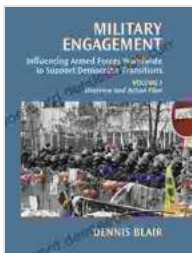


# Influencing Armed Forces Worldwide to Support Democratic Transitions

Armed forces play a crucial role in shaping political outcomes, particularly in contexts of democratic transitions. Their ability to influence events can either contribute to or hinder the consolidation of democratic institutions and values. This article examines the strategies and challenges involved in influencing armed forces worldwide to support democratic transitions, drawing on insights from comparative studies and case examples.



## Military Engagement: Influencing Armed Forces Worldwide to Support Democratic Transitions

by Dennis C. Blair

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 4301 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 158 pages  
Screen Reader : Supported



## Strategies for Influencing Armed Forces

A variety of strategies can be employed to influence armed forces towards supporting democratic transitions. These include:

### 1. Diplomatic Engagement and Dialogue

Diplomatic engagement involves establishing channels of communication and dialogue with military leaders. This allows for fostering mutual understanding, building trust, and conveying expectations regarding democratic principles and civilian control.

## **2. Civilian Oversight and Control**

Effective civilian oversight and control are essential for preventing armed forces from dominating political life. Establishing clear mechanisms for civilian oversight, such as legislative bodies or independent commissions, ensures that military power is subject to democratic accountability.

## **3. Professionalization and Training**

Professionalizing armed forces through training and education programs can promote apolitical behavior and adherence to democratic values. It helps foster a culture of respect for human rights, rule of law, and constitutional principles.

## **4. Security Sector Reform**

Security sector reform (SSR) involves comprehensive efforts to restructure and strengthen security institutions, including armed forces. It aims to enhance transparency, accountability, and civilian control over security actors.

## **5. International Military Assistance and Cooperation**

International cooperation, such as training programs or joint military exercises, can provide armed forces with exposure to democratic practices and norms. This can foster greater understanding of the importance of civilian control and democratic values.

## **Challenges in Influencing Armed Forces**

Despite various strategies, influencing armed forces to support democratic transitions faces several challenges:

### **1. Institutional Culture and Legacy**

Armed forces often have institutional cultures that prioritize obedience and loyalty over democratic principles. Overcoming these deeply ingrained norms can be challenging.

### **2. Political Polarization and Co-optation**

In highly polarized political environments, armed forces may become co-opted by political actors. This can undermine their neutrality and make them reluctant to support democratic principles.

### **3. Security Threats and National Interests**

Armed forces are primarily responsible for ensuring national security. When faced with real or perceived threats, they may prioritize military objectives over democratic processes.

### **4. Lack of Political Will and Commitment**

Political leaders may lack the will or commitment to implement necessary reforms to influence armed forces towards democratic support. This is often due to concerns about potential resistance or instability.

### **5. International Constraints and Intervention**

International interventions may have unintended consequences on armed forces' behavior. External support can unintentionally strengthen military autonomy or undermine civilian control.

## **Case Examples of Influencing Armed Forces**

Case studies provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities involved in influencing armed forces towards democratic transitions:

### **1. Tunisia**

After the 2011 revolution, the Tunisian armed forces played a crucial role in supporting democratic transition. Factors contributing to their support included diplomatic engagement, professionalization, and close cooperation with civil society.

### **2. Myanmar**

In Myanmar, the military has faced sustained international pressure to relinquish power and support democratic reforms. While some progress has been made, the military's continued involvement in politics remains a challenge.

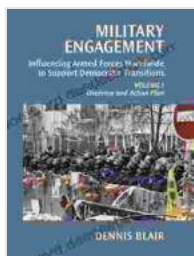
### **3. Egypt**

Egypt's transition to democracy following the 2011 uprising was marked by military intervention and political instability. The armed forces' refusal to subordinate themselves to civilian authority hindered the establishment of a democratic system.

Influencing armed forces worldwide to support democratic transitions is a complex and challenging endeavor. Effective strategies involve diplomatic engagement, civilian oversight, professionalization, security sector reform, and international cooperation. However, challenges such as institutional culture, political polarization, security threats, and international constraints

can impede progress. Case studies illustrate the varying degrees of success in influencing armed forces, highlighting the importance of tailored approaches and sustained international support.

Ultimately, the success of democratic transitions depends on the willingness of armed forces to embrace democratic values and submit to civilian control. By understanding the strategies and challenges involved, policymakers can develop more effective interventions aimed at promoting democratic transformation through the support of armed forces.



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