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## **Armies and Democracy in the New Africa: Lessons from Nigeria and South Africa**

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### **Recommended Citation**

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<https://press.armywarcollege.edu/monographs/223>

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ARMIES AND DEMOCRACY IN THE NEW AFRICA:  
LESSONS FROM NIGERIA AND SOUTH AFRICA

Kent Hughes Butts  
and  
Steven Metz

January 9, 1996

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## FOREWORD

In October 1994, the Strategic Studies Institute sponsored a roundtable on democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa. Particular attention was paid to the role the U.S. military and Department of Defense played in democracy support. This study developed from a paper presented at the roundtable.

Dr. Butts and Dr. Metz reject the notion that the political culture of African states allows or even encourages military intervention in politics. Drawing on case studies from Nigeria and South Africa, they contend that if the fragile democracies in Sub-Saharan Africa are to be sustained, African militaries must be extricated from politics and take decisive steps toward the type of military professionalism seen in stable democracies around the world.

U.S. national interests in Sub-Saharan Africa are so limited that the region will receive only a very small proportion of the human, political, military, and economic resources devoted to American national security strategy. This makes efficiency imperative. Dr. Butts and Dr. Metz argue that if U.S. strategic resources are used wisely in Africa, they can have the desired effect. In particular, the U.S. military can play an important part in helping African militaries professionalize. They close with concrete proposals through which the U.S. Department of Defense and the Army could more effectively support African democratization.

The Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to offer this study as a contribution to the ongoing debate over how the Army could better promote U.S. national interests by helping to prevent conflicts rather than simply responding once violence has broken out.

RICHARD H. WITHERSPOON  
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Director, Strategic Studies Institute

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STEVEN METZ is the Henry L. Stimson Professor of Military Studies at the U.S. Army War College. He has been with the College's Strategic Studies Institute since 1993 and earlier served on the faculty of the Air War College, the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, and several universities. He has written for journals such as *African Affairs* and the *Journal of Modern African Studies*, and has testified before the Senate Africa Subcommittee. He holds a B.A. and M.A. in international studies from the University of South Carolina, and a Ph.D. in political science from the Johns Hopkins University.

## SUMMARY

**Introduction.** To the surprise of many observers, Africa has experienced a recent wave of democratic transitions and popular movements in support of open government. But this trend is far from irreversible. In particular, African civil-military relations must be reformed. The United States should play a major role in this. To do so, American planners and policymakers must have a clear, historically-grounded understanding of the dominant patterns of African civil-military relations.

**Nigeria.** Few African nations have more potential than Nigeria, but few have experienced greater trauma in attempts to build democracy. Nigeria's strategic and symbolic importance make it a bellwether for democratization in the rest of Africa.

The Nigerian military has ruled the country for most of its independence. Beginning in 1985, the government of Major General Babangida began a controlled transition to civilian democracy. Although elections in June 1994 were considered the freest in Nigerian history, Babangida annulled the results and prevented M.K.O. Abiola, the apparent victor, from assuming office. In November 1994, General Sani Abacha abolished an interim government and built what is often considered the most repressive and corrupt regime in Nigeria's history. Despite opposition from a democracy movement and international pressure, Abacha appears entrenched while Nigeria experiences economic collapse and teeters on the brink of ethnic war.

During the decades of military rule, the Nigerian armed forces have lost nearly all semblance of professionalism and become thoroughly corrupted. Senior officers all become immensely rich through theft, while junior officers and enlisted men live in poverty. Today, there are no civil-military relations in the normal sense of the phrase. The military is incapable of self-reform and cannot lead democratization. Only a radical transformation of the military and the wholesale replacement of the officer corps could open the way to democracy. Unfortunately, there is no force capable of doing this, and the Nigerian political economy, in which political office is seen primarily as a gateway to wealth, mitigate against sustainable democracy.

**South Africa.** South Africa shows that African armed forces can serve as the midwife of political change rather than its opponent. During the transition from an apartheid to majority-rule system, the South African Defence Force (SADF) supported the government and promoted internal stability. It was thus one of the keys to the success of the transition.

The current South African military enjoys a good relationship with society and accepts civilian control. Five interrelated problems could erode or challenge the health of civil-military relations:

- Escalating internal violence;
- Difficulties integrating the armed forces;

- The military's budget crunch;
- The possibility of a radical successor to Mandela;
- Prosecution of former military officials for apartheid-era activities.

With firm leadership and careful attention to civil-military relations, South Africa can avoid or work through these problems and thus consolidate democracy.

**Recommendations.** Sustaining democracy in Africa is possible, but will be extraordinarily difficult. U.S. actions may not be decisive, but can be important. Nigeria and South Africa suggest three tenets that should guide U.S. efforts:

First, *approach democracy support in a strategic fashion.* Because the political, military, and economic resources the United States is willing to devote to Africa will remain very limited, American policies and programs must be synchronized into a coherent strategy. To do this, the United States should:

- Develop a strategy of democracy support for each African state. This should be led by the State Department, but the Department of Defense and the U.S. military can provide vital links to African militaries and should spearhead efforts to reform African civil-military relations. To do this, the military must provide high-quality personnel for Africa assignments. Rejuvenation of the Army's foreign area officer (FAO) program would be an important contribution.

- Take a long-term perspective focusing on consolidating democracy rather than simply instigating it. Special support should be provided at the end of the "honeymoon" period for a new democratic government and during the follow-on election.

- Help create an African Democracy Council composed of senior government and nongovernment supporters of African democracy to coordinate actions. This would serve as a forum for communication on democratization, and as a mechanism to support democracy movements in other states. Its liaison in the United States should be the National Endowment for Democracy.

- Adopt a policy of zero tolerance for coups against elected governments and actively support international efforts to politically and economically quarantine coup-makers. Because of Nigeria's symbolic importance, U.S. pressure should escalate and include an oil boycott.

Second, *concentrate on perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes.* Because the United States will not smother Africa in aid, U.S. efforts should concentrate on cultivating the appropriate perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes for sustaining democracy. One of the most important of these is civilian control of the military. To encourage this, the United States should:

- Seek the greatest possible expansion in the International Military Education and Training program.

- Lead an effort to form a Pan-African Staff College. This should be located in a democratic African state and be staffed with a faculty from democracies in Africa, the Americas, Europe, and the Asia-Pacific region.

Third, *emphasize military reorganization and the development of regional security mechanisms*. To facilitate healthy civil-military relations and improve military-society ties, the United States should:

- Encourage African states to move toward a system that combines a small standing army with a somewhat larger reserve force.

- Encourage the formation of a NATO-like mutual security pact composed of African democracies. By facilitating military downsizing, aiding officer professionalization, and serving as a mechanism for quarantining coup-makers, this organization could play an important political and symbolic role in building a community of African democracies.



**ARMIES AND DEMOCRACY IN THE NEW AFRICA:  
LESSONS FROM NIGERIA AND SOUTH AFRICA**

**Introduction.**

Even when they are more caricature than accurate portrayal, the popular myths, images, and traditions associated with political leaders say much about the prospects of a country. In the United States, the dominant image is probably that of a politician on the stump, shaking hands, kissing babies, and making promises meant to be taken with a grain of salt. While not a particularly appealing portrait, it at least suggests that every American politician has a deep obligation to the public. By contrast, the dominant political image in Africa is often that of the "big man" or "president for life," whisked by sunglasses bodyguards into a Mercedes limousine with darkened windows, on his way to join the waiting brothers, cousins, friends, and cronies he has appointed to government posts. At best, leaders play the part of a benevolent and enlightened father, caring for "their" people. At worst, they are psychotic dictators mistaking fear for respect and power for support. Nearly always, though, wisdom and power are the personal property of leaders, hopefully to be exercised in a benign fashion but in reality often used for repression or self-aggrandizement.

If images, myths, and traditions are windows on the truth, Africa's would not seem to bode well for democracy. Luckily, though, they suggest the future but do not determine it. As recent events in Africa show, history's psychological fetters can be transcended. Beginning in the late 1980s, the tide of democracy that earlier swept Latin America, parts of the Asia-Pacific region, and much of the former Soviet bloc reached Africa. By 1991, it "was a veritable tidal wave, methodically transforming the political map of the continent."<sup>1</sup> Autocratic governments were replaced by democracies in Zambia, Cape Verde, São Tome and Príncipe, Benin, Madagascar, Lesotho, and Burundi.<sup>2</sup> (See Map 1.) Overall, more than 30 countries had pro-democracy uprisings, many leading to substantial reforms if not outright democratization.<sup>3</sup> For advocates of democracy, a "new Africa" seemed to be emerging, providing fresh opportunities in a region long darkened by violence, repression, corruption, weak leadership, and inept governance.

Given the changes in the strategic landscape that accompanied the end of the Cold War, many Americans sought to make democracy support the conceptual centerpiece of U.S. foreign policy and national security strategy.<sup>4</sup> The Clinton administration has at least partially embraced this notion.<sup>5</sup> According to the President, "working with the new democratic states to help preserve them as democracies committed to free markets and respect for human rights is a key part of our national security strategy."<sup>6</sup> This will be more difficult in Africa than in any other part of the world. Democracy there is far from irreversible, the problems faced by newly elected governments, immense. Without assistance, the trend toward open government can easily become a temporary interregnum from dictatorship.<sup>7</sup> Even while "democracy is finding its root in country after country," Anthony Lake notes, "many African nations are but one step away from crisis."<sup>8</sup>



**Map 1. Africa.**

For African democracy to succeed, civil-military relations must be reformed. Armies have long been a major obstacle to democracy in Africa, seizing power with depressing frequency and often dominating the political process even under civilian regimes. This tendency still lingers in spots.<sup>9</sup> But little by little, step by step, African militaries are turning from enemies to promoters of democracy. The importance of this cannot be overestimated. African militaries are and will remain crucial political actors. "The question is not," according to William Gutteridge, "whether armies will participate in politics but to what extent and by what means."<sup>10</sup> Their role in the promotion and sustainment of Africa's fragile democracies is thus pivotal: Africa's militaries are vital allies for any individual, state, or organization supporting open government.

To play a role in African political reform, the United States must hone its understanding of the forces promoting and opposing democracy. While the ability of Americans to encourage, shape, and influence the reform of African civil-military relations will be limited, with focused, well-thought-out policies and programs organized into a coherent strategy, the United States can play an important role. By examining both successful and failed democratic transitions and the role the military played in them, American

planners and policymakers can frame policies that reflect a clear, historically-grounded understanding of African civil-military relations and thus slightly increase the chances that open government will be sustained.

### **Nigeria: The Augean Stable.**

To grasp the role that African militaries should play in democratization, it is first necessary to examine how they have thwarted it. For this, Nigeria provides a perfect case study and a virtual museum of pathological civil-military relations. This is a tragedy of immense proportions. Few African nations have more promise than Nigeria. It is the most populous nation in Sub-Saharan Africa by far, extensive oil reserves give it a rare level of economic potential, its military is one of the largest and most proficient on the continent, and it is extraordinarily rich in human capital. And, unlike some other states that have economic or military power without the will to use them, Nigeria considers itself a model for Sub-Saharan Africa and a spokesman for the Third World in general. It has, for instance, participated in many U.N. peace operations including those in the former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Cambodia, Angola, Rwanda, Mozambique, Namibia, and Zaire.<sup>11</sup> More recently, Nigeria formed and led a major peacekeeping effort in Liberia and provided military advice and training to other African states such as Gambia and Sierra Leone.<sup>12</sup> When a Liberian peace agreement was arranged in 1995, George Obiozor, director-general of Nigeria's official foreign policy think tank, said, "By brokering a successful peace among the warring factions of Liberia, Nigeria has reconfirmed her primacy in the West African sub-region in particular and Africa in general."<sup>13</sup> Nigeria currently holds one of the rotating positions on the United Nations Security Council and actively seeks a permanent seat.<sup>14</sup> Strategic and symbolic importance thus make Nigeria a bellwether for the rest of Africa.

Unfortunately, much of this potential and the immense energy of the Nigerian people has been wasted through misgovernment. Since independence, Nigeria has undertaken several attempts to build democracy, but all have been thwarted by military intervention. The army has directly ruled the country for 25 of its 35 years of independence, and exerted a powerful influence over policymaking even during the brief periods of civilian government. There have been seven successful military coups and many failed ones.<sup>15</sup> Throughout Africa, statist economic policies, weak political institutions, and what Samuel Decalo refers to as "an internally fractured army composed of personal loyalty pyramids," have led to military coups.<sup>16</sup> Nigeria symbolizes and epitomizes the pathology of civil-military relations in Africa.

Nigeria is an artificial state created according to colonial exigencies rather than ethnic coherence. It has three main groups: the largely Christian Ibo in the southeastern part of the country, the Yoruba in the southwest, and the Muslim Hausa-Fulani in the north. Together, these three constitute 65 percent of the Nigerian population, with the remainder belonging to a number of minority groups. During the colonial period the British used "indirect rule," leaving local political structures intact, particularly in the Muslim

north.<sup>17</sup> This, along with a policy of deliberately emphasizing ethnic differences to facilitate colonial control, inhibited the emergence of a national identity. Ethnic competition and, often, conflict, has thus been the preeminent political problem for Nigeria during its entire existence. The military has often used ethnic differences to justify intervention in politics and painted itself as the only force that can hold the nation's fractious tendencies in check.<sup>18</sup>

The modern Nigerian military took shape during the Biafran War of 1967-70 as the army grew from a light infantry force of about 6,000 to one of over 250,000 equipped with heavy weapons and supported by air and naval power. The war also saw a sharp erosion in the military's trust of civilian leadership. Despite training in the British notion of military professionalism that stressed civilian control of the military, the Nigerian army seized power in January 1966.<sup>19</sup> This began a dismal tradition of military intervention in politics. In 1975 General Yakubu Gowon, who had ruled Nigeria since late 1966, was overthrown by reformist senior officers and a new regime headed by Brigadier Murta Muhammed began a managed transition to democracy.<sup>20</sup> He purged the military and civilian bureaucracy of many inefficient or corrupt officials and instigated a five-stage program for restoring civilian, democratic government. The first steps were creation of new states to better distribute political power among the ethnic groups and the writing of a new constitution (modeled after the American).<sup>21</sup> The culmination was the transfer of power to an elected government in 1979. Although Muhammed was assassinated during a failed coup in February 1976, his successor, General Olusegun Obasanjo, completed the transition.

Despite (or because of) the opportunities provided by the oil wealth flowing into Nigeria during the Second Republic, the civilian government proved massively corrupt and ineffective. Much of the oil money was squandered on useless projects or stolen by corrupt officials, their patrons, cronies, and families.<sup>22</sup> When the military again seized power on December 31, 1983, there was celebration throughout the country.<sup>23</sup> Major General Muhammadu Buhari, the new head of state, launched a "war against indiscipline" which met with initial approval, but its repressiveness soon eroded the regime's popularity.<sup>24</sup> On August 27, 1985, Buhari was overthrown by army chief of staff Major General Ibrahim Babangida. According to Habibu Idris Shuaibu, a Nigerian officer who had backed Babangida, the driving force behind the coup was not the public's discontent or desire for democracy, but Buhari's failure to appoint junior and middle ranking officers to political office.<sup>25</sup>

Babangida instigated a second managed transition to democracy designed to avoid the problems that plagued the earlier transition. All previous Nigerian political leaders were considered tainted and banned from involvement. And, exhibiting no lack of hubris, the military regime sought to craft nothing less than a new Nigerian political culture devoid of corruption and ethnic conflict.<sup>26</sup> In practical terms, Babangida's greatest innovation may have been the creation of a mandatory two-party system.<sup>27</sup> Throughout Africa, the serious shortcomings of both one-party and multi-party systems were evident. Having one slightly-left-of-center and one slightly-right-of-

center party was seen as a palliative (and was a direct emulation of the American political system). Babangida attempted for the first time in Nigerian history to disperse real political power to local governments and deliberately encourage political mobilization through education and political awareness activities. And, recognizing the key role that the competence and effectiveness of civilian officials played in democratization, the military government created a Centre for Democratic Studies to help train local elected officials.

Mismanagement of the economy and endemic corruption during the Second Republic had led to economic crisis and a precipitous decline in living standards. By the time the military seized power in 1983, Nigeria had amassed an external debt equal to gross domestic product, and suffered widespread unemployment, underutilized industrial capacity, high inflation, substantial budget deficits, and a declining currency exchange rate.<sup>28</sup> Babangida attempted to ameliorate this through an economic emergency involving pay cuts and a reduction of government subsidies, currency devaluation, privatization, deregulation, and acceptance of an economic adjustment program designed by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately, these badly needed steps complicated democratization as the hardships imposed on the Nigerian public eroded support for the government. Corruption quickly returned and even escalated. Dr. Pius Okigbe, a Nigerian economist, estimates that \$12.2 billion of the \$12.4 billion in oil revenues the nation received during the Gulf crisis were stolen.<sup>30</sup> By the end of the 1980s, Nigeria had fallen from a middle income country with a per capita income of around \$1000 per year to one of the world's poorest, with an estimated per capita income of \$250.<sup>31</sup>

Babangida recognized that Nigerian democracy would be unsustainable without serious reform of civil-military relations and professionalization of the officer corps.<sup>32</sup> He quickly found that this was easier said than done. After nearly 20 years of involvement in politics, all memory of British-instilled military professionalism had faded. Nigeria faced no serious external or internal security threat to provide the incentive for professionalization. And Babangida's use of officers as political administrators gave them a taste of corruption's rewards. By the early 1990s, then, it was no longer possible to classify officers as "political" or "professional" since only a tiny minority remained outside the patronage system.<sup>33</sup>

Throughout Babangida's rule, military morale and self-image declined precipitously. An organizational pattern emerged in which corrupt senior "military godfathers" built and used networks of lower ranking clients.<sup>34</sup> Junior officers without a patron were unhappy with the system, but this was often due less to commitment to the national interest than personal jealousy and resentment of their exclusion. For enlisted personnel, conditions were dire. While most senior leaders were multimillionaires living in mansions and driving Mercedes, lower ranks were victimized by Nigeria's economic collapse and lived in crushing poverty.<sup>35</sup> The handful of officers who did seem committed to democratization and the broader national interest were coopted or eliminated.<sup>36</sup> A failed coup in 1990 signalled the cancerous condition of the military and sparked suspicion, fear, and purges.<sup>37</sup> Growing

ethnic conflict also heightened schisms within the military. While the majority of army officers were southern or middle-belt Christians, the military had long been dominated by northern Muslims. This was a source of deep resentment by non-northern officers and civilian elites. Both Muslim and Christian fundamentalism had been growing for some time in Nigeria, largely as a response to wider social decay.<sup>38</sup> Following Babangida's 1986 decision to seek full membership for Nigeria in the Organization of Islamic Conferences, religious tensions flared, particularly in the middle and northern segments of the country. More than 5000 died in religious violence between 1990 and 1994, with 1000 killed in April 1991 alone during riots in Kaduna and Bauchi states.<sup>39</sup>

"Probably no democratic transition," Larry Diamond writes, "has ever been beset by such a massive gap between the elaborateness of its engineering and the cynicism of the public's expectations."<sup>40</sup> Events justified this. As preparation for the final stage of the transition--election of a national president and a handover of power from the military--approached, Babangida became increasingly "corrupt, manipulative, unpredictable, ambitious, unreliable and uninterested in leaving office."<sup>41</sup> Although he initially promised to restore civilian rule by 1990, Babangida eventually postponed the turnover four times.<sup>42</sup> The presidential campaign between Moshood Abiola of the center-left Social Democratic Party (SDP) and Bashir Tofa of the center-right National Republican Convention (NRC) failed to generate public enthusiasm. Most Nigerians considered the election simply one more in a long series of charades staged by the elite. Neither Abiola and Tofa were known as political leaders and both were considered allies of Babangida by some analysts.<sup>43</sup> The general's obsessive desire to control the political transformation and his endless manipulation of the process further jaded Nigerians. Corruption and vote-rigging during the presidential primaries "alienated virtually the entire electorate."<sup>44</sup>

The system of political economy that emerged in Nigeria after the first oil boom of the early 1970s added to the perception that the election had little or nothing to do with empowering the public. In it, political power and wealth were coterminous. Whoever controlled the state controlled government contracts, particularly those dealing with petroleum. Political influence was not only *one* means of enriching one's self, family, and friends, it was the *only* way. This made running for office a simple business transaction. A candidate and his clients invested in an electoral bid with the full expectation that they would profit a thousandfold through victory.<sup>45</sup> In such an environment, winning an election was the only thing that mattered; building the nation and serving public interests were irrelevant. The military, rather than attempting to mitigate this, became one more clique (or cluster of cliques) with a vested interest in the system. Put simply, officers who partook of corruption did not want to see the system changed in a fundamental way; those outside the system did not have the power to change it.

Still, democratization lurched onward. The election on June 12, 1993, was widely considered the freest and most honest in Nigeria's history.<sup>46</sup> Although voter turnout was less than 50 percent, M.K.O.

Abiola appeared to have won a clear victory with support from across the nation. But the transfer of power never took place. During the period leading up to the elections, an organization called the Association for a Better Nigeria, composed of wealthy businessmen, politicians, and some high-ranking military officers, ran a highly visible campaign urging Babangida to retain power.<sup>47</sup> This group won a court order requiring the National Electoral Commission to withhold election results until charges of vote rigging were investigated. On June 23, Babangida annulled the elections "to save our judiciary from being ridiculed and politicized locally and internationally."<sup>48</sup> The general announced that a civilian government would be installed on August 27 as initially planned, but that new elections would be held with Abiola and Tofa, the original candidates, ineligible.<sup>49</sup> Supporters of democracy both inside and outside Nigeria immediately rejected this plan.

There were two prevalent explanations for Babangida's annulment of the elections.<sup>50</sup> One was that he was pressured by the group of senior military officers who realized that their opportunity to accumulate wealth would diminish under a civilian government, and who believed Abiola would punish them for past corruption and abuses of human rights. Second was that Babangida was pressured by or responding to the needs of the Hausa-Fulani elites both inside and outside the military who feared that the election of Abiola--who was a Muslim, but a Yoruba--would signal the end of northern domination of Nigeria. What was never clear was why the general waited until after widely observed elections took place to act. One explanation for this is simply the arrogance and poor grasp of political reality that comes to despots. Babangida may have so concentrated power that he had become convinced that there were no limits on his ability to manipulate the political system. Another is that he assumed the elections would be so blatantly tainted that the Nigerian public would demand that the military government retain power or that new elections be held. In any case, the general clearly underestimated the furor that his actions would provoke.

The annulment immediately unified the diverse democratic coalition in Nigeria. "For the first time in Nigeria's political history," Rotimi and Ihonvbere wrote, "pro-democracy organisations, non-governmental organisations and individuals, cutting across religious, gender, regional and class lines came out to insist on the need to respect the will of the people."<sup>51</sup> The democratic movement was centered on an array of institutions including the press, professional associations, university faculty and students, and the labor movement.<sup>52</sup> While the annulment was generally welcomed in the northern part of Nigeria and accepted with cynical fatalism in the eastern, Ibo regions, widespread demonstrations broke out in the southwest. Tens of thousands protested in Lagos, and were violently suppressed by the military.<sup>53</sup> For Yorubas, the annulment seemed to indicate the Hausa-Fulani would never surrender political power.<sup>54</sup> It also suggested the northern elite continued to see the military as a prime tool of ethnic domination.<sup>55</sup>

The annulment also exacerbated a split in the military between supporters and opponents of democracy. At the end of June, 30 colonels

and brigadiers retired to protest the annulment. Harvard-educated Colonel Abubakar Umar--a former state governor and thus a beneficiary of the corruption and patronage system--typified the disgust when he stated, "the Nigerian military as represented by our present leadership has become a stumbling block to the development of the nation's democracy."<sup>56</sup> But few of the civilian elites, including elected officials, voiced open support for Abiola. In part, this was due to fear of Babangida's security apparatus, but also reflected the extent to which civilian leaders had developed a vested interest in the web of corruption. While conditions were abysmal for the average Nigerian, the elite suffered little and therefore saw no need for fundamental change. Wealth immunized them from the near-total collapse of the educational and health systems, dramatic inflation, widespread unemployment, disintegration of the infrastructure, and the endemic crime--much of it drug-related--that made the life of the Nigerian public miserable.<sup>57</sup>

Even though there was no groundswell of backing for Abiola outside Lagos and the Yoruba regions, support for Babangida collapsed after the annulment. Protest spread and thousands of Nigerians who lived outside their ethnic region returned home, anticipating conflict between Yorubas and Hausa-Fulani.<sup>58</sup> On August 26, Babangida resigned and turned over power to an interim government led by Ernest Shonekan, a Harvard-educated businessman. While the democratic movement welcomed this, the interim government was composed exclusively of Babangida's friends and allies and indicated that it would rule by military decree. Democracy thus seemed no closer than before. Shonekan attempted to win public approval by freeing some political prisoners, lifting press restrictions, and indicating a willingness to dismantle the powerful and corrupt oil industry bureaucracy, but his attempts to gain support from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund led to a massive increase in fuel prices and sparked even more protests.<sup>59</sup> Even Nigerians who were thoroughly cynical about the democratization and cared little about annulment of the elections were directly threatened by the price increases, and quickly expressed their opposition through street protests and strikes .

On November 17, Shonekan was fired by Defense Minister Sani Abacha who was widely considered the dominant force in the interim government. Abacha was a thoroughly political officer--he had been a major participant in the 1983 and 1985 coups--and had become massively wealthy through graft.<sup>60</sup> One report called him "the most corrupt individual ever to succeed in taking over a country."<sup>61</sup> Facing disintegrating public order, economic chaos, and the specter of ethnic conflict or civil war, Abacha dismantled the democratic institutions created under Babangida, abolished the national and state assemblies, dissolved the two political parties, replaced all elected state governors with appointees, and banned political meetings and associations.<sup>62</sup> There were fears that the military, having lost all credibility as the protector of the national interest, would disintegrate into warring factions centered around powerful senior leaders.<sup>63</sup> But, as a master political manipulator, Abacha recognized the need to divide and stifle opponents. Confusion and contradiction were his primary tools. He made a rhetorical commitment to restarting the transition to civilian rule and lifted the media bans that



Babangida had implemented.<sup>64</sup> He then named a diverse cabinet with both military and civilian members, and promised a constitutional forum and a program of economic reforms.<sup>65</sup> He purged a number of Babangida loyalists in the military, including nine brigadiers.<sup>66</sup> And even while he banned the political parties that Babangida created, Abacha promised to allow real parties with grassroots support to emerge after the national constitutional conference completed its work.<sup>67</sup>

Even if Abacha was sincere about political reform--which is highly questionable--he was quickly distracted by mounting crises. Decades of mismanagement and corruption had set the stage; the annulment of the June 1993 elections seemed to have been the spark that lit the fire. Two problems were particularly pressing. One was economic collapse. After abandoning the unpopular austerity and adjustment program, Babangida had returned to extensive state control of the economy. The rationale behind this was obvious. The general needed statism in order to coopt political opponents by providing them the opportunity for corruption, and he needed to subsidize basic goods to forestall a popular uprising. In effect, Babangida mortgaged Nigeria's economic future for political expediency. By the time Abacha seized power, conditions had become so dire--100 percent inflation, a nearly worthless currency, shortages of basic goods--that a popular uprising appeared possible.

The second (and related) problem facing Abacha was ethnic tension. Economic difficulties and mismanagement fueled this, as minority tribes in the oil producing regions of the south and southeast protested that petroleum revenues inordinately benefited the northern political and military elite. This led to government repression so brutal that international human rights organizations feared genocide of groups like the Ogoni.<sup>68</sup> Other minorities such as the Ijaw, Itsekiri, and Urhobo also expressed discontent with government indifference to environmental degradation and the lack of development in their regions.<sup>69</sup> At the same time, tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims, which had simmered throughout Nigeria's history, seemed ready to explode. In the predominately Muslim cities of the north, there were numerous religiously-motivated attacks and riots and, in Lagos, leaflets were circulated calling for a *jihad* against Christians.<sup>70</sup>

After a brief lull, opposition to military rule intensified. In June 1994, on the first anniversary of the annulled elections, Abiola declared himself president and was soon arrested and charged with treason.<sup>71</sup> In July and August, the labor movement, led by the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers, mounted a strike in support of Abiola that brought economic life in Lagos to a standstill.<sup>72</sup> The government responded with violence and, when the strike failed to spread outside the southwest section of Nigeria, its leaders called it off.<sup>73</sup> General Abacha used the strike to further consolidate personal power.<sup>74</sup> In August, he fired the commanders of the army and navy, reportedly because they wanted to negotiate with Abiola to seek an end to the crisis.<sup>75</sup> In September, Abacha issued a decree assuming absolute power and closing most newspapers, including the influential *Guardian*.<sup>76</sup> He then eliminated all civilians from his government.<sup>77</sup> In December, Abacha ended a long tradition of judicial

independence in Nigeria by suspending *habeas corpus*.<sup>78</sup> Abacha formed a constitutional conference, but few democratic activists considered it anything other than a sham.<sup>79</sup> The general's primary technique was to weaken, divide, and confuse opponents by simultaneously combining reform (or the illusion of reform) with repression. While purging all civilians from the regime, for instance, Abacha stated, "the commitment of this administration to full democratic rule is unequivocal."<sup>80</sup>

By the spring of 1995 opposition to Abacha erupted in the military. There were frequent coup rumors and 150 officers were arrested.<sup>81</sup> As many as 400 were detained; some may have been tortured.<sup>82</sup> Forty purported plotters, including widely-respected former head of state Olusegun Obasanjo--the only Nigerian military dictator to peacefully return power to civilians--were thought to have been sentenced to death, generating a storm of international protest. External pressure also heightened. The governments of the United States and Great Britain took firm stands. Jimmy Carter visited Abacha to secure Obasanjo's release, while African leaders such as Robert Mugabe, Yoweri Museveni, and Nelson Mandela attempted to intercede on Obasanjo's part.<sup>83</sup> In November, international condemnation surged as Nigeria executed nine environmental and human rights activists, including well-known writer Ken Saro-Wiwa.<sup>84</sup> The Commonwealth suspended Nigeria while the Organization of African Unity condemned the executions.<sup>85</sup> Earlier, TransAfrica, the African-American lobbying organization that had formed the centerpiece of the American antiapartheid movement, launched a campaign against Nigeria's military regime and sought an oil boycott--its first serious protest against a black African government.<sup>86</sup> Support for this grew throughout 1995. As the editors of the *New York Times* wrote, "That is a drastic step, but it begins to look like the only way to slow General Abacha's ruinous course."<sup>87</sup> The Clinton administration initially rejected the idea of a boycott, but by the end of 1995 Assistant Secretary of State George Moose indicated that this was being reconsidered in the wake of the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa.<sup>88</sup>

Even though opposition to the Abacha regime has blossomed outside Nigeria, within the country effective repression by the regime has stifled dissent, leaving only numbness and apathy among the public.<sup>89</sup> According to Michael Ajasin, a former state governor and leader of the National Democratic Coalition, "If you organize demonstrations here, [the] government will use any of its forces to kill people. We are tired of bloodshed."<sup>90</sup> Abacha rarely appeared in public over concern for his security, and his rapid shifting of government officials heightened corruption as officeholders felt they had to steal quickly since their tenure was short.<sup>91</sup> Anticipating demonstrations and violence on the second anniversary of the annulled elections, the regime launched another crackdown.<sup>92</sup> Whether because of this or general political malaise, June 1995 was much less volatile than June 1994, with a stay-at-home strike in Lagos the only major problem. Today Abacha's strategy of deliberate confusion continues as he simultaneously pursues the most systematic repression in Nigeria's history while claiming to seek a return to civilian rule. In a nationwide speech in October 1995, for instance, he commuted the death sentences of some of his political opponents, lifted the ban on some

newspapers, and stated that he would hand over power to an elected government in 3 years but, at the same time, refused to show leniency for the jailed M.K.O. Abiola.<sup>93</sup> And, despite having named Yoruba officers to two of the top four positions in the military, ethnic tension remains serious.<sup>94</sup>

Today, there are no civil-military relations in Nigeria in the sense of discrete military and civilian institutions with a structured relationship. There is no discernible difference between the corrupt, co-opted senior military leadership and the equally corrupt and co-opted civilian elite. Abacha's dictum that "during the transition period, particular attention will be made to the orientation of the military to inculcate the spirit of subordination to the civil authority" is utterly ludicrous considering the general's extensive involvement in coups and political intervention.<sup>95</sup> While the Nigerian military retains a warfighting capability that makes it a major regional power, officer professionalism in the western sense of holding politics at arm's length has totally disappeared from Nigeria's senior ranks despite Babangida's efforts to engineer it during his rule. While the threat of a coup from junior officers persists, if it occurs, it will most likely be driven by the plotters' desire for personal aggrandizement and the desire to replace old thieves with new thieves. The military is incapable of self-reform and cannot lead successful democratization; civil-military relations are beyond reform. As Africanist Claude Welch phrases it, "Nothing less than a revolution in attitudes will suffice."<sup>96</sup> The only way that democracy can be built and sustained is through a radical transformation of the military to include the wholesale replacement of the officer corps.

Alone, though, even this is not enough. Pathological civil-military relations in Nigeria are only a symptom of deeper malignancies. The biggest obstacle to democratization is the system of political economy that makes political power and wealth coterminous. So long as government office and corruption are the major--indeed, the only--routes to wealth, democracy will not work. Supporters of democracy within and outside Nigeria must transform civil-military relations, but there must be simultaneous and equally profound change in political economy and political culture. Finding a way to do this without provoking national fragmentation, revolution, civil war, and a human disaster of vast proportions is an immense, perhaps impossible, task.<sup>97</sup>

### **South Africa: A Dangerous Dawn.**

If Nigeria suggests that African civil-military relations can degenerate to the point that radical transformation is a prerequisite for democratization, South Africa shows that African armed forces can play the opposite role and midwife the birth of open government. The South African military has long been respected as Africa's most proficient and professional military force. Despite this, the military's acceptance of apartheid's demise was not preordained. There were rumors of a rift between hardliners and moderates, talk of a possible mutiny, and even whispers of a coup led by lower-ranking officers.<sup>98</sup> An investigation by Richard Goldstone, an eminent South

African jurist, uncovered an organized movement within the military and police to discredit the ANC during the transition process.<sup>99</sup> While President F.W. de Klerk reacted strongly and dismissed or suspended 23 white military officers (including 6 generals), this showed the military's potential to hinder the emergence of democratic, majority rule.<sup>100</sup>

Yet today, the South African Defense Force (SADF), now known as the South African National Defense Force (SANDF) is a key component of the nation's political system and remains essential for the longevity of the government. What accounts for this dramatic transition from a protector of apartheid to a protector of majority rule? Part of the explanation lies with the function of the military in the apartheid system. The white minority government used the SADF to support the police in maintaining internal security and performing civil works and management functions in black townships. After former Minister of Defense P.W. Botha became prime minister (later president) of South Africa in 1977, the military's influence in policymaking became so extensive that some scholars talked of the "militarization" of politics.<sup>101</sup> But in contrast to the military praetorianism common in the rest of Africa, the SADF was *invited* to assume a major role in national policymaking rather than imposing itself on civilian leaders.<sup>102</sup> In contrast to other African armed forces, the SADF never developed a corporatist ethic that sees the military as an organization with its own interests separate from the rest of society, and eschewed the ethical justification of involvement in politics that is so common in the region.<sup>103</sup> Although the military's influence on government policies waned during the De Klerk presidency, it remained important.<sup>104</sup>

With the demise of apartheid and the establishment of the multi-ethnic Mandela government, the relationship of the SADF/SANDF to civilian leaders changed. President Mandela appointed Joe Modise as head of the ANC's military wing, Unkhonto we Sizwe (MK) as Minister of Defense while naming Communist Party member Ronnie Kasrils Deputy Minister.<sup>105</sup> A Defense Secretariat was created, through which the uniformed head of the Defense Force was to report to the Minister of Defense. A relatively liberal Afrikaner, Lieutenant General (retired) Pierre Steyn became head of the Defense Secretariat and was assigned to work on budgetary issues and long-term policy leaving the head of the Defense Force to concentrate on military operations, intelligence, training, and discipline.<sup>106</sup> While the Defense Secretary and head of the Defense Force are technically equals, this still-developing new bureaucracy further diluted the policymaking role of the military and forced the heads of the Defense Force to report to the head of the Defense Secretariat for the first time. In much of Sub-Saharan Africa, such a fall in the military's influence over national policy, when combined with a socio-political transformation that much of the officer corps did not welcome, would have sparked a coup. In South Africa, the military acceded to this remarkable transformation.

The architects of the post-apartheid South African state have been keenly aware of the importance of retaining healthy civil-military relations based on civilian control of the military. According to Article 31 of the Constitution of Republic of South

Africa, "The Security Forces as a whole, shall be required to perform their functions and exercise their powers in the national interest and shall be prohibited from furthering or prejudicing party political interest."<sup>107</sup> A June 1995 defense white paper states: "Stable civil-military relations depend to a great extent on the professionalism of the armed forces."<sup>108</sup> To cultivate professionalism and the acceptance of civilian rule by the military, the armed forces are developing an educational program on the role of the military in a democracy that will be given all members of the military.

In a broader sense, the SANDF's relationship with society has changed very little since the transition to a new government and reflects mutual respect. Under apartheid the military supported apartheid mainly by destabilizing regional governments and striking guerilla targets outside the Republic.<sup>109</sup> Its involvement in violence within the nation was critical, but sporadic. As a result, the SADF was less politically tainted than the South African Police (SAP).<sup>110</sup> The SADF presence in the black townships was often in support of civic action projects, thus leaving a relatively positive feeling on the part of the people toward the SADF.<sup>111</sup> During the election process, the SADF was able to mitigate violence and gain respect for strength of will, evenhandedness, and political acumen. Thus, the SANDF inherited a positive relationship with society as a whole and is respected for remaining above the fray of domestic politics. But today South Africa's troubles have abated, not ended. Five interrelated problems could erode or challenge the health of civil-military relations: internal violence; difficulties in integrating the armed forces; the military's budget crunch; the possibility of a radical successor to Nelson Mandela; and, the possibility of investigations leading to the prosecution of former military officials for apartheid-era activities.

*Internal Violence.* South Africa's internal security situation remains unsettled and, in some instances, has worsened since the 1994 election. Political violence between Zulu and ANC vigilantes in Kwazulu/Natal and the assassination of policemen are examples. Moreover, the schisms between the various black political parties and even segments of the African National Congress, complemented by illegal strikes and the presence of a heavily politicized, violent, uneducated and largely unskilled group of young black men in the urban townships--the so-called "lost generation" that grew out of the resistance struggle against apartheid--can spark political protest and instability should President Mandela's social policies fail. Currently, the police cannot provide internal security for the country without the assistance of the SANDF. The military's reaction to an increase in violence would be a crucial determinant of the success or failure of open government.

The African National Congress came to power in a coalition with the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Council of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). All three organizations used easily manipulated, young, urban blacks to create a system of political violence that successfully pressured the former white regime.<sup>112</sup> Nelson Mandela has not fully tamed the radicals in these groups nor provided adequate opportunities for the "lost generation." COSATU continues to back widespread strikes that have paralyzed some of the nation's major

industries, while the SACP and some ANC leaders, including party Secretary General Cyril Ramaphosa, have criticized government policies along racial and ethnic lines, often suggesting that government industrial policies benefit whites to the continued exclusion of blacks.<sup>113</sup>

Even more disturbing is the persistence of ANC self-defense units (SDUs), which have rejected calls by Nelson Mandela and others to disarm. These are the military arms of local ANC political units and constitute a major source of power for party radicals.<sup>114</sup> Armed with AK47s, SDUs have taken over police stations, spearheaded the violent conflict between the ANC and Inkhata Freedom Party in Kwazulu/Natal, and often prevented the police from increasing their influence in urban areas where, to quote President Mandela, "Powerful syndicates. . . are on the verge of taking over, and dictating to the masses of the people how they should behave themselves."<sup>115</sup> Natal, in particular, is facing a virtual civil war between local warlords.<sup>116</sup> Should the government fail in its efforts to disarm the SDUs, other political vigilante groups, and quasi-political criminal gangs, it may find that political opposition, even from within its ANC ranks, is militarily powerful enough to veto local government policies.

Therefore, the potential exists that the SANDF could be ordered to fight urban warfare against local warlords. This would place tremendous strain on the SANDF's unity. The military is fully aware of this. According to the 1995 defense white paper, "SANDF troops are currently employed on a widespread basis in support of the SAPS...such employment is likely to persist for some time because of on-going public violence and the relative shortage of police personnel. Nevertheless, the history of South Africa and many other countries suggests that it is inappropriate to utilise armed forces in a policing role on a permanent or semi-permanent basis."<sup>117</sup> The problem is finding a way to extricate the military from this mission without opening the floodgates of anarchy.

*The Integration Process.* South Africa civil-military relations are shaped by tension among three contrasting institutional traditions and their associated perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs. The first of these is that of the white officer corps which has no history of coups. Second is the ANC/PAC tradition that reflects Soviet bloc commissar-based training.<sup>118</sup> In this, the military was simply the armed component of the ruling party. Overt, deliberate politicization of the army was considered normal and appropriate. The third tradition is the more "typical" African one of the officers from the former black homelands such as Bophutswana. For them, direct or indirect intervention in politics is the norm; many have engaged in successful and failed coups. They have had little impact on the SANDF.<sup>119</sup> According to General Georg Miering, chief of the SANDF, the SADF tradition of civil-military relations has dominated the SANDF so far.<sup>120</sup> That is good news. Although at this point there is no indication that the SANDF intends any fundamental adjustment of its relationship with the government, the potential must be considered in light of the inevitable clash among the three traditions.

Under its current leadership the military is unlikely to take

revolution to the streets or threaten the government. This may change as the highly politicized MK cadres and members of coup-prone defense forces of the former tribal homelands assume senior SANDF positions. The current SANDF leaders, though, seem to have inherited the SADF's belief in civilian control of the armed forces through "objective" means based on military professionalism and abstention from politics.<sup>121</sup> But as both the military and civilian elites become more heterogeneous, the government may manipulate ethnic rivalries to control the armed forces. In a country encompassing several large black groups, Asians, coloreds, and white groups, each with distinct cultural norms, the politicization of ethnic conflict will always tempt power mongers. The old SADF was itself a complex organization. It included black Portuguese-speaking, Bushman and Zulu battalions as well as Afrikaner-speaking and English-speaking white units. Although generally led by white officers, units maintained their distinct identities and were effective, in part, because of their cultural homogeneity and the skills inherent in those cultures. Bringing in the inadequately trained and inexperienced MK and PAC military personnel while simultaneously demobilizing culturally distinct units is difficult, with the potential for mutinies or intra-group violence always present.<sup>122</sup>

There is also a possibility that South Africa may follow the pattern of many of its African neighbors and turn military advancement into an ethnic spoils system, giving most leadership positions to Xhosa officers. If so, the SANDF may become vulnerable to political manipulation by the heavily Xhosa government or lose its legitimacy among other black ethnic groups such as the Zulu. Domestic security missions might then be problematic if, for example, a Xhosa-dominated SANDF attempted to suppress ethnic violence in Kwazulu/Natal. Taking on a politically sensitive internal mission could well forfeit the goodwill that the society as a whole now ascribes to the SANDF.

Against this backdrop, the SANDF continues the difficult transformation into a post-apartheid force. Integrating multiple black political parties and ethnic groups into a largely Afrikaner-led defense force *should be* a difficult process. The differences in cultural norms on a purely personal level are profound, as are the organizational norms that the various groups bring to the integration process. The cultural problems associated with integration have already been manifest, surprisingly from the ANC's own MK cadre. Approximately 22,000 MK members were to join the SANDF; this inflated number included thousands of young, uneducated city toughs pressed into the service of the ANC during the run-up to the election, and who never served in the MK when it was a military force in exile. Over 5,000 members of this group, which Mr. Mandela himself says has been "infiltrated by people who want to destabilize this process and by sheer criminals," have embarrassed the government by going absent without leave twice during efforts to provide them basic training.<sup>123</sup>

Unlike the PAC cadre, which are largely given good marks for their performance in military training, many of the MKs had an unrealistic view of what positions they should be given and what training they require to assume positions in the SANDF.<sup>124</sup> White military leaders cringed at the idea of putting rag-tag thugs and

toughs into the SANDF with no training and for only the political purpose of meeting integration requirements.<sup>125</sup> If a solution that maintains standards is not worked out and unqualified MK are allowed to assume important positions, there could be a widespread abdication of white military leadership and the rapid evolution of the SANDF into a politicized, paper Army unable to execute an internal security mission. The abject failure of the National Peacekeeping Force formed to keep order during the 1994 election does not bode well for future efforts.<sup>126</sup> Conversely, if the large numbers of unsuitable MK are dismissed, they will likely swell the ranks of the SDUs and exacerbate urban township security problems.

Thus far the process is going fairly well. As of August 1995, the former opposition accounted for 11 generals, 1,100 officers and approximately 15,000 soldiers of the new SANDF, albeit with a lessening of standards. Given the continued problems with SDUs and continued criticism and strikes by former allies, the Mandela government may have to choose between speeding the integration process and dropping SANDF standards, and maintaining an efficient, tough security force capable of arresting the political violence that shows every evidence of continuing.<sup>127</sup>

*The Military Budget Crunch.* Nelson Mandela is wisely attempting to leave in place the capitalist market economy of the former government but recognizes that it is necessary to make good on campaign promises and demonstrate to the majority black population that a black government can seriously address their needs. His method for doing so is the regional development plan (RDP), the 5-year, \$11 billion effort primarily aimed at providing housing for large numbers of black urban dwellers.<sup>128</sup> In the absence of meaningful international financial support, Mr. Mandela's government has been forced to fund this plan through budget cuts. The SANDF has felt its share of the budget ax. According to a senior military officer, defense spending fell by half between 1989 and 1994.<sup>129</sup> While this is logical in the context of defused regional tensions, the funding required to maintain equipment and acquire new weapons systems has largely evaporated. Moreover, the politically sensitive integration of PAC and ANC military forces into the Defense Force cost an estimated 132 million rand (approximately \$36.3 million).<sup>130</sup> This integration is a test of the strength of the new government. Should it be perceived as being unnecessarily delayed or unsuccessful, the Mandela government will lose important political credits with the left wing of the ANC and other black African political parties. Recognizing this, Minister of Defense Modise went to Parliament to ask for more short-term funding to support integration and promised he would be "fighting like a lion" to prevent further defense cuts.<sup>131</sup>

While money for integration has been forthcoming, under the current political and economic situation the SANDF will continue to compete with social programs for the funds necessary to maintain operational effectiveness. Substantial economic resources are needed to sustain the transition from an all-white led Army to a multi-ethnic, multi-political partied defense force. For the current fiscal year, nearly 2 million rand were added to the military budget to facilitate the integration process. At the same time, the government



faces a myriad of other financial demands associated with the construction of a post-apartheid economy and society. The SANDF finds itself facing budget reductions at the same time that the price of integration is mounting. The SANDF budget had been dropping at approximately 12 percent per year since the beginning of the decade, a trend Minister of Defense Modise considers incompatible with the integration process.<sup>132</sup> However, the RDP, which received 5 billion rand of the 150 billion rand 1995-96 budget, will continue to place extreme demands on government resources, to include the defense budget.<sup>133</sup> At some point, the government may have to choose between maintaining military standards and achieving the goals of the Regional Development Plan. The budgetary process could well hurt the military more than internal dissent.

*The Possibility of a Radical Successor to Nelson Mandela.* Since being elected, President Mandela's health has been a major concern for those following the South African government's development. While the septuagenarian leader has broad trans-ethnic respect, his potential successors do not. Given the ANC's broad-based popularity and growing strength in Kwazulu/Natal, it is likely that his successor will come from within the party. Arguably, the two most likely candidates are Deputy President Thabo Mbeki and Cyril Ramaphosa, ANC secretary-general and president of the Constitutional Assembly. Neither has the potential to replace President Mandela as a centripetal figure of national unity, nor unquestioned support within the ANC.

Thabo Mbeki, who focuses on international affairs and receives good marks from foreign observers and many business leaders, is not popular with the left-of-center elements of the ANC who are influential in the urban areas. Cyril Ramaphosa, who lost out to Mbeki for a key cabinet post, is former head of the powerful National Union of Mineworkers. However, he carries the disadvantage of not being a Xhosa in the heavily Xhosa ANC. Although both men are responsible leaders who recognize the importance of white business interests to a prosperous South Africa and would be likely to carry on the Mandela concept of reconciliation, they may not have the opportunity. The average black South African has seen little economic improvement since Mandela has been in power. Of the 41 million South Africans, only 35 percent are "economically active," and in the economic hub of Gauteng Province there is 40 percent unemployment.<sup>134</sup>

These figures are unlikely to improve. Because of the ANC's policy of "liberation before education" during the struggle against apartheid, many young urban blacks are illiterate, trained in violence, view weapons as the only source of power and, as the MK recruits' experience with the SANDF demonstrates, have unrealistic expectations of what a black-run government can deliver. Given the high black birth rate, competition from the millions of illegal aliens seeking wealth in South Africa, and the irresponsible strike policies of the major union, economic growth sufficient to mollify black demands will be difficult, perhaps impossible. Further, in spite of the availability of funding in the budget, the government-run RDP is foundering on the shoals of inefficient government bureaucracy and "near chaos" in regional government.<sup>135</sup> The economic and social realities fuel the flames of radical rhetoric and set the stage for

the emergence of a left-of-center, charismatic and autocratic black leader. This would place great stress on the SANDF. The political unity of South Africa itself after Mandela is not a foregone conclusion. Schisms within the SANDF resulting from the emergence of a radical national leader could be the precipitant of national fragmentation.

*Prosecution of former military officials for apartheid-era activities.* The issue of amnesty for crimes committed before the election of the current Government of National Unity is a bitter and divisive one and has largely been avoided by the Mandela government as it sought to unify a multi-cultural country. Blacks oppressed by the enforcement arms of the white apartheid government view the torture and assassination used to battle anti-apartheid organizations as criminal and pressure the new government to root out and prosecute guilty individuals. Whites largely viewed this period as a time of war and organizations such as the PAC and ANC as subversive terrorist groups, deserving of the treatment they received. Moreover, the ANC itself is embarrassed by inquiries into the torture and murder of its own members.

Despite this, in July 1995, President Mandela signed legislation establishing a "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" to expose human rights abuses from the apartheid era.<sup>136</sup> The decision to prosecute Magnus Malan, former head of the SADF and Minister of Defense, and 10 other retired senior officers (including five generals and an admiral) for murder--and Mandela's acceptance of the decision--sent shock waves through the white population and much of the SANDF leadership. The 11 accused men are alleged to have sanctioned the paramilitary training of a group from the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party who, in 1987, massacred 13 women and children in KwaZulu-Natal.<sup>137</sup> The decision has polarized the various ethnic communities. In the SANDF, it pits white SADF veterans who revere and support Malan against the recently integrated opposition who view them as criminal oppressors. The ultimate impact of the case is yet to be seen, but it undoubtedly complicates the already difficult integration process and may portend further scrutiny of the apartheid-era activities of SANDF leaders. The issue has driven a wedge between Mandela and Deputy President F.W. de Klerk.<sup>138</sup> If this case is simply the first of many instigated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the fragile peace between the constituent parts of the SANDF could be shattered.

*In contrast.* Although internal violence, a difficult integration, and a budget crunch could complicate South Africa civil-military relations and potentially hinder the consolidation of democracy, the contrast with Nigeria remains stark. In Nigeria, those who understand the role of the military in stable democracies and are interested in moving their own armed forces in that direction have largely been purged or peripheralized. The only constituency for professionalism within the military seems to be junior officers susceptible to cooptation and retired officers who have already stolen their share. Nigeria's increasing isolation from the global military community will only exacerbate this.

In South Africa, the top military leadership--white as well as

black--gives every sign of commitment to civilian control of the military and healthy civil-military relations. South Africa's reintegration into the global military, political, and economic communities may further encourage this, thus lowering the pressure on an already beleaguered democratic system. Rocky Williams--a SANDF colonel and preeminent expert on South African civil-military relations--is probably correct when he contends that the SADF's tradition; the strength of South African civil society; the absence of political or economic disintegration and the legitimacy of the political system; schisms within the officer corps; and South Africa's complexity all mitigate against praetorianism.<sup>139</sup> But it is also true that the military in a democracy must carefully avoid over-association with any one element of society. The more cohesive the society, the easier this is.<sup>140</sup> Few democracies are more complex and violently divided than South Africa.<sup>141</sup> The ongoing professionalization of the MK, PAC, and homeland components of the SANDF is a race against time, hopefully to be completed before Nelson Mandela's unifying presence fades from the political scene. The end of apartheid may represent a new political dawn, but it remains a dangerous one.

#### **Recommendations: The American Role in Democracy Support.**

African democracy can be sustained but to do so will be extraordinarily difficult. The tradition of colonialism and post-colonial misgovernment, when combined with the problems arising from dependent economies, poverty, ethnic and religious schisms, rapid population growth, ecological decline, statist economics, corruption and nepotism, and ingrained patterns of violence pose tremendous obstacles to stable, open government. As Africans attempt to surmount these, U.S. actions will not be decisive but can be important. The experience of Nigeria and South Africa suggest some of the vital points and useful actions for American strategists and policymakers. From these cases, tenets can be drawn to guide U.S. efforts. Three are particularly important.

*Approach democracy support in a strategic fashion.* For the foreseeable future, Africa will remain an area of ancillary or peripheral concern for the United States. This means that the resources devoted to democracy support, whether political, military, or economic, will be limited. As a result, American policies and programs must be intricately synchronized into a coherent strategy if they are to have any lasting effect. The normal method of U.S. involvement in democratization is reactive and *ad hoc*. By contrast, a strategic approach focused on the ends, ways, and means necessary for success would entail the development of clear objectives, an accurate assessment of the resources available to attain these, and some notion of how to synchronize and phase the application of resources in pursuit of objectives. The Greater Horn of Africa Initiative (GHAI) is an example.

The United States should tailor a strategy of democracy support to each African country with the State Department in the lead. The Department of Defense will always be a secondary player but can spearhead efforts to reform civil-military relations. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs can contribute

to the overall coherence of U.S. strategy, while American military officers in-country can provide a link and channel of communication to their African counterparts. Since armies dominate the military forces of African states, the role of the U.S. Army will be particularly important. Any U.S. country team that marginalizes its military component will have a harder time understanding and influencing the officer corps of the host nation than a country team that fully integrates and utilizes its military members. The military component of a U.S. country team can also play a vital role in developing a strategic approach to democracy support. Through training, education, and institutional culture, the U.S. military concentrates on long-term and holistic strategic planning. This expertise can assist the rest of the country team (and appropriate policymakers in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Department of State, and National Security Council) in approaching democracy support in a strategic fashion. Of course, it is also incumbent on the military to provide high-quality and well-educated personnel for assignments in Africa. To be a major player in African democracy support, the Army must rejuvenate the foreign area officer (FAO) program by making it a more attractive career option.

Most of U.S. effort in democratization focuses on encouraging non-democracies to hold elections and move toward open government. This is a vital first step, but should not represent the endpoint of U.S. involvement. A strategic approach to democracy support would take a more long-term perspective, with emphasis on making democracy self-sustaining rather than simply starting it. Building a sustainable democracy is always a protracted process that unfolds in stages. The consolidation period--making democracy "so broadly and profoundly legitimate among its citizens that it is very unlikely to break down" in Larry Diamond's words--is particularly arduous.<sup>142</sup>

Two points are critical. One is the end of the "honeymoon" period for the elected government. Because the people of the Third World know that most developed nations in North America, Western Europe, and the Asia-Pacific are democracies, they often associate economic development with open government, assuming that democracy will bring an immediate improvement in living standards. The political campaigns leading to an election, with their barrage of promises, further amplify public expectations. As a result, the people of a state often become cynical or disillusioned once it becomes clear that their inflated expectations will not be met. Phrased simply, people with little experience with democracy often consider it a panacea for their problems. When they find it is not, they can lose faith. At best, expectations are lowered and the consolidation of democracy continues. At worst, the new, fragile government can be challenged or even toppled as the euphoria of the elections fades. It is particularly important for external supporters of the democratic government to offer political and economic support at this time and develop realistic expectations concerning the pace of change. South Africa, for instance, is approaching the point of widespread disillusionment. Mandela's popularity and repeated emphasis on the long-term nature of political and economic change might postpone the crisis until after he leaves the political scene but, whether now or later, intensified U.S. support may be required to consolidate South African democracy.

The second key point in building sustainable democracy is the follow-on election. It is standard wisdom that holding a *second* election and completing a peaceful transfer of power is more difficult than holding the first election.<sup>143</sup> South Africa is a case in point. The selection of Mandela's successor will be more dangerous than the 1994 election, and will serve as a vital determinant of that nation's future. In the past, Africa has seen a number of democratizations that eroded into dictatorship. Supporters of democracy must make it clear that the initial election was only the first step of a difficult journey rather than the end point of the political transformation. This is, however, easier said than done. It is politically easy to pressure an authoritarian government, whether military or civilian, to hold elections. It is more difficult to pressure a government that was, in fact, elected, but is balking at giving up power. For 50 years the United States has shown less concern for second elections than for those that begin the process of transformation from authoritarian to open government. To overcome this, the focus should be on the *consolidation* of democracy rather than simply its instigation.

Given the limitations of U.S. interests in Africa, a strategic approach to democracy support should entail a form of political triage to gain the maximum benefit from scarce political resources. Some African states will not build and consolidate democracy for a long time; others are already well on their way. American resources should be concentrated on a third category: African states that have the potential to build and consolidate democracy, but need outside help and encouragement. In all cases, a state's commitment to democracy should continue to be a primary criteria for any U.S. aid (other than humanitarian assistance).

A strategic approach to democracy support would also seek to coordinate the actions of all external supporters of democracy, whether other African nations, European states, or the United Nations. To assist in this, the United States should encourage the formation of an African Democracy Council composed of senior government and non-government supporters of democracy in the region. This would offer a forum for nations in the midst of democratization to exchange ideas and seek advice, and serve as a clearinghouse for the assessment of democratization efforts. It would also provide a mechanism to offer support to advocates of open government and pressure its opponents in states that have not undergone democratization. The National Endowment for Democracy could serve as this organization's primary liaison in the United States.

The United States should also adopt a policy of zero tolerance for military coups that overthrow elected governments, and should actively support international efforts to politically and economically quarantine coup makers. Current U.S. policy toward Nigeria is a useful step in this direction. In response to Babangida's annulment of the 1993 elections and Abacha's subsequent seizure of power, the United States ended all government-to-government military assistance and training, requested withdrawal of the Nigerian military attache from Washington, DC, withdrew the U.S. security assistance officer, did not allow a newly-named defense attache to assume his station, and

restricted the entry into the United States of Nigerian military officers involved in the Abacha government and their families.<sup>144</sup> These steps, according to Assistant Secretary of State George Moose, "were directed at those regarded as most responsible for Nigeria's current political impasse, namely the Nigerian military."<sup>145</sup> The State Department has also worked with other nations to coordinate pressure on the military regime.

These are positive steps but the United States should escalate the pressure and encourage other states and international organizations to adopt an increasingly strict and coordinated political and economic quarantine of Nigeria. For many African militaries, Nigeria is a test case. A concerted global program of pressure including the oil boycott advocated by Randall Robinson of TransAfrica would set a valuable precedent. Such actions are more politically and economically feasible now than at any time in recent memory. Nigeria supplies only 7.1 percent of U.S. oil imports.<sup>146</sup> Current world petroleum prices are low and other suppliers could make up the difference. Even if an oil boycott did result in a slight price increase and the loss of Nigerian cooperation on counternarcotic and peacekeeping efforts, that nation's symbolic importance across Africa is so great that the political benefits would justify the costs. Even though an oil boycott would be largely symbolic and difficult to enforce, it would show that even influential states are subject to pressure from the growing community of democratic nations, and that the United States is actually willing to pay a price for democracy support. By this, it might help deter future coup-makers.

*Concentrate on perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes.* The United States will not be able to smother emerging African democracies in aid. El Salvador, which received nearly \$6 billion in aid during the 1980s and 1990s, will not be replicated in Africa.<sup>147</sup> In countries that choose to undergo the difficult transition to open government, U.S. strategy should thus concentrate on the *psychological* component of democracy support. An important part of this is effective civilian control of the military. Stable democracies all have some form of civilian control and oversight of the military. For the United States, civilian control is sacrosanct and can accurately be considered the first principle of civil-military relations.<sup>148</sup> Other democratic states need to take this trust as seriously.

Stable democracies use a sliding scale of appropriate military involvement in policymaking. On issues concerning military operations, civilians usually defer to military leaders. On military organization, doctrine, strategy, force composition, acquisition, and budget, there is a somewhat firmer civilian hand. On national security strategy and foreign policy, the military usually provides advice, but is seldom the primary decisionmaker. On non-security economic, social, and political policy, most modern democracies accord the military a very small role in decisionmaking if any at all. This is what Huntington called "objective" civilian control.<sup>149</sup> African civil-military relations have more often been based on "subjective" control where civilians attempt to minimize the military's propensity to intervene in politics by promoting a convergence of interests and values.<sup>150</sup> While it is sometimes held that objective control is impossible in the African

environment, Huntington was correct when he argued that subjective control is incompatible with stable, sustained democracy. American strategies for democracy support must thus promote objective control of African militaries rather than subjective (even though this may be unattainable in some instances.) This approach could help create militaries that serve as indigenous resources for democracy support.

The key to this is cultivation of appropriate perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs. Americans who seek to help Africans consolidate democracy must overcome infatuation with the formal dimension of civil-military relations. Constitutions, laws, regulations, and organizational structures may be important, but the crux is psychological. Specific perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs undergird healthy civil-military relations. The military, for instance, needs to believe that civilian leaders were selected by legitimate means and are fair, competent, and honest. Armed forces should see their allegiance as holistic--to the nation as a whole--rather than to specific regions, groups, or individuals, believing the military budget is fair and their service adequately rewarded given the overall economic situation of the nation. The military needs to be respected, its counsel adequately considered on strategic issues, its autonomy adequate on matters that are strictly internal to the military, and believe that civilian leaders and society as a whole consider soldiering an honorable profession. Finally, the military must believe that civilian rule is almost always preferable to military rule, and that active involvement in politics is incompatible with military professionalism and detracts from the promotion of national security. Similarly, civilian officials must believe that military leaders are competent, honest, and effective, and that they deserve autonomy or authority over certain internal issues. They should consider adequate funding of the military important. And, civilians too must consider soldiering an honorable profession and believe that politicization of the military would detract from national security and political stability even though it might bring short-term gains to civilian leaders who manipulate it. The entire society needs to share these beliefs, and should feel that the military represents the nation as a whole rather than one region or segment.

The U.S. military's prime function in democracy support is encouraging African officers to adopt the perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes necessary for healthy civil-military relations, primarily by providing a good example and incentives for accepting civilian control. One of the key tools for this is the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, which brings African officers to U.S. military schools where they learn about and observe the American approach to civil-military relations. The U.S. Department of Defense considers IMET "one of the most economical and effective uses of DoD funds in the long-term. With few exceptions, IMET graduates have positive experiences in the U.S., and return to their countries with a better understanding of the proper role of a nation's military in a democratic civil society."<sup>151</sup> The program should be expanded as much as possible and include education of the civilians that will exercise oversight over the military and police forces that will allow armed forces to diminish their involvement in internal security. More

should also be done to coordinate IMET and similar programs run by the British, French, and other European nations involved in Africa.

Officer education is not, however, a panacea for military intervention. One of the major problems is that Africans attending military schools in the United States (or Great Britain or France) can easily conclude the "western" notion of military professionalism is appropriate here, but inappropriate in their political environment. One way to transcend this would be creation of a Pan-African Staff College. This could be located in a democratic African state with a faculty drawn from across Africa, the United States, Western Europe, and those Latin American, Eastern European, and Asia-Pacific nations that have undergone democratization. The objective would be to transcend the notion that civilian control of the military and officer professionalism are culture-specific "western" concepts, and allow officers from new democracies to use their experience to teach others in the midst of democratization.

*Emphasize military reorganization and the development of regional security mechanisms.* The United States should encourage African states to move toward a system of military organization that combines a very small standing military with a somewhat larger reserve force. Outside South Africa, there is little tradition of a major reserve component among African militaries. It is more than coincidence that South Africa has a reserve tradition and the SADF supported civilian control of the military and democratization. The absence of reserve systems in the rest of Africa is largely due to the colonial lineage of armed forces. In colonial times, militaries were more likely to impose the government's will on the people than to defend the nation from external aggression. A reserve system would also facilitate military downsizing. Admittedly, this is not a panacea for military intervention in politics. It does not take a large force to complete a coup d'etat, so lowering the size of standing armies would not, in itself, prevent coups. It would, though, contribute to the perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs that undergird healthy civil-military relations.

If African militaries are to continue their transition from tools of repression to defenders of the nation, reorganization into reserve-based systems would help cement the link between the military and the citizens of the nation and mitigate "we-they" thinking. One of the keys to the long history of healthy civil-military relations in the United States has been reliance on citizen-soldiers in Reserve or National Guard units. Building such a system would help African militaries change their self-image and lower the costs of national defense while still providing security against external enemies or internal insurgents. Similarly, increased U.S. and European aid for the development of African police forces could help ease regional militaries out of the internal security function and improve civil-military relations by cultivating more positive attitudes.

The augmentation and development of regional security mechanisms could perform a similar function. The ultimate objective should be a NATO-like mutual security pact composed of African democracies, possibly affiliated with the African Democracy Council. Admittedly few



African states face the imminent prospect of foreign invasion, but such an organization could bring a number of political and symbolic benefits. It could, for instance, allow military downsizing and movement toward reserve-based forces by lowering inter-state hostility. It could also facilitate officer professionalization through frequent exchanges, the construction of personal networks, and combined training and exercises. Perhaps most important, it could provide an institutional framework for quarantines against coup-makers by providing a forum for cooperation among African democracies. If such an organization were to take shape, the United States could offer invaluable advice, support, and training.

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Reforming civil-military relations in Africa will not assure the success of democracy but not doing so will guarantee the collapse of open government. Western scholars and Africans themselves have long held that expecting African militaries to adopt the "western" model of civil-military relations is ethnocentric. Today, such relativism should be abandoned. Admittedly, colonialism dealt Africa a bad hand. Admittedly, the problems faced by current African political and military leaders are extraordinarily complex. Still, the relativism that dominated U.S. thinking for several decades, with its all-too-easy acceptance of corruption, repression, and political intrigue by African military leaders is inimical to democratization and economic development. The "western" form of civil-military relations has nothing to do with culture, race, or region--it is not really "western" at all. There is, in fact, a *democratic* model of civil-military relations that transcends culture.

The decision to pursue open government in Africa must be made by Africans and cannot be imposed by outsiders. If they do make the decision to build and consolidate democracy, they must simultaneously move toward the type of civil-military relations inextricably associated with it. The United States cannot force such reform on unwilling African militaries, but should be ready to offer as much help as possible to those who undertake such a transformation. A strategy of democracy support built on a foundation of clear policies and carefully-constructed institutions can be the locomotive of such help.

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