## CONCLUSION

The challenges of professionalizing Africa's militaries are innumerable but not insurmountable. Ethnic and tribal biases, which some militaries inherited from the colonial era, have been purposely exploited by one (ethnic, political) group to gain or hold onto power by force at the expense of others. For developing states in Africa, it is vital that the military, the principal institution responsible for a country's defense and protection, be both national and republican. For that, it must be apolitical and dedicate itself exclusively to its mission. Unfortunately, challenges to constitutional order by the military, and behavior contrary to the rule of law by military and political leaders alike are commonplace in Africa. This situation undermines the credibility of the military in the eyes of the population it is supposed to defend. It is absolutely necessary to reverse this trend as it is a major impediment to the quest for the professionalization of militaries and democratic consolidation in Africa.

In the field, African militaries sorely lack operational capacity to effectively carry out their mission. Some of this is due to limited

resources, but force structures and missions that are misaligned with the security challenges that African states face, particularly the growing prominence of domestically based or nonstate transnational threats, are more significant contributors to weak performance and morale. Africa's armed forces must therefore be reorganized to better reconcile operational capacity to these threats as part of a strategic security posture.

But military professionalism is much more than an administrative concept. The stability and vibrancy of the society depends on militaries conducting themselves in a disciplined and honorable manner. The pursuit of professionalism in African militaries will begin with inculcating the fundamental values of ethics. The minimum values and characteristics that all military personnel in Africa must demonstrate are loyalty to one's country and its constitution, subordination to democratic civilian authority, a sense of duty, and respect for the rule of law. If these basic principles are observed, African militaries will not only become increasingly professional but meaningfully contribute to improved security and democratic governance on the continent while gaining newfound respect in the eyes of citizens.

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