

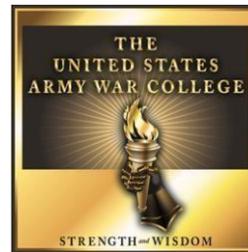
# Strategy Research Project International Fellow

## Civil-Military Relations Challenges in West Africa: Causes and Strategic Impacts

by

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## Abstract

From their independence until today, West African countries have wrestled with their civil-military relations which often resulted in instability. In the quest to understand the underlying causes of the challenges, this research project links the root causes with the sudden and too early departure of the colonial military institution from the colonies. The embryonic and immature armies of the new born nations were not professionally educated enough to adopt the proper concept of civil-military relations. By staying longer, colonial militaries would have facilitated the adequate transition of West African national militaries from colonial era into the post-independence era. This research project used a controlled comparison case study between Niger and Senegal, two former French colonies in West Africa to substantiate this fact. Senegal, with a permanent French military presence, is the only West African country to maintain proper civil-military relations and has not required military intervention since gaining independence. In contrast, poor civil-military relations throughout the sub-region have triggered civil wars and political violence, creating strategic concerns. West Africa would benefit from mentorship by the world's leading powers to establish mature and well-functioning civil-military relations to restore peace and stability in the region.

## **Civil-Military Relations Challenges in West Africa: Causes and Strategic Impacts**

Civil-military relations play an important role in the whole political, social and strategic environment in West Africa. From the independence until current era, these civil-military relations have been challenged or purely nullified in many parts of West Africa resulting in recurrent disagreements between civilian national authorities and military. This research paper intends to analyze the current nature of civil-military relations in West Africa and identify the root causes of the inherent challenges and their strategic implications in the region as well as around the world.

The research will focus on answering the question as to whether the civil-military relations challenges are deeply rooted in the sudden and premature departure of colonial military powers from West Africa. In the attempt to answer this research question, this study will, in its first part, give an overview of West Africa and its countries, then delve into various definitions and understanding of the concept of civil-military relations. In this pursuit, it will look at the current status of these relations while shedding light onto how they transitioned from colonial era into post-colonial time.

The second part will properly address the question using a “controlled comparison”<sup>1</sup> case study between Niger and Senegal, two West African former French colonies, showing the difference in their civil-military relations in spite of their common start point as colonies. The last part will look into the strategic impacts of the poor civil-military relations on the stability in the West African region and conclude with some recommendations that can help leaders address this issue efficiently.

### **Overview of West Africa**

Located in the western region of Africa and totaling 16 countries, West Africa covers an area of about 6.1 million square kilometers with a population of 340 million

people equating a density of about 50 people per square kilometer. It is worth acknowledging the variety of mapping of the region as pointed out by Bryan J. Doyle. The United Nations counts the Island of Saint Helena, a British overseas territory in the South Atlantic as part of the West African region thus making it to 17 countries. The list of West African countries on that basis includes: Benin, Burkina Faso, Capo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Saint Helena, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. However, for the purpose of this paper, we will focus on the commonly accepted West African region as described by Doyle citing Muller (2006) and Stock (2004). The area in consideration here will be the one covered by the fifteen member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a sub-regional organization created in 1975 to promote economic integration in the region. It does not include the British island of Saint Helena but has Mauritania as an affiliate.

Table 1. West African Countries<sup>2</sup>

COUNTRY	CAPITAL CITY	DATE OF INDEPENDENCE	POPULATION	SURFACE	COLONIAL MASTER	OFFICIAL LANGUAGE
BENIN	PORTO-NOVO	1 AUGUST 1960	11 MILLION	42,000sq mi	FRANCE	French
BURKINA FASO	OUAGADOUGOU	5 SEPT. 1960	17 MILLION	105,900sq.mi	FRANCE	French
CAPE VERDE	PRAIA	5 JULY 1975	800,000	1500 sq mi.	PORTUGAL	Portuguese
COTE D IVOIRE	ABIDJAN	5 AUGUST 1960	21 MILLION	124,503sq.mi.	FRANCE	French
GAMBIA	BANJUL	18 FEB. 1965	2 MILLION	3,980sq mi.	GREAT BRITAIN	English
GHANA	ACCRA	6 MARCH 1957	25 MILLION	92,100sq mi.	GREAT BRITAIN	English
GUINEA	CONAKRY	2 OCT. 1958	10 MILLION	94,980sq mi.	FRANCE	French
GUINEA BISSAU	BISSAU	10 OCT. 1974	1.7 MILLION	13,948sq mi.	PORTUGAL	Portuguese
LIBERIA	MONROVIA	26 JULY 1847	3.5 MILLION	43,000sq mi.	NONE	English
MALI	BAMAKO	22 SEPT. 1960	15 MILLION	478,839sq mi	FRANCE	French
MAURITANIA	NOUATCHOTT	28 NOV. 1960	3.5 MILLION	397,954sq mi.	FRANCE	French
NIGER	NIAMEY	3 AUGUST 1960	16 MILLION	489,698sq mi.	FRANCE	French
NIGERIA	LAGOS	1 OCT. 1960	200 MILLION	356,667sq mi.	GREAT BRITAIN	English
SENEGAL	DAKAR	4 APRIL 1960	14 MILLION	76,000sq mi.	FRANCE	French
SIERRA LEONE	FREETOWN	27 APRIL 1961	6.5 MILLION	27,699sq mi.	GREAT BRITAIN	English
TOGO	LOME	27 APRIL 1960	6.6 MILLION	22,000sq mi.	FRANCE	French



Figure 1. Map of West African Countries<sup>3</sup>



Figure 2. Map of ECOWAS Countries<sup>4</sup>

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was created on 28th May 1975 aiming at promoting the economic integration of the West African region and helping member countries overcome their socio-economic struggles. Civil-military relations and governmental instability were not on its agenda since most leaders who initiated its creation came to power through military coups. In 1990, the outbreak of democratic movements in the region pushed the leaders to amend the ECOWAS charter to include the ban of military coups and instill the rule of law.

Regarding the history and the population, the region is composed of many different ethnicities with hundreds of various dialects. The most common official languages are French and English with the exception of Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau, where Portuguese is used as Official language. Most of the region had been influenced by European settlers some centuries back.

The whole history of the region can be looked at in four major defining phases. The first phase saw the decline of existing empires of the region in the fourteenth century along with the settling of Europeans alongside the coastal trade points<sup>5</sup>. This was mostly done through some Christian missionaries, who led the way to brainwash the indigenous in the area. The second phase is characterized by the full scale of the so-called triangular trade with its associated slavery issues. The third phase represents the colonial era during which, France and Great Britain dominated the whole region. The British controlled the Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, while France ruled Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger and Senegal building the French West Africa. Portugal imposed its will on Guinea Bissau with an eye on Cape Verde, while Germany ran Togoland, but was forced split it between France and Great Britain as result of the outcomes of the First World War. Liberia is the only country in region, which is made of by released slaves from the U.S. and did not go through the colonial prism. Lastly, the fourth phase covers the period between 1957 and 1974 characterized by the creation of current nations with various independence after the decolonization process<sup>6</sup>. These two last phases (colonialization and decolonization), to some great extent, have shaped the civil-military relations in West Africa through the

nature of the role and treatment granted to the military by colonial powers in their respective areas of influence.

### Definition of Civil-Military Relations

Civil-military relations have been looked at by many scholars in the quest of defining the nature of interactions that can be profitable to a given nation. Samuel P. Huntington, Morris Janowitz, and Samuel E. Finer are the pioneers, who addressed the issue of Civil-military relations by defining it as the civilian control of the military by all means. This effective control can be achieved by increasing civilian power, or rather by minimizing military power<sup>7</sup>. Even though the works of those scholars have been termed “old School”, their definition still prevails in most recent works in which the concept civil-military relations “refers to patterns on influence, control, and subordination between the armed forces and the wider social environment”<sup>8</sup>.

The broader understanding which is preponderant in various literature is the conceptualization of civilian control. This research will follow the same precept, whereby political authorities make the decisions and the military implements them. In well-functioning civil-military relations, there is parliamentary oversight of the defense sector making sure of a sound balance between the needs of society and the needs of the defense and security sector for pursuing national strategic objectives<sup>9</sup>. This includes control of the personnel, the policies, the finance, the operations and the acquisition of equipment.

Referring specifically to Africa, Naidoo argues that civil-military relations must be institutionalized in Africa in order to define the real role of the military in democratic governance. He equally emphasizes the need of having a well-staffed parliament with sufficient expertise on defense and security issues<sup>10</sup>. It is all about having experts on

both sides and making sure that the military provides its best advice and respects the decisions made by the civilian authorities.

Civil-military relations, as defined here, implies the full control of civilian authorities over the military. Every consolidated democracy follows this definition for the sake of stability and good governance. The military institution is just one of the national instruments of power, which the government can utilize as it deems necessary to achieve national strategic end states. Most West African countries are still wrestling with their civil-military relations, because the military in many cases interferes into state's affairs to the point of undermining the civilian control in the country.

#### Problematic of Civil-Military Relations in West Africa

From their independence till current days, most West African countries have trouble establishing viable and well-functioning civil-military relations. Since the post-colonial era, the region has witnessed many military interventions to take over power and impose military rule over the country. The military has trouble respecting the authority of civilian leaders, in contradiction with the definition of well-functioning civil-military relations<sup>11</sup> . This is translated by number of military coups and years of military rule in West African countries. Already from the 1960s through 2004, the sub-region has registered 41 successful military coups and about 82 failed coups<sup>12</sup> . Our understanding of military coups is the “the irregular seizure of the state's executive by the regular armed forces or by the internal security forces through the use (or the threat of the use) of force”<sup>13</sup> .

From the results of the study of Adebajo and Rashid<sup>14</sup> on military coups in West Africa and the conclusion of McGowan on the status of military rule in the region, many other successful, attempts, and failed military coups have occurred in West Africa. The

September 2015 failed military coup in Burkina Faso is a sign that West African militaries still need to conceptualize its subordination to civilian control.

In some countries, even though there are civilian leaders in charge of defense and security matters, the military institution manages to keep them away of their business and leaves them clueless about how the institution runs. That is the case of the experienced Defense Minister in Ghana, Alhaji Mahama Idrissu, who recently shouted out the difficulty of penetrating the cordon secrecy that continued to surround the Ghanaian armed forces after ten years in office<sup>15</sup>. In Nigeria, during the second republic, the Defense Minister did not know about the decisions made by the military and did not have any independent avenue to assess the military judgement or to control which policy was being implemented.

The following table shows how deeply the military has been involved in state's affairs in West African countries.

Table 2. Military Involvement in States' Affairs in West African Countries<sup>16</sup>

COUNTRY	Number of coups	Coup year	Number of years of Military Rule
Benin	6	1963,1967,1969,1970,1972,1990	17
Burkina Faso	5	1966,1980,1982,1983,and 1987	31
Cape-Verde	(-)	(-)	(-)
Cote d'Ivoire	1	1999	1
Gambia	1	1994	2
Ghana	5	1966,1972,1978,1979,and 1981	20
Guinea	2	1984, 2008	11
Guinea -Bissau	4	1980,1999,2003,2012	20
Liberia	2	1980,1990	6
Mali	3	1968,1991,2012	25
Mauritania	6	1978,1979,1980,1984,2005,2008	17

Niger	4	1974,1996,1998,2010	20
Nigeria	6	1966,1966,1975,1983,1985,1993	32
Senegal	(-)	(-)	(-)
Sierra Leone	5	1967,1967,1968,1992,1997	6
Togo	2	1963,1967	25

A glance at the table above, shows how problematic are the civil-military relations in West Africa. In fair cases, these challenges are shown by the refusal of the military to accept civilian control, and in worse cases, through the toppling of the established government by military coups. There is a palpable reciprocal mistrust between the military and the civilian authorities, because there is no clear delineation of responsibilities; each entity accusing the other of overplaying its hands. According to Huntington, the civilian control which seeks the distribution of political power between military and the civilian groups is most conducive to the emergence of professional attitude and behavior among the officer's corps<sup>17</sup>.

The unstable and poor nature of civil-military relations in West Africa strongly impacts the process of development and democratization across the sub-region and often leads to instability. The current violent situation in Mali is the result of a military intervention into state's affairs in 2012. For West Africa to thrive in many ways, it is important to identify the root causes underlying the challenges of civil-military relations in order to design the adequate solution for a much stable and prosperous sub-region.

**Causes of the Poor Civil-Military Relations in West Africa**

The notion of well-functioning civil-military relations is a dead-born concept in most West African countries, because of the way these military institutions were created and how they were used in the pre-independence era by the respective colonial

masters. As Luckman points it out, “the history of many of those armies can be traced from the small mercenary forces that had been used to establish British and French rule in West Africa”<sup>18</sup>. Composed of mostly uneducated indigenous, the military was mainly used to subdue the civilian population and was the hammer that the colonial power utilized to crush every indigenous revolt or political ambition.

Furthermore, most personnel of these militaries could not exceed the rank of Noncommissioned officers (NCO) due to their low academic level. This was the case in most French colonies, where none of the indigenous military had command position<sup>19</sup>. In spite of their limited training and education level, the status of military conferred them a certain superiority Vis-a –Vis the civilians of every level in the colonies. As very well observed by W.F. Gutteridge, “Nationalist politicians saw them as agents of imperial rule suppressing political demonstrations and protecting European property. Though they had won glory by serving overseas in the two world wars, their imperial activities caused them to be regarded in some quarters as armies of occupation or at best as mercenaries in the service of a foreign power”<sup>20</sup>. From this angle, and from a patriotic standpoint, the military was not viewed as part of the indigenous people and therefore not accepted.

In respect of the aspiration of freedom and independence of the colonies, the colonial powers allowed the creation of new independent West African countries and handed over the instruments of national power to the indigenous political leaders. This included the military organization which, understandably, could not be fully accepted by the society. During the struggle for freedom and independence, the soldiers were on the side of their colonial masters pushing the populace and local political leaders to develop

fear and mistrust for the military in general. To the leaders of the new independent nations, the military did not contribute to the achievement of independence and would therefore not be granted any consideration whatsoever. The military on the other hand, was not ready to let go its conferred power over civilians during the colonial era.

Another important factor is the makeup of the military organization in the colonial era. There was a clear tribal imbalance in the national composition of the military, because the colonial masters believed that some local tribes are more suitable to the military job than others considered as natural warriors. This belief was characterized by “a recruitment policy that preferred subjectively defined 'martial races' or those who were worthwhile soldiers”<sup>21</sup>. The fact that the military in many colonies was only composed of the warrior tribes made the whole situation more complex. The rejection of the military by the new local politicians was viewed as the rejection of a whole tribe, thus bringing another dynamic into the civil-military challenges. Those challenges are quickly turned into tribal antagonism fueled by other hidden past resentments. Gutteridge argues that “Preference for a culture and the recruitment of speakers of a language that discouraged literacy in Western technology and education, produced the legacy of an educational and technological vacuum in the army, and helped to spawn serious political consequences in the polity after colonialism”<sup>22</sup>. In Togo for instance, the French deemed the tribes from the North more suitable to military and left a colonial legacy of a military composed of nineteen percent of people from the Northern part of the country and about the equal percentage of southerners in the group of civil leaders. The decision of Sylvanus Olympio, the first President to dismantle the inherited military was perceived as a rejection of people from northern Togo. This situation, along with other

political considerations, led to the first military coups ever staged in Africa in post-colonial era in January 1963<sup>23</sup>. From the independence till current days, in spite of some progress, Togo, like many other West African countries, is still struggling to establish civil-military relations that can seed stability.

In some other new independent countries, the military saw the civilian control as an unnecessary intrusion into the military sphere of competency. There were cases where soldiers experienced contradicting instructions from civilian authorities, who obviously did not know what they were talking about. A case in point happened in Ghana, where Kwame Nkrumah, the newly elected President, was issuing his own instructions to the Ghanaian contingent in UN mission in Congo, and in the process contradicting orders issued by the United Nations command<sup>24</sup>. This frustration of the Ghanaian military leadership was one of the factors that led to the military intervention that later ousted Nkrumah from the power.

All in all, the challenges of civil-military relations in West Africa are deeply rooted in the colonial legacy, which left behind a military organization with no strategic leadership and a civil leadership with no ability to handle all the instruments of national power. As Chidume well argues, “The post-independence era found many fledgling West African governments groping in the dark for stability and direction. Soon, many governments found out that the new state of nationhood meant much more than just the creation of a national flag, the composition of a national anthem and the election of a president”<sup>25</sup>. The colonial powers did not have time to instill the notion of civilian control over military and to define the proper role the military should have in the new nations. As Mr. Harold McMillan, a British Prime Minister observed, “The wind of change” started

sweeping through the colonial Anglophone and Francophone West Africa in the early 1950s with the firm determination to drive the colonial masters out of African soil” and the sudden thirst of freedom did not give them time to appropriately shape the civil-military relations before their departure. The civil-military relations which obviously were well managed by the colonial masters, did not transition appropriately into post-independence era in West African countries.

Neither the military nor the civilian authorities did know their respective roles in the new national setting. The military wants to maintain its preponderance in the new independent nations, while the civil authorities were determined to do away with this group of “foreign-aligned mercenaries”. This rough and unsettling transition led to the current conflicting civil-military relations in most West African countries. The world is still wondering if civil-military relations in West Africa would have been better today if the colonial military powers had stayed longer. In order to address this question we will at this point conduct a case study between Niger and Senegal

#### Case Study of Niger and Senegal on Civil-Military Relations Issues

The recurring challenges of civil-military relations in West Africa are deep rooted in the sudden and too early departure of the colonial masters from their respective colonies. The continuous presence of colonial military powers in those colonies would positively shape civil-military relations in most West African countries. The position is well supported by the controlled comparison between two former French West African colonies with the same pre-colonial setting in all regards, but have opposite civil-military relations till current days.

Niger is a landlocked West African country which gained its independence from France on August 3<sup>rd</sup> 1960. It covers a surface of 1,267 square kilometers with

population of 18 million inhabitants. Its neighboring countries include: Nigeria and Benin to the South, Algeria and Libya to the North, Burkina Faso and Mali to the West and Chad to the East. The capital city is Niamey. Niger has throughout had a strategic significance to France, because of its linking position between the French sub-Saharan colonies and the northern ones. This position was vital as it served as rear base to French troops during the war against Algeria in 1954.

Like in every other French colony the military in Niger was used to subdue the population and helped the French rulers control and run the country during the colonial era. Just after independence in 1960, the country inherited a military institution placed under civilian leadership with French Troops still present in the country. There were French military installations in Agadir, Zinder, Bilaro, and in Niamey from where the French could have close eyes on Algeria. Due to their low academic and military professional education, none of the indigenous soldier could exceed the rank of NCO and were therefore forced to serve under French officers. This situation did not please the national military personnel, who sensed a continuation of the colonization in the country. French officers were still leading military units of the country and subsequently maintained functioning civil-military relations in the country from the independence until 1973<sup>26</sup>. This is well translated by the fact that, from 1960 through 1973, there have been no military interventions in the country's political affairs, and the military institution was under the control of civilian authorities with Diori Hamani as President of the new independent nation<sup>27</sup>.

In 1965, the epidemic Africanization of national militaries in West Africa reached Niger and President Hamani signed a legislation ending the employment of French

military in Niger. However, they continued to serve in the country until forced to leave in 1974<sup>28</sup>. This expulsion of French military personnel from the country created a military strategic leadership vacuum that was quickly filled by national, unqualified indigenous military personnel. NCOs were made colonels and officers to assume strategic positions such as Chief of Defense staff without any further military professional education.

Just after the departure of the French troops and leadership in the wake of 1974, the newly appointed national military leaders started questioning the decisions of civilian authorities in all matters. The new national strategic environment was filled with palpable tension between civil authorities and the military which reversed the trend of civil-military relations by playing the watchdog over the whole country. The military started dictating its will to the civilians with regards to its budget and acquisitions. According to the 2013 report of Correlates of War Project, the country's military expenditures rose from US \$476 to an average of US \$5,500 per soldier per year in 1974. This tension resulted in the first military coups on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1974, just months after the departure of French military leaders from Niger<sup>29</sup>.

Surprisingly, the major reasons evoked by Colonel Seny Kountche to justify the military coups, were the mismanagement of the drought of 1968 and the corruption of the civilian administration. The severe drought happened in 1968 and the alleged corruption was not an overnight process; one can wonder why there was no military involvement into all those issues and why did the tension start in 1974 just after the French had left the country. The French military presence in the country was determining factor that help defuse tensions and shape civil-military relations from the independence in 1960 until their departure in 1974. The jeopardy of civil-military

relations in Niger started from 1974 substantiated by 20 years of military rule and four military coups. The vivid memory of the 2010 military coups in Niger proves that the country is still wrestling with civil-military relations in spite of the establishment of a civil administration.

The transition of civil-military relations into post-colonial era started off smoothly with continuous presence of French military leadership, but was quickly derailed with the sudden departure of the colonial military power.

Senegal on the other hand, has been enjoying well-functioning civil-military relations since its independence on the 4<sup>th</sup> April 1960 till current days. In fact, Senegal, just like Niger is a former West African French colony which got its independence in 1960. Senegal is located on the Atlantic Ocean with a coastline of 571 kilometers and a total surface of 196,722 square kilometers. The country borders the Atlantic Ocean to the West, Gambia in the center, Mauritania to the North, Mali to the East, Guinea and Guinea Bissau to the South. Its geographic position offers the fastest sea line of communication both to Europe and to the American continent, a great asset during the triangular slave trade. It was the major departure point of slaves to America through the famous “gate of no return” which is still exists on the Senegalese coast today.

This strategic position of Senegal explains the importance of the country and justifies its choice as the capital of the French West African colonial empire. The French involvement in Senegal was so deep that four Senegalese communes had representatives in the French parliament long before the decolonization process. The inhabitants of these communes (Gore- Rufisque- Dakar- Saint Louis) are considered French citizens and fought in the French military in the so-called “tirailleurs Senegalais”

in the Second World War<sup>30</sup>. After the independence, the new government was established in the capital city Dakar but maintained some close political, cultural and military ties with the colonial masters.

The role of the Senegalese military during the colonial era was not different from the one assigned to those in all other French colonies across West Africa. It was utilized to control the civil populace and to crush every indigenous political ambition. The level of military professional education was limited to NCO level and all units were under French command. After the independence, The French maintained their military presence in Senegal due to its strategic importance and the deep political ties cultivated over time. In spite of the africanization of the Senegalese military in the post-colonial era, the transition of civil-military relations into the new era was quite perfect with the civilian control over the military. Just like in Niger in the wake of the independence, French military remained in Senegal to maintain their military presence in the region and pursue the professionalization of the new born military institution. The civil-military relations in the two countries remained fairly good from 1960 to 1974. These relations were tremendously influenced by the French military presence which helped ease eventual tension between the civilians and the military during that immediate post-colonial period.

In the early 1974s the expelled French troops from Niger joined Senegal, increasing the number of French military in the country. The professionalization of the Senegalese military progressed with the creation of NCO academy in Kaolack and the officers' academy of Thies. French officers and NCOs trained, and educated Senegal military personnel in these institutions and gradually incorporated them into the chain of

command of the national military. The continuous French presence helped mentor and canalize the Senegalese officers and NCOs in the conceptualization of the role and place of the military in the society.

Chafer argues that the obvious French military presence in Senegal plays a vital role in the country's political stability. The same point of view is shared by many security observers and political analysts such as Professor Thierno Bah of the University of Dakar who asserts that, the Senegalese military's collaborative interaction with civilian authorities and the civil society is the key reason why the country never experiences any military coups or governmental instability like other West African countries. All this is the result of the continuation of the military education and training provided by French military experts still present in the country. Senegal was therefore able to go beyond the civil-military relations to create its own concept of "Armée - Nation" (military- Nation). This concept identifies the military as national tool at the service of the community in all domain. This puts the military not only under the control of civilian authorities, but also under the oversight of the people. This explains why amongst all former French colonies of West Africa, Senegal is the only one without any military involvement nor military coups in the post-colonial era.

In one of its reports titled "Senegal's Armée-Nation," Partners for Democratic Change, an African Institute for security sector transformation based in Washington, DC, states that "In West African States the relations between civilians and the security sector is a crucial social dynamic and the lack of effective civilian oversight and control over the sector is one of the primary causes of instability in the region. Thus, security sector reform that envisions improved civil-military relations is an essential first step

toward a stable West Africa”<sup>31</sup>. Senegal was able to achieve that through the presence of the French military establishment in the country. Immediately after the independence, the first President, Leopold Sedar Senghor worked with his chief of Defense Staff, General Jean Alfred Diallo to determine that the military has a major role in the country’s development and must serve the Senegalese people under the unequivocal leadership of civilian authorities. This solid foundation of well-functioning civil-military relations was laid thanks to the permanent presence of French military troops and leadership in the country until current days.

The comparison of these two West African former French colonies shows different outcomes in their civil-military relations even though they all started off well in that regard in the wake of the post-colonial era. The sudden and rushed departure of the French troops from Niger precipitated its civil-military relations into jeopardy. The permanent presence of French troops in Senegal was and still remains a major vector that shapes the civil-military relations making it the model in the whole West Africa. It is clear that the French military did not stay in Senegal out of pure love to this country, but rather to protect their interests in the whole sub-region; nevertheless, it helped create a stable country to look up to in terms of civil-military relations in West Africa. As McNamara notes in his book, *France in Black Africa*, “Political independence and the accompanying need to establish national armies forced the French to reevaluate their military strategy in sub-Saharan Africa; They soon concluded that a continuing French military presence would be needed to support the newborn local security forces, to assure stability in the region, and to protect French citizen and their residual interests”.

Just after the independence, the embryonic military institutions of West African countries were not ready to efficiently deal with the complex issue of civil-military relations and should have been kept under leash by their respective colonial military power for professionalization. Most of them were cut loose too early resulting into poor civil-military relations with the associated governmental instabilities and internal wars. The too early and sudden departure of the colonial military power from their respective West African colonies is the root cause of the civil-military challenges in West Africa. The poor civil-military relations in West African countries become relevant and constitute the source of major strategic concerns in the sub-region. In fact most of the internal wars and instabilities in the West African region derive from the unnecessary involvement of the military in countries' political affairs. These subsequent wars impact the whole strategic environment and request humanitarian assistance and other helps from the whole world. The current United Nations peace keeping missions in the West African region were initiated to settle internal conflicts triggered by poor civil-military relations in Cote d'Ivoire and in Mali for instance.

Cote d'Ivoire was a peaceful country with acceptable civil-military relations until 1999, when General Robert GIE overthrew the civil government. The country entered into civil war which affected the whole region and forced the intervention of ECOWAS peace keeping forces which were later replaced by the current UNOCI (United Nations Mission in Cote d'Ivoire). The implication of the United Nations is meant to prevent the escalation and the outspread of the strategic damages across the continent.

In the same way, Mali was considered a peaceful and stable country by major powers. A 2010 security brief by the National Defense University-based Africa Center

for Strategic Studies painted Mali as a stable country with “ great credibility in dealing with....competing interests” from civil society, including islamist ones<sup>32</sup>. In 2012, the military staged a coup which plunged the whole country into a civil war with international implications. In spite of the presence of a strong UN peace keeping mission in the country, Mali is currently home to many terrorist groups, and radical Islamic violent organizations that threaten peace throughout the world. This whole situation could have been prevented if the military had not mingled into the state’s affairs by organizing a military coups. Inadequate and unbalanced civil-military relations in West African countries have negative strategic impacts beyond the sub region and must promptly be addressed.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Civil-military relations challenges in West Africa must be understood from the role and the structuring of the military in the colonial era and how it transitioned into post-independence era. Based on the poor level of military professional education in various armies of the new born Nations, a longer mentorship of the colonial military would have been necessary to instill well-functioning civil-military relations. The case study between Niger and Senegal speaks volume as to the current nature of civil-military relations in those two countries. The political independence of West African countries in the 60s should not mean the beginning of the “solo flight” of their unexperienced and poorly educated militaries. The too early and too sudden departure of the colonial military is the root cause of the civil-military challenges in West Africa.

In light of all these challenges of civil-military relations in West Africa, it appears necessary that appropriate steps be taken to ensure peace, stability and good governance in the region. While recolonization cannot be an option, this paper argues

that a close mentorship by military forces of democratic super powers might be a useful approach. It is vital to reinforce the level of military education of the West African militaries to inculcate their constitutional role and republican ethos. This research recommends that West African countries follow Fayemi who argues that: At all time, the unifying theme of political elite negotiations should be the determination to assert democratic civilian control and oversight and the subordination of the military to civilian authority". This would help demilitarize the political and civic life of West African countries and create agreeable civil-military relations.

It is equally important to establish a civilian democratic defense policy expertise and create a network of constant dialogue between the military institution and the civil society. There must be a synergic working relationship between the two entities based on well-defined criteria of the level of military involvement as part of the instruments of national power. For the sake of peace and stability, West African countries must strive for well-functioning civil-military relations. This must be a concerted effort between the military and civilian leadership with the close support and assistance of the world leading powers.

#### Endnotes

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