THE FALTERING PROSPECT OF CRAFTING STABLE CIVIL MILITARY RELATIONS IN AFRICA'S EMERGING DEMOCRACIES

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Abstract

Without doubt the traditional concerns of preventing military incursion in politics and ensuring their subordination to civil authority remain important. However other issues as accountability in military procurement, the deployment of the military in civil unrest, military excesses on national security duties among other are now of serious concerns. While acknowledging the importance of other emerging issues in civil-military relations this paper looks at the modalities employed by civil leaders in Africa's emerging democracies at addressing core concerns underpinning the crafting of stable civil-military relations on the continent. Specifically this effort is directed at assessing how contemporary political leaders in the continent are addressing the twin issues of preventing military foray into national body politics and ensuring military subordination to constituted civil authorities within the ambit of Africa's weak democratic institutions. The paper draws on past experiences and current realities to advance the argument that efforts at ensuring democratic control of the military and evolving stable civil-military relations in Africa's democratizing states are faltering at best.

Keywords: Africa, democratization, military intervention, civil-military relations

Introduction

The armed forces as a distinct social group occupy a significant position in the political life of any state. The uniqueness stems from the fact that the military establishment is the only organized body of men constitutionally invested with the monopoly in the use of coercive force. The bearing of arms and use of force by national armed forces are directed at maintaining internal law and order and the protection of the political community against external aggression. Given that the primary responsibility of any political leader is that of protecting the political community from internal insurrection and external aggression, the military becomes a necessary evil that the state has to contend with, because as Hobbes noted, 'covenants without swords are nothing but mere words' (cited in Adekanye, 1978).

While the existence of the armed forces may be necessary, they portend a great danger to the community they are meant to serve. Although Bonaparte's maxim that without an army there is neither independence nor civil liberty may be true, it is also important that political leaders consistently remember Burke's warning that an armed discipline body is dangerous to liberty' (Baynham, 1992). Much as Machiavelli's assertion that the 'chief foundations of all states, whether new, old or mixed are good arms' remains true in all clime and time, it is essential to remember that many a time the good arms have been turned against the political community it is meant to protect. Given the essentiality of the military to the maintenance of the political order and the danger inherent in its overwhelming superiority in the use of force, most political communities have been faced with the problematic of how best to subject the military to the prevailing civilian order. This is the crux of civil-military relations discourse whether by ancient political philosophers or contemporary political thinkers.

In the western world, the common assumption is that it is natural for the military to obey the civil orders. However, in reality this is far from being the norms. Since the end of the Second World War, more than three quarters of states in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East have been subjected to varying degree of military incursion into their body politics (Finer, 1975). States such as Burma, Pakistan, Thailand and Syria have

been repeatedly prone to and were indeed sustained by the military. In Africa more than half of states on the continent have witnessed at least a military coup.

Western democracies viewed by many as an area noted for civil supremacy, efforts at controlling the political aspiration of the military have not enjoyed outright success. While the constitution in France reiterated the supremacy of the political authorities over the armed forces, yet the military was responsible for effecting successful changes in the form of government in 1799, 1815, 1851 and 1958. It also tried to do so but failed in 1960 and 1962. South of Europe, Portuguese military staged a successful coup in 1974, while in Greece and Turkey the military has successfully effected changes in government on a number of occasion since 1945 (Adeshina, 1999). In Turkey in particular the military has arrogated to itself the responsibility of being the guardian of Turkish political secularism and has provided bulwark to successive civilian administration.

Rather than been an issue particular to a region, military foray into politics is indeed a global phenomenon. With the exception of North America there is no region of the world that has not witnessed one form of military rule or incursion at one point in time. The problem of civilian control of the military therefore remains critical for regimes whether authoritarian or democratic. This piece discusses the problem of civilian control of the military in Africa. In particular it takes a cursory look at the history of military involvement in African politics, the demilitarization of the state and politics in Africa resulting from the wave of democratization that swept through the continent. This paper also assesses the striving of and modalities deployed by civil authorities in Africa's old authoritarian regimes and new democracies to contain the military and evolve stable civil-military relations.

Military intervention in post-colonial Africa politics
Analysts, commentators and scholars of Africa politics in the decade of independence never expected that the military will come to play dominant roles in the politics of the newly independent states. Scholars of African politics were at that time dismissive of the military as to assert that ---'in few of the independent African states is the military elite

much in evidence in the social and political life of their polity (Gutteridge, 1976; Lloyd, 1966). Their non-prominence as at that time led to apathy and ignorance about the armed forces among the then emerging African political elite (Welch, 1972). Looking back on continental developments, it seems surprising that the potential impact of the military was not fully anticipated as at then, given the experience in Latin America and the Middle East.

While the 'force publique' mutiny in the Congo and the attempted overthrow of the Emperor of Ethiopia by the Imperial Guard had already taken place by 1960, these were events in two very different categories. One was a mutiny about pay and promotion while the other was a calculated attempt to overthrow an existing social order (Gutteridge, 1976). Different as the underlying factors for these two incidents might be they pointed to the potential of the military in the emerging African states as at then to disrupt the prevailing political order in their respective countries. That propensity has been enacted even earlier before 1960, though it was not taken seriously. As early as 1952 the Egyptian military under Gamel Nasser had overthrown the monarchy and imposed military authoritarian rule.

The tendency and capability of the armed forces in African states to intervene in politics began to manifest in clear term by 1963. The main sequence of events began in Togo when president Sylvanus Olympio was assassinated by rebelling officers and men of the Togolese armed forces. A new government installed under civilian president Nicholas Grunitzky was later overthrown by Colonel Etienne Eyadema on the fourth anniversary of Olympio murder (Ocran, 1977). Eyadema ruled Togo as a military dictator for 38 years till his death in February 2005. Wave of military coups and coup d'états followed in quick succession after the Togolese incident.

Specifically there were four coups in 1965; in 1966 it was six, two within the space of six months in Nigeria. By 1975 Benin republic had recorded no less than five coups (Baynham, 1992). As at 1984, Africa had experienced 56 successful coups, while 65 attempts failed. By the dawn of the 1990s out of 52 independent African states, only 11

had been spared the legacy of military coup or conspiracy to upturn constitutional government (Adeshina, 1999: 8). As at present the list of states spared from the throes of military intervention continued to shrink. A notable example in this regard was the coup that occurred in Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast) in December 1999 and the country's descent into civil conflict.

Given the ease with which Africa military overthrow the civil order, questions have been asked as to what motivates the various interventions. The issues underlying military coup in Africa have occupied the attention of scholars of civil-military relations since the 1960s. There are volumes of scholarly works that seek to explain the causes of military intervention in African and other third world countries. Classic among such are Finer's (1962) path breaking and definitive work. Other prominent scholarly works that seek to account for military intervention in third world states include; Decalo (1973); Gutteridge (1962, 1975); Huntington, (1968); Janowitz (1964); Luckham (1971); Nordlinger (1970) among other.

Given the impressive volume of literature that address the causes and circumstances under which military intervention takes place it will be difficult to replicate in concise form all the strands of debate here. The list of causes and circumstances seems to be endless. It ranges from economic crisis, excruciating poverty, corruption, regional/ethnic rivalry and marginalization, political repression of opposition, maladministration, foreign interference, personal and corporate interest protection among many other issue and/or grievances whether objective or not (Adeshina, 1999; Baynham, 1992; Gutteridge, 1975; Ocran, 1977). Though military rulers in Africa were credited with some impressive list of success and achievements, it is worthy to reiterate that military regimes performances were not in any way better than those of the civilian regimes they overthrew. With benefit of hindsight it has come to be realized that the military regimes in Africa were as well guilty of those crimes that they highlighted as necessitating their interventions. Military dictators are themselves corrupt; their regimes were repressive and marked by patrimonial practices of the highest order. There are abundant cases across Africa that

were testimonies to the plundering and mis-governance of the military regimes across states on the continent.

Africa's faltering democratization process

Africa like other regions of the world has not been spared from the wave of political transition from varying brands of dictatorship to liberal democracy. By the early 1990s, African states and their dictatorial leaders have lost legitimacy to rule. Economies of most states on the continent were in shambles as a result of corruption and mismanagement. Worsening thing was the failure of World Bank and IMF stabilization economic policies encapsulated in Structural Adjustment Programme, SAP. As the socio-economic and political situations in many of the states worsens, the various segment of their polity become enraged. As public disenchantment grows, opposition to dictatorial rule mushrooms across the continent. The rising popular opposition coupled with external pressure from the international community forced many military dictators on the continent to accede to holding multi-party elections and open up the democratic space (Adeshina, 1999; Ihonvbere, 1997).

The struggle for democratization and demilitarization in Africa was fuelled by diverse social constituencies that include; religious leaders, student body, professional bodies and other social and pro-democracy groups. The popular struggle itself took various forms; industrial strikes, civil disobedience, riots, demonstrations, underground and open enlightenment and advocacy campaigns and other form of civil protest. In rare case was armed confrontation resorted to by the opposition groups and civil society. The ruling elite response to pro-democracy agitation was markedly different depending on a constellation of factors that range from strength and cohesion of the opposition, extent of external pressure, available exit option, the political dynamic within the opposition front among other (Ihonvbere, 1997).

Notwithstanding the extent of pressure both internal and external, the result of pro-democracy struggles in Africa has been mixed. Partial success has been achieved in some places while in other dictatorial rule continues unabated. In those states where sitting

authoritarian and military regimes have been forced to conduct liberal multi-party elections the electoral process was seriously perverted and democratization drive greatly flawed. The sad state of democratization in Africa notwithstanding, the story has been interesting in few places. The most successful of the case been the change from apartheid to multi-racial and multi-party democracy in South Africa.

In Ghana, Jerry Rawlings civilianized himself and stuck to power. This was replicated in many other states across the continent. For instance in Kenya, President Arap Moi manipulated the electoral process during the 1991 multi-party elections to stay in office. In Guinea and Gambia, Lamizana Conteh and Yahaya Jameh out of pressure removed their uniforms, manipulated the electoral process and claimed victories in national elections to remain in power. While this might have been the preponderant pattern yet there are instances where dictators were forced out of power. In Malawi, Hasting Kamuzu Banda was defeated in elections after 30 years of repressive rule, while Mathieu Kerekou tasted defeat in Benin Republic in the 1991 multi party national elections (Lumumba-Kasongo, 2005). Siad Barre and Mengistu Hiale Mariam dictatorial regimes collapsed in Somalia and Ethiopia not through elections but popular armed rebellion. In Nigeria there was a tortuous transition, annulment of the presidential polls and the historic June 12 crisis. This was followed by another military spell under General Abacha, his sham transition and death and the General Abdulsalam's transition that returned the nation to democracy in 1999.

Despite the fact that a substantial number of states on the continent are now governed by regimes brought to power in various form of controversial elections, the continent can not be said to have arrived at the dawn of competitive liberal democracy. Earlier euphoria that greeted the wave of democratization has given way to a grim realization that not much has changed. While considerable developments, have occurred with regard to the holding of elections not much can be said to have occurred at the institutional and structural level with regards to enthroning democratic politics and governance on the continent.

Democratic control of the Armed Forces and the crafting of stable civil-military relations in Africa

One of the major challenges facing all democratic societies in both developed and developing state is that of crafting effective civilian control of the military. This is particularly critical for state emerging from military dictatorship and authoritarian to liberal multi-party democracy. In such state two central issues appear dominant in the discourse on civil-military relations. The first is with regards to preventing actual military interventions that can truncate the democratization process. Such concern becomes important given the history of military incursion in politics on the continent. The military coup in Sao Tome and Principe that nearly toppled the civilian regime in 2003 and the February 2010 coup in Republique du Niger (Niger Republic) were vivid reminders that this concern needs to be taken serious. The second issue of concern in democratizing African states relates to the best modality for subjecting the military to effective civilian control.

While the military has and still remains a major player in the politics of states on the continent that should not be taken to mean that it has played dominant roles in virtually all states on the continent. Far from this, a number of regimes have successfully maintained civilian authority over their military establishment. Cameroon, Gabon, Swaziland, Botswana, Tanzania, Kenya, Tunisia, Morocco and Senegal all have recorded varying degree of success in efforts directed at curtailing direct military intervention aside effecting appreciable level of civil authority control over defense policy making, implementation, budgeting and other issues as they affect the military establishment.

Generally, in discussing civil control of the military, Huntington (1957) categorized modalities available to civilian ruler into two: the objective and subjective model of control. This pattern is a replica of the formal constitutional cum legal and penetration models of civil control of the armed forces (Williams, 2002). In the objective or legal model the military is disciplined by its professional ethics. The military establishment willingly accedes to civil control as enshrined in the constitution of the state and their

service acts. Of paramount importance to the military will be the discharge of their constitutional responsibilities and service to the larger community (Baynham, 1992). This model represents the observable reality in most consolidated democracy of Western Europe, North America and the Scandinavia. The military in these societies is highly disciplined, respects civilian authority and enjoys considerable autonomy with regards to military operational issues. Civil control manifest through the executive direction of national defense policy and planning, parliamentary oversight on defense issues particularly on military budget and civil society advocacy and watchdog functions (Cottey, Edmunds and Forster, 2002).

On the other hand in the subjective/penetration model, civil supremacy is assured through the employment of various non-democratic tactics as; ethnic manipulation, divide and rule, co-option of influential military figures, indoctrination, instrumental pay-offs, bias recruitment, promotion and posting of loyal officer among others. In many third world states and especially in Africa's fledging democracies, the minimal success achieved in the area of civil-military relations is largely attributed to the penetration model (Williams, 2002: 266). The techniques and strategies adopted by African rulers in bringing the military under minimal civil control are varied and dictated by the prevailing socio-economic and political circumstances in which the regime finds itself. The common strategies that have been utilized by ruling regimes on the continent are discussed below.

Weakening the Armed Forces

One of the important strategies used by regimes in Africa to minimize the threat of intervention and ensure civilian control is to tactically weaken the military. In achieving this end Decalo (1989) suggests two measures. The first measure is the strategy of keeping disloyal elements and politically inclined officers out of the forces. This amounted to selective disengagement of officers that have tasted political power especially during military rules. President Obasanjo massive retirement of more than 100 political Generals and other officers of the Nigerian Armed Forces is a good example (Ojo, 2006). The Obasanjo purge according to Adekanye (2000) was meant to serve three objectives: achieve political subordination and re-professionalization of the military,

reduce intra-officers rivalry and neutralize the danger posed by the political Generals to the fledging democratic regime. Related to the Nigeria example was the purge of non Kikuyu officers from the General Service Unit [GSU] in Kenya under the presidency of Jomo Kenyatta (N'diaye, 2002).

Another strategy for weakening the military is the infiltration of the armed forces with political spies. This strategy proved useful to Omar Bongo of Gabon in foiling military conspiracy against his dictatorial rule. It also worked for General Babangida and Abacha and ensured their survival in power from 1985 to 1998 in Nigeria. The major draw-back of the tactic is that it erodes espirit de corp. and diminishes the level of confidence and trust within the military establishment. Aside these, the proclivity of the military can be reduced by purposely creating a counter-force armed unit against the military. This can be in form of an institutional unit like the National Security Service in Ghana under Nkrumah; the Special Presidential Division in Mobutu Zaire; the General Service Unit, Kenya Mobile Police under Presidents Kenyatta and Moi; the Presidential Guard of President Derby in Chad; the Brigade of Guard in Nigeria and the Special Task Force under General Abacha (Adeshina, 1999; N'diaye, 2002).

Politicization and popularization of the military
Another strategy of ensuring civilian control and oversight over the military establishment is that of popularizing and politicizing the military. By this the national political leaders ensure that proper indoctrination was given to the ranks and files within the nation's military forces such that they will without compulsion accede to civil control and regulation. This practice was adopted in Tanzania by the country's national idol and long time ruler, the Late Julius Nyerere. Tanzania did not inherit a people defense force from the British after independence; rather it was circumstances that necessitated the adoption of, and the institutionalization of a popular defense force in Tanzania.

While the idea of basing defense on the people themselves was not new to Tanzania societies yet it was the mutiny by section of the colonially inherited Tanganyika Rifles in 1964 that heralded the formation of a people defense forces in the country (Rupiya,

Lwehabura and Roux, 2006). The Tanzania Peoples' Defence Force [TPDF] created in September 1964 from the scratch was put in place to replace the mutinous armed forces. While few old hands from the disbanded force were retrained into the TPDF the entry point for most of the recruits into the force was through TANU youth wing. By this practice men of the TPDF joined the forces through the instrumentality of the party. From its inception, it was ingrained in the troops that they were a people's force under civilian control. They were always reminded of their difference from the colonial armed forces. To say the least they were being exhorted not to behave like the army that mutinied in January 1964. The new military was given a very clear mission, to defend Tanzania and everything Tanzanian, especially the people and their political ideology. Intensive efforts were made at indoctrination, with almost a quarter of training time reserved for politics. As a result, not only the commanders but all the troops knew exactly where they stood in relation to the party, the government and the people (Lupogo, 2001). With benefit of hindsight the TPDF created by Nyerere was meant to be a political military establishment whose objective will be to serve the interest of the civil political leaders, the party and the state (Nestor, 2006).

The guidelines of the Tanzania African National Union [TANU] the de facto ruling party gave the directive that the party shall control the military and ensure that the primary task of the military during peacetime was to enable the people to defend their independence and their policies of socialism and self-reliance. This stand was combined with country wide militia training for the people through the education system. Through extensive training, indoctrination and massive social mobilization campaign the new military was embraced by the people as partners in the development and defense of the country. According to the new guidelines soldiers were involved in politics, including standing for elections and competing for public office. Not only this the new military force engaged in varying social and infrastructure development project in partnership with civilians especially in rural communities. The rank and file of the new force was never privileged over other civil groups or professions. During difficult times the military personnel suffered privation like everyone else within the nation's population.

The prevailing political ideology of African Socialism practiced under Nyerere reign regarded the TPDF as a tool for nation building and defense. The armed forces joined the other institutions in the pool from which talent was picked and deployed wherever it was required. The new people defense force was so politicized to the extent that officers of the TPDF were co-opted into various civil political positions to serve the nation. At one stage, the military had more than its fair share of district commissioners. During the mid-1980s, about a quarter of the district commissioners were army officers. As late as 1990, 30 percent of the mainland regional commissioners were from the military. The district and regional commissioners were also the party secretaries in their respective areas, posts that carried heavy administrative and political responsibilities. Cabinet posts were also open to army officers either through election to parliament or direct appointment (Lupogo, 2001).

Through this practice members of the TPDF were properly integrated into the socio-political fabric and economic life of the state. The armed forces did not feel left out of the action, as it was represented in the cabinet, the regional and district offices. The military also has a strong presence in urban and rural areas as militia instructors. They could therefore not point accusing fingers at other political leaders because they were in it together. The military was part of the government and the party hierarchy. It could almost be maintained that they did not need a *coup d'état* as such action would not but affect the military establishment itself. The TPDF could only carry out a *coup d'etat* against it own interest.

While unsuccessful coup attempts were made by sections of the TPDF yet the success of Tanzania military politicization and indoctrination was that none of the attempts were successful in usurping the civil political order. Since the adoption of multiparty democracy in Tanzania attempts have been made at decoupling not only the security forces from the state but also the party and civil service. Such efforts at institutionalizing non-partisan control of the military were embedded in the recommendation of the 1991 Presidential Commission on Single Party or Multi-party system in Tanzania popularly referred to as the Nyalali Commission (Rupiya, 2006).

Ethnic recruitment, posting and promotion

The strategy of ethnic military recruitment was initiated by the colonialist in their recruitment to the various colonial military forces. The British and the Belgian were particularly noted for instituting 'Ethnic Warrior' recruitment practice in their former colonies. In post-colonial Africa this practice has been adopted by political leaders to ensure loyalty, neutralize imminent threats of intervention and effect the subordination of the military to their rule. President Kenyatta 'Kikuyinized' the Kenya military and the General Service Unit. When Moi took over the reign of the state he followed in the step of Kenyatta and systematically replaced Kikuyu officers in the military and GSU with officers from his Kalenjin ethnic group. The strategy was also adopted by President Bongo in Gabon, Hamani Diori in Niger, Eyadema in Togo, Museveni in Uganda among other rulers. For these regimes ethnicization when combined with other strategies has ensured their survival and the subordination of the military to their rule.

Aside ethnicizing the forces, African rulers have utilized selective promotion for loyal officers mostly from their ethnic group. This can also be complemented by posting reliable and loyal officers to important and sensitive security and military position and assignment. In Gabon, President Bongo has consistently assigned his family member to sensitive security positions. In Zambia and Botswana, former Presidents Kenneth Kaunda and Seretse Khama used their respective sons to monitor the military (Adeshina, 1999). It is instructive to note that both countries have not experienced successful military intervention. While this might not be the only option when combined with others it has helped in taming the military and ensure their control little as this may be.

Instrumental and material pay-offs

Another stabilizing control mechanism is the 'buying' of officers loyalty through material inducements particularly pay rise. Rewards can also be in form of corporate project to boost morale and unscrupulously enrich few officers in the process, like the Thebephatshwa airbase project at Mapharangwane in Botswana. Individual reward may involve accelerated promotion as enjoyed by Botswana newly inaugurated President

retired Lt. General Ian Khama Seretse Khama while serving in the Botswana Defense Force. It may also be in form of overseas courses, duty free cars, and land allocation among other inducements. The allocation of Peugeot Cars though to be paid for through deduction from salary, land allocation in choice areas to serving and retired Generals in Nigeria are classic example. In Kenya Presidents Kenyatta and Moi also utilized monetary pay-off and other material rewards as carrot for inducing control over the military and buying officers' loyalty (N'diaye, 2002). Other tactics like co-option can also be used to neutralize and safeguard regime. This was the case with the appointment of General Khama rtd to the position of Botswana Vice President and Minister of Presidential Affairs and Public Administration in 1998 and that of General Mompati Merafhe in 1995 to the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs of Botswana (Malomo, 2001). Aside co-option, expatriate or mercenary have also been utilized to provide regime survival, while foreign troop based in a territory are relied upon. France provides this form of support for its former colonies and crony regimes in Africa.

Conclusion

The piece has addressed the issue of military incursion in politics in Africa, the democratization drive and the varying efforts directed at ensuring civil control of the military in Africa's emerging democracies. In particular it notes that the relative success so far achieved in subjecting the military to civil control in Africa's fledgling democracies have come through the use of the subjective measures. The above discussed subjective strategies that have been deployed to ensure regime survival, subordination of the military to civil authority and to ward off the possibility of military intervention no doubt have achieved relative success. However, they are at the long-run unsatisfactory compared with the institutionalization of civil control through professionalism, non-politicization, re-orientation, strengthening parliamentary and civil society oversight capacities among other legal-constitutional modalities for ensuring civil control over the military establishment. For society transiting from authoritarian rule to democracy reforming the character of civil-military relations is an important issue in the success of efforts at evolving a stable and mutually benefiting working relationship between the civil authority and the military establishment.

The reformation according to Adekanye (2001) will entail ensuring military subordination to civil rule, re-professionalism, empowering civil society to provide effective check, demilitarizing the society and providing effective policing. These issues are at the core of evolving stable civil-military relations and ensuring democratic consolidation in Africa's emerging democracies. Until African states especially those transiting from authoritarian rule to liberal multiparty democracy are able to address these issues satisfactorily, their effort at crafting stable civil-military relations will remain elusive and an exercise in futility.

Without much doubt the problematic of civil-military relations in the contemporary world is no longer restricted to the twin issues of preventing military foray in politics and ensuring their subordination to civil authorities. Now it involves ranges of issues distinct but related to these traditional concerns. While the challenges of evolving stable civil-military relations are issues that most states have to grapple with it becomes critical in states emerging from the throes of dictatorial rule because the survival of the emerging democratic order and the deepening of the democratization process are also hinged on how well the ruling political elite manage the complexity of issues surrounding civil-military relations. Herein lies the centrality of crafting a stable working relationship between and among the stakeholders involved in the demilitarization, democratization and crafting of stable civil-military relations in Africa's emerging democracies.

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