

Abstract

This paper reviews the literature on military budgeting in African countries and draws lessons for researchers on military budgeting in African countries. It argues that while very little is known about the military budgetary process in African countries, making any research project on the subject a difficult one, the general lack of previous work in this area offers an opportunity for researchers to produce a unique research output. Second, any problem confronting researchers on military budgeting in Africa can be minimized with proper planning. The SIPRI research team has put in place carefully planned and sound research strategies to minimize the impact of the unusual problems that plague military spending studies in African countries.

KEY WORDS: MILITARY EXPENDITURE RESEARCH, BUDGETING, DATA, PROCESS, AFRICA

Researching Military Expenditures in Africa: Findings and Lessons for Researchers ¹

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1 Introduction

Military spending is relatively large, consuming an average of about 2% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of nations. Sub-Saharan African countries spent an average about \$8.8 billion annually on the military between 1990 and 1999.¹ While the absolute amount spent on military in African countries is minuscule compared to those of developed countries, the military burden, averaging about 2.3% of GDP, is much higher than the world average. The 2.3% average military burden of African countries masks wide variation of the burden across countries. For example, between 1990 and 1991, average military burden ranged from 0.7% for Ghana to a high of 20.41% for Eritrea.² Despite the relatively large amounts of expenditures on military in African countries, very little is known about the military budgeting *process* in Africa, the reliability and consistency of the military expenditure data, the composition of military expenditures, and the efficiency of military spending. In the presence of extreme resource constraints, it is important that resources, including military resources, be allocated efficiently. This project is intended to shed light on the military *budgetary process* in order to provide information on the reliability of military expenditure data, as well as improve the efficiency of the military sector. Another objective of the project is to build local capacity to analyze military budgets with the view to improve the efficiency of the military sector.

Military budgeting has been a difficult and controversial subject to study everywhere in the world for many reasons. Among these are countries' unwillingness to reveal their military postures to potential adversaries—something accurately reliable and timely military expenditure data may do—and the possibility that military budgets are determined by political economy considerations rather than by security needs. Other possible reasons for the controversy may include the effect of military spending on the economic, political, and social life of nations. These controversies are possibly the result of lack of transparency in military budgeting. If one adds the extremely weak and inefficient budgetary institutions, including lack of a formal military budgeting process, the difficulty of studying military budgets in African countries is compounded. The military sector should be subjected to the same standard of scrutiny as any public sector. The quest for efficiency may involve reallocation of resources to or away from the military sector, or a change in input combination within the

military sector itself. To do so requires an understanding of the current patterns of resource allocation which can only be achieved through an understanding of the process that generates the military budget. Unfortunately very little is known about the military budgeting *process* in African countries.

I have been asked to share my thoughts on what is known about military budgeting research in Africa and what lessons researchers can learn from the experiences of earlier researchers. I will focus on the economics literature since others are better qualified than I am to address non-economic issues involved in African budgeting. I will organize my thoughts around one major theme—what to expect and what arrangements this research project has put in place to make the research project a fruitful and an enjoyable one for researchers. When this project is over, some, and hopefully all, researchers involved in it will continue to conduct research on the military sector in Africa. Although I will occasionally refer to research on military budgeting elsewhere, I will generally focus on research experiences in African countries. The discussion will be necessarily brief so as to focus on the main task of the project.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 briefly reviews selected studies on military budgeting in African countries, section 3 discusses the budgeting process, while section 4 draws lessons from previous research and discusses what this project plans to do to ease some of the problems associated with doing research on military spending in Africa.

2 Previous Work

In spite of the interest in military budgeting in developing countries generally, and Africa in particular, very little work has been done on military budgeting *process* in Africa. Most of the work done on military budgeting in Africa are in three main areas—the effects of military budgeting on economic growth and development, the effects of military spending on political and institutional stability, and the trade-off between military spending and spending on social and economic services. Researchers have used different designs, statistical techniques, and data sets in their studies of military budgets in Africa. This section will review a small sample of the research in these areas as a comprehensive review of the literature will take us too far away from the objective of this conference. I will concentrate on work done on

African countries although I may, on occasion, refer to work done elsewhere. I limit myself to the economics literature because other members of the team are more qualified than myself to discuss studies in other disciplines.

2.1 Military Spending and Economic Growth

Several econometric studies, using cross national data and a variety of research designs (Gyimah-Brempong: 1989, Mohammed: 1992, Dunne and Mohammed: 1995, Dunne and Vougas: 1999) have investigated the effect of military spending on economic growth in Africa. These studies generally find that military spending has a negative impact on the growth of GDP in African countries. They find that military spending affect economic growth through reductions in the acquisition of productive resources as well as through reduction in the productivity of existing resources for lack of complementary inputs. All these studies are based on aggregate national income data.

Dunne and Watson (2000) using firm level employment data from South Africa, finds that military spending decreases employment and efficiency in the South African industrial sector. Perhaps military spending negatively impact economic growth in African countries not because the amounts spent on military is too much but because military resources are not allocated efficiently. It must be noted that these studies do not address the larger issue of the relationship between national security and military spending on the one hand, and the effects of security on economic growth and development on the other.

2.2 Military Budgeting and Institutional Instability

A few researchers have investigated the effects of military spending on political and institutional stability in African countries.³ A number of theories are put forth to explain the relationship between military spending and institutional stability in African countries. One theory is that increased military budgets increase the power of the military in civil society. Emboldened by their command over national resources, the officer corps are led to believe that they can govern better than the elected civilian leaders, hence the military overthrows the elected government of a country. Another theory is that civilian governments are only overthrown when there is poor economic performance. Military expenditure, by reducing

economic growth, paves the way for the military to overthrow civilian governments on whose watch poor economic performance occurs. In these two scenarios, increased military budgets result in political and institutional instability. A third theory is that the military only cares about its corporate interest. Increased military budget allocation increases resources, prestige, and hence the corporate interest of the military. Increased corporate interest leaves soldiers in the barracks and away from politics. In this case, increased military spending stabilizes political and social institutions.

The foregoing discussion implies that the relationship between military spending and political and institutional stability is an empirical one. Unfortunately, different researchers have found empirical evidence to support different views of the impact of military spending on political stability. While some researchers find that increased military spending stabilizes political and social institutions (Berg: 1987, Wang: 1998, among others), the preponderance of studies suggest that increased military spending is destabilizing in African countries. Gupta, de Mello and Sharan (2000) find that increased military spending encourages corruption, and hence destabilize political institutions in developing countries.

2.3 Determinants of Military Spending

There are two inter-related issues on the determinants of military spending—what determines the *overall amount* of military spending and what determines the *composition* of military spending. While there have been a few studies of the determinants of total military spending in African countries there have been virtually no studies of the composition on military spending in African countries in the economics literature. I review a few of the studies on the determinants of the aggregate level of military spending in Africa.

Mohammed (1996a) uses a comprehensive model that includes economic, political, and strategic variables to investigate the determinants of total military budgets in African countries between 1961 and 1991. Using a panel data and estimation method, he finds that military budgets in African countries are determined by a complex mix of political, strategic and economic factors. He finds that economic growth does not cause changes in military budgets but changes in military budgets affect economic growth. Failure to account for any of the political, strategic and economic factors may result in a misunderstanding of the determinants of military budgets in African countries. Dunne and Mohammed (1995) and

Omitoogun (2000), among others, find similar results.

Gyimah-Brempong (1998) finds that military budget allocations in African countries are, in part, determined by political economy considerations. Military budgets are protected during periods of austerity partly because of the fear that “excessive” cuts in these budgets may be construed as an attack on the corporate interest of the military, hence lead to a coup d’etat. This finding is consistent with the corporate interest and economic stagnation theories of coups d’etat in African countries. At the general level, Alesina and Spolaore (1996) develops a model in which military spending, international conflicts, and nation formation are endogenous and find that military budgets are determined by, among other things, the perceived break-up of countries and the threat of international conflict.

Military budgets are in part, determined by “national security.” The question then is what constitutes national security and who determines it? Is national security synonymous with the security of the ruling elite or protecting the territorial integrity of the nation? Is there a public debate as to what constitute national security or national security? Another related issue is whether military budgets are related to any long-term national defense strategy. Very little has been done in the economics literature on these issues. An important issue in military budgeting is the composition of military budget, an issue that is closely related to the issue of national security objectives. The objectives of national security will determine how to combine inputs to efficiently achieve those objectives. For examples, regardless of the size of the military budget, if all the budget is spent on personnel, a nation will not have a credible military capability. However, this pattern of resource allocation in the military sector makes sense if the objective of military policy is job creation. There is virtually no work done in the military economics literature on what military budgets are spent on.

2.4 Budgetary Trade-off Studies

A large number of studies on military budgeting in African countries focus on the trade-offs between military spending and spending on social services or economic activities. Although researchers use different methodologies and samples, they come to the general conclusion that military spending substitute for spending on other sectors of the economy. Gyimah-Brempong (1998, 1992, 1989a), using simultaneous equation models and panel data, finds that there is a trade off between military spending on the one hand and spending on social

services, investment in physical, and human capital, but not on social security on the other. Mohammed (1995a) finds a trade off between military spending and spending on capital goods. Dunne and Mohammed (1995) also find that military spending in African countries substitute for investment in human and physical capital. These results are consistent with research results found elsewhere in the world.⁴

Berg (1987), using qualitative analysis, and Kohler (1987), using regression analysis, on the other hand, conclude that military spending increases investment in physical capital in African countries. They argue that military spending leads to political stability and increased security which in turn reduces economic and social uncertainty and hence improves the investment climate. The preponderance of empirical evidence, however, suggests that increased military spending does not necessarily bring about security and that there is a significant trade-off between military spending and spending on other sectors of the economy.

All the studies reviewed above share one thing in common. Regardless of the theoretical model, the estimation method, or the period of analysis, they are all based on military budget data that are, at best of questionable reliability. Regardless of the elegance of the theoretical model and the technical sophistication of the estimation method, the usefulness of the results of any empirical work depends on the quality and reliability of the data on which the study is based. All researchers on military budgeting in Africa recognize the weakness of the data base, hence some of these researchers are very careful in stating their conclusions. The special problems posed by the quality of military spending data in African countries is one of the reasons for this project. Earlier presenters at this workshop have ably dealt with this issue so I will not spend time on it here.

2.5 Studies of Budgeting Process

Little has been done, or is known about the military budgeting *process* in African countries. With the exception of Berg's (1987) qualitative study of military budgeting in Senegal, and two recent studies of military budgeting processes in Africa—Henk and Rupiya (2001) and Hendrickson and Ball (2001)—there is virtually no work on the military budgetary *process* in African countries that the author is aware of. The little that may be known about the military budgeting *process* in Africa is based on anecdotal evidence. Yet understanding the budgeting process, the process that determines military resources, is crucial to understanding

the military budgets and resource allocation within the military.

Berg (1987) studied military budgeting in Senegal in the early 1980s. Using qualitative analysis based on interviews and the available data, he concluded that military budgeting in Senegal did not follow any formal process but was basically an *ad hoc* one determined entirely by the executive branch of government and a few key military personnel. Parliament had very little input into the decision although it had to give its approval to the budget as is the case of allocation to other ministries. He found evidence of little transparency in the process. The military budget allocations were in part determined by political economy considerations and only mildly by strategic and security considerations. However, military budget allocations was influenced by military aid from France. There appears to be evidence of off-budget spending on the military and the budget was presented in a highly aggregated form. With few exceptions, there is evidence to suggest that the experience and practices of military budgeting in other African countries are not different from those of the Senegalese experience found by Berg.

Henk and Rupiya (2001) investigate the *process* and outcomes of military budgeting in African countries. The study is a qualitative study based on interviews with military budget makers and professional military personnel. They conclude that, for a large number of African countries, there is no formal military budgeting process. Where there is a written formal process, it is not followed. Military budgets are determined by a few people surrounding the executive in an ad hoc manner without any relation to a military strategy or objective. There appears to be a large element of off-budget spending by many military establishments. They also conclude that military budgets are not subject to the same scrutiny as the budgets of other ministries and there is very little transparency in military budgeting in most of these countries. Hendrickson and Ball (2001), find evidence to indicate that off-budget military spending is very widespread in African countries and this provides a substantial amount of resources to the military sector in many African countries.

2.6 Objectives of Military Budgeting

An important issue that needs to be addressed in studies of military budgeting is the objective of military spending. After all, resources are expended to achieve an objective and unless that objective is clear, there is no way of knowing the most efficient way of allocating resources

to achieve that objective. In a world of scarcity and competing claims on national resources spending priorities should be given to areas where the most good is done for society as a whole. In this regard, military budget should stand the test of efficiency as the budget of any other sector; and efficiency cannot be determined without an objective. Is military budget request related to any long term strategic and military need of the country? Presumably any military objective will be based on the nation's legitimate military needs and available resources. The long term strategic military objective of a nation does not only determine the size of military budget but also determine its *composition* and possibly the budgeting process itself. A well formulated and articulated military strategy will also make it easy to develop a consensus on the size of the military budget.

Providing a long term military objective and strategy also allows the researcher and policy makers to evaluate resource allocation within the military sector. For example, will the force structure, type of equipment purchased, personnel, and training allow the stated military objective to be achieved? Given the military objective, will downsizing the current military personnel and increasing equipment and training lead to an improvement in the performance of the military? Another reason for knowing the long range military objective and strategy is that it helps the researcher understand the military budget data. As it is well known, data is meaningless without an understanding of the data generating process. Unfortunately, with the possible exception of South Africa, almost all African countries do not provide a coherent strategic objective within which to evaluate their military budgets.

3 Lessons from Military Studies in Africa

What do we know about military budgets in Africa and what lessons can we learn from the experiences of previous researchers? Unfortunately not much. In particular, very little is known about the *budgeting process* in African countries. We know, however, that conducting research on military spending anywhere in the world is difficult. The difficulties are compounded in Africa by institutional, cultural, and resource scarcity factors. There are lessons that can be drawn from the experiences of earlier researchers on military spending in Africa and hopefully make this project an enjoyable one to the researchers.

While not all practical problems associated with such a research project can be com-

pletely anticipated, the research project has looked at some of the difficulties faced by earlier researchers and developed strategies/approaches to try to minimize the impacts of these problems. I mention some of the problems that readily come to mind and then discuss what strategies the project has put in place to support researchers. The project will try to provide whatever support researchers need to successfully complete the task.

3.1 Definitional Issues:

One of the problems that has been frequently mentioned in this workshop is one of the definition of military spending. Different definitions imply that military spending data across countries or through time are inconsistent.

Strategy: This project uses the SIPRI definition of military spending as its point of departure. According to SIPRI:

where possible, SIPRI military expenditure includes all current and capital expenditures on:

the armed forces, including peace keeping forces

defence ministries and other governmental agencies engaged in defence project

paramilitary forces when judged to be trained, equipped and available for military operations

military space activities.

Though the SIPRI definition of military spending may not be comprehensive to suit all countries and situations, it has the distinct advantage of being consistent in identification and quantifiable.

Of course if in the course of the study, there is consistent evidence that military spending in African countries differ from the SIPRI definition provided above, the project team can revise the definition. After all, this is what sound research practice is all about. Apart from measuring military spending in absolute dollars, it will be necessary to adjust the absolute amount of military spending by resources of the country by calculating military burden (military spending/GDP ratio).

3.2 African Military Budget Data is not Reliable:

The official budget data obtained in African countries is not very reliable and consistent. Several factors account for this state of affairs. These include lack of/or adhering to a formal budget process, attempts to hide actual military spending through off-budget spending, weaknesses of budget institutions, as well as lack of resources to collect, store, retrieve, and process data. Therefore, always maintain a healthy dose of skepticism for data on military spending in Africa and make sure you cross reference all sources for collaboration.

It is therefore necessary to probe more deeply in this area. Researchers may try different questions that cross reference any spending data that is provided. Rely on the advisors (co-researchers) for help in this area since the military and military ministry personnel are more likely to trust them than they will trust the researcher. Also look at audited reports (the Auditor General's Department could prove to be a "gold mine") and consult other officials who are involved in the general budgetary process. Leave no stone unturned in your quest for accurate information. One often gets accurate and reliable information where one least expects it. More important, researchers should be honest and be respectful in asking these questions.

Note that the poor quality data is the main reason for conducting this project; while this poses a challenge to researchers, it also provide an excellent opportunity to come up with results that will improve the budgetary process and data quality.

3.3 Lack of Formal Budgeting Process:

There is no formal military budgeting process in most African countries. Few countries follow formal military budget processes where one exists. The question that comes to mind is how does one study a process that does not exist or not followed? What should one look for?

Strategy: The project team has developed a very detailed project outline that clearly details the questions to be investigated (the project description is attached). In addition, the team has developed a detailed questionnaire to be used as a guide to interview military budget makers.

3.4 Steep Learning Curve:

In the best of circumstances, military budget studies everywhere is a challenge. In Africa where very little work has been done and where research resources are extremely scarce, the task *seems* even more daunting. Since very little is done, you become pioneers/trailblazers; not an easy task. Issues such as what are the relevant questions?, what is the appropriate methodology?, how do I get access to the appropriate literature?, how do I write the research report to help in comparative analyses will keep coming up. This creates a lot of problems and opportunities to develop something interesting.

Strategy: The project team has developed a couple of strategies to help in this connection.

- i. There is a detailed and easily accessible project outline and questions to be investigated.
- ii. There is a detailed questionnaire as mentioned above.
- iii. The project management has assembled a team of Advisors with experience in military research in Africa and elsewhere who are at your disposal for advise, when necessary (the list of the Advisory Group and their contacts are provided in Appendix A). Hopefully, some of the researchers will team up with some members of the Advisory Group to do joint research on military spending after this project is over.
- iv. The project team has also provided a sample research report outline as a guide. This outline is provided in Appendix B. While each country report is likely to be unique, it is hoped that this common format will facilitate cross country comparison and also allow for general conclusions to be derived from the country studies.

3.5 Budget Data is treated as prevelidged Information:

It is very difficult to obtain information about military spending in African countries because of the desire to maintain secrecy for whatever reasons. Indeed it is possible to be charged with spying if one asks too many questions about military budgets. How then does one conduct such a study?

Strategy: The project is designed to pair university personnel with former military personnel or people who have directly worked on military budgets to act as resource personnel. These people do not only have knowledge about military matters but they also command

respect and confidence from their former colleagues. They also know the right questions to ask, and most importantly *how* to ask those questions. Please work close with your resource person.

3.6 Other Practical Advise

Ask the right questions: We must ask the right questions in the right tone to get the answers we want. The answers are there but we may have to work extra hard to get them. Be persistent but polite and respectful in your request for information.

The Researcher must be an Educator: In a culture not used to ordinary people asking questions about military expenditures, the researcher must be prepared to explain the rationale behind the research project and why it is important. Couch your pitch as one of support for the military sector. One of the reasons the general public in African countries do not support increased military expenditures in African countries is the lack of transparency in military budgeting. The project is intended to help the public understand the military budgeting process, hence it could garner public support for military appropriations. This approach will elicit cooperation from those you interview.

Never Lose Your Composure: Be prepared for the unexpected but never lose your composure and be sincere in your dealings with budget personnel. Always keep your end of any bargain you strike with people you interview. You have to earn their confidence and trust before they provide you with any useful information.

Expectation of High Quality Product: We expect a very high quality output from this project. Therefore, put in your best effort, use all the resources available to you and get help when the need arises. Believe me, you may need their help. You should also discuss issues with your fellow researchers.

4 Conclusion

Military spending is relatively large in African countries, yet very little is known about the *process* of military budgeting. This project is intended to understand the process that

generate the military spending data. Although there are problems associated with military spending in African countries, the strategies put in place by the project team, as well as hard work, patience, and dedication of the researchers will ensure success.

5 NOTES

1. There is evidence to suggest that reported military spending is far less than actual military spending in many African countries. For a discussion of this see Hendrickson and Ball (2001), Ball (1984b), Henk and Rupiya (2001).
2. See SIPRI Yearbook 2001, Appendixes 4A-1 and 4A-4.
3. See Wang (1998) for an excellent summary of the relationships between military spending and political instability.
4. For example, see Robert Looney, “The Budgetary Impact of Defence Expenditures in the Middle East”, *The Middle East Business and Economic Review*, **5** (2), 1993, 38-49.
5. See http://projects.sipri.se/mex_definition.html.
6. See Ball (1984) and Hendrickson and Ball (2001) for a discussion of off-budget military spending.

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8 Appendix B: Research Report Outline

While country experiences are different and therefore each country report in this project is likely to be different, it is important that all the country reports conform to a similar style and outline. I have therefore taken the liberty to suggest a possible outline for the country reports. Note that this is only a **suggested** outline and could be followed or discarded.

I. Introduction: Describes the country location, evolution of its political system and its economic background.

II. The General Budgetary Process in the Country

III. The military budget process:

- a. Policies guiding the process
- b. The Main actors in the process
- c. The role of external influence
- d. Key Mechanisms: Legislature, audit, budget office, etc.

IV. Components of the Military Expenditure

V. The role of paramilitary forces

VI. Other sources of income and expenditure

VII. The relationship between the political system and proper functioning of the military budgeting process

VIII. Conclusions and recommendations