# The Future of Demilitarisation and Civil Military Relations in West Africa: Challenges and Prospects for Democratic Consolidation*

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## Abstract

*This paper examines the state of civil-military relations and the prospects for demilitarisation and democratisation in contemporary West Africa. Its underlying thesis is that West Africa poses one of the greatest dilemmas to the prospects for demilitarisation in Africa. At the same time, it offers a potentially useful mechanism for regional peace and security with implications for (de)militarisation in Africa. While the paper recognises the historico-structural dimensions of militarisation as well as the behavioural obstacles to demilitarisation, it captures the challenges and prospects in terms of the complexity of state-civil society relations and suggests a holistic understanding of the concept of security. This, it does with a view to de-emphasising force as the key mechanism for conflict resolution, and promoting an inclusive institutional framework for demilitarisation and development.*

## Introduction

Militarisation is a multi-dimensional process containing phenomena such as rearmament, the growth of armed forces, an increasing role for the military in decision making process, an increasing role for force in conflict resolution and the spread of "militaristic" values. In general, ... militarisation is a process whereby the "civilian" sphere is increasingly militarised towards a state of excess, usually referred to as "militarism" (Hettne, 1988,18).

The West Africa region presents Africa with some of its greatest challenges to demilitarisation today. If one takes the incidence of conflicts in the region, the increased flow of arms, the activity of private armies, the prime place occupied by force in conflict resolution and the continued influence of the military in the political decision-making process as the militarisation index, West Africa is one region that ought to worry observers deeply. In reviewing the current security situation in Africa and, exploring the relationship between militarisation, armed conflict and underdevelopment, an understanding of the security challenges of demilitarisation in the region should help illuminate our assessment of the prospects for solutions.

In this paper, demilitarisation is understood in both qualitative and quantitative terms. The central premise of the paper is that although demilitarisation in all its dimensions constitutes an essential requirement for establishing stable civil-military relations, economic development and therefore democratic consolidation, there can be distorting consequences especially when it is reduced to a bean-counting exercise. The academic and policy implications of this can be negative, especially when the actual results do not fit the expected outcomes. A good example of this is the trade-off hypothesis that is popular in studies on disarmament and development, even when there is evidence that a decrease in defence expenditure does not necessarily translate into an increase in social spending.[1] In West Africa where political leaders have been known to pursue "guns" and "butter" objectives, military spending does develop a life of its own and becomes autonomous of overall national spending. Often times, reduction in military spending leads to non-consumer defence spending, not increased expenditure on the productive aspect of the civil sector nor on long-term social welfare spending like education or health.[2] Demilitarisation should therefore be seen not as a set of technical and administrative arrangements that automatically flow from post conflict reconstruction efforts, but as part of complex political processes which must address the root causes of conflict.[3]

In our recognition of the need for a holistic approach to the problems of security, democratisation and development, this paper looks at the material base of militarisation as well as its behavioural and socio-cultural dimensions. To enable us to synthesise the structural and the symptomatic issues relevant to the militarisation-demilitarisation debate, conflict is examined at the political and psychological levels. Since the issues involved cannot be captured simply through a theorisation of historical experiences premised upon the separation of the "domestic" and the "international", the "economic" and the "political", the demilitarisation dilemma is also seen in terms of its global, regional, national and sub-national complexities. Primacy is however given in our analysis to state-civil society relations in West Africa; and to how state power relates to the key economic and social forces in affected societies. This way, militarisation would be properly

put into context and solving the problems and achieving the prospects of demilitarisation in Africa would not be reduced to a number crunching exercises.

## The Paradox of Democratisation and Demilitarisation in West Africa

The record of African countries in democratic transition, a decade after the post-cold war "third wave", underlines the enormity of the task of demilitarising politics and ensuring stable civil-military relations in a democracy. Although African countries are democratising in the formal sense, and significant strides have been made in the areas of civil-military relations and reduced military expenditure, it may be misleading to speak of democratic governments if by this it is understood that the formal end of authoritarian structures also marks a definitive break with authoritarian practices – abuse of human rights, state-engineered conflicts and the militarisation of decision-making processes. Of the several countries that democratised during the past decade, none can as yet boast of a serious movement beyond the formal processes of legitimation through "free" and "fair" elections. Hence, General Eyadema could openly rig elections and usurp the powers of the Electoral Commission in the belief that the essential defining feature of the electoral process is his being declared the winner. The international community has most often supported these fundamentally flawed processes in the name of political stability. In view of the authoritarian character of the democratisation process in these countries, several scholars like Diamond & Plattner (1997), Mkandiware and Olukoshi (1995) have criticised these so-called new democracies as electoral democracies, illiberal democracies, or pro-forma democracies.

West Africa, which appeared to have led the democratic reform process in the immediate post- cold war era, seems to typify this obsession with elections as representing democracy. In the past five years, the region has regressed to one of "home-grown" *democraduras*, quasi-dictatorships, personalised autocracies, pacted democracies, stolen elections and endless transitions leaving in its trail nominally civilianised.[4] military rulers/warlords in Burkina-Faso, Ghana, the Gambia, Niger, Togo, Benin, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Chad and Liberia; "debilitating democracies" in Cotê d'Ivoire, Senegal, Cameroon and Mauritania; and a full blown military dictatorship in the region's largest country – Nigeria. Even in Mali, originally seen as a strong beacon of hope for democratic consolidation, things are now beginning to look uncertain.

An essential feature of peace-building and conflict management is often the degree to which consensus can be achieved among parties in conflict. But in situations where elections have become a "legitimate" means of consolidating political exclusion and authoritarianism, the opposition has often resorted to violence as the only means of challenging these practices; and this could become

a potential source of domestic instability, especially in countries where the nationality question is yet to be resolved to the satisfaction of all players. In a sense this is the paradox of the democratisation-demilitarisation process. On the one hand, asking authoritarian governments with few or no answers to their countries' economic and social problems to demilitarise could only be seen by incumbents as political suicide. On the other hand, advising those excluded from the political process to put their faith in "electoral democracy", when they know everywhere that the deck is stacked against them, can only engender conflict. The militarist option now prevalent in the West Africa region must be seen, in part, as the inevitable consequence of the acute nature of internal contradictions and the almost total absence of any credible mechanisms for mediating conflict and seeking enduring resolutions. There are however other challenges that must be taken into account in assessing the future of demilitarisation on the continent. These challenges are discussed below.

## The Challenge of the Military Psyche
In spite of the rather pessimistic picture painted above, military disengagement from politics is still the most important first step towards democratic reform, even if it does not equate with civilian, democratic control. Indeed, from the evidence available, demilitarisation of politics has widened the space within which genuine democratic reform is possible and sustainable. Even so, purging politics of its current militarism, especially in a body politic that has become atomised and, in which the symbols, values, and ethos of the military are reproduced in large sections of civil-society, still appears difficult to attain.[5] Given the prevailing political culture bred by three decades of militarisation and authoritarian control, perhaps the greatest challenge lies in dealing with the psychology of militarism and the aura of invincibility that this has created. As argued by Hothne (*op cit.*), it is quite possible to have militarism without having the military in power. This is why, "in some African countries, political transition has involved a reconfiguration of political, economic and military elites, rather than an opening up of the political system and broadening of participation".[6] Indeed, this is more likely to be the case if the "new democrats" come from a military background as the situation is in West Africa where what we have are "shadow military states" (ECA/GCA 1998), rather than democratic countries. This also explains the phenomenon of child soldiers who have exchanged their school pens and pencils for rifles and grenades, and university graduates who have dropped their diplomas for military commissions. Traumatised by violence and long years of existence under military and authoritarian structures, they have mostly tendered to glorify a regime in which traditional norms and the rule of law have little or no meaning. A critical task in consolidating democracies and rebuilding stable civil-military relations therefore lies in reclaiming the militarised mind.

## The Legacy of Colonialism

Tied to the challenge of the military psyche has been the military's colonial legacy, therefore an understanding of the colonial character of the military is a crucial factor in the determination of the praetorian instincts of several West African armies. The history of many of these armies can be traced from the small mercenary forces that had been used to establish British and French rule in West Africa.[7] On the one hand, nationalist leaders saw the army as a reactionary force having been used to legitimise colonial rule. They were convinced that it could not be trusted in the task of nation-building. Since many of these nationalist leaders went on to become the leading figures in the post-colonial states, there was always a deep seated suspicion among them and the people they governed that the military was an institution to be wary of if co-optation failed. In addition to this was the perception of the military establishment as the place for drop-outs. On the other hand, Africans in colonial armies had developed an attitude that disposed them towards direct involvement in political affairs. As Michael Crowder argued:

> Africans had fought alongside white men, killed white men, seen brave Africans and white cowards, slept with white women, met white soldiers who treated them as equals, or who were like themselves, hardly educated … Above all, having fought in the defence of freedom, *they considered it their right that they should share in the government of the land* [my emphasis].[8]

This orientation was later encouraged and exploited by civilian groups who felt excluded from power. The result was the rampant *coups d'état* that characterised the politics of the region in the 1960s and 70s. Having discovered its own indispensability to political society, the military enhanced its place in civil society much to the detriment of civilian regimes.[9] This was compounded by the fact that the ruling elites in political and civil society, were ignorant of the military.

## The Challenge of an Ignorant Civilian Political Elite

The deep resentment against the military by the civilian political elite because of the former's colonial past as well as its post-independence involvement in politics resulted in a civilian elite that remained on the one hand, dependent on the military for survival when in power, and on the other hand, ignorant about the military as an institution. Even when civilians are in charge of the military establishment, knowledge of the military is often sketchy or at worst, virtually non-existent. Any close study of civilian governments' defence policies and practices in West Africa would immediately reveal the reluctance to develop independent knowledge about the psychological and sociological underpinnings of the military institution. The inability of the civilian political elite to challenge military judgment on

operational as well as security issues aided the military in the struggle for political power.

In Nigeria, for instance, the military has always preyed on this ignorance which has in turn precluded the development of a civilian, strategic understanding of the operational requirement for accountable armed forces. In effect, since the military has been responsible for both operational and policy control over defence and political matters, there was no alternative, countervailing system to scrutinise its decisions, hold it accountable, and submit it to ultimate civil control. This lack of effective oversight is perhaps the single most important factor responsible for the demise of the few civilian, democratic governments and the rise of military "democrats" under various guises in West Africa. The military profession, like any other, finds it difficult to respect a Commander-in-Chief or a Defence Minister who lacks a basic understanding of the institution, yet this is more often than not the situation in most West African democracies. The experienced Defence Minister in Ghana, Alhaji Mahama Idrissu recently referred to the difficulty of penetrating the cordon of secrecy that continued to surround the Armed Forces in Ghana, after 13 years as head of the Defence Ministry.[10] In Nigeria, during the second republic, the Minister of Defence was generally clueless about the decisions made by the military, and had no independent means of assessing military judgments placed before him. In short, the military has maintained virtual control over the military decision-making process.[11]

The need to invest the defence ministry with considerable political power, and the administrative and political leadership with institutional knowledge is crucial to earning the respect and confidence of the armed forces. The challenge remains one of overcoming the historical reluctance of the civilian political elite to become the source of countervailing power capable of subjecting military policy to critical scrutiny and control. For in any situation where the civilian elites do not take the task of controlling the formulation of military policy seriously, the vacuum is often occupied by the military which ends up dictating to the civilian political leadership with impunity. At the level of the executive, parliament and the civilian bureaucracy, the conscious will to direct policy must be regained and sustained in the same way this has happened in countries like Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay, to mention a few, that have moved from prolonged military rule to democracy.

## The Challenge of a Mission: Redefining the Military Role in Society

In addition to lacking effective oversight from the civilian political elite and the general populace, a clear and identifiable military mission tied closely to its traditional duties and professional training is absent. The threat of a military without a well defined mission therefore becomes real in countries where the military is preoccupied with dual responsibility for political and defence matters.

Ideally, military missions are determined largely by the objective security needs of a country, which must of necessity be subject to periodic review. By extending the military's responsibilities beyond defence, or extending its defence duties to include others like nation-building and internal security, the professionalism of the military is inevitably undermined. The political uses of military talents, for instance, has been shown to be counter-productive in areas where the military is needed to function like a fighting force.[12] Although some countries in West Africa have armies with a fine reputation for international peacekeeping duties, their soldiers have been found wanting when called upon to undertake such missions largely because of the disorientation that arises from bad military leadership. Yet, international peacekeeping seems to offer a solution to the challenge posed by the lack of mission for a military that is out of government since this is one role that is not far removed from its primary duty of defence of territorial integrity and state sovereignty.

Since no country in West Africa faces any severe external threat, one would expect the military to redefine its role and mission to accommodate the changing geopolitical realities. However, for a military that is in search of an ideological legitimation for its place in the body politic, its own security in politics has become synonymous with national security. That is the "ideas of the ruling regime have become the ruling ideas" defined as national security, with the military concentrating on the best way to enhance the security of successive military governments. This aberration from the traditional military mission has opened to military professionals a wide range of rent-seeking opportunities through their direct involvement in the running of bureaucracies, special task forces, internal security, humanitarian and disaster management as well as social welfare projects. Some military regimes like the one headed by Rawlings, exploited this distorted mission to create populist support through organs such as the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs) which later formed the template for his (Rawlings') return to power as a civilian president.

While it may be superficially correct, as some scholars have argued that providing rent-seeking opportunities for the military in a civilian democracy may help curb the military's interest in direct governance, and so consolidate democracy,[13] there are serious implications in at least two broad areas for sustainable civil-military relations in a democracy. First, because the ruling military elite has now acquired extensive experience in running all kinds of civilian based projects with good opportunities for rent-seeking, the experience and clout gained from mere participation in such activities have undermined the notion that the military is unfit for civilian administration. Second, as Louis Goodman argues, "a real danger exists that involvement of the military in alternate missions may lead the military to neglect its core mission by failing to maintain combat readiness".[14] A third caution may be added. There is the temptation to encourage military

involvement in developmental roles in civil society, as has been the case in countries like Tanzania and Senegal – and these countries seem to enjoy fairly stable civil-military relations. It is however, my contention that this notion poses enormous danger to the objective of demilitarising political society. At the root of it, all is the danger posed by the authoritarian enclaves left behind by ex-military rulers especially where these enclaves are determined to frustrate the consolidation of democracy in societies that have just emerged from prolonged military cum authoritarian rule.

## The Challenge of Ethno-nationalism and Globalisation

The nation-state in Africa is now caught between the paradox of ethno-nationalism and globalisation both of which reduce the prospects for demilitarisation and democratisation in West Africa. During the cold war era, traditional super-power politics ensured minimum integrity and primacy of the nation-state, and the state's monopoly of the instruments of violence was taken for granted. The end of the cold war has already changed all this. The integrity of the nation-state is now under threat; and the military has become both a pawn and player in the contest arising from this situation. In the event, weapons accumulation is no longer the preserve of the state; therefore any demilitarisation project now, would have sub-national actors to contend with. In addition, the military has become an instrument of the ethnic struggle for power in many West African states leading to the perception that West African armies are the conclaves of certain ethnic groups associated with the ruling elite, civilian or military. In its recent assessment of civil-military relations in Africa, the US-based National Democratic Institute reported that ethnic tensions are more prevalent within African militaries or in relations between the military and civilian leadership.[15] According to the study, of particular concern is the "politicisation of ethnicity within African armies" which creates "an imbalance of membership of the armed forces as a whole and/or in the composition of special units." In Togo, for example, approximately 90 per cent of the members of the armed forces come from the same ethnic group. Of the 13,000 strong Togolese Armed Forces (FAT), only 3,000 are from the southern part; of the 10,000 from the North, 7,000 come from the Kabre ethnic stock of President Eyadema; and none of the 26 units in the command structure is headed by a southerner.[16]

In other countries where the ethnic cleavages do not appear as striking, there is still the perception that the military is not an equal opportunity profession. The Christian Association of Nigeria recently raised alarm about what it perceived as the lopsided recruitment of more Moslems into the Nigerian army. This perception was reinforced by the creation of the Special Bodyguard Service – a countervailing power-centre set up by the late by General Abacha and virtually dominated by recruits from General Abacha's ethnic group. The domination of the Krahn elements in Liberia under President Doe, which contributed to the loss of

confidence in the objective control of that army, has become an issue in post-conflict Liberia. In spite of the provisions of the Abuja Accords that ECOMOG should supervise disarmament and restructure the Liberian Army, the current government has asserted its right to carry out the restructuring. All the armed factions have opposed this as it is suspected that this might be an attempt to ensure that the restructured army is essentially President Taylor's ethnic army. Even in countries where the army appears to be ethnically balanced, there is a strong perception of ethnic bias in special units set up primarily for regime security. In Ghana for example, there exists the apprehension that *Ewes*, President Rawling's ethnic group, dominate special units like the 64th Commando unit.

The collapse of communism and the movement for market reform encouraged the notion that proxy wars propped up by the superpowers will fade away, if not totally disappear in Africa. Such optimism may not be unfounded since it is true that global military expenditure has plummeted, and indeed Africa's share of it has declined on an average by 1.3% during the last ten years. However, the relationship between arms reduction and political stability, demilitarisation and development, and arms control and the cold war is not inevitable. There is need for a more rigorous assessment of the relationship between arms procurement and authoritarian regimes; weapons accumulation in Africa and capital accumulation in the industrial world; structural adjustment programmes and arms procurement, militarisation, militarism and arms reduction; as well as the tortuous democratic experiments in Africa, and their impact on the future of the arms race in the next millennium.[17]

The economic aspect of globalisation[18] has compounded the problem of insecurity, violence and militarisation especially as the economic problems of the new democracies deepened and the nation-state was threatened by ethno-jingoism. Poverty remains the greatest threat to democratic consolidation in Africa today; and the overwhelming majority of the African populace is consequently marginal to the democratisation process. At the same time, there is little indication that their lot will be improved as economic and political reforms proceed. As the economic crisis worsens and social tensions increase, the new democratic regimes are compelled to resort to the same repressive means of government to safeguard regime security and capitalist development. The politics of repression under structural adjustment programmes undertaken by virtually every state in the region is the best example of this trend, especially as expressed through policies such as devaluation, de-subsidisation, de-nationalisation and deregulation, all of which are possible only where citizens' rights are suppressed. These, coupled with the exclusionary politics, have fueled local armed conflict, and the further militarisation of society, and all this with direct or indirect external collaboration. There is therefore a sense in which the current wave of militarisation in West Africa could be seen as a function of a dominant elite cartel comprising of arms manufacturers,

mineral exploiters, corporate mercenaries and Africa's authoritarian as well as new democratic governments and warlords as junior partners.

The clearest example of this external connection is the upsurge in the activities of private peacekeepers (private armies like Executive Outcomes), light weapons proliferation and the linkage to mineral exploitation in troubled West African states. In exploring the causes and potential cures of conflict in Africa, the United Nation's Secretary-General Mr. Kofi Annan referred to "interests external to Africa", who "in the competition for oil and other precious resources in Africa continue to play a large and, sometimes decisive role, both in suppressing conflict and sustaining it".[19] The Secretary-General also referred to "the role of international arms merchants in African conflicts", and "how access to resources by warring parties … has highlighted the impact that international business interests can have on the success or failure of peace efforts".[20] These trends have wider implications for the demilitarisation process and democratic consolidation in West Africa. For in a globalised world where public interest in international peacekeeping has waned considerably,[21] the security vacuum created is now being effectively occupied by unregulated private armies often linked to international business interests that are intent on maximising profit and on resource exploitation in countries in conflict.

This increasing use of mercenaries by established governments and multilateral institutions, has come under a sharp focus by the recent revelation in the British media about the link between Sandline International – a British private military organisation, the British Foreign Office and Kaba's regime in Sierra Leone which had then been ousted by a rebel group in conjunction with renegade soldiers from the Sierra Leonean army. Interestingly, Sandline shares its London premises with Diamond Works – a Canadian owned diamond prospecting corporation with major concessions in Sierra Leone, and one of Diamond Works' Directors, Tony Buckingham is the founder of Sandline International. These complex international linkages are replicated in several instances in other parts of Africa, especially in Angola and Mozambique.[22] In spite of the motives of private security organisations, opinion remains divided on their destabilising influence, and some analysts still view them as a positive factor in conflict management and peace building[23] rather than as mercenaries.

The incidence of light weapons and small arms proliferation is closely linked to the private security firms operating in Africa; and it also poses a serious challenge to the demilitarisation process in West Africa. This has been the subject of debate in multilateral circles in recent times. For example, a Panel of Government Experts appointed by the UN's Secretary-General identified uncontrolled availability of small arms and light weapons as both a causal and exacerbating factor in Africa's conflicts. According to the panel, the weapons contribute to "fuelling conflicts but also exacerbating violence and criminality".[24]

For the long term stability of any country coming out of prolonged military/ authoritarian rule, changes in military, security and defence structures are crucial and they must be approached bearing in mind the challenges posed by the various factors that impinge on the state's capacity to manage its security concerns in this era of globalisation. In policy specific terms, solutions to the proliferation of mercenaries on the continent must be sought through the revamping of the relevant legislation both at OAU, and UN levels concerning international mercenaries and arms transfer whilst ECOWAS is encouraged to legislate against the involvement of private armies in conflict situations. As a first step, there is the need to critically assess the implications of the activities of private armies for African security.[25]

## The Nigeria factor in the Demilitarisation and Democratisation Agenda in West Africa

Beyond the challenges to a successful demilitarisation programme already identified, one challenge that is particularly unique to West Africa is the position of Nigeria in all of these. The demonstration effect of continued military rule in a strategic country such as Nigeria impinges significantly on the future of demilitarisation and democratisation in the region. With a quarter of the entire African population – a population roughly equal to the combined total of its fifteen west African neighbours, a military that is by far the largest and best equipped in the region, and oil wealth unmatched by that of any of the neighbouring countries – Nigeria has been the source of envy and pride for most African countries. In its good days, its resources provided, and in some cases – still provide the source of the common good in the region. Put in the simplest of terms, if Nigeria disintegrates, so will regional security suffer.

As the military regime in Nigeria tightens its grip on civil society, it is bound to give more confidence to other praetorians in the region waiting in the wings to upset the fledgling democratic culture. This can happen in a number of ways, but the most worrying source is the contagion of its coup culture, already widespread in the region. Or if Nigeria should descend into anarchy it would trigger a widespread refugee crisis in the region. Just as *apartheid* South Africa affected the security and stability of the entire Southern African region, there is little hope of consolidated democracy or a leadership focus on demilitarisation in West Africa without a democratic and demilitarised Nigeria. Already, Nigeria's cycle of crisis is having a wider impact in West Africa in particular, and Africa in general. For instance, although there is no conclusive evidence of Nigeria's involvement in the 1994 military coup in Gambia, it is hard to dispute that inspiration for it was drawn from the presence of a military regime in Nigeria. And in particular, the transformation of the two military rulers – Yaya Jammeh and Barre Mainasara – into civilian presidents seems to have received more explicit support from the Nigerian rulers. Furthermore, it is arguable that the "election" of General Kerekou in Benin in 1996,

the re-election of Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings as president of Ghana in December 1996, and the "re-election" of Eyadema as president of Togo in 1998 benefited, in part, from the example of military rule in the most important country in the region. Therefore, however commendable Nigeria's efforts in restoring democratic government in Sierra Leone and Liberia might appear, the precarious fate of democracy in its own internal political processes seriously threatens regional stability.

There are other negative security implications for Nigeria's neighbours. Already, as a result of the porous international borders in the region, financial fraud, money laundering, drug trafficking, and arms smuggling now constitute major security problems.[26] And it is apparent that the Nigerian contingent, which formed the bulk of the ECOMOG peacekeeping force in Liberia is now seen as an army of occupation, rather than a peacekeeping force, because of the militarisation of its internal politics.[27]

# Designing a Holistic Security Agenda for Demilitarisation and Democratic Development

*Rethinking Regional Security Mechanism for Peace-building*
Caught between the extremes of supra-nationalism as represented by globalisation, and the reactionary sub-nationalism that has been exacerbated by the politicisation of ethnicity, regionalism offers the best panacea for the weakened nation-state in West Africa. Indeed, it would appear that any prospect for demilitarisation and democratisation in West Africa must build on the fabric of regionalism if it is to have any chance of success. Given the declining external security threats and the need to curb the rising tide of internal strife, the promotion of a professional peace-building mechanism within the global framework of preventive diplomacy would seem critical in the region. The last decade in West Africa has witnessed the strengthening of regional autonomy, especially in its conflict management capacity. Although seen in several circles as a standard feature of Nigeria's sub-imperialist agenda, there is a strong perception of ECOMOG as a potential mechanism for an effective conflict management model in Africa.[28] Yet, regional autonomy can be influenced by national and sub-national factors. It is also susceptible to super-power influence and control, which may be opposed to the goals of demilitarisation and democratic consolidation, especially if the latter does not offer the required stability for capitalist development.

In rethinking regionalism, we must go beyond the pro-forma creation of a peace-keeping force that remains technical in form and content only. For regionalism to be an effective antidote to globalisation and ethnicisation it must permeate the nation-state in a more deeply rooted manner. Otherwise, if the current non-state challenges to the nation state in West Africa are a measure of what to expect in the

future, the prospects for demilitarisation are bleak. It is for this reason that a recognition of the necessity for a multi-dimensional understanding of security, without a redefinition of existing notions of state sovereignty, would undermine the search for a holistic security agenda. In arguing for a redefinition of the concept of sovereignty in the sub-region which de-emphasises colonial artificial boundaries, the motive is not territorial revisionism. Instead, we are revisiting the territorial state where the artificial boundaries have formed the legitimising force for arrested development in several states that are just juridical entities in name only. If we could translate this into a sustainable security agenda, we would propose a West-Central Africa security and development mechanism, but one that is properly structured, rather than a victim of an ad hoc arrangement like ECOMOG. If a properly structured security mechanism were available for deployment at a moment's notice, it should be possible to convince small states like Sierra Leone and the Gambia that the protection of their territorial integrity does not necessarily depend on a standing army.

A systemic change of the type that we are suggesting requires extensive work. A good place to start might be to review the ECOWAS Defence Protocols to incorporate lessons derived from similar instruments operating in other parts of the world; develop a peacekeeping model with an accountable command, control and information system; develop the necessary linkages between security, democracy and development in the regional integration process; and, finally, conceptualise an architecture of conflict management for 21st Century Africa in which militarism and militarisation are less significant.[29]

### Redefining the Mission of the Military
If militarism is to become less significant in the politics of the region, the military needs to redefine its mission which is at present confined to the nation-state. To the extent that West Africa's militaries have penetrated all aspects of civic and economic life makes military demobilisation a dangerous proposition, and would require considerable skill to implement. It could be achieved by first assuaging the fears of the rank and file of the military about their future in a demobilisation era; finding an appropriate role and mission for those left behind in the institution and guaranteeing their professional autonomy. Equally important will be the need to develop a civilian, democratic defence policy expertise and create the necessary opportunities for networking and dialogue between military representatives and civil society. As much as possible, the military must be restricted to its traditional external combat role as a means of strengthening civil-military relations. If it must get involved in any internal security operations, proper criteria must be established for evaluating their involvement. At all times, the unifying theme in all of the political elite negotiations should be the determination to assert democratic civilian control and oversight and the subordination of the military to civilian authority.

The region could gain from the contrasting experience of other countries: e.g. smaller countries coming from long years of military rule to civilian democratic politics – like Costa Rica, Panama and Haiti, where they succeeded in getting rid of their standing armies; bigger countries with some regional influence – like Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Pakistan, South Korea and Bangladesh where, the military retains a significant influence in national politics; others in both Latin America and Russia where the military is still actively involved in politics; and a country like Poland where the armed forces have moved from completely "satrapic" orientation into stable, conventional roles.

In all of these cases, there are outstanding problems associated with creating stable civil-military relations in which roles are clearly defined and mission fully worked out. But the fact that the mission has been refocused, especially in countries like South Africa, Argentina and Poland gives real cause for hope that the obstacles to sustainable civil-military relations are not insurmountable. South Korea, for example, seems to have succeeded where others have failed by seeking reconciliation via accountability for past human rights abuses which occurred under military rule. Two former heads of state were sentenced to life imprisonment for their role in the massacre of student demonstrators in the early 1980s. The recent election of a candidate perceived as a threat to the military establishment may have stemmed from a successful demystification carried out by the previous regime, even though the deteriorating economy ultimately contributed to the success of the left-wing president, Kim Dae Jung, who eventually released the convicted former Heads of State as a gesture of reconciliation. So far, what the South Korean example seems to show is that Faustian bargains with some progressive elements within the military may be inevitable in order to deal with the challenges of demilitarisation and/or the quest to consolidate democracy. However, such pacts should be dependent on whether they guarantee the complete subordination of the armed forces to the democratic civilian authority. Nor should pacts be engineered for the consolidation of personal autocracies in exchange for military privileges, which precludes the military from being accountable to democratic institutions.

Notwithstanding the positive developments in the countries mentioned above, the experience of West African countries where the military has become so entrenched in the body politic gives much cause for worry about how successful the agenda for restructuring existing civil-military relations.[30] This is especially so when one confronts the inevitable issue of amnesty or accountability for human rights and other abuses committed by successive military authorities, especially in Nigeria, but also in Sierra Leone, the Gambia, Ghana and Liberia. The example of Argentina and Chile, can only make us cautiously optimistic about the future for democratic consolidation. After seven years of democratic restoration in Chile, General Pinochet, with his grip on the military, has blocked every effort to punish human rights abuses of his seventeen years rule as Chilean Head of State. Through

his hard core right-wing supporters, some of whom describe him as the greatest "visionary" Chile has ever known, the elected Chilean government headed by President Frei has not been able to exorcise the terrible ghosts of those repressive years. This represents a benchmark of failure for those who fought for democratic reform, although some argue that there is wisdom in exercising some patience for General Pinochet to leave the scene. But for all practical purposes, he remains the undemocratic spirit guiding Chilean democracy; although he has now stepped down as Commander-in-Chief, a position he retained in 1990 after giving way to the democrats, his influence still runs deep within the civilian, political structure of the country; not just because he remains a Senator for Life, but also as a result of the "authoritarian enclaves" he established over the years. For example, there are still ten non-elected seats he unilaterally allocated to himself and his subordinate generals in the Chilean Senate. With this power base, he has managed to sabotage any attempt to try the army for past misdeeds.[31]

The Chilean scenario definitely raises a number of questions about the future of democracy in West Africa sub-region, given the fact that some states in the region are already adopting similar measures. Senegal's democracy is, to all intents and purposes, a replica of this, if one considers the place of the military in that dispensation. Also, given the evidence in Nigeria that efforts for the eventual transformation of military rulers into "elected" civilian rulers are continuing apace, the threat of the military's authoritarian enclaves must worry observers of the transition politics.

## Ensuring Civilian Oversight and Military Autonomy on Professional Military Matters

Provided the overall case for regionalisation is acceptable to the affected states, the other issue for consideration at nation-state level is the separation of operational and policy control over broad defence matters such as size, shape, organisation, equipment, weapon acquisition and pay/conditions in the services on the one hand, and on the other hand administrative control over the services. The point has been made earlier about how the lack of any expertise on the part of elected civilian authorities has prevented effective oversight of the various arms of the armed forces. Any redirection of the defence policy process will inevitably require a different kind of expertise, which must be applied by a mixture of civilians and military professionals. To sustain this, there is a need for a significant thawing process through changes in relationships between the military and civilian political elite, and a significant increase in contacts between opinion moulders and the outside world. The process of agreeing an appropriate role for the military can only be successfully achieved in a climate of mutual confidence and dialogue between the civil and military elites.

In introducing civilian expertise however, care must be taken not to substitute

military incompetence with technocrats who are not wholly accountable to the electorate. If civilian control is to be democratic, it must empower elected officials to lead the confidence building exercise. This is not to suggest however that professional civilian expertise is unnecessary in these countries. In fact, a possibility worth exploring is the creation of a Strategic Cell that may serve in an advisory capacity between a civilian president and the military professionals. At all times, the military should not be left to conduct its affairs without "interference", at least not in terms of broad policy formulation; but the political elite should leave the military to design wholly operational matters especially where broad policy issues have been settled. In ensuring civilian supremacy and a democratic pattern of civil-military relations, the civilian leadership must help the military with the definition of the role it must play in a clear and precise manner. As much as possible, this must be confined to its traditional external combat role as a means of strengthening civil over military authority.

## Resolving the Challenge of Ethno-Nationalism in Recruitment

The resolution of the highly volatile question of recruitment is only possible to the extent that the nationality question is resolved in individual countries. Three central questions should be addressed here. (i) Should recruitment into the armed forces in a democratic dispensation be based on equal opportunity? (ii) Should the military be a combat effective, battle ready force recruited from the most able in the most rigorous and competitive manner? (iii) Should the manner of recruitment matter – if the training is standardised and geared towards bringing out the best in every recruit?[32] These are not necessarily the most important when issues of structure and process are the ones receiving the most attention.

If good personnel is at the core of any effective military organisation, the concern about representation is a legitimate one, especially in ethnically diverse societies where the armed forces are seen as key instruments of national integration. Getting recruitment wrong from the outset has implications for discipline, attrition rate and the organisation's institutional cohesion in the long run, all of which must be situated within the context of the perceptions and misperceptions bred by inter-ethnic suspicions. Therefore, attempts at demilitarisation and stable military relations must ensure a balance between merit and equal opportunity. This can only be done in a situation where the military is seen not as the fastest route to political power, but as a professional institution serving the interests of all citizens.

What is of utmost importance within this context is what the military mission is, what objective threats face the nation? What are the necessary force numbers, rather than the manpower necessary for the accomplishments of its mission? Is the personnel suitable for the mission that the military may be called upon to accomplish? Are manpower numbers cost-effective; and does the recruitment

process attract individuals that are wholly dedicated to military service in a democracy?

Another way this issue has been addressed is through compulsory military service. In countries like Tanzania and Senegal that have experienced long years of stable civil-military relations, compulsory military service is an integral part of their armed forces recruitment policy. This can be used to complement a policy of demilitarisation and demobilisation. A much reduced, but highly mobile deployment force within a rationalised recruitment process can still be effective while it addresses the huge problem of ethnic imbalance through compulsory military service.

## Resolution of Human Rights Issues as a Key Plank in the Demilitarisation Process

The desperate need to negotiate a process of reconciliation (Argentina/South Africa) or restitution (South Korea) between the military and civil society that safeguards human rights and fundamental freedoms remains an issue in countries emerging from prolonged authoritarian rule. In several countries in West Africa where the military has had a long and chequered history of political intervention and human right abuse, citizens are insisting on a reconciliation or restitution mechanism for dealing with the past. The idea of assuaging the fears of the military by a declaration of amnesty poses a serious challenge to the strengthening of stable civil-military relations. Equally, the approach in some countries of literally hauling everyone connected to a military regime to jail without adequate investigation of their role is fraught with danger for genuine reconciliation. Ultimately, the question must be asked, as others must have asked themselves in Chile, Argentina and Philippines. While restitution may be a necessary, even cathartic exercise, in terms of sustainable, civil-military relations, it could exacerbate rather than attenuate tensions in conflict ridden societies. Indeed, some will argue that one key reason why ex-military rulers turned-civilian presidents are reluctant to vacate the seat of government is this fear of the unknown if "enemies" take charge of government. This is one of the areas where the right balance must be struck between the search for immediate justice and the need for long term stability. It is difficult to see a situation where abuses can be wished away if democracy is to be sustainable, in the long term. Therefore, countries emerging from a prolonged authoritarian dispensation must examine mechanisms for dealing with this major problem area in seeking long-term demilitarisation strategies.[33]

## Conclusion and Policy Considerations

We have tried in this paper to integrate the broad issues with the specific concerns that relate to the subject of demilitarisation and democratisation in the context of a weakening nation-state. In suggesting the structural mechanisms for de-

emphasising force in conflict resolution, the paper recognises the futility of violent challenge to ethno-nationalistic responses to domination. Equally, the nation-state must re-examine the process of regionalisation, especially given West Africa's recent experience with ECOMOG without necessarily losing the symbolism of state sovereignty. The quality of political leadership will ultimately make a difference in straddling these difficult issues. It is common knowledge that some civilian political leaders have in the past either participated actively in, or encouraged the military to stage coups against their opponents. This not only undermines the fragile political system, but also destroys military profession-alism. That is why the clarity and quality of the post-military leadership in the new democracies will necessarily determine how these complex issues are resolved.

## Notes

* This is a revised version of a paper presented at the international conference by the Africa Leadership Forum and The Arias Foundation on the theme "Leadership Challenges of Demilitarisation in Africa" held in Arusha, Tanzania, July 22-24, 1998.

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1 See United Nations, *Study on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development: Report of the Secretary-General* New York: United Nations, 1981, for a good example of this positive correlation argument.

2 For an expansion of this argument, see J 'Kayode Fayemi, *Threats, Military Expenditure and National Security: Analysis of Trends in Nigeria's Defence Planning,* 1970-1990, Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of London, 1994.

3 See Mats R Berdal, "Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars: Armed soldiers and the termination of armed conflicts", *Adelphi Paper 303* Oxford: Oxford University Press for IISS, 1996.

4 See Nicolas Van de Walle, "Reversal, Survival or Consolidation? The Prospects for Democracy in Africa", Paper presented at the 38th Annual Meetings of the African Studies Association, Orlando, Florida, November 3-6, 1995 and Richard Joseph, "Africa, 1990-1997: From *Abertura* to Closure", *Journal of Democracy,* Vol. 9, No. 2, April 1998. For a less pessimistic viewpoint, see E. Gyimah-Boadi, "The Rebirth of Liberalism", *Journal of Democracy, Ibid.*

5 Robin Luckham, "Democracy and the Military: An Epitaph for Frankenstein's Monster?" *Democratisation,* Vol. 3, No. 2. Summer 1996, pp. 1-16.

6 Economic Community of Africa & Global Coalition for Africa, *The Role of the*

*African Military in Political Transition and Economic Development: Co-Chairpersons' Summary*, Addis-Ababa, May 8-9, 1998, p. 1.

7  See Robin Luckham, *The Nigerian Military: A Sociological Analysis of Authority and Revolt 1960-1967*. Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 1971 and Simon Baynham, *The Military and Politics in Nkrumah's Ghana*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1988.

8  Michael Crowder, *West Africa under Colonial Rule*, London: Hutchinson, 1970, p. 505

9  For a good background on the nature of civil-military relations in West Africa, see Eboe Hutchful & Abdoulaye Bathily *(eds)*, *The Military and Militarism in Africa*, (Dakar: Codesria, 1998); For good country studies, see J 'Bayo Adekanye, *Nigeria: In Search of a Stable Civil-Military Relations*, Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1981. Also, see his *"Military Occupation and Social Stratification,* (Ibadan: University of Ibadan, 1993), Eboe Hutchful, "Military Policy and Reform in Ghana", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 35, 2 (1997), pp. 251-278 and Baffour Agyeman-Duah, "Liberia: The Search for a Stable Civil-Military Relations", Paper presented at the Workshop on "State Rebuilding after State Collapse in Liberia", organised by the Centre for Democracy and Development, London, June 19, 1998.

10  See Eboe Hutchful, "Military Policy and Reform in Ghana," JMAS, *Ibid.*

11  General Ibrahim Babangida who was the Director of Army Plans and Staff Duties during the Shagari regime once told a Conference on national security that "the amount of power vested in the civilian headed Ministry of Defence could be a source of concern to the armed forces because the ministry consists mainly of *civilians who have little or no knowledge of the military profession ..."* See National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies *Proceedings of Conference on National Security*, Kuru, Jos: NIPSS, 1981 p. 130.

12  This has been the major criticism of the peacekeeping activities of ECOWAS Monitoring Group – ECOMOG in West Africa. See Funmi Olonisakin, *Bridging the Conceptual Gap in Peace-keeping: Peace Creation in Liberia*, Centre for Democracy & Development Occasional Paper 2, London: CDD, forthcoming.

13  See David Goldsworthy, "Civilian Control and the Military in Black Africa", *African Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 8, 1987, pp. 49-74.

14  Louis W. Goodman, "Military Roles: Past and Present", in Larry Diamond and Marc Plattner *(eds.) Civil-Military Relations and Democracy*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997, p. 39.

15  *Report of the Civil-Military Relations Assessment Mission: West and Central Africa.* Washington, D.C.: NDI, April 1997.

16  Lida Koussi Moise, "National Armies and Ethnicity in Africa," *The Role of the African Armed Forces in the Democratic Process Africa*, Proceedings of the

Regional Seminar held in Ouagadougou, 2-4 July, 1997 cited in Agyeman-Duah, *op-cit.*

17 See Kayode Fayemi, "Africa's Disarmament Illusions", *Africa Events*, February 1993, pp. 23-26.

18 See Nicolas van de Walle, "Globalisation and African Democracy" in Richard Joseph (*ed.*) *State, Conflict and Democracy in Africa* Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner, forthcoming.

19 UN Secretary-General explores potential causes, cures of conflict in Africa, (UN-IRIN West Africa News), SG/2045 – AFR/50, SC/6501. 16 April 1998.

20 *Ibid.*

21 See a recent book co-authored by the UN Co-ordinator of the Peacekeeping Operations in Somalia, Robert Oakley. In it, the authors conceded the inability of the UN to cope with the burden of peacekeeping operations due to the lack of interests from member-nations. See Robert Oakley, Michael J. Dziedic, and Eliot M. Goldberg, *Policing the New World Disorder: Peace Operations and Public Security*, Washington, D.C.: National Defence University Press, 1998.

22 See *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 39, No. 9, May 29, 1998.

23 David Shearer and Herbert Howe have been positive in their analyses of mercenary activities in West Africa, both concluding that what is needed to even out the rough edges of current practise is regulation. See Herbert Howe, "Private Security Forces and African Stability: The Case of Executive Outcomes", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 36, 2, 1998 and David Shearer, *Private Armies and Military Intervention*, IISS Adelphi Paper, Oxford: Oxford University Press for IISS, 1997.

24 "Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms", New York: United Nations, July 1997, p. 25 cited in Abdel-Fatau Musah, *Africa: The Challenge of Light Weapons Destruction During Peacekeeping Operations*, BASIC PAPERS, No. 23, December 1997.

25 See J 'Kayode Fayemi & Abdel-Fatau Musah (*eds.*), *Mercenaries and African Conflicts*, London: Pluto Books, forthcoming.

26 For the reach of Nigeria's drug barons, see Philip Van Niekerk, "South Africa's Drug Explosion", *The London Observer*, 28 January, 1996.

27 This was a major issue at the recent National Conference in Liberia.

28 Countries like Senegal and others within the French axis, hitherto reluctant of the need for ECOMOG, now actively campaign for its involvement in the recent crisis in Guinea-Bissau. Egypt has officially requested that ECOMOG be adopted as a continental model in Africa.

29 This is the subject of a much larger research work at the Centre for Democracy and Development.

30 In General Abacha's recently aborted transition programme in Nigeria, at least a third of the Senators elected into the National Assembly came from a military

background. Indeed, the entrenchment has probably shut down the notion of a level playing field in politics for some time to come in the assessment of some observers.

31  Young parliamentarians in the Chilean Assembly recently sought an injunction in the Court to block an automatic seat for General Pinochet in the country's Senate. Ironically, President Frei and several senior politicians are not in the frontline of this challenge to the military.

32  See Kayode Fayemi, "The Politics of Military Recruitment in Nigeria: A Critical Appraisal", *Tempo Magazine (Lagos)*, 28 August 1997, pp. 4-5 for an extensive analysis of the Nigerian Armed Forces' recruitment politics under General Abacha.

33  See Sonny Onyegbula, "Seeking Truth and Justice in West Africa: Lessons from South African experience", Centre for Democracy & Development's Monograph Series (London: CDD, 1998).

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