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by SAMUEL DECALO*

IN the past several years there has been a proliferation of studies on *coup d'états* in Africa and the political role of African military structures. Armies have been analysed in terms of their social and ethnic composition, training, ideology, and socialising influences. Intense debate has focused around the overt and covert reasons for their intervention in the political arena. Simple and complex typologies of civil–military relations and of military coups have been constructed; statistical data – both hard and soft – has been marshalled and subjected to factor and regression analysis, in order to validate general or middle-range theories of military intervention. And once in power, the officer corps' performance has been examined in order to generate insights into its propensity to serve as a modernising or developmental agent.

With over one third of the continent ruled at any particular moment by military elements or by military–civilian coalitions,[1] the previously fashionable discourse on the merits of unipartyism, mass *vis-à-vis* élite parties, pan-Africanism and African socialism in all its varieties, has largely petered out, clearing the ground for the handful of qualitatively superior-in-depth empirical case studies. So too may be the case with the current intense interest in African military hierarchies. For much of the contemporary outpouring takes place within a theoretical vacuum filled with mutually contradictory hypotheses, neither tested operationally nor grounded in solid empirical data. Striking, indeed, is the great paucity of *detailed* case studies of African armies, coups, or military régimes, based on field-work and utilising other than secondary sources. Military intervention is practically always defined – *a priori* – as a dependant variable, with the focus shifting to the more easily analysable systemic parameters for the 'detection' of the particular catalysts

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[1] The important question of what *is* a military régime has hardly been touched upon by most analysts. Hence the civil–military coalition in Upper Volta, the civilianised Togolese régime, and the largely personal cliques of General Idi Amin in Uganda, and General Jean-Bedel Bokassa in the Central African Republic, have been dealt with as part and parcel of the same phenomena of 'military régimes', while the growing influence of the military in Gabon and Guinea has been left outside the scope of research.

that evoked the intrusion in the political realm. Such an intellectual predisposition and analytic approach have resulted in a gross reification of African armies, and an uncritical acceptance of formal organisation theory as the explanatory framework for military behaviour, and of military-stated motives for their interventions – all faults associated with the previous era's uncritical examination of the party-states in West Africa.

The purpose of this article is to briefly review some of the more recent studies on military coups and régimes in Africa within the framework of a broader analysis of the state of the subdiscipline. Most of the research focuses on three broad, and inter-linked, areas of analysis: (i) the political sociology and/or historiography of African armies; (ii) the preconditions for military intervention in the political scene; and (iii) the military as rulers.

AFRICAN MILITARY HISTORIOGRAPHY

As has already been noted, few detailed studies exist on the evolution of African military structures and their political sociology. For all practical purposes the only scholars who have delved deeply in this area have been, on the one hand, S. E. Finer, *The Man on Horseback* (London, 1962), Morris Janowitz, *The Military in the Political Development of New Nations* (Chicago, 1964), J. M. Lee, *African Armies and Civil Order* (New York, 1969), and W. F. Gutteridge, *Military Institutions and Power in the New States* (London, 1965) and *The Military in African Politics* (London, 1969); followed in a more specialised and somewhat different direction by N. J. Miners, *The Nigerian Army, 1956–1966* (London, 1971), A. R. Luckham, *The Nigerian Military: a sociological analysis of authority and revolt, 1960–1967* (Cambridge, 1971), and R. Pinkney, *Ghana under Military Rule, 1966–1969* (London, 1972). But it should be remembered, of course, that other research has utilised to a greater or lesser extent data relating to the ethnic, social, training, professional, and generational make-up of African armies. However, since most of these publications have already been extensively reviewed elsewhere, and since their conclusions are directly linked with an assessment of the propensity of military structures to intervene in politics, it would be more profitable to discuss their findings in the next section. There are, however, several general observations that should be made at this stage.

First, the entire area of analysis is fraught with problems, not least of which is the frequent lack of basic documentation and archival

material, or its non-reliability. There are difficulties in tracing or interviewing either key ex-colonial administrators, or current African officers and defense officials. There is an understandable sensitivity – and sometimes suspicion – in governmental circles and in African Command H.Q.s to this sort of analysis. Indeed, the more acute the polarisation of the army on a multiplicity of planes (and hence, maybe, the more interesting academically), the greater the likelihood that detailed information, if forthcoming, may be misleading, as this author can attest to in the case of several French-speaking African countries.[1] Even basic 'non-controversial' hard data will vary according to the source being used, and this will include the size of actual forces, the number of officers and their tribal breakdown, the military budget, and the ethnic configuration of the country being studied.[2] And the methodological problems attending the construction of cross-cultural soft-data indices (for example, the degree of 'modernisation' of military élites,[3] levels of socialisation to western military norms, class and/or occupational origin) are familiar to all. Needless to say, correlations linking sets of variables which are intrinsically unreliable can only be regarded with a great deal of caution. And the idiosyncretic factor, the 'personal element', which plays such an important role in syncretic and unstructured societies, is liable to negate conclusions based on prolonged solid empirical analysis.

There are two other weaknesses connected with much of the literature on the political sociology of the military in Africa – it is frequently based upon organisational theory which is largely inapplicable to African armies, and the theoretical utility of the research is greatly hampered by the over-concentration on a few selected countries. The former point will be elaborated upon in the next section; the latter criticism is attested to by the dearth of scholarly attention to much of 'French' Africa. Africanists have, for a variety of reasons, preferred to study anglophone Africa and only a handful of other states such as

[1] This problem can be partly surmounted, of course, in several ways. Nevertheless, there is serious doubt whether even the most sympathetic observer, equipped with the best credentials, could carry out systematic research on the military in, for example, Algeria, Morocco, Guinea, Congo-Brazzaville, Uganda, or for that matter Zaïre. See *The New York Times*, 14 April 1972, for one tragic attempt to verify an inter-tribal massacre in the Mbarara barracks in Uganda.

[2] See the cautionary remark made by A. S. Banks and R. B. Textor, *A Cross Polity Survey* (Cambridge, 1963), p. 96. Recent statistics on military forces in Africa and their budgets are to be found in the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures, 1970* (Washington, 1971).

[3] For some conclusions based on assumptions of 'modernisation' of groups in Africa, see Robert Melson and Howard Wolpe, 'Modernization and the Politics of Communalism: a theoretical perspective', in *The American Political Science Review* (Berkeley), LXIV, 4, December 1970, pp. 1112–30.

Sudan, Algeria, and Zaïre. While continentally valid theories of military intervention and performance in political office may be the goal, there are no grounds to assume that insights generated from the Ghanaian or Nigerian examples alone will necessarily lead to anything but lop-sided generalisations and inapplicable conclusions when superimposed upon Congo-Brazzaville or Mali. One need not belabour the equal theoretical importance of *both* the Ghanaian and Dahomean experience with military coups for the purpose of formulating general theories of military intervention. Indeed, it could well be argued that greater attention to the parameters of the Togolese and Upper Voltaic experiences may well challenge certain current assumptions about military rule in Africa.

PREREQUISITES FOR MILITARY INTERVENTION

When one approaches literature that either attempts to explain specific military coups, or to develop a systemic theory of such occurrences, one encounters what has aptly been called 'a veritable jungle of mostly pseudo-theory'.[1] Whether one starts out with a negative or positive image of the military, there appears to be near-universal agreement about a syndrome of developmental strains and stresses in African political systems that provoke the military to seize power. Military role-expansion is hence viewed as a function of systemic disequilibrium.[2] This may be due to the failure of élites to resolve economic problems,[3] to incipient developmental tensions consequent to mobilisational policies,[4] to corruption, governmental inefficiency, and intensive inter-élite strife,[5] or to a general swing of the legitimacy

[1] Robert E. Dowse, 'The Military and Political Development', in Colin Leys (ed.), *Politics and Change in Developing Countries* (Cambridge, 1969), p. 213.

[2] The fullest tabulation of structural deficiencies underlying instability in Africa is contained in Aristide Zolberg, 'Military Intervention in the New States of Tropical Africa: elements of comparative analysis', in Henry Bienen (ed.), *The Military Intervenes* (New York, 1968), and in Claude E. Welch, 'Soldier and State in Africa', in *The Journal of Modern African Studies* (Cambridge), v, 3, November 1967, pp. 305–22.

[3] Cf. Dorothy Nelkin, 'The Economic and Social Setting of Military Takeovers in Africa', in *Journal of Asian and African Studies* (Leiden), II, 1968, p. 231: 'in every country, the issues which best account for the ease of military access to power, relate to economic circumstances and their social consequences'.

[4] Samuel P. Huntington, 'Political Development and Political Decay', in *World Politics* (Princeton), April 1965, p. 417. See also James O'Connell, 'The Inevitability of Instability', in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, v, 2, September 1967, pp. 181–91; and A. S. Feldman, 'Violence and Volatility: the likelihood of revolution', in H. Eckstein (ed.), *Internal War* (New York, 1964).

[5] Cf. Ruth First, *Power in Africa* (New York, 1970), p. ix: 'The army coup d'etat is plainly a short-circuit of power conflicts in a situation where arms do the deciding.'

pendulum from incompetent civilian régimes to allegedly efficient, honest, national, and a-political military forces.[1] On a more theoretical level, military interventions are viewed as 'one index of low levels of political institutionalization',[2] a function of inadequate 'political culture' and the gap between governmental policies and the army's perceptions of the 'national interest'.[3] Moreover, viewed as examples of political violence, African coups can be conceptually linked with the burgeoning social-psychology approach to political phenomena,[4] though no Africanist has done so as of now.

To this (admittedly incomplete) list of factors that precipitate military takeovers, an additional one has recently acquired justified prominence: political tampering with the army's professional integrity, its hierarchy of command, budget, and – though no one has yet explicitly stated it thus – personal amenities, fringe benefits, and pay scales. In short, the army may move into the political arena when its corporate (and, personal, it will shortly be argued) interests are threatened, acting essentially as the country's 'best organized trade union'.[5]

Most of the literature dealing with African coups religiously recites many of the above-mentioned weaknesses and shortcomings of civilian régimes, and with their 'theoretical' underpinnings 'secure', proceed to examine concrete case studies where 'empirical' validation is obtained. Consequently, typologies are developed, usually resting on the orthodox 'strike-reactive-designed' coup classification.[6]

[1] See Fred Riggs, 'Bureaucrats and Political Development: a paradoxical view', in J. LaPalombara (ed.), *Bureaucracy and Political Development* (Princeton, 1963).

[2] Huntington, loc. cit. p. 403.

[3] Finer, op.cit. pp. 23–60.

[4] Cf. Ted Gurr, 'Psychological Factors in Civil Violence', in *World Politics*, January 1968; James Davies, 'Towards a Theory of Revolution', in *The American Sociological Review* (Washington), February 1962; Betty Nesvold, 'Scalogram Analysis of Political Violence', in *Comparative Political Studies* (Beverly Hills), July 1969; and also Ivo and R. Feieraband, 'Aggressive Behavior within Polities', in *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* (Ann Arbor), July 1966.

[5] Aristide Zolberg, 'The Structure of Political Conflict in the New States of Tropical Africa', in *The American Political Science Review*, March 1968, p. 75. The theme of a 'corporate interests' threat is familiar to observers of the Latin American scene, and is not strictly new in African studies except in terms of the recent frequency and emphasis with which it is raised. See, for example, Claude E. Welch, 'The Roots and Implications of Military Intervention', in his *Soldier and State in Africa* (Evanston, 1970), pp. 34–5; and Henry Bienen, 'The Background to Contemporary Studies of Militaries and Modernization', in his *The Military and Modernization* (Chicago, 1971), p. 4.

[6] A somewhat different typology has been developed by A. R. Luckham, 'A Comparative Typology of Civil-Military Relations', in *Government and Opposition* (London), Winter 1971, pp. 5–35. The rubric criteria are the strength or weakness of (i) civilian institutions, and (ii) military structures, and also (iii) the nature of the boundaries of the civil and military systems. As Luckham himself points out, typologies are not the best way to derive empirically testable hypotheses; the problem with his classification is that most African states would fall into one of two groups. without adequate separation between very different examples of

There are two basic problems with such an analytic approach from which probably stem some of the inconsistencies of such studies, and the low levels of predictive value of their analytic insights. First, there is a general tendency to accept officially enunciated reasons for takeovers as valid, particularly when the toppled civilian régime has only too obviously been manifesting the weaknesses for which it has been attacked. Consequently other, covert reasons, are not detected or given sufficient weight. Widespread government corruption is a case in point; this has been the most widely cited charge of officer cliques moving against their civilian counterparts. Yet, as Dennis Austin points out, this 'is usually an additional weight in the balance on the side of intervention. It is often used *ex post facto* to justify intervention.'[1] In Sierra Leone, corruption was one of a successive list of official justifications for the second 1967 coup which, according to Humphrey Fisher, 'suggests the army itself did not know why it was in power', though finally corruption again became the primary excuse. A much more valid reason was the army's need to resolve internal tensions exacerbated during Brigadier D. Lansana's tenure as Chief of Staff.[2] And in Dahomey, the first victim of an anti-corruption tribunal set up by the military in 1966, was its own creator, chairman, and Minister of Justice, Major L. Chasme.[3]

Even in the case of seemingly non-controversial 'umpire coups' the motives may be murkier and more convoluted than appear at first sight. In Dahomey in 1965, General C. Soglo intervened between J. Ahomadegbe and S. M. Apithy when their struggle for supremacy had resulted in virtual governmental standstill, tract warfare, and demonstrations by their followers in the coastal cities. Yet one basic factor, largely ignored, tends to throw more light on Soglo's true motives in overthrowing Ahomadegbe, who like him was also a Fon from Abomey. (It will be recalled that Ahomadegbe *had* won his struggle with Apithy in the P.D.U.; the pro-Apithy demonstrations in Porto Novo had been much smaller than anticipated, and the general curfew had resulted in cooling off of tempers.)

This factor may be called the 'personal element'. In the case of Soglo

civil–military relations. The dimensions of the constructs would also be much more difficult to quantify than Luckham tends to believe. The typology is, nevertheless, of great utility in understanding the variety of relationships possible.

[1] Dennis Austin, 'The Underlying Problem of the Army *coup d'état* in Africa', in *Optima* (New York), April 1969, pp. 65 and 67.

[2] Humphrey J. Fisher, 'Elections and Coups in Sierra Leone, 1967', in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, VII, 4, December 1969, p. 635.

[3] Samuel Decalo, 'The Politics of Instability in Dahomey', in *Genève-Afrique* (Geneva), VII, 2, 1968, p. 27.

it refers to his public humiliation by Ahomadegbe the day before the coup, the closer link between Ahomadegbe and Soglo's immediate subordinate, the proud Colonel P. Aho, and a history of friction between the Head of Government and his Chief of Staff. In a very real sense Soglo's actions can be seen to stem from his own anger and hurt pride, *within* a political context which allowed their unfettered expression in the form of a coup, one of several options, which could not fail but gain acclaim in both the Porto Novo and Northern regions.[1]

In like manner, the 1965 coup in the Central African Republic occurred *within* the context of a harsh budgetary crisis, crass corruption of cabinet ministers (indeed, of the entire political hierarchy), and overt attempts to displace the wearied and disenchanted David Dacko. But the most important 'cause' for the coup was the personal ambitions of Colonel Jean-Bedel Bokassa, the Chief of Staff, who had already manifested his inclinations on a number of occasions, including when he had 'taken over the Ministry of War on his own initiative'.[2] Dacko's attempts to balance 'the police' against 'the army' was not so much a juggling of corporate interests, as attempts to ward off personal ambitions on the part of both Bokassa and Izamo (the Chief of Police who lost out).[3]

The failings of civilian leadership in Uganda also do not go far in explaining the nature and timing of Idi Amin's coup. Most of the 18 reasons he later cited related to problems afflicting Uganda even before independence,[4] and cannot be regarded as having been particularly acute in the months just prior to the takeover. The worst of the internal political schisms had occurred during 1965–6, dramatised by the February 1966 arrest of five of Milton Obote's cabinet ministers. Corruption was not new in Uganda, with the military partaking in it at least to an equal degree – while Obote himself was acknowledged to be living a modest life. Ethnic cleavages, always acute, were being denounced in practically every one of Obote's speeches, and the economy was on the verge of making an upward turn.

More cogent reasons for the Amin coup would be purely personal

[1] See Maurice Glele, *Naissance d'un état noire* (Paris, 1969), p. 290; W. A. E. Skurnik, 'The Military and Politics: Dahomey and Upper Volta', in Welch, op.cit. pp. 78–9; and Samuel Decalo, 'Regionalism, Politics, and the Military in Dahomey', in *Journal of Developing Areas* (Macomb, Ill.), April 1973.

[2] Pierre Kalck, *Central African Republic: a failure in de-colonization* (New York, 1971), p. 152.

[3] This somewhat different interpretation of events leading up to the coup in Bangui does not discount the various other factors involved, including the corporate threat to the army contained in the slashed 1966 budget (Kalck, op. cit. p. 152), or army grumbles against the free-spending politicians who appeared to have corralled all the 'best women' in Bangui (Lee, op. cit. p. 100).

[4] Uganda, *Birth of the Second Republic* (Entebbe, 1971).

ones, combined with a deep malaise in the armed forces which had been in a state of convulsion since 1963. Amin was probably right in believing in his imminent removal from the post of Commander of the Army, consequent to the previous curtailing of his authority by the creation of two other parallel Command positions.[1] His involvement in the death of Brigadier P. Y. Okoya in January 1970, the Auditor-General's report regarding the possible misuse of defence funds, a long history of friction with Obote, and Amin's contempt for the National Service, the General Service Unit, and the *Common Man's Charter*, are together more powerful motivations for a personal power-grab than the 'systemic weakness' arguments.

Within the army dangerous tensions had built up following the extraordinary increase in personnel between 1962–7,[2] with intense friction within the officer corps resulting from differential commissioning practices superimposed on harsh internal ethnic cleavages. The situation was aggravated by agitation over high salaries, fringe benefits, promotions, and more logistic support services. In a very real sense it is doubtful if the Ugandan army of 1971 could be regarded as a cohesive hierarchy of command. Discipline has completely collapsed since the coup, and there have been widescale massacres of Acholi and Langi troops by West Nile elements nominally loyal to Amin, as well as a major settling of personal accounts. The officer corps has been purged and soldiers loyal to Amin have been promoted, in several cases from the rank of sergeant to colonel. The coup can not be viewed, therefore, as merely 'class action' by the military against civilian authority as Michael Lofchie has recently argued,[3] nor as a result of the systemic weaknesses of Obote's régime. Rather, this was a classic example of a personalised takeover caused by a General's own fears and ambitions, within the context of a widespread civic malaise and a fissiparous fratricidal army rife with corporate grievances.

Houari Boumedienne's coup in Algeria was likewise in part consequent to the threat of his imminent dismissal by Ben Bella who had been whittling down his sources of power. Differences of personality have also played a role elsewhere. In Ghana, Colonel E. K. Kotoka was known not to get along with General C. M. Barwah who had

[1] A Chief of Staff of the Air Force and a Chief of Staff of the Army were created. Brigadier Suleiman Hussein, who was elevated to the latter post in October 1970, was murdered shortly after Amin took over.

[2] The growth rate has been 48 per cent per year (from 1,000 to 7,000 men); see Lee, op. cit. p. 105.

[3] Michael F. Lofchie, 'The Uganda Coup – class action by the military', in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, x, 2, May 1972, pp. 19–35.

replaced Generals S. J. A. Otu and J. A. Ankrah, and Kotoka was very doubtful about his own professional future under his new Commander. Similar fears existed among Ibo officers in Nigeria where the Defence Minister was from the North, and they coincided with uneasiness about the increased intake of Northern cadets, and grievances over deteriorating facilities.[1] And in Congo-Brazzaville the original Ngouabi coup, and all attempted coups since, are better seen as personal attempts to seize power within a textbook example of a praetorian state[2] – with the ethnic cleavages and the Left–Right tug-of-war only complicating rather than explaining events there.[3]

Thus the main weakness of attempts to explain military interventions by pinpointing areas of systemic stress is in not placing sufficient weight on the personal and idiosyncratic element in military hierarchies, which have much greater freedom and scope of action within the context of fragmented and unstructured political systems. Such explanations have difficulty in locating clusters of variables, or separating dimensions between relatively stable civilian régimes and countries with a record of successful coups. There is no adequate accounting for the relative frequency of role-expansion activities of the military in some systems, as opposed to others. Since most writers correctly stress that there is no universal explanatory variable at work, the analytic distinction between the Congo-Brazzaville, Ghana, Dahomey, and Togo is reduced to the question of the degree and intensity of the failings that each system manifests. A country which suffers from continuous praetorian assaults from different segments of the military (for example, Congo-Brazzaville, Dahomey, and Sierra Leone) simply has more acute ethnic, inter-élite, and socio-economic cleavages than a country which has not seen a military takeover, such as Chad, Kenya, or Niger.

Quite apart from the methodological problems in correctly gauging or measuring relative levels of government corruption, inter-élite strife, and ethnic cleavages, such analytic onslaughts verge on being tautological. It can be taken as axiomatic that most African states are

[1] Miners, op. cit. pp. 173 and 179.

[2] See David C. Rapoport, 'A Comparative Theory of Military and Political Types', in Samuel P. Huntington (ed.), *Changing Patterns of Military Politics* (New York, 1962); Samuel P. Huntington, 'Praetorianism and Political Decay', in his *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, 1968); and Amos Perlmutter, 'The Praetorian State and the Praetorian Army', in *Comparative Politics* (Chicago), April 1969.

[3] For an excellent critique of the use of the terms 'Left' and 'Right' in the context of African politics, see Immanuel Wallerstein, 'Left and Right in Africa', in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, IX, 1, May 1971. For some recent developments in Congo-Brazzaville, see Arthur H. House, 'Brazzaville: revolution or rhetoric?', in *Africa Report* (Washington), April 1971; and the issues of *Afrique nouvelle* (Dakar) for November 1971–January 1972.

afflicted with the whole range of systemic problems.[1] Similarly, many régimes have tampered with the internal hierarchies of their armed forces and/or have curbed their military budgets. As Aristide Zolberg has pointed out, 'it is impossible to specify *as a class* countries where coups have occurred from others which have so far been spared'.[2] And recent research involving factor analysis of over 100 societal and military variables seems to corroborate this conclusion.[3] Needless to say, significant statistical correlations between systemic variables and cross-national incidence of coups will *not* appear if one of the key elements in the situation – the personal factor – is ignored in the discipline because it is difficult to trace and impossible to quantify.

There are essentially two complementary methods of bridging the impasse. Attention can be shifted from the overt 'causes' of coups to the performance of the military once in power, as several scholars have forcefully suggested.[4] The rationale behind this is that the true motives of the officer corps may be better perceived through the analysis of their policies after the takeover. As Philippe Schmitter puts it in connection with research elsewhere:

> Studies of military intervention in Latin America have surprisingly... focused exclusively on *causes*...and have neglected almost entirely *consequences*. They leave us with the generals (or colonels, as the case may be) battering down the gates to the presidential palace...and tell us very little about what these triumphant groups do with their newly acquired power.[5]

Secondly, buttressed by growing evidence in this direction, it is possible to adopt the conceptual image of the officer corps as essentially an élite body (actually, a coterie of élite cliques), primarily concerned with corporate and individual interests, in a societal context of acute scarcity where other élites (politicians, trade unionists, students) are competing for the same rewards and benefits.[6] In such conditions of

[1] Aristide Zolberg, *Creating Political Order: the party-states of West Africa* (Chicago, 1966).

[2] Zolberg in Bienen, *The Military Intervenes*, p. 71.

[3] See, for example, Roberta Koplin Mapp, 'Domestic Correlates of Military Intervention in African Politics', Canadian Political Science Association, Winnipeg, 1970. For other relevant studies, see Donald G. Morrison and H. M. Stevenson, 'Political Instability in Independent Black Africa: more dimensions of conflict behavior within nations', and Louis Terrell, 'Societal Stress, Political Instability and Levels of Military Effort', both in *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, September 1971.

[4] E.g. Bienen, loc. cit. p. 4.

[5] Philippe Schmitter, 'Military Intervention, Political Competitiveness, and Public Policy in Latin America, 1950–1967', Harvard University, 1970, cited in Eric Nordlinger, 'Soldier in Mufti', in *The American Political Science Review*, LXIV, 4, December 1970, p. 1133.

[6] Cf. Dennis Austin's similar conclusion about the Ghanaian army, 'the last of the élites', which is 'no less eager to pursue its advantage and protect its interests than other pressure groups within the local universe of Ghanaian politics'; 'Army and Politics in Ghana', in *West Africa* (London), 24 March 1972. See also A. A. Mazrui and D. Rothchild, 'The Soldier

scarcity, civilian and military grievances tend to coincide, and the existence of corporate and/or personal ambitions of officers might be the key variable in sparking off a coup.[1] Viewed thus, all the inadequacies of civilian rule usually cited as reasons for African coups become the 'backdrop' against which inter-élite conflict (intra-civil, intra-military, and civil-military) arises, and the arena within which personal ambitions manifest themselves. The weaknesses and failings of the political system are not eliminated for purposes of analysis; rather, they are reduced in importance as explanatory variables when the analytic gunsights are squarely aimed at the competing civilian and military cliques, the internal state of the army, its officer corps, and personal ambitions therein.

THE MILITARY AS RULERS

The previous comments notwithstanding, and despite a recent shift in the pendulum from one extreme to the other, there are still two conflicting views of military régimes in Africa, judged in terms of their potential for political leadership, and their role as social and economic modernisers.[2] Also characteristic of the literature is a frequent lack of appreciation of a most elemental fact: that whenever an élite (civil or military) captures political power, its own corporate interests are among the first to be promoted.

Chronologically, the 'positive image' of military hierarchies and military governments was the first to be espoused, anchored solidly in formal organisation theory. Briefly stated, the military is seen as the most national, unified, disciplined, modern, and efficient structure in society, the repository of western and managerial skills. Army officers are viewed as puritanical, nationalist, dedicated to rapid socio-economic change, a-political and impatient with the sterile infighting, corruption, and mismanagement of resources by political élites.[3] As a result of these alleged attributes, the army is viewed as 'the most efficient type of organization for combining maximum rates of modernization with

and State in East Africa: some theoretical conclusions on the army mutinies of 1964', in A. A. Mazrui, *Violence and Thought* (London, 1969). For a definition of African élites, see the 'Introduction' in P. C. Lloyd, *The New Elites of Tropical Africa* (Harmondsworth, 1966).

[1] Dowse would reject such a stress on personal ambitions, because in his view there are alternate ladders to social power for upward-moving élites; loc. cit. p. 226. This may be true of Ghana, Nigeria, and several other states, but it is not valid for the majority in Africa. Moreover, such an objection does not cope with the problem of élites *already* in the army who might develop such political ambitions.

[2] Kenneth W. Grundy, *Conflicting Images of the Military in Africa* (Nairobi, 1968).

[3] The most detailed espousal of this viewpoint is contained in Finer, op. cit., and Janowitz, op. cit. See also Lucian Pye, 'Armies in the Process of Political Modernization', in J. J. Johnson (ed.), *The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries* (Princeton, 1962), pp. 69–90.

maximum levels of stability and control',[1] though many scholars have also pointed out that these very same professional attributes limit its effectiveness in office. Specifically, the army's lack of ideology and developmental strategies, its hierarchical conception of authority and civic rule, are viewed as obstacles in the way of stable and constructive military administration.

Since the early 1960s the pendulum has slowly shifted away from such an idealised image of African armies, though some contemporary works still implicitly start with these assumptions. The body of evidence weighs heavily in the direction of African armies which are neither 'complex structures', nor national, westernised, or modern. In most instances, hierarchical structural charts camouflage deep malaise and cleavages reflecting the wider societal chasms superimposed upon lines of division based on age, class, education, and rank.[2] And whatever organisational unity African armies may possess has frequently been dramatically eroded through the politicisation of their cleavages and personal ambitions once in power. As Michael Lee commented in 1970 about Uganda, 'It looks as if the army is more likely to succumb to the influence of the values expressed by the political community, than to create and diffuse new concepts of national identity.'[3] Where military régimes have avoided this decomposition of internal lines of authority, this has usually been due to internal ethnic cohesiveness, and to the resolution or non-existence of competing ambitions (Togo, Upper Volta), at times achieved through internal purges (Zaïre, Central African Republic). The alternative extreme is a praetorian army, best exemplified in Congo-Brazzaville, Dahomey, Burundi, Sierra Leone, and Uganda.[4]

As to the propensities of African armies to affectuate meaningful socio-economic change and modernisation, Samuel Huntington's distinction between modernisation and political development is crucial. In so far as this is defined in terms of political institutionalisation, or the creation of a stable political order, most military régimes can be deemed to be either dysfunctional to political development, or more interested

[1] Marion J. Levy, *Modernization and the Structure of Societies* (Princeton, 1966), vol. 2, p. 603. See also Lucian Pye, *Aspects of Political Development* (Boston, 1966); and M. J. V. Bell, 'The Military in the New States of Africa', in Jacques Van Doorn (ed.), *Armed Forces and Society* (The Hague, 1968).

[2] For several examples of this, see Decalo, *Journal of Developing Areas*, 1973; and E. Philip Morgan, 'Military Intervention in Politics: the case of Uganda', African Studies Association, Denver, 1971.

[3] Lee, op. cit. p. 113.

[4] Claude E. Welch has recently analysed the coups in Ghana, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone in terms of the emergence of an anglophone praetorian syndrome; see his 'Praetorianism in Commonwealth West Africa', in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, x, 2, July 1972.

in creating the kind of 'non-integrative grid of administration' referred to by Edward Feit.[1] The creation under military auspices of buttressing political parties is often an indication of the army's awareness of the need of legitimising civilian structures, but rarely have they assumed importance or mass support. Hence Zaïre's M.N.R., Congo-Brazzaville's P.C.T., and *Mesan* in the Central African Republic, cannot be regarded as efforts to create significant institutions, though Togo's R.P.T. may well be a deviant example.[2] The mere creation of such civil–military channels of communication with their marginal, upward political mobility possibilities and outlets to patronage have, however, solidified army rule – especially in Zaïre and Togo – allowing their Heads of State to shed their military garb.

With only minor qualifications one can agree with Austin's conclusion that 'it is difficult to find evidence, in the army interventions in tropical Africa, of any wish to bring about fundamental social changes in the structure of power within the state'.[3] Or, as Ruth First puts it, 'The coup as a method of change that changes little has become endemic to Africa's politics.'[4] A change in political style, a redistribution of political and economic power *among* the élites, and the expansion of military interests is more often than not the most significant outcome of army rule.

The change in political style includes a return to a-political rule most characteristic of the colonial administration, linkages with the civil service, and the promotion of technocrats to the cabinet. Mobilisational policies are de-emphasised, eroded traditional authority is retrenched, and a loose monolithic consensus is pursued with greater or lesser zeal. If corruption was rife during the civilian era, the army may set up commissions of inquiry, but will avoid criminally implicating the bulk of the civil service or, for that matter, itself or its allies in the coup.

In the 1963 Dahomey coup, for example, General Soglo did not even contemplate at the outset the detention of Maga, or even removing him from political life, and it took the young putschists of 1967 to purge some of the Dahomean officers most involved in embezzlement and corruption. In Ghana, the Ankrah Government's sweeping inquiries left

[1] Edward Feit, 'The Rule of the Iron Surgeons: military government in Spain and Ghana', in *Comparative Politics*, July 1969, pp. 485–97, and 'Military Coups and Political Development', in *World Politics*, January 1969, pp. 179–93.

[2] Simon Kiba, 'La Voie de la "Nouvelle Marche" au Togo avec le RPT', in *Afrique nouvelle*, 31 March 1972. *Mesan* is still largely a paper structure, and the Congolese P.C.T., captured by militant elements, has not evoked much mass participation.

[3] Austin, *Optima*, p. 66. Meaningful systematic change has only occurred in Rwanda, Zanzibar, and possibly Congo-Brazzaville, consequent to their 'revolutions'.

[4] First, op. cit. p. 22.

intact the bulk of the civil service as well as the army, and in particular the police. The same holds true for the investigations in Nigeria and Sierra Leone after their respective coups. In Upper Volta, Maurice Yameogo was brought to trial only after pressure from trade unionists and some junior officers. In the Central African Republic, Dacko is not likely to be brought to trial in light of the damaging things he could reveal in public about the current avaricious clique in power.

In the redistribution of political and economic power, the military and civil service are the net gainers; in countries under acute financial stress, however, the military régime finds itself compelled to curtail the privileges of the latter group whose salaries consume between 60–80 per cent of all state budgets. A classic illustration of this is Sangoule Lamizana's abolition of Maurice Yameogo's austerity cuts which had brought the massive demonstrations prior to the coup in the Upper Volta; yet the very same cuts, coupled with other austerity measures, were soon to be re-imposed as the army came to realise the precariousness of the economy. This time when the civil service demonstrated, their trade union rights were limited. In Ghana, despite the official austerity imposed by Ankrah, army and senior civil service salaries went up, while social services for the interior drastically declined. Again, in the 1971 Ignatius Acheampong coup, practically the first announcement of the new military government was a major scaling down of Kofi Busia's austerity measures.

In Congo-Brazzaville, once Major Marien Ngouabi became Head of State, there were pay increases in the order of 40 per cent for the low-grade civil service, and 20 per cent for middle-grade officials, including the army. In Dahomey, General Soglo merely continued the 'solidarity tax' imposed by Ahomadegbe, but not before decreeing various benefits and import tax exemptions for the army, including customs exemptions for 20 cars for his fellow officers. Their somewhat more conscientious Upper Voltaic counterparts exempted their own salaries from the austerity taxes imposed upon the rest of the civil service, specifying, indeed, that officers transferring to the administration would maintain their military privileges and exemptions.

Moreover, modernisation and economic development in weak unicrop economies is frequently affected by considerations totally extraneous to the issue of whether a civilian or military clique is in power. The pick-up in world cocoa and diamond prices, for example, merely coincided with the rise to power of the Ankrah and Bokassa military régimes. Much of the base for the Togolese economic 'success story' – rapid expansion of phosphate exports, and German nostalgia for their

Musterkolonie – was laid long before E. G. Eyadema came to power.[1] And Zaïre's economic potentials would have been exploited no matter the régime in power, as long as it could assure stability.

Public and private foreign aid and investments have usually been attracted more by economic potentials, possible profits, and political stability, than by the mere existence of military cliques in power. Hence both Ankrah and the Busia régimes had problems in attracting foreign capital.[2] Neither Dacko, who was favourably regarded by France, nor Bokassa, very warily eyed by Paris, have had much success in attracting legitimate capital despite vast untapped wood and diamond resources.[3] And Nigeria's economic boom, based as it is on increasing oil exports, does not stem from that country's military leadership. Even Upper Volta, which under a competent and dedicated group of officers has seen a major amelioration of its budgetary and financial straits, has only recently begun to feel the trickle of French investment aid.

Corruption, nepotism, and smuggling have not been eliminated under military régimes; if anything, the scope of these activities tends to broaden. Anti-smuggling drives have been uniquely unsuccessful, whether pushed by military or civilian régimes – and in Mali, Togo, C.A.R., Sierra Leone, Zaïre, Uganda, Ghana, and Nigeria, police and army officers have been deeply implicated. In Togo, despite protests from Ghana (and to some extent Dahomey), the régime turns a blind eye to the massive imports of consumer commodities under the country's liberal controls, patently destined for immediate 're-export' across the porous borders of Ghana, with the tacit or active co-operation of the latter's border police.[4]

Once in power, an internal settling of accounts within the army, increases in military budgets, and promotions for the major participants in the coup have been nearly universal. The country's 'most powerful trade union' rarely pauses for a decent interval before appropriating the financial and material needs commensurate to its professional self-image. Contrary to the academic literature about austerity and spartan tastes, the officer corps does not differ in its bourgeois tastes from the other élites, traditional cultural values not usually placing a

[1] See the statistics in *Banque centrale des états de l'Afrique de l'ouest: indicateurs économiques* (Paris), 192, February 1972, p. 3. An evaluation of the Eyadema régime is contained in the author's forthcoming 'The Army and Politics in Togo'.

[2] See Robert M. Price, 'Military Officers and Political Leadership: the Ghanaian case', in *Comparative Politics*, April 1971, pp. 361–79.

[3] Kalck, op. cit. pp. 141–8 and 159–83.

[4] *West Africa*, 7 April 1972. Significantly, Colonel Acheampong recently ordered the reorganisation of this force, and summary sentences for those discovered co-operating with smugglers from across the border.

high value on asceticism. Thus, for example, the austerity budgets of the N.L.C. in Ghana included a 5 per cent raise in military salaries, and a 41·4 per cent increase in military expenditure between 1966–7 and 1968–9, while allocations for agriculture, industries, communications, and trade were cut between 28·3 and 78·2 per cent.[1] The increased post-coup army salaries in Congo-Brazzaville, Upper Volta, and C.A.R. have already been noted previously. The same has happened in Uganda, where the National Bank blandly reported a major drain in foreign reserves largely due to imports 'for strengthening the internal security and the defence of the country'.[2] Moreover, though not all post-coup promotions have been as dramatic as those announced by General Amin in Uganda, or Colonel Moussa Traore in Mali (no longer a Lieutenant),[3] key officers are nevertheless rapidly promoted up the ranks.[4] And the blurring of civil–military boundaries brings about increased corruption and the politicisation of army personnel, as well as the possibility of military fragmentation and counter-coups.

In the light of all these factors it is not surprising that in a recent major piece of research (which unfortunately did not single out Africa for particular attention), Eric Nordlinger concludes, on the basis of aggregate data analysis, that if economic development results under military régimes, it is often *in spite of*, not because of, the military élite in power.[5] Though major systemic differences exist between Africa and other areas of the developing world, this careful analysis should make us even more more wary of reification of military hierarchies, and assigning them attributes and policy preferences not resting on solid empirical evidence. According to Nordlinger, the two most important motivations explaining the army's frequent conservative *status quo* and non-developmental inclinations are 'the officers' determined pursuance of their corporate interests in combination with their deeply inculcated military values that assign overriding importance to the preservation of a particular type of political stability, and the officers' attachments to their middle class interests and identities.' Where concerted socio-economic modernisation *does* proceed, it is the result of the increased corporate prestige to be gained from leadership of a more developed

[1] Robert M. Price, 'A Theoretical Approach to Military Rule in New States: reference-group theory and the Ghanaian case', in *World Politics*, XXIII, 3, April 1971, p. 425.

[2] *Africa Research Bulletin. Economic, Financial, and Technical Series* (Exeter), March 1972, p. 2299.

[3] *Afrique nouvelle*, 7 October 1971.

[4] This has caused discontent among officers not involved in the anti-Government operation who see themselves passed over, and in the junior ranks. Operation Guitar Boy, the attempted counter-coup in Ghana, was an example of this kind of unrest.

[5] Nordlinger, loc. cit. pp. 1131–48.

state, and because one threat to the army is from traditional oligarchies that can be broken up by mobilisational policies.[1]

The latter part of the above statement is probably too sweeping to be useful to Africanists. African military élites are not infrequently more acceptable to traditional elements in society than to more radicalised urban groups. Moreover, in the handful of cases where the military has supported socio-economic development, other factors have been at work. In Togo, for example, the alternative to progressive military leadership may well be an Ewe-led Government (with or without Noë Kutuklui) – totally unacceptable to the ranking officers, for it might resurrect the Sylvanus Olympio assassination episode in which Etienne Eyadema was directly and personally involved. In Upper Volta, there was no real alternative to an austerity and developmental programme under the military, in light of a virtual French ultimatum that the country clear up its economic mess. Nordlinger's amalgam of theory and statistical data needs careful replication with the universe restricted to the black African states, before some of his broader conclusions can be accepted as relevant to African studies.[2]

While the underpinnings of Nordlinger's conclusions are statistical correlations, Robert Price has recently tried to explain the same conservative *status quo* military syndrome using reference group theory.[3] Disputing classical formal organisation theory, and its stress on the nationalist and puritanical attributes of the officer corps that allegedly incline it to intervene when civilian leadership fails, Price argues that in the case of Ghana the army intervened in order to reassert their corporate interests. Once in power, the N.L.C.'s policies revealed the extent of their psychological internalisation of outside reference group values. Relying extensively on the published self-justification of two of the key leaders of the 1966 coup – Brigadier Akwasi Afrifa and Major-General K. A. Ocran[4] – who continuously stress their unease with the

[1] Ibid. pp. 1134 and 1144. Nordlinger also adds: 'In oligarchical societies the soldier is a radical, in societies dominated by the middle class the officers act as arbitrators among middle class groups; and when mass political participation is in sight, the soldier protects the existing order.' This conclusion is similar to Huntington's in his *Political Order in Changing Societies*, pp. 221–2.

[2] It could also be noted that Mapp's previously cited factor analysis, restricted to African data, did not come up with any statistically meaningful correlations between some of the variables used by Nordlinger.

[3] Price, *World Politics*, pp. 403–4: 'An individual's reference groups are those social groups to which he psychologically relates himself, with which he identifies. To become a member of a group in the psychological sense implies the internalization of its central norms and values – for to be a member implies certain modes of thought and behavior.'

[4] K. A. Ocran, *A Myth is Broken* (London, 1968), and A. A. Afrifa, *The Ghana Coup* London, 1967).

realities of Ghana army life under Kwame Nkrumah, as opposed to their experiences in England or under expatriate officers, Price concludes that reference-group identifications were developed with the British army, its values, traditions, and expectations:

> the training process undergone by the officer corps of many of the new states is such as to produce reference-group identifications with the officer corps of the ex-colonial power and concomitant commitments to its set of traditions, symbols, and values. Such identifications and commitments are seen to affect the behavior of these officers, both in their relations with civilian political authorities and in their capacity as governmental leaders should they accede to political power, in ways which are neither explicable nor predictable in terms of the formal organizational model.[1]

Hence Nkrumah's anti-West and anti-British policies, his 'highly un-British' tampering with military appointments, promotions, cadet training, and the restrictions placed on the military's budget, caused irreparable civil–military tensions, especially since they were superimposed over a highly critical image of him.[2]

Ghana's 1966 coup, according to Price, was primarily designed to redress military grievances; it hence had no ideological overtones, nor was there any concrete programme of action aimed at solving the country's problems. The various *ad hoc* policies emanating from the N.L.C. vividly attested to their pro-British (and pro-West) sentiments, and to their lack of nationalist (at least in economic matters) aspirations and inclinations. Mass corruption did not abate, since the army would not move against either the police or the civil service, their allies. Meaningful austerity policies were not truly forthcoming, for while stringent budgetary controls were announced, army allocations went up by an average annual 22 per cent. British and western firms were allowed to enter the economic arena to the detriment of indigenous entrepreneurs, and the more profitable state industries were handed over at ridiculous terms.

The 1972 coup in Ghana forcefully underscores the relevance of perceived threats to the army's corporate interests as a major variable in coups and military régimes in Africa. Indeed, Acheampong's description of the state of the armed forces, and their financial and material deprivation under Busia, bears striking resemblance to that of Ocran and Afrifa about the army's plight under Nkrumah. There was

[1] Price, *World Politics*, p. 407. Interestingly, Nkrumah did refer to the coup leaders as possessing 'Sandhurst mentality... tend[ing] to frown on everything in our Ghanaian way of life which did not conform with English customs and traditions.' Peter Enahoro, 'Military Rule in Africa', in *Africa* (London), 4, 1971, p. 20.

[2] Price, *Comparative Politics*, pp. 364–7, and *World Politics*, pp. 411–13. Indeed, according to Ocran, op. cit. p. 43: 'When the British were here, our interests were better protected.'

little attempt to camouflage Acheampong's desire to redress both military and personal grievances. High on the list of reasons for the coup were the reduced military budget, erosion in military salaries via the Cedi devaluation, the removal of several fringe benefits,[1] and the fact that a whole group of officers not involved in the 1966 coup had been by-passed by the promotion scramble after its success, including Acheampong and most of his colleagues in the National Redemption Council.

Though it is still too early to assess the new régime's socio-economic inclinations, and whether they would conform with hypotheses derived from Price's reference-group theory as applied to Ghana, the Government has linked up with urban and civil service elements whose tacit acquiesence is vital to its short-term stability. The 586 public servants previously dismissed were informed that they might be re-employed; the civil service's disciplinary code was abolished, car allowances and significant portions of Busia's fringe benefits cuts have been restored, and the trade unions were once again allowed to re-group. Simultaneously, crackdowns on smuggling, tax evasion, and corruption have been announced, with several heavy sentences already having been meted out for such offences. On the other hand, the new budget included cuts in prestige, infrastructure, *and* developmental projects, coupled with an increase in defence allocations.[2]

It is, however, one thing to accept the fact that military hierarchies often act to protect their own interests, and quite another to accept the reference-group theory as a valid explanatory framework for more than a limited number of officers in the N.L.C. in Ghana. While the approach is certainly elegant, and grounded in solid theory, empirical validation other than from the one case-study is sorely needed. Indeed, the theoretical framework would have been seriously threatened had Ocran and Afrifa not chosen to publish their embarrassingly frank memoires. We have no such autobiographies of other African officers in Ghana or elsewhere. Methodologically it can be doubted whether the kind of internalisation of values that apparently occurred here can be verified

[1] One commentator points out that even prior to the devaluation, a typical major's pay had declined from N¢215 to N¢125 under the onslaught of Busia's July 1971 budget; Valerie P. Bennett, 'The Military under the Busia Government', in *West Africa*, 25 February 1972. The army's corporate grumbles were so strongly phrased that practically the entire press accepted this as the basic reason for the coup; see, for example, *The New York Times*, 17 and 22 January 1972. Busia, in London, called it an 'officers' amenities coup', and Bennett noted in another article, 'The "Nonpoliticians" Take Over', in *Africa Report*, April 1972, p. 20, that all the other complaints voiced by Acheampong 'would probably not have been enough to bring down Busia if his government had not attempted to apply austerity measures to the military'. For one justification of the coup, see General Ocran's letter in *West Africa*, 11 February 1972.

[2] *West Africa*, 10 March 1972.

elsewhere; there is also the very thorny problem that overt behaviour is not necessarily directly linked with attitudes or values. On purely theoretical grounds it is an open question whether the younger officers, now slowly gravitating around the power apex all over Africa, are also subject to similar emotional transfers and linkages during their much briefer exposures to host-culture values in British and French staff colleges.[1]

Hence Price's theoretical contribution – as distinct from his substantive analysis of army intervention and rule in Ghana – can only be regarded at this stage as a welcome and useful theoretical thrust, limited by the non-availability of other empirical data to the two leaders of the 1966 Ghanaian coup.

SOME RECENT STUDIES

The previously outlined proliferation of conflicting approaches, theories, and hypotheses about African military régimes and their causes is best exemplified by three books that have recently been published in this field.

Ernest W. Lefever's *Spear and Scepter: army, police and politics in tropical Africa* (Washington, 1970) is unfortunately the easiest to evaluate due to its theoretical and analytical shortcomings. The author starts on a disastrous note with a patronising introductory chapter which tells us more about his biases and misconceptions concerning Africa, and concludes with a series of 'hypotheses' whose superficiality is only matched by the treatment given to the intervening case studies of the military in Ghana, Zaïre, and Ethiopia. This study has no theoretical underpinnings, though it pays lip-service to theory through footnotes and an annotated bibliography.[2] Textual analysis and information obtained from interviews are not rigorously scrutinised and subjected to alternate empirical verification. With only a few qualifications – as in the case of the abortive 1960 Ethiopian coup – a highly positive image

[1] Price recognises – *World Politics*, p. 429 – some of these limitations when he states in his conclusion: 'To the degree that the socialization of officers in new states differs, or to the degree that it changes over time within the same state, differences can be expected in the nature of military rule.' However, the socialisation of officers will differ, even given the same stimulus and similar individuals, due to variations of personality. Each officer will accept or reject particular influences or actions not in conformity with his own self-image or scale of values, producing different composites of attitudinal and behavioural characteristics which cannot easily be predicted.

[2] Unconventional definitions and nomenclature also abound. Political development, for example, is defined as 'any change in the structure of government or the process of gaining and exercising political authority that enhances the government's capacity to provide security for its people and to enforce the law throughout its territory'. Lefever, op. cit. p. 174.

emerges of the 'detribalized, Westernized, modernized, integrated, and cohesive' military forces. Armies intervene due to the inability of 'fledgling African leaders with little experience in the art of state politics' – the transfer of sovereignty was 'abrupt and premature' – to cope with 'centrifugal forces unleashed by the withdrawal of externally imposed restraints'. Not all civilian élites are judged so harshly; there are those like Kamuzu Banda in Malawi whose political maturity is recognised by Lefever. Others, more ambivalent about the West (for pro-West sentiments emerge as the prime criteria for maturity), are suffering 'something like the identity crisis of an adolescent', gravitating between Marx and Keynes.

Once in power, military régimes provide pragmatic and beneficial leadership. Oblique references appear about petty corruption in the police, though the army and its officers are not too afflicted by this. In Ghana the N.L.C. rule brought the army no special benefits, privileges, or status, and there was only one instance of military corruption (Ankrah); indeed the N.L.C. 'curtailed widescale corruption, improved the balance of payments, increased foreign aid and private investment'.

Lefever's chapter on Zaïre is a drawn-out, descriptive account of the travails of that country with the *Force publique*, the A.N.C., and the United Nations. General Joseph Mobutu's rule scores positively because of his pro-West policies and ability to bring order out of chaos; his more oppressive and negative features are, however, largely absent, and the relevance of the case study for an understanding of civil–military relations and problems of military rule is clouded by a mass of non-analytical detail. The Ethiopian case-study is by contrast relatively non-controversial, though equally non-inspiring. In short, the 'general predictive value for tropical Africa and other areas in the Third World' the author claims for his analysis of the Ghanaian and Zaïre experience with military rule, is highly presumptuous in light of the unreliability and misleading nature of the study.[1]

Claude E. Welch's volume of original essays on *Soldier and State in Africa* (Evanston, 1970), commences with a long and thorough contribution by the editor, already referred to in this review article. Noting that the study of military intervention 'belies simple, unicausal analysis', the author delineates a wide variety of systemic problems that tend to evoke a takeover. The most potent motivation is seen as the army's 'desire to protect professional autonomy' within the context of declining popularity and the political weakness of the régime.[2] Personal

[1] Quotations from Lefever, op. cit. pp. 1–2, 10, 19–20, 67, 72, and 186.

[2] Welch, op. cit. pp. 17 and 34–5.

ambitions within the army are largely excluded from consideration as possible supplementary considerations.

Once in power, both legitimation and economic development elude the army, while the original coup strains the hierarchy of command, exacerbates inherent lines of division, and increases the chance of an internal coup attempt. In short, the army – portrayed largely sympathetically – is equally incapable of solving the very problems that have proved intractable to their civilian predecessors.

The rest of the essays are of mixed quality, as is frequently the case with edited volumes. Jean-Claude Willame's essay on Zaïre is in particular weak, possibly due to its brevity, though his application of the 'patrimonial élites' concept is certainly welcome.[1] The strongest chapters are those by W. A. E. Skurnik on Dahomey and Upper Volta, and Jon Kraus on Ghana. The latter's contribution again pinpoints the essentially corporate nature of the 1966 coup, the conservative style of the N.L.C., and the new personal ambitions and grievances which arose in the army, and which contributed to the second eruption in 1972. His analysis is particularly refreshing when compared with Lefever's chapter on Ghana.

Ruth First's *Power in Africa* (New York, 1970) – simultaneously published as *The Barrel of a Gun: political power in Africa and the coup d'état* (Harmondsworth, 1970) – is of a completely different genre. Her study is a hardhitting *tour de force*, analytically and forcefully ferretting out and dissecting motives, policies, and ambitions of civilian and military élites. It is an emotional outburst, buttressed by fact and professional literature – an academic book of great scope and breadth, unencumbered by jargon yet familiar with theory.

First leaves no doubt from the outset as to the principal problem in Africa – the failure of leaders, civilian and military – in mobilisation as well as pragmatic states. 'Africa is a continent of mass poverty, but the obsession of the ruling group is with luxuries', and the new post-independence élites are only distinguished by 'their inability to conceptualize the promise of independence other than in terms of their own immediate interest'. Failures of leadership, weak economies dominated by external factors, gaps between values inculcated to officers abroad and political styles at home, all lead to coups. These do not fall into neat patterns or categories, for they can be precipitated by any crisis. Motives are complex, they change over time, and include personal ambitions which may be difficult to perceive at the outset. When the

[1] See Jean-Claude Willame's full-scale study, *Patrimonialism and Political Change in the Congo* (Stanford, 1972), especially ch. 4, 'Private Armies'.

army intervenes, however, 'whatever its declarations of noble interest, [it] generally acts for army reasons'. Though these may be predominant, secondary, or merely coincide with civic unrest, 'army reasons are invariably present'.

Military intervention, according to First, neither brings economic development nor social change, for 'The interests of the officer corps lie in preserving the inflated standards of the African élite; in retaining or increasing the army's share of the budget; and in steadying the state when it shakes under stress, since it has itself such a large group stake in the budget and the economy.' Indeed, 'The facility of coup logistics and the audacity and arrogance of the coup-makers are equalled by the inanity of their aims'. The main consequence of military takeovers is increased military budgets, army salaries, and promotions, and the continuation of élite-biased policies under the new military-bureaucracy coalition.

First documents her harsh indictment of African civilian and military rule with an encyclopaedic array of documented evidence. Though she devotes considerable space to case-studies of Ghana, Nigeria, and Sudan, she also looks closely at Algeria and the U.A.R., and practically every African state makes some sort of an appearance. There is a certain amount of disorganisation in the presentation of such a mass of data, and some scholars may be irked by either her frequent (eloquent) journalistic style, or her slant (not so much about her total condemnation of the military), which makes a strong appearance in the last 30 pages or so. Her study is nevertheless a solid contribution to our growing sophistication about the motivations that bring military intervention, and the nature of military rule.[1]

Whether through First's massive frontal assault, or through a more theoretical analysis of the motives and actual policies of military hierarchies (such as Price's), a largely negative profile of the African officer corps has recently been mushrooming. The stage may soon be reached when the same kind of healthy scepticism and critical re-evaluation of other African political phenomena, begins to emerge in the field of African civil-military relations.

[1] Quotations from First, op. cit. pp. 5, 12, 20–21, 61, and 430.