

SHAPING THE STATE IN AFRICA: THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY IN NATION-BUILDING

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The book *“The New African Civil-Military Relations”* (Pretoria, 2015, 213 p.) contains a selection of papers on the relationship between civilian and military institutions within the framework of democratization in several African countries.

Most of the papers were initially presented at the 13th International Conference of Africanists «Society and Politics in Africa: Traditional, Transitional, and New», which took place on May 27-30, 2014 at the Institute for African Studies, Moscow.

In the opening chapter, entitled *«International African Studies’ Perspectives: The new African civil-military relations phase in African states’ development»*, **Martin Rupiya (South Africa)**, **Gorden Moyo (Zimbabwe)** and **Henrik Laugesen (Denmark)** rightly suggest that one of the main reasons for African countries’ failure at nation-building and state forming has been «the intrusive attention of external powers and the emergence of a political-military elite lacking vision» (p. 7). They also put forward the term «stable coup system», in order to poignantly describe a political system in which illegitimate acquisition or retention of power (including the presidential third term phenomenon) is tolerated by the international community and sub-regional organizations.

Chapter 1 *«The Process of Democratisation and the Main Military Challenges to Nation Building in Libya»* by **Elena Doroshenko (Russia)** offers an informative overview of the situation in Libya in 2011-2014. The author focuses on two main impediments to Libya’s re-emergence as a viable state: activity of militias (including Islamist groups) and foreign involvement. The author underlines that in the aftermath of the so-called “Arab Spring” more people were detained, tortured and executed by the ex-rebels than in the 42 years of Gaddafi’s rule (p. 23). In 2017, the author’s conclusions are just as relevant, as the country remains divided among multiple contesting parties.

Simon Akindes’s (Nigeria) chapter on *«Civil-*

Military Relations in Benin: Out of the barracks and back - now what?» outlines the history of CMR in Benin from August 1960 (when the country turned independent) to December 2014.

Akindes makes an outstanding effort to set meaningful historical landmarks in the development of CMR in Benin. He singles out three periods: «High Military Visibility» (1960-1972), the time «characterized by frequent appearances of the army on the political stage»; «Marxist-Leninist Wandering» (1972-1990), when the military played an increased role in politics, albeit under the guardianship of the ruling party; and the «Return to the Barracks» stage (1990-2014), when the country underwent successful transition to liberal democracy (p. 38). With regard to Benin, Akindes concludes that despite visible successes in developing quality CMR, the role of the Beninese military is not sufficiently determined by legislation, the military is not fully incorporated in the democratic mainstream, and thus the CMR will not evolve unimpeded unless these issues are resolved.

Chapter 3 *«Post-Liberation Relapse and Aborted Social Contract? Isaias Afwerki and Eritrea, 1991-2015»* by **Kealeboga J. Maphunye (South Africa)** describes the political situation in post-independence Eritrea. The author presents a review of literature on CMR in general, and on the nature of the regime in Eritrea. He appropriately characterizes the current regime as authoritarian, despotic or even totalitarian, and stresses that Eritrea «does not have a civilian government that controls the military» (p. 68). The author convincingly argues that Eritrea is «an African example of a failed state» (p. 74). Eritrea is thus portrayed as a state with a fossilized political system, degrading national economy, hostile to almost all of its neighbors and overlooked by most of the international investors active in the region.

In Chapter 4 *«Democratization in Kenya: The ambiguity of foreign military assistance»*, **Henrik Laugesen** asserts that «the African military often finds itself fixed in the traditional ‘colonial role’, as a tool to keep power in the hands of the rulers and not as a catalyst for democracy» and that foreign military assistance rarely changes that (p. 77). The author contends that the three factors inhibiting the change

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are corruption, ethnic dynamics (p. 85) and lack of professionalism of the military (p. 87). Laugesen notes that foreign military assistance does not alleviate corruption: on the contrary, it may even worsen it. It logically follows that foreign military assistance has an ambiguous and peripheral effect on democratization, even though many Western countries claim that the main purpose of their military cooperation with Africa is encouraging democratic change.

In their chapter «*Challenges of Relationships and Social Identities: The paradox of the consequences of Kenya's military intervention in Somalia*» **Irene Limo (Kenya)** and **Wilson Muna (Kenya)** start off with a thorough review of development and dynamics of Al Shabaab, a major Islamist group in Somalia. Then the authors switch to the social and economic consequences Kenya had to face after its intervention in Somalia. They aptly point out that «by committing troops to Somalia, Kenya has continued to exert enormous pressure on its civilians who are the real funders of this invasion through taxation» (p. 109). In 2012, the approximate monthly cost of the intervention was \$180 million. Moreover, tourism industry disruptions were registered in Kenyan areas at the Somalian border. Thus, the conclusion is, the «intervention that sought to protect the national interests and citizens of the country has left many ordinary people exposed to a greater risk in the form of terror attacks, as well as economic hardship, as the government tightens its tax regulations to support the economy and the continued presence of Kenyan troops in Somalia» (p. 111).

Chapter 6 «*The Role of the Military in Politics in Africa's 'Phantom State': the Central African Republic, 1960-2014*» by **Martin Rupiya** focuses on the obstacles to the establishment of a functioning state and capable army in CAR. The author states that «the sub-regional interests of CAR's neighbors have coalesced with French interests in keeping Bangui weak» (p. 122). This claim is supported by substantial factual evidence drawn from the period of 1960 to 2014. Rupiya asserts persuasively that CAR is indeed a "phantom state", whose existence is determined by France's relationship with its former African colonies (Françafrique) and the integration of its own elites in this relationship; other debilitating factors are naive and mendacious mentality of its political leaders and the influence of neighboring countries and their authorities (p. 130). The author's concluding claim appears to be somewhat controversial: the condition of the "phantom state" can be easily overcome «with the concerted effort of locals supported by the AU» and the UN mission in CAR (p. 131).

Sunday Angoma Okello (Ethiopia) furthers the subject in his chapter «*Civil-Military Relations: Perspectives in South Sudan*». Okello, who spent over 20 years working in South Sudan, provides an in-depth analysis of a number of CMR foundations, such as economic and social development and IGAD-led peace talks. He states that because the ruling SPLA/M was heavily influenced by its rebel background, it has failed to transform into a national government and to develop CMR, which is why its rule is associated with «violence, a high probability to turn to warfare» (p. 139). The author convincingly claims that this is what led the SPLA/M into the disastrous civil war lasting since 2013.

Chapter 8 «*Civil-Military Relations Dynamics and the Prospects for a Democratic Developmental State in Zimbabwe*» by **Gorden Moyo** deals specifically with the phenomenon of a democratic developmental state (DDS) within the discursive context of CMR in Zimbabwe. Firstly, Moyo claims that there is «the omnipresence, if not omnipotence, of the retired and serving military officers in vital state institutions, political economy, and public leadership» in most African countries, with the Zimbabwean military institution following the suit and «progressively expanding its influence and visibility in the political economy over the past three-and-a-half decades» (p. 160). He compellingly argues that the militarization of state institutions is the main obstacle to economic reform, democratic transition, and a DDS in particular.

Martin Rupiya's and **Mpho Mothoagae's (South Africa)** chapter «*Tracking Lesotho's Sixth Military Coup, 30 August 2014: What has changed?*» investigates the prospects for the establishment of a tradition of democratic transition in this African nation. While noting that at present there is - technically - democratic environment in Lesotho, the authors point out that the previous coups have made the country «prone to coups and susceptible to groups of officers considering the option» (p. 202). The authors also blame the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which deliberately refused to condemn the August 2014 coup, thus emboldening the putschists and effectively maintaining a "stable coup regime" in the kingdom. They state that a CMR reform involving disarmament and restructuring security sector is the key priority for Lesotho's democratic development.

The book presents a great variety of approaches to developing CMR in Africa, some of which may be considered the best practices in domestic policy, of equally great interest to researchers and policymakers.