

# Africa in Fact

The Journal of Good Governance Africa

**Wounded eagles**

**Fresh blood from old wounds**

**Rogue army for a fragile state**

**The howitzer and the handshake**

Broken ranks



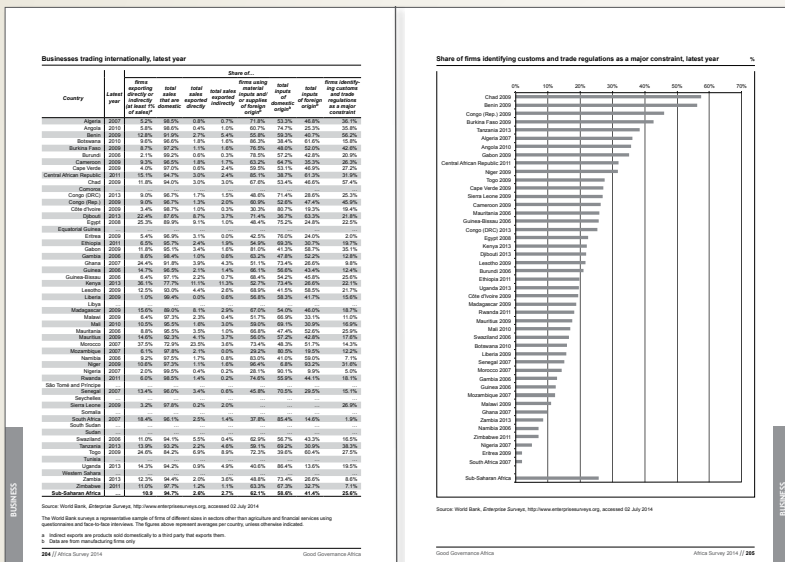
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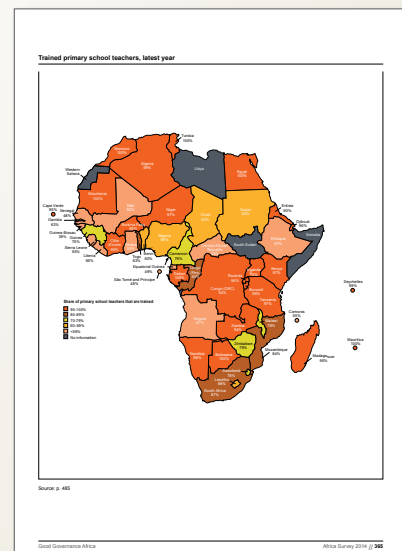
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# CONTENTS

## 4 About our contributors

### Nigeria's military decline

## 5 Wounded eagles

by Eleanor Whitehead

Boko Haram is capitalising on the rot at the core of Nigeria's army

### Democratic Republic of Congo: who's in charge?

## 8 Rogue army for a fragile state

by François Misser

In the insecure DRC, the regular army is as dangerous as the rebels

### Uganda's far-flung troops

## 12 Crossing the line

by Elias Biriyabarema

Politics and personal ambition fuel the risky forays of this east African nation's army

### America's army in Africa

## 15 The howitzer and the handshake

by Richard Poplak

The tension between self-interest versus moral obligation confuses US foreign policy towards the continent

### Libya's militias

## 20 Many armies and none

by Mary Fitzgerald

Political, geographic and tribal allegiances divide this war-weary country

### Zimbabwe military's reach

## 23 In the pound seats

by Owen Gagare

Military brass defend the political status quo to protect their own business interests

### Military takeovers in Africa

## 26 Coup decay

by Brian Klaas

When will the AU bare its teeth?

### Private military and security companies

## 30 Loose cannons

by Stephen Johnson

Who controls the guns-for-hire?

### South Sudan's SPLA splits

## 36 Fresh blood from old wounds

by Kevin Bloom

A longstanding personal rivalry has torn apart the world's newest country—and its armed forces

### Madagascar's game of thrones

## 40 Calling the shots

by Annelie Rozeboom

For decades the neutral image of Madagascar's army was a well-cultivated mirage

### Mali's risky rebel integration project

## 43 Mergers and insurrections

by Kamissa Camara

All past attempts to merge Tuareg rebel groups into the regular army have failed

### Rwanda's peacekeepers

## 47 Africa's unlikely protectors

by Nick Long

From the ashes of genocide has risen the continent's most trusted peacekeeping force

### Troublemaker-in-residence

## 50 Weak governments and weak armies

by Jillian Reilly

An irreverent look at a toxic combination

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## Nigeria's military decline

Boko Haram is capitalising on the rot at the core of Nigeria's army

### Wounded eagles

by Eleanor Whitehead

In a small hospital in the Diffa region of south-east Niger, a roomful of Nigerian soldiers wait patiently for medical staff to change their bandages. Their bullet wounds seep blood onto the floor of the whitewashed chamber. The air is heavy with the smell of disinfectant.

These are just a handful of the roughly 300 Nigerian forces that retreated across the border in November 2014, after militant Islamist group Boko Haram attacked the town of Malam Fatori in Nigeria's north-east. Now, lying three to a bed in a foreign country, they are silent and defeated. A stronger image for the hopelessness hanging over the nation's army could scarcely exist.

Fifteen years ago, Nigeria's military was regarded as one of the most proficient in Africa and served as a stabilising force throughout the region. But today corruption and a lack of resources limit its ability to respond to the growing threat posed by Boko Haram, which wants to establish a caliphate in Nigeria. Mutinies and retreats like this one have become common among poorly-armed soldiers scared for their lives.

The army's strength dates back to Nigeria's 1967-1970 civil war. As the government fought to prevent Biafra's secession, forces grew from around 10,500 at the start of the war to 250,000 by 1970, according to [globalsecurity.org](http://globalsecurity.org), a military portal.

Subsequently, a series of military governments, large oil revenues and ambitions to be a regional power have all been cited as factors contributing to the country's military strength. This culminated in successful interventions in brutal civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s and early 2000s.

Understanding exactly when the decline began is difficult, even for the government. Its proud military culture means those on the inside are unwilling to expose the army's weaknesses. But it was the deployment to Mali in 2013—as part of the African-led International Support Mission to Mali organised by the Economic Community of West African States—that first exposed their problems to the world.

Nigeria was one of several west African countries that sent 3,000 soldiers to help regain control of Mali's north from Islamic extremists. "When the Nigerians said they'd send troops, we all breathed a sigh of relief," recalled one Western diplomat based in Abuja, the capital, who requested anonymity. "But they turned up—quite literally, in some cases—without boots or guns. That was a real wake-up call."

Since then, the Boko Haram insurgency in the north-east has shone further light on the military's problems. "It is unarguable now that there is a rotten core within the army," the diplomat said.

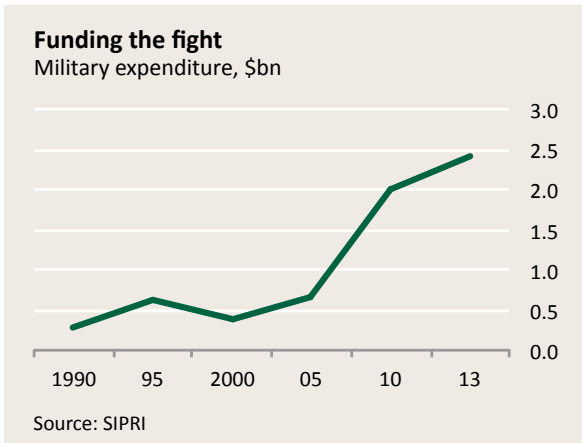
Nigeria's army faces a litany of problems and its forces are spread too thin

fighting them. Although about 100,000 serve in the military, its priorities are divided between fighting Islamist insurgents in the north, controlling militancy and oil theft in the southern Niger Delta, and calming tribal conflict in the country's middle-belt, said Kayode Akindele of the pan-African investment management firm 46 Parallels.

These competing interests have limited deployment in the north-east to about 15,000 troops, Mr Akindele said. This may not be significantly more than the number of rebels fighting for Boko Haram, according to Jacob Zenn, an analyst for the Jamestown Foundation, a US-based think-tank.

Weapons are another major constraint. Maintenance is poor and commanders report that supplies of functioning equipment have plummeted since the 1990s. Until 2014 the air force had no helicopters equipped for night operations, Mr Akindele said.

On paper, funding is not a problem. In 2013 Nigeria spent \$2.4 billion on defence, an almost four-fold increase since 2005, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). But



paltry oversight of military spending means funds designed to buy hardware, or pay soldiers' salaries, are misappropriated.

Officers in charge choose what to do with the money, a second Western diplomat told *Africa in Fact*. "In the north, soldiers are not getting paid or fed and are not receiving ammunition. That's a by-product of corruption."

Additionally, Boko Haram's hit-and-run tactics are hard for a standard military force to counter. "The army is built for face operations [traditional front-line warfare], not for this type of guerrilla warfare," Mr Akindele said. Nigerian soldiers also lack their jihadist enemies' fierce ideological motivation.

Morale among Nigerian troops is at rock bottom: the press has reported several rebellions in the past year, and armed forces regularly retreat across borders to escape the better-equipped and more determined insurgents.

"Every time there is a fight on the frontier, we see them here," said a doctor tending to wounded Nigerian soldiers in Niger's Diffa region. In August 2014 nearly 500 troops withdrew into Cameroon, according to Cameroonian military reports.

Ethnic and religious sympathies, as well as personal interests, appear to have bred some collusion with Boko Haram. In August independent Australian hostage negotiator Stephen Davis, who attempted to secure the Chibok girls' release, accused Nigeria's former army chief of staff, Azubuike Ihejirika, of funding the sect. The Nigerian government has charged various soldiers and commanders with desertion, mutiny or involvement with the terrorists. In September a military court in Abuja convicted 12 soldiers of mutiny and attempted murder after they opened fire on their commander in

north-eastern Borno state. They were sentenced to death.

London-based watchdog Amnesty International has accused Nigerian forces of multiple human rights abuses, ranging from the arbitrary arrest and detention of the wives and family of senior Boko Haram members, to the murder of civilians. “The same communities are now being terrorised in turn by Boko Haram and the military alike,” Salil Shetty, Amnesty’s secretary-general, said in a report released in August 2014.


Western nations, including the UK and US, say these allegations limit the military assistance they can provide Nigeria. In response, the Nigerian government argues that it has been forced to turn to non-traditional partners, such as Russia, to procure weapons, according to media reports.

Although many of these behaviour and resource problems have plagued the Nigerian army for several years, they have only emerged with the attention that Boko Haram has brought. To curb the risk of rebellion, leaders have intermittently withheld funds from the armed forces. For example, military leader Ibrahim Babangida cut funds to the air force after the failure of a rumoured coup in 1985 involving planned aerial bombardments, according to Mr Akindele.

When former military leader Olusegun Obasanjo became head of the new civilian government in 1999, he sacked hundreds of officers who had benefited politically from the previous military regimes, Mr Akindele recalled. “A lot of capacity was taken out in that one fell swoop, which, you could argue, they have not been able to replace,” he said.

The government and armed forces are slowly trying to reform. The military trials of recent months are “unprecedented in Nigerian history”, Mr Akindele pointed out. In January 2014, the country’s president, Goodluck Jonathan, replaced the leaders of the air force, army and navy, as well as the heads of the federal police force and the State Security Service, the country’s secret police. This major overhaul of the military high command suggests that the government is “looking for people they are confident are telling the truth”, the diplomat said.

Sadly, no quick solution to Boko Haram’s bloody insurgency looks likely. But it will certainly require much more than a military response. Part of the terrorists’ motivation lies in protest against the official neglect of Nigeria’s desperately poor north-east, which shows little sign of abating under the current leadership. The most likely solution to the insurgency would be a government that delivers, is transparent and performs proper oversight of military spending.

For many, though, it is too late. “In Nigeria, when I hear guns I am afraid, because I know...the army will not protect me,” said Rekia Abakar, a middle-aged refugee who fled fighting in Borno state and has settled in Niger with her children. “Here I feel better, because I am protected.” 

**The government and armed forces are slowly trying to reform. The military trials of recent months are “unprecedented in Nigerian history”, Mr Akindele pointed out.**

## Democratic Republic of Congo: who's in charge?

In the insecure DRC, the regular army is as dangerous as the rebels

### Rogue army for a fragile state

by François Misser

What's the difference between a regular soldier from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and a rebel from one of the scores of armed militias that scour this expansive mineral-laden country? The newness of his uniform? His weight? The way he walks? The firearm he carries?

A notable difference is sometimes hard to discern. Therein lies the problem. No one knows who is in control. The army often mirrors its rebel opponents. Large parts of the country are in chaos.

Like the insurgents, Congolese soldiers are regularly involved in robbery, racketeering, rape and the plundering of natural resources, according to a May 2014 report from the International Peace Information Service (IPIS), a think-tank based in Antwerp, Belgium. In the eastern DRC, the armed forces (Forces Armées de la République démocratique du Congo, FARDC) operate in 383 of the 1,088 mines visited by the report's authors. Despite various attempts to reform the Congolese army, illegal taxation by these regulars is even more frequent than rebel group interference in the country's many mines.

The DRC's armed forces are often incompetent, underpaid and powerless in the face of the myriad rebel groups that still plague the DRC. They compete with these groups for control of gold, tantalum, tin and tungsten.

Optimism reached new heights in the DRC when the M23 rebels were defeated in November 2013. But the credit for this victory goes to the UN's intervention brigade. Its 3,069 peacekeepers from Malawi, South Africa and Tanzania exercised a unique mandate and launched an offensive that crushed the Rwandan-backed rebels. But since this triumph, other rebel groups have filled the space vacated by the M23.

Insecurity has continued to prevail on several fronts with the massacres of more than 250 people in the Beni area of North Kivu between October and early December 2014 (at the time of writing).

Eleven years after the end of Africa's great war, the DRC remains a fragile state. The army is largely to blame. In early November, the UN Security Council expressed its concern about human rights and international law violations by armed groups and Congolese security and defence forces.

Also in November, the DRC celebrated the 15th anniversary of the UN's largest operation with a total of 22,016 uniformed personnel from 51 countries, including 19,815 soldiers, with a yearly budget of \$1.39 billion. This is more than three times the FARDC's annual budget of \$400m in 2014, according to Jean-Jacques Wondo, a Congolese military expert.



Time and again, the Congolese military are exposed as the source of trouble. After the M23 victory, 23 FARDC officers and soldiers were accused of the January 2nd 2014 killing of Colonel Mamadou Ndala, the operational commander of the army's rapid reaction unit, which fought alongside the UN's intervention brigade.

The FARDC's chronic indiscipline can be traced back to 1885 when Belgium's King Leopold II created the Force Publique. Its *raison d'être* was to protect his economic interests, fight Arab slave-traders and repress those who opposed forced labour recruitment for the collection of rubber and ivory. Apart from the first and second world wars, when this private army was used to fight the Germans in Cameroon, Rhodesia, Tanzania and Togo, the Force Publique's main role was to keep civilians under control.

It maintained this function under long-time dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, who renamed the country Zaire after he seized power in 1965. The Force Publique's motto was *civil azali Monguna ya soldat* ("the civilian is the enemy of the soldier" in Lingala) according to Daniel Monguya in his 1977 "The Secret History of Zaire". Cases of mutinies before and after independence are well documented.

A legacy of dishonest leadership is one of the root causes of the army's indiscipline, corruption and brutality. In 1996 generals were selling weapons and fuel to neighbouring states while trafficking in gold and siphoning money off their own Zairian troops, who in turn began increasingly to harass Congolese civilians, Mr Wondo said during an interview. Unfortunately, old habits die hard: in July 2014, FARDC soldiers killed a fellow payroll officer, according to Radio France Internationale.

Poor salaries are also to blame. They range from \$56 per month for a rank-and-file soldier to \$86 for an army general, according to Mbokamosika, a website which claims to have obtained this information from defence ministry documents.

Low salaries do not attract professional soldiers. Recruitment is often made on the basis of loyalty and ethnicity, not competence, Mr Wondo told *Africa in Fact*. This is a throwback to the Mobutu era when dancing and singing for Zaire's "Guide" were required skills to join the army, according to Mr Wondo's 2013 book on the Congolese army. In addition, many soldiers live with their wives and children in military camps, further lowering professional standards.

Poor, inadequate and inappropriate equipment, such as the heavy Russian-made T-55 tanks bought to chase rebels in the mountains of North Kivu in 2010, also drag down the Congolese army. These tanks were designed to operate in open landscapes and not the craggy and forested terrain of the Kivus.

#### Rank remuneration

Monthly salaries in the FARDC

Rank	Title	\$ equivalent
1	Lieutenant-General	85.76
2	Major-General	80.22
4	Colonel	71.33
7	Captain	62.99
8	Lieutenant	62.44
12	Warrant Officer	60.22
14	Sergeant-Major	59.05
17	Corporal	56.33
20	Recruit	55.56

Source: Mbokamosika

Also to blame for the FARDC's problems is the failed demobilisation process following the 1998-2003 war. The plan was for thousands of ragtag rebels from all sides to join the regular army. Some of the responsibility may lie with the UN mission: its presence may have led the military to rely on foreign peacekeepers instead of training these soldiers to do the job.

Another problem related to the demobilisation is the imbalance between the large proportion of high-ranking officers (26%) and low-ranking officers (39%) on the one hand, and the small proportion of rank-and-file troops (35%) on the other. This situation can be traced back to the 2002 Sun City peace talks in South Africa, where the Congolese government and rebel groups promoted many soldiers, regardless of their experience or skills.

In addition, Joseph Kabila, the rebel leader who became president, has steadfastly opposed the presence of a strong army that could challenge his presidential guard. It is an open secret that his 15,000-strong Republican Guard, much like Mr Mobutu's Special Presidential Division, is getting the lion's share of armaments and other hardware, according to Christoph Vogel, a political scientist, in a piece published by the Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations, a Brussels-based think-tank, in February 2014.

The president's elite force is not even accountable to the FARDC chief of staff, Mr Wondo stressed in an interview. Mr Kabila wants to keep the army weak to prevent a coup, according to Messrs Wondo and Vogel, as well as insiders in Parliament and the army who spoke on conditions of anonymity.

Attempts to reorganise the FARDC through 29 presidential decrees issued last September are unlikely to work, Mr Wondo added.

Geographical differences among high-ranking FARDC officers also play a role in the army's disorganisation. General Didier Etumba, chief of staff, comes from Mr Mobutu's Equateur province in the west. He is isolated from other officers who come from eastern provinces such as Katanga (the birthplace of Mr Kabila's late father), the Kivus, Maniema or Province Orientale.

Clearly coming from the east is more favourable. The defence minister, Aimé Ngoy Mukena, the ground forces chief of staff, Major-General Dieudonné Banze, the air force chief of staff, Brigadier Enoch Numbi, and the interim commander of the Republican Guard, Brigadier Ilunga Kampete, all hail from the south-eastern Katanga province.

These appointments have a clear political objective, Mr Wondo said. Mr Kabila is preparing for the 2016 presidential election although his constitutionally-mandated two terms will be up. He is rewarding those who represent the areas where he did well in the 2011 election and making sure those areas where he is weakest have tough top brass. Last September Mr Kabila appointed 40 operational commanders, including the notorious Gabriel Amisi, over the defence area of three western provinces, Equateur, Bas-Congo and Kinshasa, which are hostile to Mr Kabila. (Mr Amisi gained notoriety by crushing a mutiny through summary executions, beatings, rape and looting in 2002 inside the Rwandan-backed Congolese Rally for Democracy, one of the main protagonists

of the 1998-2003 war, according to Human Rights Watch.)

The defence budget has increased by over 60% since 2013 to \$400m in 2014, mainly to pay for the war effort against the M23 and arms purchases from the Czech Republic, Serbia and Ukraine. But FARDC forces have shrunk from 330,000 to 140,000 between 2004 and 2014, according to EU and DRC defence ministry estimates.


One of the paradoxes of the DRC is that few countries have received as much foreign technical assistance for such disastrous results. Besides the UN and the European Union, which is training infantry and artillery officers at two military academies, the DRC army benefits from at least 14 bilateral military cooperation agreements, according to Mr Wondo and others.

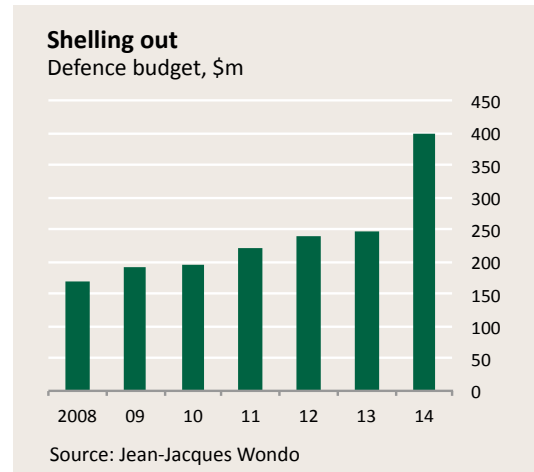
Angola, Belgium, France, South Africa and the US are training or have trained army battalions. Belarus and Ukraine have trained pilots. The Czech Republic

and Russia have provided T-55 tanks and trained officers to man them. Serbia sent instructors to the DRC's military academies. North Korean and Moroccan trainers are present in the Republican Guard, which also benefits from the anti-riot and artillery skills of Egyptian experts. The Chinese provide training in logistics and communications.

Unfortunately, the training and equipment provided by these foreign partners are not coordinated and the army's performance remains below par. After training courses are completed, many soldiers are neither integrated into army units nor given a salary or accommodation. Many live on the streets like vagrants, according to October 2014 press reports from Kinshasa, the capital.

Even when the military curriculum includes human rights training, the lessons are not learnt. The UN Joint Human Rights Office reported in May 2013 that members of the Congolese 391st Commando Battalion, who were trained by US special forces, participated in a range of atrocities, including the mass rape of at least 102 women and 33 young girls in eastern Congo, the arbitrary execution of at least two people and the widespread looting of villages. On June 12th 2012, the military court of Kindu, capital of the eastern Maniema province, condemned three commandos of the FARDC's 322nd battalion, who were trained by Belgian instructors, to prison sentences for the murder of a woman, reported UN-backed Radio Okapi.

Clearly, the DRC's military needs major reform. All the foreign training and dollars will do little good without political will at the top to make these clearly needed changes. Until then, chaos and insurgencies will continue to prevail. The only difference between the army and the rebels is that the Congolese government backs one. 



## Uganda's far-flung troops

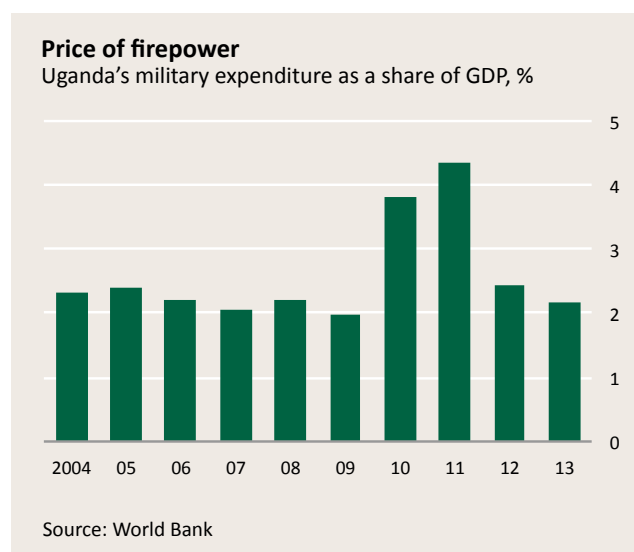
Politics and personal ambition fuel the risky adventures abroad of this east African nation's army

### Crossing the line

by Elias Biryabarema

Uganda has about 5,000 troops putting out fires in neighbouring South Sudan and the Central African Republic. These latest operations follow a long trail of controversial interventions in other countries in the region, including the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Somalia.

For ordinary Ugandans, struggling with low salaries, collapsing infrastructure and runaway corruption, the huge cost of these missions is hard to swallow. "Why is our military all over the place—even in countries that haven't attacked us?" asked Cissy Kagaba, executive director of the Kampala-based Anti-Corruption Coalition of Uganda. "When the defence ministry comes seeking a supplementary budget they get it instantly, yet teachers have been demanding an increment for years and no one listens to them."



Shortly after Uganda sent troops to quell the civil war that broke out in South Sudan in December 2013, the defence ministry requested and received a supplementary 120 billion Ugandan shillings (\$50m) to fund these operations by the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF).

The defence sector has "consistently been overfunded", wrote Uganda's largest opposition party, the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), in its alternative budget proposal in July 2014. The FDC also called for "full accountability on our continued stay in Somalia and South Sudan" and demanded "the withdrawal of the UPDF from South Sudan".

Uganda's president, Yoweri Museveni, in power for 29 years, often points to Ugandan security concerns and the "pan-African spirit" to justify these foreign adventures. Yet most analysts see these interventions as moves by Mr Museveni to strengthen his power at home and distract citizens from their domestic woes while carving out a



role as the West's point man in the unstable, resource-rich region.

Mr Museveni wants to be “a player for regional stability” but other motives closer to home are also at play, said Christoph Vogel, a regional political analyst and PhD candidate at the University of Zurich. “It’s helpful to use an external threat to distract from domestic problems. That’s a very old and very simple political strategy obviously used by Museveni.”

Opposition to Mr Museveni’s regime has grown in recent years. Shortly after the last elections in February 2011, widespread street protests broke out in the capital Kampala and other major towns. An ensuing crackdown left at least nine demonstrators dead, according to Human Rights Watch, the US-based pressure group.

Mr Museveni’s personal political ambitions were behind Uganda’s recent foreign military forays, particularly in South Sudan, said Moses Khisa, a political analyst and PhD student at Chicago’s Northwestern University. He shrouded Uganda’s involvement in pan-African rhetoric and used the Somali crisis to “keep in the good books of the West, especially the US”, Mr Khisa added. This also served to “leverage...peace-keeping funding to mollify his most important constituency—the military”.

Uganda was the first country to send troops to Mogadishu, Somalia’s capital, in March 2007 as part of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to tackle the Shabab, the radical Is-



© Jeremy T. Lock

Have guns, will travel

lamist group. The UPDF’s 6,223 soldiers, according to the AMISOM website, made up the largest national contingent. Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Sierra Leone together sent another 15,341 soldiers. This AU force succeeded in expelling the Shabab from Mogadishu and much of Somalia.

Mr Museveni was eager to send troops to Somalia at the time to repair his fraying relations with the West, said Godber Tumushabe, an analyst and associate director at the Great Lakes Institute for Strategic Studies (GLISS), a Kampala-based think-tank. The West had been displeased with the 2005 removal of presidential term limits freeing Mr Museveni for a potential life presidency.

“Somalia came in at a very opportune moment,” he told *Africa in Fact*. “Museveni found an opportunity to place himself in the middle of the war on terror. That gave

him quite a lot of traction” in the West.

With east Africa emerging as an important front in the war on terror and Mr Museveni fashioning himself as a dependable ally, the West has maintained its warm relations and appears to overlook Mr Museveni’s excesses. “You really see that the international community is not very keen at pressing [Mr Museveni] on some of the democratic issues, human rights...because they think he’s fighting their war,” Mr Tumushabe said.

Kristian Schmidt, head of the European Union (EU) delegation in Kampala, denied that the West was soft on Mr Museveni, but acknowledged that the EU “appreciates the partnership” with him.

South Sudanese rebels say Mr Museveni’s move in December 2013 to send troops to defend his long-time ally, President Salva Kiir, was self-interested meddling in a neighbour’s internal affairs.

Mr Museveni’s involvement in South Sudan was “arrogant aggression”, the rebels’ military spokesman, Brigadier Lul Ruai Koang, told *Africa in Fact*. He accused the UPDF of using illegal cluster bombs and committing killings on a scale that constitutes war crimes. Ugandan troops are “paid in dollars” by Mr Kiir, the brigadier alleged.


At the time of writing, 2,000 Ugandan soldiers were stationed in South Sudan and another 3,000 in the CAR, according to Paddy Ankuda, a UPDF spokesman.

Mr Schmidt admitted that the EU is concerned about human rights violations allegedly committed by UPDF troops. A September 2014 report by Human Rights Watch accused Ugandan soldiers of demanding sex from Somali women in exchange for food.

Similar accusations have trailed the UPDF’s actions in foreign countries. The DRC sued Uganda at the Hague-based International Court of Justice in June 1999 demanding compensation for Uganda’s “illegal exploitation of Congolese natural resources” during its occupation. The court returned a verdict in DRC’s favour in December 2005, ordering Uganda to negotiate with the DRC the amount of reparations to be paid. Talks on this issue continue.

Whether driven by personal ambition or greed, as his critics argue, or striving to keep regional peace, as he maintains, Mr Museveni is playing a dangerous game. With today’s rebels tomorrow’s potential leaders, Ugandan boots could be sowing seeds of future violence. In the words of a September 2014 Standard Chartered Bank report: “Uganda’s involvement in regional peacekeeping efforts may...contribute to security risks.”

For example, the Shabab has repeatedly struck or threatened Uganda in retaliation for the UPDF’s 2007 incursion into Somalia. On July 11th 2010, the Somali militant group claimed responsibility for two suicide bombings in Kampala that killed at least 74 people, according to media reports.

Mr Museveni is unlikely to heed these threats. He has much to gain from sending his troops abroad: diplomatic capital from the West that considers him an ally in the fight against Islamic extremists. As his grip on power becomes more and more tenuous at home, we can expect to hear again that familiar, distracting thump of Ugandan boots marching across the border. 

## America's army in Africa

Self-interest versus moral obligation confuses US foreign policy towards the continent

### The howitzer and the handshake

by Richard Poplak

General David M. Rodriguez, who heads up the United States Africa Command, or AFRICOM, is the continent's most powerful man. He is also its most powerless.

Depending on whom you believe, General Rodriguez commands the full might of the greatest military in the history of the world: he could in one awesome shock-and-awe campaign flatten the continent into a parking lot for Humvees. Or, he is a benevolent hugger of children, with no violent mandate whatsoever.

These are the extremes AFRICOM engenders. Is it here to hinder or to help?

In the preface of their 1984 book "The United States and Africa: A History", Peter Duignan and L.H. Gann concede that the literature on American foreign policy in Africa was considerable. But "most of it consists of specialised monographs that are neither accessible nor of interest to the ordinary reader." At the dawn of President Ronald Reagan's second term, if a policymaker were to look for a digestible overview of America's involvement in Africa, there was but one choice, Messrs Duignan and Gann's account.

This illustrates that while US-Africa studies may be a robust academic field, it has rarely, if ever, translated into popular interest. This has had a trickle-down effect: ambitious young diplomats and State Department officials have steered clear of African posts if they hoped to advance their careers.

This gap in historical knowledge and institutional memory has made it difficult for many American policymakers to understand the divisiveness of the relationship. Washington has, after all, spent billions on the continent over the decades, much of it with undeniably good intentions, almost all useless.

As Messrs Duignan and Gann point out, the story starts badly, and goes downhill from there. Any account of Americans in Africa must begin with the slave trade. While there were slavers long before there were Americans, no modern society had created the need for so massive an indentured workforce before the tobacco and cotton plantations of the southern United States.

Every well-intentioned action—the colonisation of Liberia in 1820 to "repatriate" freed African slaves—was nullified by an equally ill-intentioned action—the creation of Liberia in 1820 to purge America of unassimilable freemen. On the one hand, President Lyndon B. Johnson refused to back a UN peacekeeping force in Rhodesia when Ian Smith's white supremacist Rhodesian Front unilaterally declared independence from Britain in 1965. On the other hand, President Jimmy Carter worked hard during the negotiations that ended the bush war in that country, thus helping to usher in liberation in 1980.

This could go on for pages—the CIA's involvement in the murder of Congolese

liberation firebrand Patrice Lumumba in 1964; the Clinton administration's inaction during the Rwanda genocide.

But the cycle of cause and effect does nothing to describe the most important aspect of America's relationship with Africa: no US administration has developed anything approaching even a rudimentary African foreign policy. President Barack Obama's is no exception.

**One administration delivered democracy at the barrel of a gun, the next could not and would not support spontaneous outbreaks of the same with a chequebook.**

The US has traditionally spent about 1% of its federal budget on foreign and military aid, which in 2012 amounted to \$48.4 billion (a number that has been dipping south in the remnants of the Great Recession). As a result, the superpower's global ambitions were vastly curtailed. "There is a democratic awakening in places that have never dreamed of de-

mocracy," Secretary of State Hilary Clinton said in October 2011 while the Arab spring smouldered in the north. "And it is unfortunate that it's happening at a historic time when our own government is facing so many serious economic challenges, because there's no way to have a Marshall Plan for the Middle East and north Africa."

That remains a startling admission: one administration delivered democracy at the barrel of a gun, the next could not and would not support spontaneous outbreaks of the same with a chequebook. And while ideal American policy (articulated by State Department officials, academics and NGOs) impressed the need for justice and fairness, how could a country act in its own best interests when dressed as a nursemaid?

It is this irreconcilable paradox—self-interest versus moral obligation—that has cancelled a coherent Africa policy, if not the desire for one. One of Bill Clinton's regularly recited maxims is that there are headlines and there are trend lines—the smart observer follows the trend lines. But as far as America and Africa were concerned, what were the trend lines? Once, in the good old days, there was the cold war era policy of containment, broken by isolated acts of benevolence during crises like the Biafran and Ethiopian famines. And while the war on terror and the AIDS epidemic gave birth to epic programmes, those initiatives existed in their own standalone silos.

Congress, with the backing of the Clinton administration, ushered in the new century with an almost coherent initiative: the 2000 African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). This law allows countries duty-free access to American markets under certain "conditions". They should be corruption free, market-based economies that eliminate barriers to US trade and investment, and enforce intellectual property rights laws. (In other words, nowhere.) Nevertheless, AGOA counts the flourishing of the Ethiopian birdseed market and South Africa's booming sorbet industry as successes. (While some would argue that AGOA has been more impactful than this, no one argues that it constitutes a resolute African outlook.)

Aid was sent from mighty acronyms: USAID, the ubiquitous US Agency for International Development, as well as the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). Both



focus on “transformational development”, the evangelically-tinged buzz phrase that was meant to evoke an Africa transmogrified into a bastion of neo-liberalism. But USAID courted opprobrium by sending food from America instead of buying food from Africa; and the MCC, which was meant to appropriate \$5 billion from Congress by 2006, was only granted \$1.8 billion and never made its targets. George W. Bush’s baby, PEPFAR (the US President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) unilaterally went forth into Africa to eliminate the scourge of AIDS and treaded on the turf of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, also operating due to the largesse of American lawmakers.

This brief précis does little to describe the full complexity of competing agencies, the NGOs that nibbled at their hides like oxpeckers, and the willingness of American lenders to engage with African leaders in “sensitive” (read Islamic) regions, who had neither the intention nor the ability to democratise.



AFRICOM’s commanders, Messrs Ward, Ham and Rodriguez

Those same leaders, and more besides, were alarmed when the Department of Defense reordered its global military commands to establish AFRICOM in 2007. Based in Stuttgart, Germany to assuage fears of neo-imperial designs, with a command base in Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti—a strategic Shangri-La of pirates and terrorists along the Red Sea littoral—AFRICOM was widely interpreted, and not just by Africans, as the militarisation of diplomacy: a new phase in US-Africa engagement, which eschewed the handshake for the howitzer.

These fears were largely misplaced, mostly because AFRICOM was subject to a revolution underway at the time in the Pentagon—led by the charismatic (and now disgraced) General David Petraeus, then running the campaign in Iraq. A new contingent of intellectual warriors conceived of war-making as “20% fighting, 80% political”. This meant big doses of cultural sensitivity, lots of well digging, and an AFRICOM Facebook page that was happy to display evidence of both.

Some questions arose with AFRICOM’s creation, and not only from its detractors: what are America’s strategic objectives in Africa? How did prosecuting the war against terror in Somalia dovetail with moral obligations to old clients like the Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia? And was the impetus to “stabilise” the governments of energy producers undercutting the development of democratic institutions?

“In recent years, analysts and US policymakers have noted Africa’s growing

strategic importance to U.S. interests,” analyst Lauren Ploch wrote in a 2011 Congressional report. “Among those interests are the increasing importance of Africa’s natural resources, particularly energy resources, and mounting concern over violent extremist activities and other potential threats posed by under-governed spaces, such as maritime piracy and illicit trafficking.” Furthermore, there was “ongoing concern for Africa’s many humanitarian crises, armed conflicts, and more general challenges, such as the devastating effect of HIV/AIDS” (and now Ebola).

Translation: oil, terror and benevolence.

In military terms, Africa was traditionally divided under three commands—the US European Command (EUCOM), the US Central Command (CENTCOM) and the US Pacific Command (PACOM). This befitted Africa’s status as a region of little importance. It allowed civilian officials from the State Department to set policy in consort with their peers at donor institutions like USAID.

In 2006 Donald Rumsfeld, then-defence secretary, formed a planning commission that recommended a more specific Africa-centred command to battle the never-ending terrorist scourge. On July 10th 2007, Mr Bush named AFRICOM’s first commander, General William E. “Kip” Ward. He immediately began acting like a kleptocrat, allegedly blowing hundreds of thousands of dollars on unauthorised flights and hotel rooms for himself, his family and cronies. After three years at the helm, he was retired and reduced in rank to lieutenant-general in 2012, but not before setting up Camp Lemonnier and kicking off the age of AFRICOM.

It was hardly an auspicious beginning—Messrs Rumsfeld, Bush and Ward are all firmly interred in the annals of ignominy. But in many respects, AFRICOM changed the game. And while it may seem crass to acknowledge, the Ebola virus has provided this strategic realignment with the perfect *raison d’être*: a horrendous malady that kills people in Africa and threatens the well-being of the 300m inhabitants of the continental United States.

As the outbreak has intensified, AFRICOM mobilised 3,000 soldiers (recently downgraded to 2,200) and its engineering corps to build treatment centres in Liberia; and to employ military strategies—as CNN would put it—to “go to war” against the disease. A budget of \$1 billion has been approved for the Ebola battle, almost four times AFRICOM’s annual stipend; a visit to the AFRICOM Facebook page shows that the virus in the hands of propagandists has become both a charm offensive and an “absolute necessity” for United States security. Ebola may also mean that America earns a permanent base in Liberia where a Joint Force Command Headquarters has been set up, with no plans to dismantle it in the foreseeable future.

AFRICOM, according to Facebook and Twitter, is always ready with a hug and a cuppa. But social media is not so forthcoming with some of the less diplomatic initiatives underway across the continent. Yes, we are treated to images of Camp Lemonnier security forces’ veterinarians showing off German shepherds to bemused Somali-based African Union peacekeepers. But what of the eight African countries hosting (or soon to host) drone bases?

General Carter F. Ham, AFRICOM’s second commander, told the Senate Armed Services Committee in March 2013 that intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) efforts would be required to “assist the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Central African Republic and the Republic of South Sudan to defeat the Lord’s Resistance Army in Central Africa”—the wonderfully named Operation Observant Compass. That does not quite explain a drone base in Mahé, Seychelles, or Niamey, Niger. The latter facility was set up to help the French with ISR activities regarding Islamists in Mali and the Saharan hinterlands.

The Seychelles facility is another cog in Operation Ocean Freedom, appended to Operation Enduring Freedom—Horn of Africa, the anti-piracy machinery that hopes to blow pirates out of the sea.

But we get into entirely familiar cold war movie territory when we glance at AFRICOM’s increasingly cosy relationship with the decidedly non-democratic Chad. In May 2014, 80 US personnel were sent to that



Countries hosting or soon to host drone bases

country to make good on the #BringBackOurGirls Twitter campaign. After the Nigerian terror outfit Boko Haram kidnapped 200 plus girls from a northern town, Mr Obama told Congress that these forces would “support the operation of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance aircraft for missions over northern Nigeria and the surrounding area...until its support in resolving the kidnapping situation is no longer required”. The girls are still missing, and the mission has evolved into a mini-base camp, one of a string of camps that TomDispatch, an online media site, has uncovered across the continent.

“Can a military tiptoe onto a continent?” asks primary AFRICOM muckraker Nick Turse. Looked at from a drones-eye view, AFRICOM was meant to plug into American activities in Africa with relative seamlessness, a big Rumsfeldian puzzle piece that allowed the State Department and the military to conspire in protecting and advancing America’s interests across the globe.

It has not been a perfect marriage, and AFRICOM is certainly undermined by suspicion and distaste. But the show in Stuttgart must, and will, go on. AFRICOM is now as firm an African fixture as elephants on the Serengeti, and most likely more permanent. The tiptoe is fast becoming a stampede. **GGF**

## Libya's militias

Political, geographic and tribal allegiances divide the country

### Many armies and none

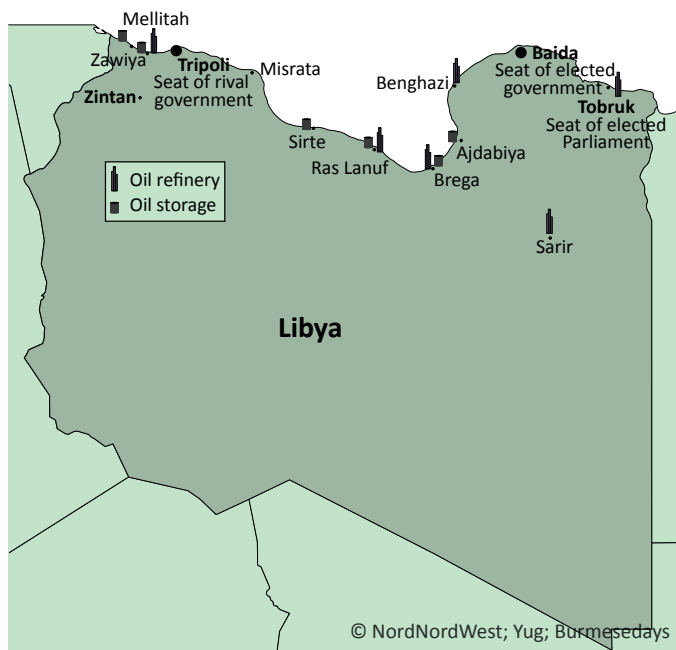
by Mary Fitzgerald

Libya is a divided country with two prime ministers, two parliaments and two armies that rule from opposite ends of the country.

Along with the patchwork of militias that emerged during and after the 2011 uprising, the uniformed armed forces that defected that year have coalesced into two broad camps loyal to two rival governments.

One, the internationally recognised product of a parliament elected in a national ballot in June, is based in the eastern town of Baida. There it is supported by a break-away faction of the Libyan army led by retired general Khalifa Haftar and forces under the command of Abdelrazaq al-Nadhuri, the government's recently appointed chief of staff and an ally of Mr Haftar.

The government in Baida is also aligned with armed groups from the western mountain town of Zintan who were routed from Tripoli following a weeks-long battle in



July and August 2014 with rival militias collectively known as Libya Dawn.

The other is a self-declared government in Tripoli, formed in the wake of the fighting that changed the balance of power in the capital in August. Butressed by the Dawn coalition of fighters from the port city of Misrata and other western towns, along with Islamists, the

Tripoli-based administration is also backed by army units that have united around Jadallah Obaidi, Mr al-Nadhuri's predecessor, as chief of staff.

Contrary to what is often assumed, Libya's crisis has little to do with ideology. It is too often reduced to a misleading narrative of Islamist versus non-Islamist, or secularist/liberal—two words that have little meaning in the broadly conservative Libyan



context. The current conflict is less an ideological struggle than a multi-faceted scramble for power and resources rooted in overlapping regional, economic and social dynamics. While ideology inspires a minority, it is not the primary driver.

Of more significance is the rivalry between regions, particularly between Misrata and Zintan, and the contest between those who benefited under the old regime and what can be described as the revolutionary elites that emerged after 2011. Although in recent months Libya's fractured political and armed currents have pooled into two loose sides, each comprised of shifting alliances, no single faction is capable of prevailing over all others.

The country now contains all the ingredients for a protracted civil war, with backing from regional actors including Qatar and Turkey on one side and Egypt and the United Arab Emirates on the other. According to the US,



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No walk in the park

the latter collaborated to carry out air strikes on Misrata-allied locations during the battle for Tripoli in August 2014.

The seeds for the security fragmentation were sown during the Qaddafi regime. Fearful of a military coup, Mr Qaddafi had neglected the army and police for decades, preferring instead to build elite battalions commanded by his sons.

Those from the hollowed-out military that joined the uprising were too weak and disjointed to keep order after the dictator's fall. The revolutionaries, particularly Islamists, often viewed them with suspicion due to their association with the former regime.

Then a series of fateful decisions by the National Transitional Council, the feeble interim authority set up in the first months of the uprising, led to the current unravelling. To plug the former regime's security gap, the council reorganised the revolutionary groups into larger paramilitary formations and put them on its payroll.

As a result, nearly all of Libya's armed groups today claim legitimacy due to their ostensible affiliation with ministries and other institutions, which are themselves riven by internal tensions arising from competing regional, tribal and political loyalties. Several of these groups became entwined with political and criminal elements as they consolidated power and impeded efforts to form a regular army.

Today Libya is a curious security landscape where an array of formal and

informal armed forces operate under the nominal auspices of disputed—and now duplicated—state institutions.


The relationship between the officially sanctioned irregular forces and the remnants of Mr Qaddafi's military units has been uneasy, particularly in the eastern city of Benghazi where a series of assassinations of security officials from 2012 sharpened divisions. Mr Haftar exploited this when he launched an air and ground offensive against Islamist-leaning militias in the city in May 2014, just three months after the government accused him of attempting a coup. Backed by disgruntled former army and police officers and militias linked to powerful eastern tribes and regional separatists, the former general also secured the support of Benghazi's special forces for the operation he dubbed *karama* ("dignity" in Arabic).

His targets included state-affiliated armed groups like the Libyan Shield One and February 17 Revolutionary Martyrs' Brigade, as well as the hardline Ansar al-Sharia, which was designated a terrorist group by the US State Department in January 2014. The rhetoric employed by Mr Haftar and his self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) tapped into popular demands for a proper army and police, despite the large component of the LNA that is comprised of irregular tribal forces and militia linked to a federalist movement seeking greater autonomy for eastern Libya.

Mr Haftar had been stalling until mid-October when a renewed offensive, boosted by Egyptian-supported airstrikes and the emergence of local armed civilian allies known as *sahawat* ("awakening" in Arabic) brought him some territorial gains. The government in Baida has since given its imprimatur, as has its appointed chief of staff, whose son died fighting for Mr Haftar in Benghazi.

As the two duelling military-political camps of Dignity and Dawn become more entrenched in Libya's eastern and western flanks, the prospect of building a unified and broadly representative military architecture for the country grows even more remote. Plans by Britain, Italy, Turkey and the US to train and equip some 19,000 members of the nascent Libyan army overseas, including former revolutionaries, had already run into problems before the current escalation. Some programmes were delayed due to funding issues. In October 2014 Britain halted its training of Libyan recruits after some of them were accused of committing sexual offences and others displayed disciplinary problems. There were also concerns that trainees would simply return to the local commanders who had led them against Mr Qaddafi.

With deepening political polarisation comes the risk that existing alliances will buckle, further splintering the security sector. There are no easy answers to Libya's dense tangle of security challenges. Disarming and disbanding the militias before a proper army and police are formed will leave a vacuum. But the very existence of the militias hampers the building of such forces. The best Libyans can hope for is that international actors remain committed to helping create a functioning military and police, even if it includes former revolutionaries.

But as Libya's fractures multiply, those allies have grown wary. For now, Libya remains destined to be a country of many armies and none. 

## Zimbabwe military's reach

Brass defend political status quo to protect their own extensive business interests

### In the pound seats

by Owen Gagare

Two separate billion-dollar deals have turned the spotlight back on the unholy alliance between the ruling party, the military and big business in Zimbabwe. This network of mutual interests is curbing political change in the southern African country, opposition parties and civil groups say.

During his visit to China last August, President Robert Mugabe oversaw the signing of a \$2 billion deal with China Africa Sunlight Energy Company (CASECO), a joint venture between Harare-based Oldstone Investments and three Chinese firms to build a thermal power station in Gwayi, western Zimbabwe, by 2017, said Patrick Chinamasa, Zimbabwe's finance minister. Martin Rushwaya, chairman of Oldstone Investments is also the permanent secretary in the country's defence ministry.

Another mega-deal was signed a month later, this time for a platinum mining project in Darwendale, 70km north-west of Harare. The joint venture is between Zimbabwe's Pen East Mining Company and a Russian consortium of three corporations, Rostec, VI Holdings and Vnesheconombank. Total investment in the project would rise to \$4.8 billion, said Walter Chidhakwa, the country's minister of mines, in September.

Tshinga Dube, a retired colonel, wears many hats. In 2011 he was listed as Pen East's board chairman. He is also chairman of diamond mining company Marange Resources and general manager of Harare-based Zimbabwe Defence Industries (ZDI), which manufactures and supplies army uniforms, equipment and ammunition.

Mr Dube is not the only high-ranking military official—either retired or serving—to have multiple business interests in Zimbabwe. “There are certain elements within the military who are benefiting while the majority [of Zimbabweans] are suffering,” said Douglas Mwonozora, secretary-general of the Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai (MDC-T), Zimbabwe's largest opposition party. “Those who benefit unduly then interfere with the politics of Zimbabwe in order to protect their wealth,” he said.

The military's close ties to the ruling Zanu-PF date back to the country's liberation struggle. Almost all current senior officers participated in the war against the colonial regime, fighting for two armed wings that merged in 1987 under the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (Zanu-PF).

The military has openly acknowledged its allegiance to the ruling party. Ahead of the 2002 presidential elections—in which Zanu-PF for the first time faced a real electoral threat from the MDC—General Vitalis Zvinvashe, then commander of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces, famously announced that his forces would not serve under MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai if he won.

“We will...not accept, let alone support or salute, anyone with a different agenda

that threatens the very existence of our sovereignty, our country and our people," General Zvinavashe said.

When Mr Mugabe lost the first round of the 2008 presidential election to Mr Tsvangirai, senior military officers intimidated villagers into voting for Zanu-PF in the runoff election, according to a 2008 report by Human Rights Watch, a New York-based lobby. Mr Tsvangirai ultimately pulled out of the second round.

Mr Mugabe has consistently repaid military figures for their loyalty. He awarded most security sector bosses large farms in Zimbabwe's controversial land reform programme in 2000. He has also routinely deployed top military officials to head parastatals and government ministries.

These include, among many others, retired Air Commodore Mike Tichafa Karakadzai, who was general manager of the National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ), and retired Major-General Mike Nyambuya, a former minister of energy and current chairman of the controversial National Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Board.

Mr Mugabe defended these and similar appointments at Mr Karakadzai's funeral in August 2013. The practice would continue, Mr Mugabe said at the service, because those in the military were "role models of valour, patriotism, honesty, industriousness and discipline".

Zimbabwe's diamond industry is another sphere where military involvement runs deep. When the Zimbabwe government took over the rights to the Marange diamond fields in eastern Zimbabwe in 2006, high-ranking officials in the security sector formed companies to exploit the gems.

Two of the most prominent diamond mining companies are Mbada Diamonds and Anjin Investments. Robert Mhlanga, a retired air force vice-marshal, chairs Mbada Diamonds while Anjin's company secretary is Charles Tarumbwa, a serving brigadier-general.

During the unity government period between 2009 and 2012, Zimbabwe's parliamentary committee on mines and energy led an investigation into the activities at the Marange fields. According to its June 2013 report: "Secrecy and lack of transparency in the diamond mining industry has resulted in serious leakages and failure to remit satisfactory revenues to the state."

Finance minister during this period, Tendai Biti, then of the MDC, consistently complained that the treasury was not receiving revenue from diamond sales. In 2012 he slashed the country's national budget after revenue from diamond sales was far below expectations.

"While the minister of finance expected \$600m from the proceeds of diamond exports in 2012, the state only received about \$41m," Mr Tsvangirai said in October 2013 during an Oxford University lecture. "This is against reported sales of diamonds running into billions of dollars every year."

In 2012 Global Witness, a UK-based watchdog, detailed the intricate network of Chinese and Zimbabwean security, police and intelligence services operating at the Marange diamond fields. Its report reveals how Zimbabwe's secret police, the Central



Intelligence Organisation (CIO), apparently received financing from Sam Pa, a Hong Kong businessman. It also suggests that several CIO members are directors of Sino-Zimbabwe Development, a group of firms with mining interests registered in the British Virgin Islands, Singapore and Zimbabwe.


“Together with factors such as the presence of the permanent secretary of the ministry of defence [Mr Rushwaya] on Anjin’s executive board, these company records have led Global Witness to conclude that half of [this] large diamond mining company is likely part-owned and part-controlled by the Zimbabwean ministry of defence, military and police,” the report states.

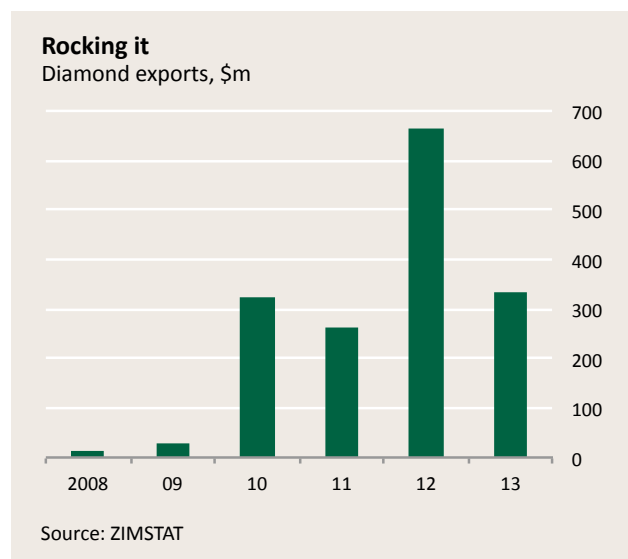
The loss to public coffers is particularly regrettable considering the state of the country’s economy. A liquidity crunch has resulted in many companies either shutting or scaling down. More than 85% of the population is not formally employed, according to opposition party estimates. Between 25% and 35% of the population are undernourished, according to 2014 World Food Programme figures.

Military-business collaborations are not necessarily wrong, said Martin Rupiya, executive director of the African Public Policy and Research Institute, a Nairobi-based think-tank. These partnerships are common in Europe and the US. But in Zimbabwe’s case, he said, the absence of transparency and the unanswered corruption allegations raise questions.

“The challenge in the case of Zimbabwe is that the [Zanu-PF] party actually does not have a clear policy,” Mr Rupiya said. “What remains is the [internal] fight between factions—a factor clear to citizens—with an increasingly weak and ineffective president handing out contracts [to military personnel] to secure his own power base.”

Until recently, Zanu-PF had two sparring factions, one led by Emmerson Mnangagwa, Zimbabwe’s justice minister, and the other by Joice Mujuru, the former vice-president who was sacked in December by Mr Mugabe.

Mr Mnangagwa, who was defence minister from 2009 to 2013, remains close to the military. As this magazine was going to press, he was about to be sworn in as Zimbabwe’s new vice-president. He appears to be leading the race to succeed the 90-year-old Mr Mugabe. 



## Military takeovers in Africa

When will the AU bare its teeth?

### Coup decay

by Brian Klaas

It was late 1987 when Blaise Compaoré became president of Burkina Faso in a coup d'état. Michael Jackson was atop the charts with his album "Bad" and the Berlin Wall would stand for another two years.

Twenty-seven years later, Mr Compaoré lost power the same way he had taken it. Burkina Faso's military hijacked a wave of popular protest and toppled the long-time strongman from his Ouagadougou throne on November 1st 2014. Mr Compaoré's convoy of tinted-window sport-utility vehicles snaked south-west to Côte d'Ivoire, following the path to exile trampled by so many post-independence African leaders chased from office at the barrel of a gun.

As news spread of the departure of "Beau Blaise", as he was known, euphoric celebrations filled the streets. But in the blur of the following days' hangover, another realisation set in: who had taken his place? Had Burkina Faso traded one bad government for a worse one?

So long as the military remains in power—or the military at least retains the post of prime minister—the answer is yes. Burkina Faso's recent coup, like all illegal takeovers, is a disaster for the country. Zapping decades of dictatorship may appeal to Africans desperate for a lightning strike of political change after protracted stagnation.

Unfortunately, the damage inflicted by a coup d'état in a single day almost always takes years, sometimes generations, to repair.

The average putsch throws national economies into recession for three full years, according to coup expert and political scientist Jay Ulfelder, former director of the CIA's Political Instability Task Force. On top of the drop in growth rates, illegal regime change often prompts international isolation, a severe drop in foreign investment, and the loss of international aid that is often crucial to funding social support programmes.

Prior to Madagascar's 2009 coup, for example, the government relied on international donors

to cover 40% of its bills, according to its 2008 budget. After the takeover, a coordinated isolation campaign yanked that money away from Madagascar—eliminating \$4 out of every \$10 from the government's planned expenditures. The country faced total quarantine from the global stage—even though the military handed control back to a

#### Dwindling dollars

Aid received by Madagascar, \$m



Source: World Bank

civilian (albeit unelected) almost immediately.

The African Union also suspended Madagascar for almost five years. During that period essential donors such as the US and France cut off bilateral aid, and the World Bank closed its multilateral aid tap.

The damage persists more than five years later, as Madagascar's growth rate—above 7% in 2008, according to World Bank figures—has still not come close to its pre-coup levels, only reaching 2.1% in 2013.

Madagascar is not alone on the continent. While governments are overthrown everywhere in the developing world, Africa is uniquely afflicted.

A coup d'état is an unconstitutional transfer of power originating from within the state, usually involving the military. This is in contrast to a rebellion or civil war, which involves groups of fighters that are distinctly outside the state apparatus. Between 1960 and 2013, 386 alleged, planned, failed and successful coups d'état disrupted the African continent—an average of more than seven per year, according to the Center for Systemic Peace, a non-profit think-tank based just outside Washington, DC.

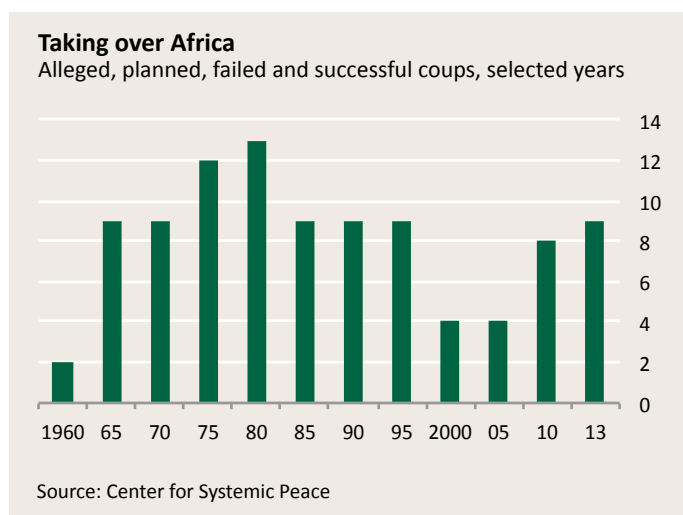
Power-hungry presidents have sometimes pointed to “alleged” and “planned” coups against their regimes as a pretext to crack down on internal opposition. For example, in 1991 Tunisia's ruthless strongman, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, fabricated a plot by Islamists and a few hundred military officers that he viewed as major threats. He used the pretext of this conspiracy to jail and torture hundreds of men from both rival groups. As a result, accurate counting of coups that includes “alleged” and “planned” attempts is problematic.

Leaving aside these take-over attempts, in the 54 years since most of Africa became independent, 85 successful coups, including the recent one in Burkina Faso, have removed the ruling regime—an average of 1.6 per year since 1960.

Moreover, the absolute numbers are high relative to other regions. The Center for Systemic Peace reports that Africa has been home to 53% of all coups d'état in the world—a distinctly disproportionate share.

So we know that takeovers happen in Africa with alarming frequency. But have the trends changed over time?

Throughout the first three decades of African independence, “successful” coups took place at almost metronomic intervals: 20 in the 1960s, 19 in the 1970s and 20 in the 1980s. During the wave of democratisation in the 1990s, fewer governments (14) were overthrown, but military takeovers still persisted as a common way for



regimes in Africa to rise to power.

Illegal takeovers have declined in the new millennium with just seven “successful” coups. But they may be making a comeback as militaries have taken over five governments in sub-Saharan Africa since 2010: Burkina Faso in 2014; Egypt, 2013; Guinea-Bissau, 2012; Mali, 2012; and Niger, 2010. In addition to these clear-cut examples, the Arab spring’s unconstitutional transfers of power demonstrate the sometimes murky distinctions between coups and revolutions. The 2011 transfer of power in Egypt is rarely called a coup, but this classification is debatable because Egypt’s military retained de facto authority. The Libyan case is far clearer and was certainly not a coup. The regime was toppled by outside intervention and a series of militias that were not part of the state apparatus.

Regardless of their frequency or how they are counted, one major change has made it less tempting for soldiers to seize power in Africa: the international community, at the urging of the African Union, is taking a much firmer stance against regimes that arrive in power by unconstitutional means.

Until 1997 the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) had a policy of non-interference in the affairs of member states. After all, long-standing incumbents had written the rules and were not eager to have a supranational body dictate their internal affairs.

That precedent began to change when the army deposed the president of Sierra Leone in May 1997. The OAU’s secretary-general, Salim Ahmed Salim, condemned the coup and demanded that the international community repudiate the subsequent government. They did: Nigerian troops of the west African intervention force, Ecomog, drove out the rebels and paved the way for the reinstatement of the deposed president, with about 100 casualties, according to press reports.

Three years later, the continent’s leaders signed the Constitutive Act of the African Union—a replacement for the Organisation of African Unity. The Act’s article 30 censures illegal takeovers and establishes that “Governments which shall come to power through unconstitutional means shall not be allowed to participate in the activities of the Union.”

This was a major change from the previous policy of non-intervention. It compelled the African Union to suspend the memberships of Madagascar (2009), Mali (2012), Egypt (2013) and the Central African Republic (2013, still in effect), owing to their unconstitutional transfers of power. A strict reading of the African Union’s article 30 should have led to the suspension of Egypt, Libya and Tunisia in 2011 as the new governments were certainly not put in place using constitutional means. But, if they had been barred, these countries would have each earned reinstatement (at least initially) by their attempts to hold elections.

Coup leaders can now be certain of the immediate costs: perpetrating a coup is a nearly sure-fire way to lose membership in the club of African states (though alarmingly, Burkina Faso and its coup leader and new prime minister, Yacouba Isaac Zida, a lieutenant-colonel, seem to be getting away with it). Worse, it also is likely to lead to a complete loss of bilateral assistance and international recognition (again, Burkina

Faso may be a troubling exception). The spoils of many African governments are still alluring but that attraction is diminished when aid dollars are shut off completely and diplomatic ties are severed.

As a result, the battlefield in the aftermath of coups has now changed; it is no longer about securing non-intervention after unconstitutional takeovers. Instead, African leaders that seize power illegally are now playing a branding game, trying to label their palace revolutions as “popular insurrections” aiming to “restore democracy” rather than military takeovers.

This tendency is as old as African coups themselves. As Ruth First, a South African coup scholar, put it in 1970, “It is as though, in the army books and regulations by which the soldiers were drilled, there is an entry: Coups, justifications for; and beside it, the felicitous phrases that coup-makers repeat by rote.” But at least back then, everyone knew it was a farce and did not take the coup justifications seriously.


That marketing was on display in Burkina Faso in November 2014 when soldiers deposed a civilian leader who had won four disputed elections. They welcomed the protestors’ labelling the event the “Black spring”, hoping to attract the goodwill that was generated by the Arab spring. Tens of thousands of people had taken to the streets calling for the ousting of Mr Compaoré. But as soon as the military deposed a civilian and made a soldier the prime minister, the event became a textbook coup. Now, they are trying to package it as a “civilian transition”. A man in uniform, however, would not be guiding a genuine civilian changeover.

Therein lies the paradox: many people in Burkina Faso may be elated at the demise of the Compaoré regime, just as many people in Egypt were recently delighted to see General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and the Egyptian military overthrow Muhammad Morsi in 2013. But both events were steps backward, not forward. On a continent that has been rife with military takeovers since independence, the time has come to intensify, not lessen, the pressure on regimes that seize power in unconstitutional ways.

The African Union threatened Burkina Faso with suspension if it did not return to civilian rule swiftly, but backed off when the military agreed to cede power to a civilian-led transition. That is too lenient. This regime change is unconstitutional and contravenes article 30, which binds the AU to immediately suspend Burkina Faso until it holds fresh elections. This “civilian transition” is a sham.

If the AU wants to stop coups it must respect its own rules, which deem military takeovers unacceptable transgressions, even if the deposed government was unpopular.

Until the African Union proves it has teeth, military takeovers will persist on the continent. Soldiers were once tantalised by coups that propelled them to power without any negative consequences. Today, despite more penalties, soldiers are still tempted. Why? Because as in Burkina Faso, the AU is looking the other way.

If unconstitutional takeovers are to be made aberrations of the past, armies that depose governments must face isolation, sanctions and loss of aid until clean and fair elections are held. In Burkina Faso, that message has been lost and the African Union has been duped. 



## Private military and security companies

### Who controls the guns-for-hire?

## Loose cannons

by Stephen Johnson

It is not the sort of image you expect to find in a UN report: a man in a blue uniform lies hogtied on the ground, his hands and feet secured behind his back, his face covered in ash and bruises.

The 2013 report, on the breaking of an arms embargo in Somalia, detailed the activities of private military companies in that lawless country. The photograph in question was taken at a training camp run by one such firm. The report tells of another trainee bound and beaten to death with rocks.

These and other incidents—physical abuse, arms trafficking, coup plots—point to a murky underworld where private armies operate with little or no accountability, mainly because few international laws regulate the use and behaviour of mercenaries.

Thousands of soldiers of fortune, usually under contract to private military and security companies (PMSCs), are paid to fight proxy wars for governments and to protect companies and NGOs. But do they end conflicts or fuel them? Is this a modern corporate manifestation of the mercenary phenomenon that plagued Africa after its colonisation?

At the end of the cold war, military budgets around the world plummeted as countries no longer saw the need for large standing armies. Between 1987 and 1996 the world's militaries shrank by more than 6m soldiers—from 29m to 22.7m—according to Kees Kingma writing for the Bonn International Conversion Center, a research



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Training or terror?

institute focusing on the conversion of military facilities and equipment to civilian use. This decline of official armies had particular relevance for Africa—as unfolding circumstances would show.

As apartheid ended South Africa began to reduce its armed forces. Between 1995 and 2000,

the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) declined significantly from 120,000 personnel to about 82,000, according to Mr Kingma. Many of the newly demobilised soldiers found jobs working for private security firms, including the US-based DynCorp, Military Professional Resources, Pacific Architects and Engineers (PAE), and Protection

Strategies—all of which were involved in African conflicts.

Several professional army firms found work in Somalia after its government collapsed in 1991. The president of Puntland, a semi-autonomous region in the country's north-east, hired Saracen International, then a Pretoria-based firm (now Sterling Corporate Services based in the United Arab Emirates) to provide the Puntland Maritime Police Force with military training and equipment to fight maritime piracy. Harsh corporal punishment characterised Saracen's training camps during May 2010 and February 2011. This included the breaking of hands, the binding and beating of police apprentices, and one death, according to the abovementioned UN report.

Saracen "trainers were expected to act not only as instructors, but as fighters participating in combat operations"—a violation of the arms embargo, said the UN report. The police force that Saracen trained reported directly to the Puntland president, which stirred fears that it would "be deployed in an internal security role and not just for anti-piracy operations".

Executive Outcomes, one of the most notorious private military contractors, was founded in 1989 by South Africans Eeben Barlow and Lafras Luitingh among others. Both men had worked for the Civil Cooperation Bureau, the apartheid government's hit squad. Executive Outcomes employed many soldiers from recently disbanded SANDF special forces units.

Executive Outcomes and its front companies operated in Angola throughout the 1990s, according to a report by Chukwuma Osakwe of the Nigerian Defence Academy and Ubong Essien Umoh of the University of Uyo for *Science Militaria* journal in 2014. The Angolan government hired the firm to combat fighters loyal to the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola after it refused to accept the 1992 election results. Sierra Leone's government also hired the group to fight against the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) from 1995 to 1997, according to the report.

Executive Outcomes also had close links to the British private military firm Sandline International. This group gained infamy after it was linked to the "Arms to Africa" scandal, a circumvention of a UN weapons embargo on Sierra Leone during the civil war in 1997, according to Khareen Pech, a researcher for the South African-based Institute for Security Studies (ISS), in a 1998 report.

Neither company exists today. Executive Outcomes dissolved in 1999 after South Africa adopted a law limiting mercenary activity, according to Ms Pech. Sandline closed its doors in 2004, listing the reason on its company website as "the general lack of governmental support for private military companies willing to help end armed conflicts in places like Africa".

Peter Singer, author of the 2007 book "Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the

**The Angolan government hired the firm to combat fighters loyal to the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola after it refused to accept the 1992 election results.**

**The use of private military companies raises difficult questions of accountability, because a hired private soldier answers first to his company, not to the state in which he is operating.**

Privatized Military Industry”, divides modern private military contractors into three groups: first, firms supplying “direct, tactical military assistance” (including front-line combat); second, consulting companies that provide strategic training; and third, support businesses that provide logistics, maintenance and intelligence services.

Executive Outcomes and Sandline fell into the first category. The more common type operating today straddles the second and third categories. These firms provide training and logistical services to a variety of organisations, from private companies to national armies to NGOs operating in high-risk countries.

For example, former South African air force pilots, technicians and trainers form almost all of Rwanda’s air capability, according to Andre Roux, a senior ISS researcher. Angola today uses private military personnel extensively to develop its command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveil-

lance and reconnaissance (C4ISR) capabilities, Mr Roux said.

Since the 1990s, as the UN has launched more peacekeeping missions, especially in Africa, its use of private military firms has risen in parallel. The UN used Life-Guard—a South African company with ties to Executive Outcomes—to protect its personnel in Sierra Leone in 1998 before its blue helmets were officially deployed, wrote Åse Gilje Østensen in a 2011 report for the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces.

The UN subcontracts most of its mine-clearing operations to private firms, according to a November 2011 ISS study written by Eric George. The total value of de-mining operations throughout the world may be as much as \$33 billion, Mr George wrote, making it a very lucrative market for private military companies.

The UN is also increasingly contracting its support services, such as intelligence gathering and civilian policing, to these firms because it does not have the requisite expertise itself, according to Ms Østensen.

Security training is another major service. For example, the UN hired DynCorp and PAE in 2004 to train and help restructure Liberia’s military and police sectors, according to Mr George.

The US State Department also contracted PAE and DynCorp in the 2004 African Union (AU) mission to Sudan and the 2003 AU-UN mission to supply transport, logistics, communications and housing services in Darfur.

The use of private military companies raises difficult questions of accountability, because a hired private soldier answers first to his company, not to the state in which he is operating, Mr George said. The question of accountability becomes even murkier when private firms, hired by governments or international organisations, subcontract

out their assignments to other companies.

This issue arose when the UN hired DynCorp to support its peacekeeping efforts in Somalia and Sudan. In Somalia in 2006 the UN discovered that one of DynCorp's subcontracted companies, Aerolift, a South African-based logistics firm, was allegedly delivering weapons to Islamist insurgents the Shabab, according to a 2010 report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

In Sudan DynCorp subcontracted Badr Airline, which the UN accused of violating an arms embargo in 2006 by delivering pickup trucks mounted with machine guns to North Darfur in Sudan, according to a 2009 SIPRI report.

These cases underscore the lack of oversight and the absence of clear legislation regulating the activities of soldiers-for-hire and private military firms.

Some international regulation exists, including the UN's 2001 International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries. Under this treaty, signatory states are responsible for ensuring that no one engages in mercenary activity within their jurisdiction. But so far only 33 countries have ratified the treaty.

The 2008 Montreux Document, an inter-state agreement ratified by 17 countries, including the US, China, Britain, France and Germany, specifies a code of conduct for private military firms, according to Kateri Camola in a 2013 report for Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protection, a research organisation based in Geneva.

The Montreux Document lists 70 ways in which signatories can ensure responsible use of private military contractors, according to a South African defence department research paper. These include not using contractors for activities requiring force, and licensing and regulating contracted companies. But the Montreux Document is only a set of guidelines and is not binding.

The International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers is an inter-company agreement, signed by 708 private security firms across the world. It calls for private military and security companies and their employees to respect human rights and the rule of law in their operations.

Although well intentioned, this agreement suffers from the same shortcoming as the Montreux Document: it does not have the authority to penalise companies or their personnel who do not comply.

The only inter-African legislation governing the use of private military forces is the 1985 Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa.

So far only 30 AU states have ratified the agreement, according to ISS senior researcher Sabelo Gumedze. This treaty similarly lacks teeth as it does not include any

**A private firm that specialises in military logistics will have more access to heavy-airlift infrastructure than an African government that needs these services for a one-off operation.**

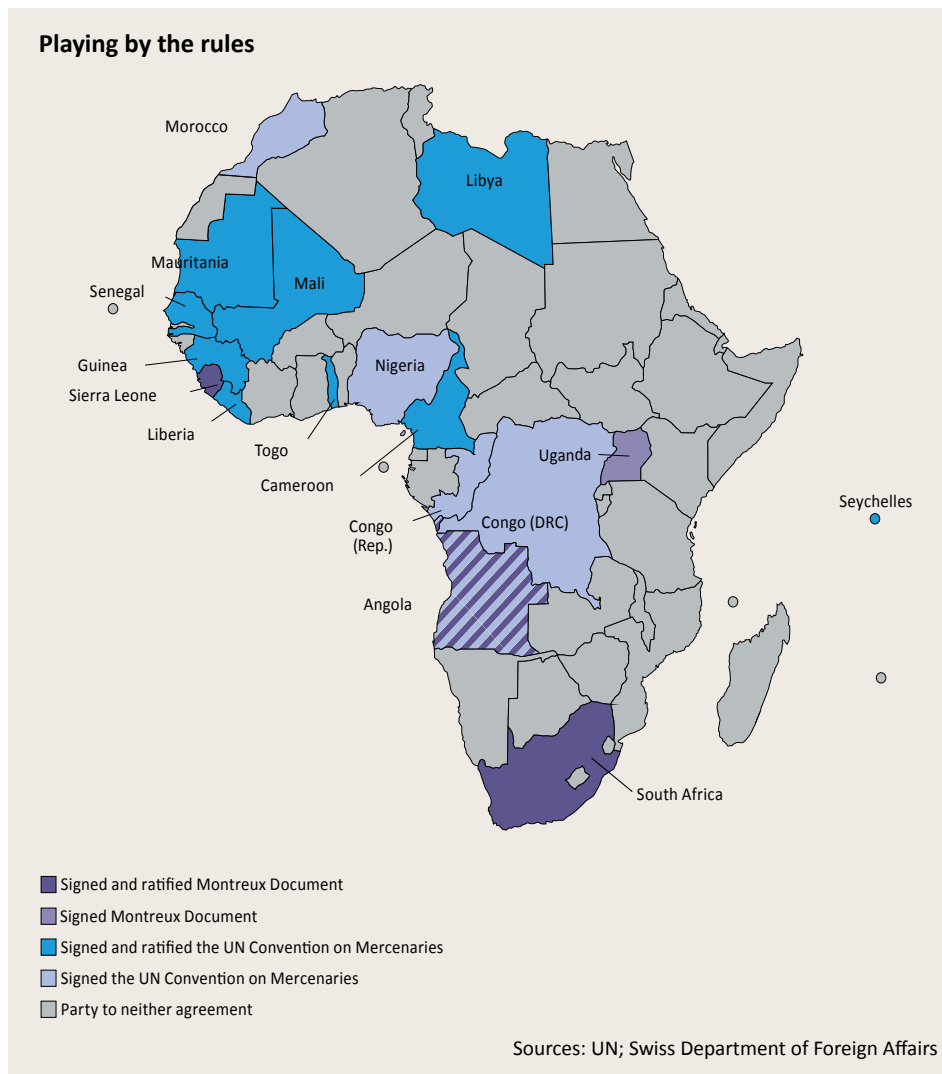
monitoring mechanisms, penalties or sanctions, according to Mr Gumedze and other experts.

South Africa is the only country in Africa that has passed domestic laws regulating the use of private armies: the 1998 Regulation of Foreign Military Assistance Act and the 2006 Prohibition of Mercenary Activities and Regulation of Certain Activities in a Country of Armed Conflict Act.

South Africa used the 1998 law to convict Mark Thatcher, son of the late British prime minister, after he and several mercenaries, mostly South African citizens, attempted a coup d'état in Equatorial Guinea in 2004, according to court documents.

Mr Thatcher pleaded guilty in 2005. He was fined \$450,000 and received a four-year suspended sentence.

The absence of laws controlling these firms makes it difficult to punish private security firms and their employees when they misbehave. Issues related to jurisdiction





often hobble prosecutors' efforts to make arrests because a private military contractor may flee the country after committing a crime.

This is what happened after the UN accused Saracen personnel of human rights abuses in Somalia. It happened too in Sierra Leone, where Executive Outcomes employees allegedly killed civilians in indiscriminate airstrikes between 1995 and 1997, according to Messrs Osakwe and Umoh. In both cases, no one was prosecuted, either in Sierra Leone or Somalia or in their home countries.

While criticism of these private armies is legitimate, some observers argue that they can play a useful role, but away from the front line. They have the skills and experience to deliver professional specialised services to governments that lack the resources or expertise to perform these tasks.


A private firm that specialises in military logistics will have more access to heavy-airlift infrastructure than an African government that needs these services for a one-off operation. In the same way, a contractor that provides dedicated mine-clearing services will have better trained and equipped staff than a national army that has a diffuse variety of responsibilities.

Thembanani Mbadlanyana, an ISS researcher, promotes what he calls the “steering and rowing” approach. Under this method, the employer—the government or international body—“steers” by providing direction, policy and oversight for a specific operation and makes sure that it is well executed. The private security firm “rows” by delivering a specific service.

Steering requires understanding the various issues and balancing the competing demands for resources, he argues, a common government function. Rowing requires the competence to carry out a specific mission, which should fall under the expertise of an experienced private firm.

Private armies can play a valuable role on the continent, but only when international law regulates their responsibilities and ensures their accountability. A first step would be for governments to establish clear rules governing the registration and licensing of private military companies. This requires ongoing monitoring of their activities, according to the 2013 UN report.

Rules to ensure security trainers do not participate in combat operations, as well as thorough background checks to make sure that the firms' personnel do not have criminal records, would also improve the private security environment. This could include laws that establish corporate criminal responsibility for contractors who operate beyond their legal mandates.

These companies are here to stay. The international community and national governments need to mitigate the inherent threats they pose by adopting strong laws that monitor and regulate and by punishing them when these laws are broken. 

**Private armies can play a valuable role on the continent, but only when international law regulates their responsibilities and ensures their accountability.**

## South Sudan: SPLA splits

A longstanding personal rivalry has torn apart the world's newest country—and its armed forces

## Fresh blood from old wounds

by Kevin Bloom

For too long, South Sudan's army has not performed its primary function, safeguarding its citizens. Spirals of defections and divisions that pre-date its birth have intensified the 14-month civil war in the world's youngest nation.

In December, at the time of writing, more than 600,000 refugees had fled into neighbouring Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda, with 100 refugees entering Ethiopia every day, according to UN estimates. A few months before, in September, a new rebel movement was born, the so-called "National Democratic Front" (NDF). It aims to "unite all the fighting groups in South Sudan" and overthrow the regime of the country's president, Salva Kiir, according to its manifesto.

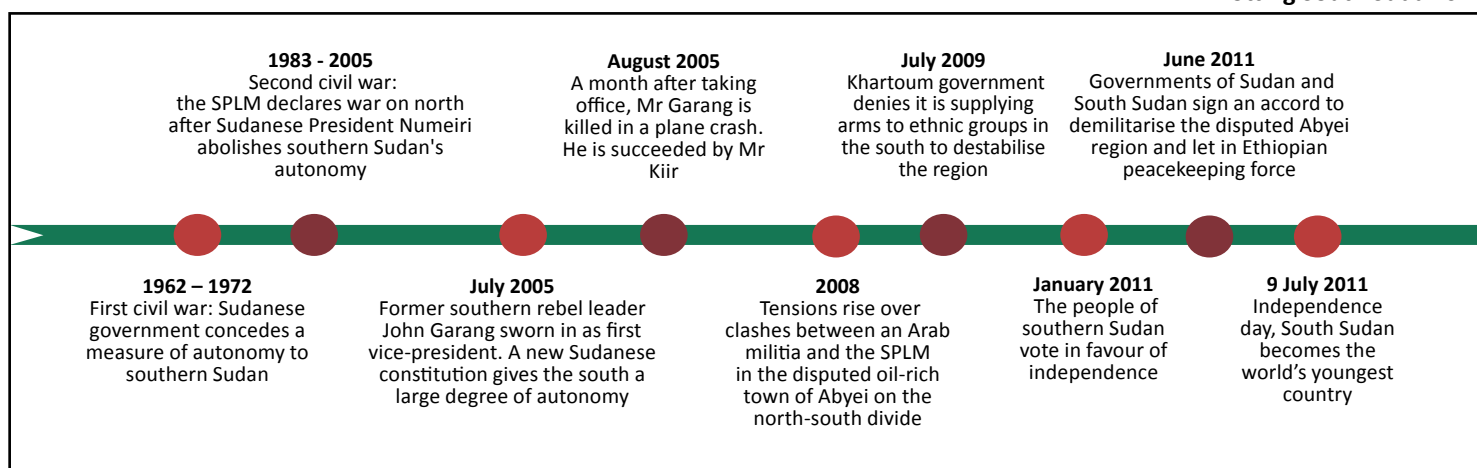
The NDF may not be a serious threat to Mr Kiir and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). But its gripes—rampant corruption, insecurity, tribalism and nepotism—most certainly are.

How did a nation that held such high hopes at its birth sink into this mess? The clues lie in a split that had been tearing apart the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), the ruling party that was always bound to the SPLA.

"When a president has been in power for a long time, it becomes inevitable that a new generation arises," said Riek Machar, then Mr Kiir's vice-president, in a now-infamous interview with the UK's *Guardian* newspaper on July 4th 2013. "It is a natural process, it is best to move that way. It is not that the incumbent is at all bad."

Mr Kiir may not have been "at all bad", but he knew an impending palace coup

### Plotting South Sudan's



when he saw one. On July 8th 2013 he removed Taban Deng, Mr Machar’s long-time ally, from his post as governor of South Sudan’s oil-rich Unity State. On July 24th he sacked Mr Machar and the rest of the cabinet. South Sudan, which had only just celebrated its second birthday, appeared to be back in the quagmire that from 1983 to 2005 had served as the battleground for post-colonial Africa’s longest civil war.

For foreign diplomats and aid workers stationed in Juba, the capital, the most urgent question was this: who controlled the army? There were no signs of an increased military presence on Juba’s streets immediately after the July 24th announcement. But it did not augur well that Mr Kiir had also fired 17 police brigadiers. The UN—aware that the army was an unholy mélange of former civil war militias, yet still the country’s ultimate power broker—advised its staff to remain indoors.

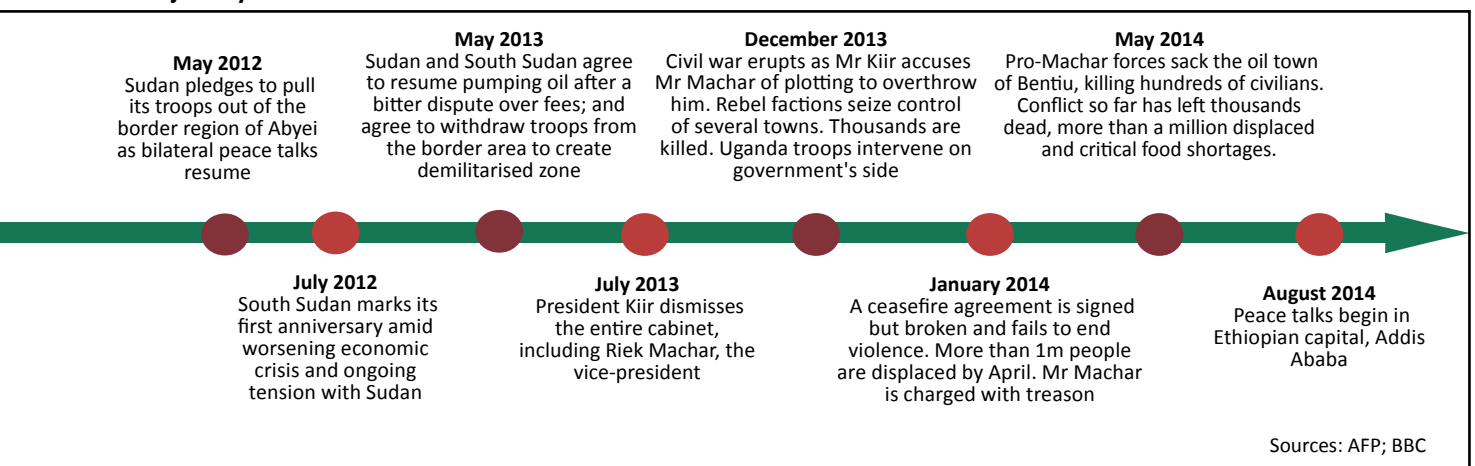
In the months preceding the split, Juba’s army was spread thin, fighting a rebel group in north-eastern Jonglei State and combating a nationwide increase in intertribal violence. Meanwhile in May 2013, Sudan’s president, Omar al-Bashir, warned that he would shut off the cross-border oil pipelines (the only route out for landlocked South Sudan’s oil, which represented 98% of its export revenues) unless Juba stopped supporting rebels hostile to Khartoum. What was going on? Were these threads linked?

Trying to unravel this complex web, my sources in Juba turned to history, specifically how the key characters in the July 2013 SPLM split behaved in the aftermath of a 1991 rupture. They started with Mr Machar, the chief dissenting figure in both.

The son of a Nuer chief from Leer, Western Upper Nile (modern-day Unity State), Mr Machar joined the SPLM/SPLA in 1984, within a year of the movement’s founding. Under the command of John Garang, who was also the political head of the SPLM, the SPLA had the backing of Ethiopia’s Mengistu Haile Mariam. The Ethiopian despot saw this as an opportunity to hit back at Khartoum for Sudan’s support of Eritrean rebels.

The alliance proved fruitful. Thanks to Mr Mengistu, Mr Garang won out against his rivals. His dream of a reformed and united Sudan held sway as the driving vision

**war-torn trajectory**



of the SPLA. He would remain unchallenged until 1991, when Meles Zenawi rode into Addis Ababa on a tank and unseated Mr Mengistu.

Taking courage from Mr Meles, and no doubt grateful to the Ethiopian for weakening his boss's position, Mr Machar led a coup against Mr Garang in August

1991—a mainly Nuer insurrection against the Dinka leader. The coup attempt failed. But Mr Machar would break away to form a splinter group called SPLA-Nasir, named after the town close to the Ethiopian border where it was based. These pretenders to the throne would also rally behind the political cause of southern independence.

For all his bluster about “independence”, it came to light in a 2003 Human Rights Watch (HRW) report that Mr



South Sudan's ousted Vice-President Riek Machar and President Salva Kiir

Machar had been covertly relying on the funding and materiel of the National Islamic Front (NIF), Khartoum's ruling party, from the month of SPLA-Nasir's inception.

Whereas Mr Garang's SPLA had attempted to disrupt the oil industry, Mr Machar had offered the NIF exactly what it wanted: control of the oil-rich regions of Western Upper Nile, according to the HRW report.

In 1997, after acting as the key southern signatory to the Khartoum Peace Agreement, Mr Machar was rewarded with a string of new titles: president of the Southern States Coordinating Council, assistant to Mr al-Bashir, head of the new political party, United Democratic Salvation Front, and commander-in-chief of Khartoum's brand-new military arm, the South Sudan Defence Force.

“His failure to stem the government's forced displacement of civilians from Western Upper Nile/Unity State,” noted the abovementioned report, “ended up turning the Nuer against his leadership and eventually led to his belated resignation from government and attempt to recreate his army in the south in 2000 as the Sudan People's Democratic Forces (2000-2002).”

Messrs Machar and Garang signed an agreement in January 2002 and merged their forces, with Mr Machar “receiving a leadership position in the SPLA”, according to the HRW report.

Twelve years later, in October 2014 alleged top-secret Sudanese state documents (leaked to South Sudanese and foreign journalists) appeared to confirm suspicions that Mr Machar's subsequent stance of reconciliation had never been anything

more than posturing.

The minutes of a meeting purportedly held on August 31st 2014 in Khartoum made a damning case. As signed off by the security and military officials present, the “South Sudan” item on the agenda was dealt with as follows: “Assistance to Riek’s rebel Sudan People’s Liberation Movement in Opposition will increase and include tanks, artillery, intelligence and logistical training, as requested, said the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.” The “explicit aim [of the National Congress Party, the former NIF] is a federal state of Greater Upper Nile—a bid to regain the oilfields and to block the SPLM-North’s route southwards.”


Khartoum denied that the document was real, but London-based journal *Africa Confidential* disagreed and deemed it probably authentic, based on the testimony of Sudanese politicians and bureaucrats. Despite his active participation in the all-important 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement and his display of grief following Mr Garang’s untimely death, Mr Machar appeared as two-faced as ever.

It was all there in summary: the acronyms that had spun like slots to define Mr Machar’s various rebel armies had now landed on “Sudan People’s Liberation Movement in Opposition”; Mr Deng had remained Mr Machar’s most loyal henchman; Khartoum had remained steadfast in its love for the oilfields of old Western Upper Nile; and the southern Sudanese rebels that had found themselves north of the border after the July 2011 declaration of independence were now called “SPLM-North”.

As for Mr Kiir, my sources in Juba were quick to recall that even if his history was not as colourful as Mr Machar’s, he was not beyond reproach. Mr Garang’s long-time deputy, Mr Kiir is today the commander-in-chief of a national army accused by HRW of grave human rights abuses. The second Sudanese civil war (1983-2005) claimed a death toll, when accounting for famine and disease, of 2m people, a number neither Western NGOs nor the SPLM dispute. The current war, if sanity does not prevail, may well go the same way.

Or it could be even worse. The difference between the SPLA then and the SPLA now is that it is no longer a liberation movement but an official national army. “Forces loyal to Kiir” is simply a euphemism for Dinka soldiers. US Secretary of State John Kerry used the phrase “possible genocide” as late as May 2014. While that has not come to pass, it may yet if Khartoum’s hawks have their way.

“This year the Sudan People’s Army...managed to cultivate large areas in South Kordofan State,” said General Siddiig Aamir, Sudan’s director of military intelligence and security, suggest the minutes from the abovementioned August 2014 meeting. “We must not allow them to harvest these crops...Good harvest means supplies to the war effort. We must starve them, so that commanders and civilians desert them and we recruit the deserters to use them in the war to defeat the rebels.”

Eric Reeves, a researcher and advocate with deep expertise on the region, says: “It will be civilians—primarily children, women, and the elderly—who will suffer most from this destruction of food supplies.” Therein lies the SPLA’s most tragic mistake: they have laid themselves open to agendas beyond their control. 



## Madagascar's game of thrones

For decades the neutral image of Madagascar's army was a well-cultivated mirage

### Calling the shots

by Annelie Rozeboom

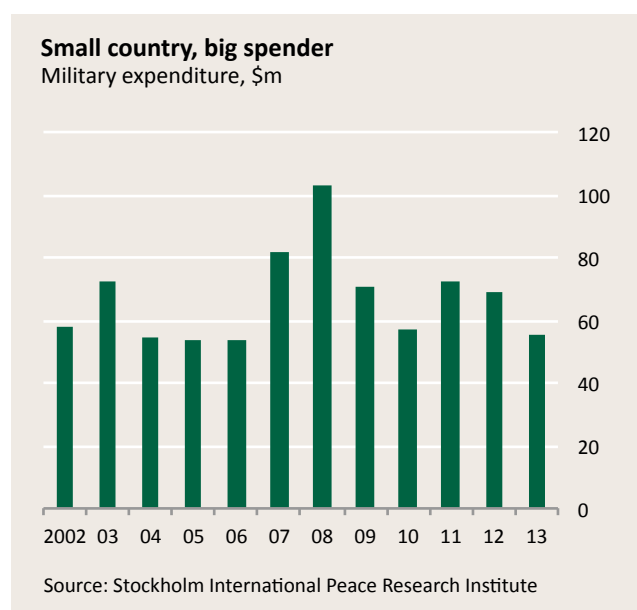
The day after Marc Ravalomanana, former president of Madagascar, returned from five years of exile, the army broke down the door to his house in the capital, arrested him and whisked him to an army base in the island's extreme north.

The incident last October was a blunt reminder that the army is still deeply enmeshed in Madagascan politics. "The fact that the army can just sweep in, break down the door and arrest someone, shows how powerful they still are," said historian Stephen Ellis of the African Studies Centre at Leiden University, in the Netherlands. Juvence Ramasy, a researcher in political science at the University of Tamatave, on Madagascar's east coast, agrees. "It is high time the military went back to its barracks and left politicians to rule the country," he said.

Mr Ravalomanana had returned ten months after new presidential elections were held in December 2013. In 2009, after violent protests, the army, mainly lowly

officers who were frustrated at their lack of upward mobility, had toppled him. The military replaced him with the then mayor of Antananarivo, Andry Rajoelina, a former disc jockey.

Until then, the island's post-independence army had carefully cultivated an image of neutrality. But this picture is a delusion because more military officers than civilians have served as president since



independence, according to a May 2014 report by the International Crisis Group (ICG), a think-tank based in Brussels.

The military has been behind several successful coups and even more failed attempts.

Since its establishment at independence in 1960, Madagascar's army has neither needed to defend the country nor to keep the peace between warring domestic

factions. In any case, it would not have succeeded because the army has too many generals and lacks experience, equipment and personnel. Madagascar has just 12,500 regular troops, according to a June 2014 World Bank-funded study. These forces are “ill-equipped and underpaid”, according to defenceWeb, a security news portal.

During the most recent presidential election, the army remained neutral and kept a safe distance from polling stations. But in his last days as president, Mr Rajoelina promoted a slate of loyal officers as an insurance policy in case his proxy candidate for president, Hery Rajaonarimampianina, sidelined him, according to the ICG report.

Mr Rajaonarimampianina won the election and acted exactly as Mr Rajoelina had feared. At his first cabinet meeting on January 29th 2014, he abolished the hated Special Intervention Force (known by its French initials FIS), a military unit Mr Rajoelina had created as a political instrument of intimidation. He also disbanded the Homeland Security Division (DST), a political police squad. When Mr Rajoelina was not named prime minister, as had been widely expected, he complained on television that “Hery” had failed to call him.

Despite the new president’s promising signs of independence, the army’s neutrality is still not clear. It has been deeply involved in politics since 1972, when Philibert Tsiranana, the French-appointed president, handed power to a military council after unrest ended his reign. The military appointed Lieutenant-Commander Didier Ratsiraka president three years later, in 1975.

“This public image of neutrality shows how much skill...the army has for operating behind the scenes,” Mr Ellis said. “Mr Ratsiraka made a point of not showing up in public in a military uniform. He preferred a Pierre Cardin suit and a silk tie.”

Mr Ratsiraka renamed, enlarged and reorganised the nation’s security troops—Forces Armées Malagasy—to make them appropriate for a “socialist revolutionary” state. Between 1975 and 1980, the newly renamed Forces Armées Populaires (FAP) increased in size from 4,700 to 6,300 ordinary troops, according to political scientist Jaona Rabenirainy, writing in *Politique Africaine*, a journal, in June 2002.

While an impressive list of army generals have held important political posts since then—including ministers of defence, foreign



Hery's henchmen?

affairs and strategically important fisheries—they have always ruled together with civilians.

The military brass has only put its foot down when politicians made a mess of it. When Mr Ratsiraka bankrupted the country and refused to step down in 1991, the army issued an ultimatum that led to a transitional government with Mr Ratsiraka stripped of nearly all his powers.

## **The military got whatever it wanted from Mr Rajoelina's regime: salary raises, deferred retirement, new equipment, tax exemptions, and posts in government and corporations.**

Mr Ravalomanana, first elected in 2002, partly blames himself for his ousting by the military. "That was the mistake: we spent too much money on health and education, and not enough on the army," he told Radio France Internationale on May 14th 2009, several months after the coup.


Mr Ravalomanana had tried to make the army focus on the unglamorous work of preventing chronic cattle theft in rural areas. He also sent several generals into early retirement and—unforgivably—named a civilian as defence minister in 2007. "Ravalomanana was not a skilled politician," Mr Ellis said. "He openly disrespected the army and humiliated its leaders."

In contrast, the military got whatever it wanted from Mr Rajoelina's regime: salary raises, deferred retirement, new equipment, including helicopters from Belgium, tax exemptions, and posts in government and corporations, according to the World Bank-funded study.

Now the new president will need to reform the military that stands poised to oppose him if he missteps. One of the army's main problems is its top-heavy structure. Its 150 generals would be a suitable number for an army of 400,000 troops, according to the World Bank-funded report. However, Madagascar's generals command just over 12,500 soldiers.

Unlike Mr Rajoelina's last-minute promotions, career advancement for military officers should be shielded from political manipulation, the ICG recommends. In addition, the army should be professional, and declare its unequivocal commitment to the constitution and the principle of civilian oversight over its actions. As international aid returns to Madagascar following the last election, the ICG report asks donors to make sure: "support will be taken away and the country will return to international isolation if the military intervenes again."

The international community's role is limited, Mr Ellis warned. "Madagascar is now ruled by an elite supported by the army," he said. "This group of people is not interested in democracy as we know it. They are only interested in that part of the population that has capital or lives in the cities. There is very little the international community can do."

Only people can force a change, Mr Ellis said: "The party that manages to fill the streets with people in Antananarivo means trouble for the sitting president." 

## Mali's risky rebel integration project

All past attempts to merge Tuareg rebel groups into the regular army have failed

### Mergers and insurrections

by Kamissa Camara

The next round of peace talks in Algeria between Mali's government and six armed rebel groups—mostly composed of Tuaregs, the fabled blue-robed men of the desert—was scheduled for January 2015, as this magazine went to press. The third round finished inconclusively on November 27th 2014.

The talks come in the wake of a Tuareg rebellion in January 2012, the fourth since Mali's independence in 1960. The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), one of the groups represented in Algiers, conquered much of Mali's northern desert, with the hope of creating an independent state to be called Azawad. The failure of the Malian army to subdue the rebels prompted a French-led military intervention in January 2013.

The 2012 rebellion was based on many of the same claims as three previous Tuareg rebellions, which ended in 1964, 1995 and 2009 respectively: more authority over local government and more funding in the north for schools, roads and other infrastructure. Although the government has often agreed to meet many of these demands

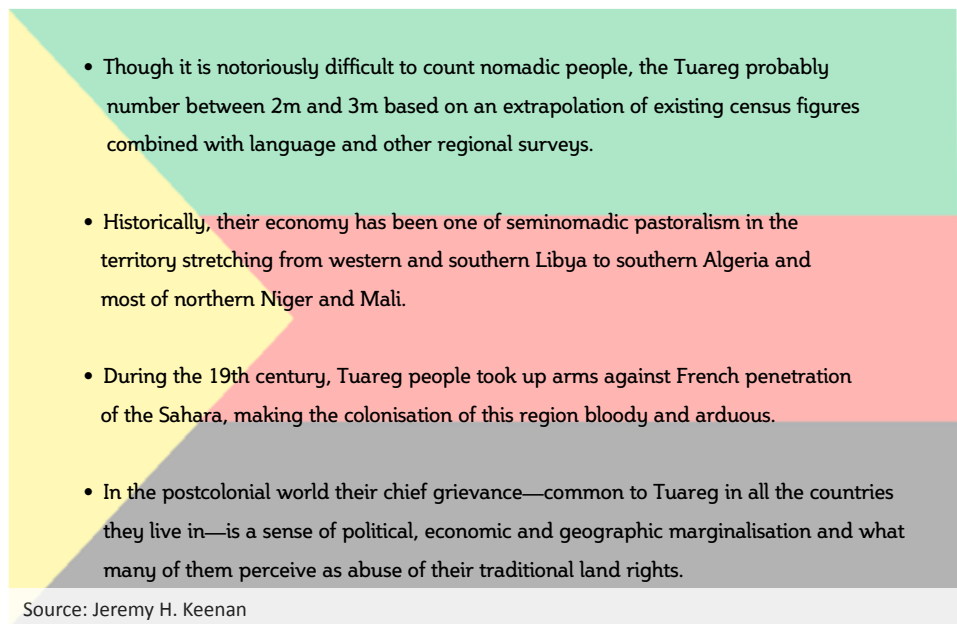


© Alfred Weidinger

True blue

since the 1960s, successive regimes in Bamako have failed to keep these promises. The demand for an independent state in 2012 was new.

Tuareg attacks in early 2012 exposed two main weaknesses of the Armed Forces of Mali (FAMA): poor training and out-of-date ammunition and weapons. In contrast, the rebels proved their military strength. They had returned to Mali in 2011 after the fall of Libya's Muammar Qaddafi, armed with sophisticated weapons and the experience to use them. By mid-2012, the FAMA had lost an estimated 1,100 soldiers against 100 for the MNLA, according to the UN. The country was thrown into further chaos when national army soldiers stormed the presidential palace in Bamako, Mali's



- Though it is notoriously difficult to count nomadic people, the Tuareg probably number between 2m and 3m based on an extrapolation of existing census figures combined with language and other regional surveys.
- Historically, their economy has been one of seminomadic pastoralism in the territory stretching from western and southern Libya to southern Algeria and most of northern Niger and Mali.
- During the 19th century, Tuareg people took up arms against French penetration of the Sahara, making the colonisation of this region bloody and arduous.
- In the postcolonial world their chief grievance—common to Tuareg in all the countries they live in—is a sense of political, economic and geographic marginalisation and what many of them perceive as abuse of their traditional land rights.

Source: Jeremy H. Keenan

Flag of Azawad

capital, on March 22nd 2012. This small group of soldiers ousted the president, Amadou Toumani Touré, incensed at his mismanagement of the Tuareg rebellion.

The six rebel groups have tried unsuccessfully to unify their positions during the peace negotiations, which started in July 2014. The Tuareg MNLA, the High Council for the Unity of Azawad, the Arab Movement of Azawad alongside the Co-ordination for the People of Azawad and two other dissident movements, remain divided on the issues of secession and greater autonomy. The Malian government has ruled out any talks on independence, but is open to discussions over devolving more authority over local affairs.

One of the main concerns that remains on the table is a project to integrate and in some cases re-integrate about 3,000 rebel fighters into the Malian army. They are mostly northerners who fought in the 2012 rebellion, but also include about 500 Tuaregs who deserted the army between 2011 and 2012.



Moussa Mara, Mali's prime minister, first introduced this integration project in May 2013, describing it as critical to achieving national reconciliation. But some Malian authorities and military officials are worried that traitors and criminals could be joining an army they once tried to destroy. Armed groups who occupied Mali's north summarily executed approximately 150 Malian soldiers in 2012, according to a May 2014 report by Human Rights Watch, a New York-based advocacy group.

This is not the first time the Malian government has attempted to incorporate Tuareg fighters into its army. It has tried and failed many times. The strategy has been exposed as a superficial fix that does not resolve the underlying differences that have so often turned comrades into enemies.

The government first attempted to include the rebels in the regular Malian army in the 1990s—during and after the 1990-1995 rebellion. In 1993 Mali integrated 610 former Tuareg combatants into the army. Three years later it incorporated 1,200 Tuaregs into the army, national guard and gendarmerie, 300 into the police, customs, water and forestry services, with a further 120 into the civilian administration, according to FAMA's Lieutenant-Colonel Kalifa Keita.

This re-integration process, however, was particularly painful for the Malian army, explained General Moussa Sinko Coulibaly, Mali's interior minister from April 2012 to March 2014. "We promoted many rebels and some Tuareg officers were appointed to key government positions, which created great resentment among long-serving and highly educated soldiers," he said. "Our soldiers accepted to work with men who had fought against them a few months earlier," General Coulibaly said. "We made exceptional preferences to these former rebels by giving them promotions even though some of them were completely illiterate. But that was the price to pay for peace."

One former rebel, who asked to remain anonymous, agreed. "Tuaregs were the bosses of the Malian army," he said. "We were so powerful within the army that even the thieves belonged to us! We regret what we have lost because we know we will never have it again."

Since the 1990s Tuaregs have deserted the national army, taking weapons and vehicles with them. Most often, they join rebel movements composed of their own ethnic groups in neighbouring Algeria, Libya and Niger. The exact number of desertions over the past 20 years is not known.

The latest failed attempt at rebel military integration stemmed from the July 2006 Algiers Accords, signed between Mali's government and a Tuareg rebel group. This peace accord aimed at bringing security and economic growth to the north. As part of this agreement, the government installed special security units in the north staffed by local Tuaregs, explained General Coulibaly.

This arrangement did not work, General Coulibaly admitted. Seven months later, other rebel factions, who felt excluded by the Algiers agreement, took up arms against the government. This demonstrated the deep divisions that exist among anti-government forces in Mali, further complicating any integration project.

If integration is pursued, former insurgents should be spread out among different

units to prevent plots against national institutions, General Coulibaly said. If special units composed of minority ethnic groups are created, high-ranking officials from these groups could build a personal support base of armed state- and non-state actors, recreating conditions for further rebellions.

Mistrust sowed in the past will make any new integration project “extremely challenging”, General Coulibaly said. “If some of these men now come to the peace talks in Algiers to discuss possibilities of reintegration, it is difficult to take them seriously.”

Unfortunately Africa has very few cases of successful rebel-military integration (RMI) to inspire Mali or inform its decisions. Armed non-state actors, such as rebel movements, are fluid and often divided along ideological, language, cultural or ethnic lines. Engaging them successfully requires a flexible and context-specific approach.


Over the past 20 years, Burundi, Sierra Leone and South Africa have tried incorporating former competing military forces into a single national army. This process has rarely proved successful, particularly when countries have merged fighting forces into an already existing and often weakened national army.

The failure of RMI in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has some salutary lessons for Mali. As part of a 2009 peace accord, rebels from the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP), a militia/political party, were integrated into the DRC’s national army (FARDC). But in the spring of 2012, a few defected and formed the M23, after the March 23rd 2009 signing of the peace agreement.

The integration approach in the DRC failed because it mixed different ethnic groups, according to Mark Knight, a director at Montreux Solutions, a private security advisory company. “While both unit and single combatant integration took place, soldiers moved towards leaders and brigades of their own ethnicity, thus polarising the new national military (FARDC),” Mr Knight wrote in a 2011 report. “One consequence was that soldiers were reluctant to accept postings in regions where their ethnic group was not seen to be in charge. Old rivalries from the civil war remain and have led to an escalation in tensions between different brigades.”

Niger, Mali’s eastern neighbour, has successfully dealt with former rebel fighters and offers lessons for Mali. For years it integrated defecting forces back into its army. But this solution was discarded because access to weapons gave former insurgents the opportunity to rebel again. In 2006 Niger decided to include a disarmament clause in its peace deals with rebels. Since then, Niger has not incorporated rebels into its armed forces but rather into the civil service. Disarmed, Niger’s rebels have had to shift their method of struggle to constructive dialogue with the central government.

Mali’s prime minister is clear that assimilating Tuareg fighters into the army must remain on the table. “Without integration, no agreement; without an agreement, no peace,” Mr Mara told Africa in Fact in October 2014. But if Mali does not learn from its own or other countries’ experiences, integration offers little hope of lasting peace.

Disarmament of non-state actors will be a necessary first step towards enduring national reconciliation—whether an integration plan is agreed upon or not. Mali’s long-term peace depends on the government maintaining its monopoly of force. 

## Rwanda: the continent's most admired peacekeeping force

After a four-year civil war and long experience in other conflicts, its troops are trusted and feared

### Africa's unlikely protectors

by Nick Long

Rwanda, once a byword for peacekeeping disasters after the 1994 genocide, today plays a disproportionate role in regional efforts to prevent conflict and protect civilians. This landlocked nation of just over 11m people is the second-largest supplier of personnel from Africa to UN peacekeeping missions—and the fifth-largest in the world.

As of October 2014, the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) and Rwandan police had 5,092 soldiers, 558 police and 17 military experts serving with UN missions, mainly in the Central African Republic (CAR), South Sudan and Sudan's Darfur region, second to Ethiopia, according to the UN.

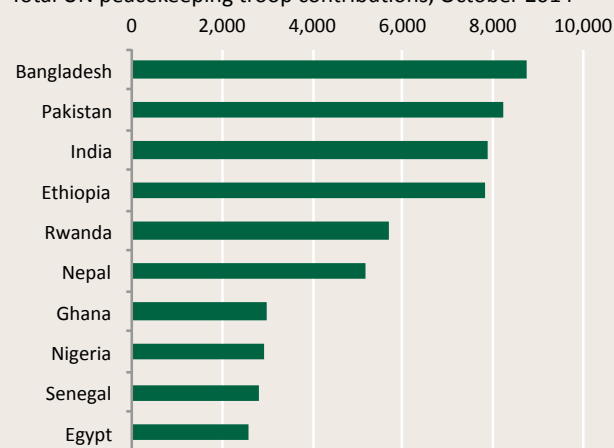
Rwandan blue helmets are considered brave, effective and trustworthy, wrote Robert Rehder, a US marine and military observer in Sudan, in a 2008 dissertation for the Marine Corps Command and Staff College in Quantico, Virginia. They have earned "a reputation as a force to be taken seriously".

US ambassador to the UN, Samantha Power, told the Security Council in July 2014 that the population in countries where Rwandans serve trust them. "Troops from other countries draw strength from their fortitude, and aggressors who would attack civilians fear them," she added.

One of the RDF's greatest achievements has been to turn a Tutsi rebel movement into a national army with many Hutus serving in its ranks. After the civil war, an estimated 15,000 Hutus from the defeated government army joined the ranks of the new defence force, according to Mr Rehder. These included hardcore rebels such as Paul Rwarakabije, who had commanded the Rwandan Hutu FDLR (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda) in Zaire (now the

#### Peacekeepers in our time

Total UN peacekeeping troop contributions, October 2014



Source: UN

Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC), a remnant of the defeated government army that fled there after many had taken part in the genocide, according to Jason Stearns, author and Congo expert. Critics of Mr Kagame's regime argue that Mr Rwarakabije and other senior Hutus were given largely ceremonial jobs and real military power remains with the Tutsi.



© US Air Force

Lining up for Darfur

In January 2014 the US Army transported 850 RDF soldiers to the CAR, where locals noted their honesty and impartiality. "When Rwandan soldiers were guarding their convoys, they took the job seriously," said a truck driver in CAR to Voice of America on July 31st 2014. "They would stay with any trucks that broke down instead of abandoning them, as other peacekeepers had."

What accounts for the Rwandan peacekeepers' superior performance? RDF spokesman, Brigadier-General Joseph Nzabamwita, attributes it partly to the extensive mission-specific training, sometimes lasting several months. The lengthy debriefing of returning peacekeepers helps keep that training relevant, he added. Brigadier-General Nzabamwita also credits the Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) initiative, a US-run programme that helps train African troops in peacekeeping and small unit operations in 25 African countries.

Culture and history, however, are two elements that set Rwandan soldiers apart, "an ethos developed by an ancient warrior tradition and honed by years of struggle", according to Mr Rehder. Rwanda was an expansionist kingdom ruled by ethnic Tutsis since the 15th century. Its subjects all spoke the same language and to a large extent shared the same culture.

Despite the Hutu majority, the Tutsi were militarily dominant, according to historian and author Gérard Prunier. Young Tutsis were inculcated with a martial culture in which, as the Kinyarwandan saying goes, "if you are not willing to shed your blood for your country, the dogs will have it for free."

By formalising ethnic identity in bureaucratic documents and ruling largely

through a proxy Tutsi elite, the Belgian colonists deepened that divide. When they entrusted the country's security to an almost exclusively Hutu armed force, the Belgians set Rwandans on a path to genocide.

Today's RDF grew out of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a largely Tutsi army of exiles living in Uganda who had fled there in the early years after independence in 1962. Many had fought in Uganda's civil wars since the 1970s. Its leader, Paul Kagame, rose to control Uganda's military intelligence.

The RDF's cadres today have almost unparalleled military experience. Many fought in the four-year Rwandan civil war, which culminated in the 1994 genocide. Others have spent more than seven years fighting in two wars in what is now the DRC from 1996-97 and 1998-2003.

Another reason behind the current RDF success may be the high level of education achieved by many of its troops while in Uganda, Mr Rehder explained. Many of the RPF's fighters were recruited from a relatively successful diaspora and up to 20% of them may have had university education, he estimated.


This was probably the best-educated guerrilla movement in Africa's history, according to Mr Prunier. While their classroom learning may not have been directly relevant, their mental acuity showed through in small-unit fighting, which requires soldiers to act on their own initiative.

Another factor in the RDF's success is that officers routinely serve on the front-line with their men and are subject to the same discipline, emphasised a Rwandan police officer who has served on several peacekeeping missions and preferred to remain anonymous.

The absence of corruption scandals in Rwanda is another likely reason for its army's success. Soldiers are more likely to remain motivated if their commanders are honest and not siphoning off resources meant for the rank and file, as in Nigeria, the DRC and other African states.

One cautionary note: Western donors may be less willing to finance the Rwandan army if the plans for an East African Standby Force (EASF) mean that RDF troops would be deployed in neighbouring countries, such as Burundi or even the DRC. While Rwandan troops participated in the EASF training exercises in Ethiopia in November 2014, they have not been deployed on active operations.

Several rebel movements in the DRC, including the Rwandan FDLR and the Allied Democratic Forces, originally a Ugandan rebel group, are among the dissident movements that the EASF might seek to counter, said General James Kabarebe, Rwanda's defence minister, in a July 2014 speech. If General Kabarebe meant they could be countered without intervening in the DRC, no one could take exception.

But after Rwanda's military interventions in its neighbour from 1996-2003, and its support for rebel movements in eastern Congo, including the now defeated M23 rebel group, Britain, the US and other countries suspended aid to Rwanda in 2012. Donors may again threaten to cut off funds if Rwanda or its troops meddle in its neighbours' affairs. 

## Troublemaker-in-residence

What do you get when you mix weak governments and weak armies?

### A toxic combination

by Jillian Reilly

So this is my first column as *Africa in Fact's* occasional Troublemaker-in-residence. Despite my provocative title, do not expect cynicism. As satisfying as snark may feel for the writer, it rarely prompts productive conversation. My intention is to cut through politics, propriety and political correctness to provoke authentic debate around Africa's challenges. To challenge the status quo. And I do not believe we can do that without causing some trouble. So here we go.

When the subject is security, you can almost predict the Troublemaker's riff: African governments are too poor to afford standing armies. How can we argue for military spending in the context of millions of unemployed and undernourished, when too many mothers die in birth and not enough children attend school! (That's my indignant shouting.) When an entire edition of *Africa in Fact* is focused on the failures and failings of some of Africa's best-equipped armies, surely it is time to consider alternatives.

Now allow me to make a little more trouble by suggesting that most militaries across Africa are not merely a liability—a drain on the public purse—but are, themselves, a danger. Because Africa's biggest threat comes from within: in the form of weak governments. When your enemy is within, an army is not going to help and there is too good a chance it might hurt.

Now here is my first official Troublemaker pronouncement: weak governance is the single greatest impediment to Africa's growth and the cause of its continued instability. You name it—acute crisis or gnawing challenge—the misuse or abuse of power fuels it. Ebola. Famine. Malaria. Inequality. Effective governments could not prevent these crises, but they should manage them before they become crippling.

Weak governments, not weak armies, make African countries profoundly insecure. But it gets worse: the toxic combination of weak governments and weak armies is too often deadly. History shows that a feckless military will likely serve as the strong arm of the Big Man or the scavengers feeding off the Big Man's remains. Those weak militaries help create vacuums of power or greedily fill them. They are either pawns or predators in an authoritarian game of power where ordinary citizens are too often the losers. Burkina Faso is the latest depressing reminder of that reality.

Weak governments also spot their enemies within: in the form of people with opinions or followers. Dissent, pluralism and intellectualism are the enemies of weak governments because they expose their cracks. Just last October the Sierra Leonean government used authoritarian legislation intended to manage Ebola to arrest a journalist critical of the government's response to the pandemic. It leaves me wondering whom most Africans need protection from?




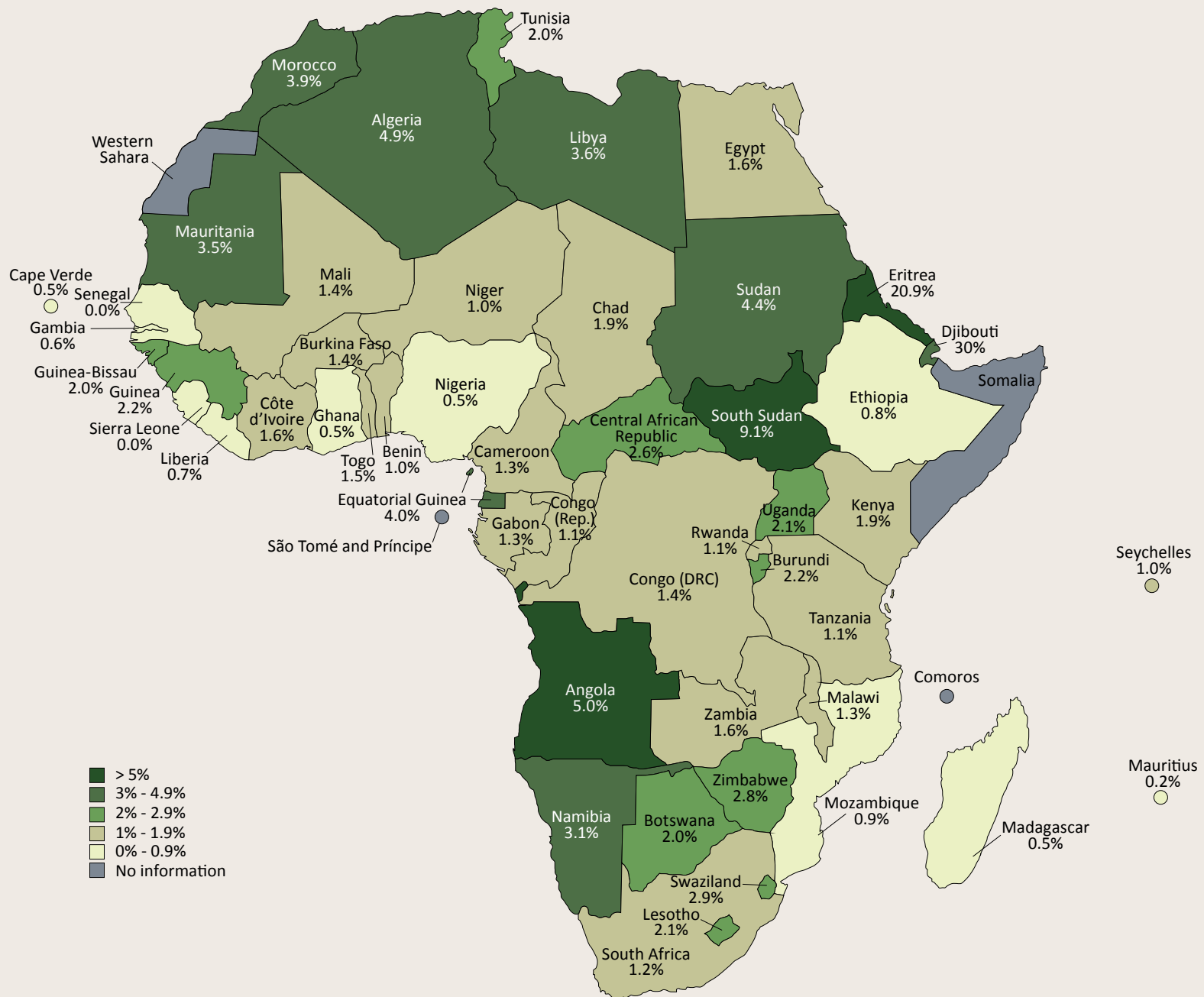
Africans, beware Big Men with access to big guns. If you dig too deep or talk too loud, those guns might aim at you.

Now, in the spirit of constructive troublemaking, let me imagine a very different kind of military: standing “armies” of volunteers deployed swiftly and effectively in response to crises: floods in Mozambique or drought in the Horn. The kinds of crises where we normally wait for some equally feckless UN army to swoop in and provide “relief”. History has proven that it is usually a relief when the UN troops finally push off. When the responsibility for short-term relief and medium-term development sits firmly within capable African hands, the continent will have reached a critical milestone.

Surely in the context of mass joblessness and frequent natural or man-made emergencies—predicted to increase as a result of climate change—there is a compelling case for a type of rapid response national guard or civilian corps whose job is to protect and rebuild. Of course, again we would have to confront weak governance in the form of organising and managing the volunteers. In mid-November the Liberian government had not paid volunteer “contact tracers” a cent, despite their heroic efforts in finding Ebola patients.

Still, imagine if those weak armies catalogued in this edition could be transformed into crisis response teams of pilots, medics, foot soldiers and engineers—not unlike existing armies but supporting developmental rather than political agendas.

Imagine an army that re-built rather than destroyed; that preserved life rather than promised death. Now that would be a genuine contribution to the continent’s security. 



# Bang for your buck

Source: World Bank

Military expenditure as share of GDP; latest available year