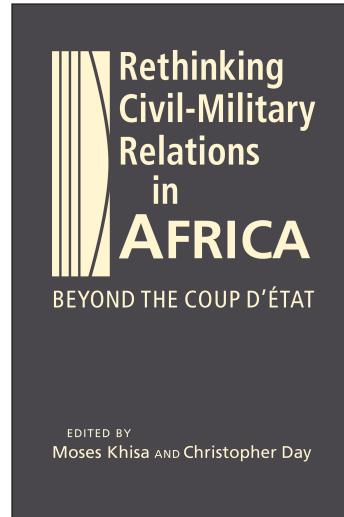


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Rethinking Civil-Military Relations in Africa: Beyond the Coup d'État

edited by
Moses Khisa and
Christopher Day

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Contents

<i>List of Tables and Figures</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xi
1 Rethinking Civil-Military Relations in Africa <i>Christopher Day and Moses Khisa</i>	1
2 Political Legitimacy and Military Interventions <i>Michael Ohene Aboagye and John F. Clark</i>	39
3 The African Union and the “Good Coup” <i>Erin Damman and Christopher Day</i>	65
4 The “Coups Taboo” and Authoritarian Politics <i>Moses Khisa</i>	91
5 African Militaries and Contemporary Warfare <i>Jahara Matissek and William Reno</i>	115
6 Military Effectiveness: The African Alternative <i>Jahara Matissek</i>	139
7 Security Sector Reform and Civil-Military Relations <i>Louis-Alexandre Berg</i>	161

viii *Contents*

8	Beyond the Coup d'État? <i>Erin Damman, Christopher Day, and Moses Khisa</i>	185
	<i>List of Acronyms</i>	207
	<i>Bibliography</i>	211
	<i>The Contributors</i>	237
	<i>Index</i>	239
	<i>About the Book</i>	249

1

Rethinking Civil-Military Relations in Africa

Christopher Day and Moses Khisa

*It is always dangerous for soldiers, sailors, or airmen to play at politics.
They enter a sphere in which the values are quite different from those to
which they have hitherto been accustomed.*

—Winston Churchill

On August 18, 2020, Mali's president Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta was forced to resign only two years into a second term. He had been arrested by members of the Malian armed forces in a coup d'état, the country's fourth since independence. While Keïta had often relied on security forces to shore up his rickety hold on authority (Human Rights Watch 2020), upheaval in the northern part of the country, popular protests in the capital, and a history of corruption and electoral malfeasance finally drove disgruntled soldiers to take matters into their own hands. The foreign-trained leaders of the mutiny quickly formed the National Committee for the Salvation of the People, promising elections and political stability against the backdrop of regional and international condemnation for an unconstitutional seizure of power.

A little more than a year earlier on April 11, 2019, after weeks of popular protests, the Sudanese armed forces bloodlessly relieved Omar al-Bashir of his three-decade stretch as Sudan's president. What soon followed was a carousel of interim leaders, an unanticipated disruption to Sudan's already fragile political order. A military council struggled to renovate regime politics in the face of intransigent wrangling, an attempted counter-coup, and persistent civilian opposition (de Waal 2019; Mampilly 2019).

Seventeen months earlier, Zimbabwe experienced a similar yet more ambiguous fate, as the army's Operation Restore Legacy put an end to Robert Mugabe's thirty-seven years of rule, described as "the politest coup in history," and masquerading as a purge of "criminals" (Cheeseman 2017). This military intervention into Zimbabwe's politics was more a reshuffle of elites than a full-blown coup, doing its best to appear to act within the country's constitutional order rather than replace it entirely (Beardsworth, Cheeseman, and Tinhu 2019; Tendi 2020). These episodes all came in the wake of Egypt's experience in 2013, when after ousting Hosni Mubarak in the face of a relentless street uprising in 2011, the Egyptian military reclaimed power after a short stint under the Islamist leader Muhammad Morsi, a move that prompted the African Union (AU) to suspend Egypt's membership in the continental body (Tansey 2017: 145).

What do these snapshots tell us about the nature of contemporary Africa's civil-military relations? At first glance, they seem to coincide with a common view of Africa as a continent of coups and military regimes. Yet, a closer look shows that the patterns of behavior exhibited by today's political and military actors across Africa have changed in ways that fundamentally depart from those of the preceding decades. In the same spirit, societal attitudes toward the role of the military have also changed, moving away from what was largely a negative perception at the height of pervasive military regimes and military-instigated disorder in countries such as Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, and Uganda, to mention but a few. Moving forward, a proper understanding of civil military relations requires situating the military within a set of political and sociocultural changes present in different African states and societies (Ratuva, Compel, and Aguilar 2019: 5).

As a coercive institution, the military is an integral part of the modern state, invested with a high concentration of power. Indeed, the Weberian ideal of centralizing and monopolizing the means of violence remains a cardinal yardstick for measuring state strength, effective control, and the range of organizational capabilities that states depend on to manage basic public affairs and that constitute the state's *raison d'être*. This is especially relevant in an era when states worldwide face growing and diverse challenges both internally and externally. Yet, if the successful monopoly of violence is a defining feature of the state, it is seldom perfect or complete. This is an acute problem for many African states, where effective state control has historically been beyond the reach of many regimes. The kaleidoscope of coups and countercoups of the 1960s and 1970s overturned regimes in a majority of newly independent states (Young 2012; Meredith 2014). Successive waves of military interventions into politics became heavily implicated in Africa's state and societal crises of the 1980s and 1990s. And although the nature and extent of political instability changed significantly in the post-Cold War era, Africa still faces changing forms of state fragility,

shifting threats to regime security, and ongoing political challenges from state armed forces as well as armed nonstate actors.

As governments inevitably invest in building coercive institutions, for internal security and external defense, the conventional wisdom points to the looming danger of military intrusion into the political realm if the military is not sufficiently subordinated to civilian authority and subject to public accountability. Indeed, since independence, the common issue facing African states has been the dual problem of (1) failing to exert effective state control and to broadcast power; and (2) building militaries that are loyal to and serve the state rather than the narrow interests of regimes, politicians, or soldiers. This is the true crux of the civil-military conundrum in Africa: the dilemma of protection *by* the military and protection *from* the military by building efficient military institutions that guard civilians but are, at the same time, accountable to civilian authorities and the wider public (Feaver 1996, 2003).

For a long time, the dominant paradigm of understanding civil-military relations in Africa was anchored in viewing the coup d'état as the primary mechanism for military interference in otherwise civilian politics. This is unsurprising since, as a region, Africa has been historically rife with coups, a phenomenon central to Africa's civil-military conundrum (Decalo 1998a; McGowan 2003; Souaré 2014). In much of the scholarship on Africa's civil-military dilemma, the common theoretical entry point has been Samuel Huntington's *The Soldier and the State*, the classic study that pivots on the concept of "objective civilian control." In this "proper" mode of civil-military relations, a professionalized officer corps is subordinate to civilian control and the civil-military conundrum is solved when professional soldiers stick to soldiering and remain neutral agents of, rather than participants in, politics, let alone become masterminds and instigators of coups d'état (Huntington 1957; Feaver 1996, 2003). This means that the military adheres to a strict creed and code of conduct that marks a clear demarcation between functions of the military and activities that are out of bounds (Khisra and Day 2020).

This conventional approach to understanding civil-military relations fits awkwardly in the African context and requires some fundamental rethinking for several reasons. Empirically, coups d'état have steadily declined for the past two decades, a trend that poses the question of whether fewer coups signal the absence of military involvement in regime politics. In addition, there is remarkable variation across cases with a set of outcomes in civil-military relations not adequately captured by the existing literature. What is more, the marked decline of coups has happened simultaneously with other key transformations that have reshaped the permissive and constraining conditions of Africa's civil-military relations. For example, changes in the nature of conflict on the continent have

prompted corresponding changes in how states respond through a continental regional peace and security architecture (Straus 2012; Williams 2016; Brubacher, Damman, and Day 2017; Whitaker and Clark 2019). There have also been notable shifts in the domestic political dynamics of many African states, where the institutionalization of authority has taken both democratic and authoritarian paths (Riedl 2014; Cheeseman and Fisher 2019). Furthermore, changes in international and regional norms have meant that, increasingly, intrusive military activities in civilian politics are met with swift condemnation and disapproval, a major departure from the Cold War era politics (Souaré 2014; Williams 2006).

In our assessment, the conceptual and theoretical language to assess civil-military relations in Africa remains underdeveloped.¹ In the broader study of African politics, scholars have considered the coup d'état to be the primary outcome of interest to civil-military relations. This narrow focus has obscured more than it has illuminated the complexities of civil-military relations on the continent. Real political transformations in Africa have outpaced conventional explanations of civil-military relations, and they do not speak to some of the peculiarities of African political systems.

In this book, we seek to reorient the study of civil-military relations in Africa by casting a wider net on the empirical terrain to capture a broader range of phenomena beyond the coup. We also reframe the theoretical discussion around not the coup d'état per se, but the broader spectrum of *civil-military relations* as the primary outcome of interest, which recognizes theoretical levers that are more complex than the conventional scholarship has portrayed. As such, we seek to push the field to examine how civil-military relations play out not just in conventional democracies, but in authoritarian regimes as well (Svolik 2012), and how they factor in multidimensional trade-offs between governance, coup-proofing, and military effectiveness that include a variety of armed state and nonstate actors, particularly in times of war (Brooks 2019). This requires us to normalize the military's role in politics despite normative and analytical tendencies to institutionally disaggregate military and civilian authority.

Five Empirical Puzzles

This book begins with the premise that Africa's militaries play key roles in political and societal processes that do not necessarily involve the signature move of the coup d'état previously associated with military intrusions and activities. While coups still occur, and are an important phenomenon, the effort to rethink civil-military relations requires examining patterns of military institutions and actors that stray beyond or engage differently in matters of national security or even domestic law and order, all of which have implications for political processes and societal relations. For instance,

in South Sudan and Uganda, army officers occupy seats in the national legislature and hold cabinet or other civilian positions (Khisa and Day 2020). In Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Uganda, prominent members of the military and military-owned companies participate directly in state-owned construction and manufacturing sectors of the economy (Booth and Golooba-Mutebi 2012; Gebregziabher 2019). Such actions, among others, enable armies to be involved in political and economic processes in quite unorthodox ways, which makes direct military interventions unnecessary yet allows militaries to function as fulcrums of socioeconomic and political processes. To get at trends such as these, we identify five major empirical puzzles that require fresh thinking and a reorientation of civil-military relations on the continent: the decline of coups, outliers and the “coup but not a coup,” patterns of state violence, regional security and defense operations, and foreign military training.

The Decline of Coups

One of the most dramatic changes on the African political landscape in the past two decades has been the precipitous decline in overt military takeovers, a major departure from “coup-routines” of the 1970s and 1980s. The severity of the coup phenomenon in the decades following Africa’s independence was such that military takeovers were a guaranteed annual occurrence, with the exception of a handful of those in the “stable minority” (Decalo 1998b: 10). Sudan’s coup in 1958 marked the first military takeover in independent Africa. However, it is the 1963 coup d’état in Togo that is considered the conventional bookend to a wave of coups that included nine concentrated in just a few months between 1965 and 1966 (Wells 1974; Young 2012). From the mid-1960s through the mid-1990s, Africa was a continent of coups. The question became not why military coups happen, but why they do not (Clark 2007: 142).

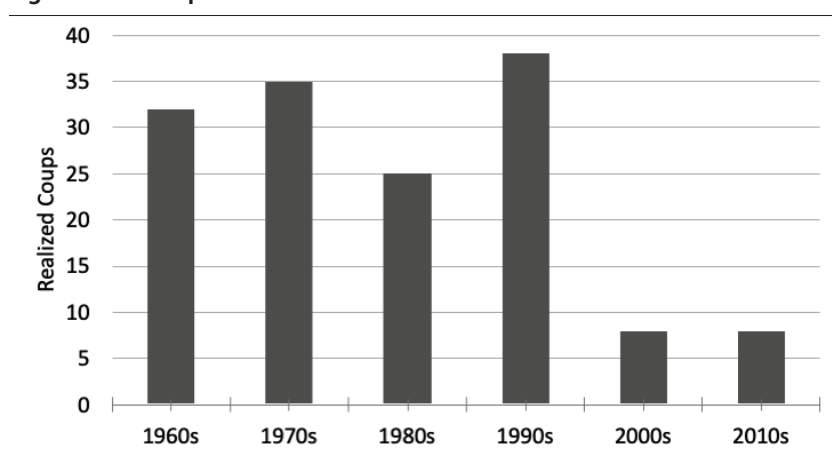
In his study, Patrick J. McGowan (2003) observed that from 1956 to 2001, there were 188 attempted military coups, 43 percent of which succeeded. This means that during the first three decades of independent Africa, the continent averaged more than twenty successful coups per decade (Khisa and Day 2020). Other passes through the data confirm this pattern, where during the first two decades of independence alone, the continent experienced some forty successful coups (Meredith 2014: 608). Yet another look shows that from 1960 to 1990, there were at least twenty-two successful coups per decade, and more than seventy in total from 1956 to 1990. During this period, at least one-third of African states were under one form of military rule or the other and, by 2012, the continent had experienced eighty-eight successful coups in thirty-three countries (Souaré 2014: 75; Young 2012: 145).

In one instructive case, Benin had five successful coups during the first ten years of independence in circumstances where “soldiers were overthrown

by other soldiers with almost revolving-door regularity” (Reid 2012: 154). By the 1980s, most African states had experienced at least one successful coup, with several repeat offenders, notably Benin, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria, tied at six apiece. After overthrowing civilian leaders, uniformed men turned to overthrowing one other in countercoups, palace coups, and “coups of descending order” by junior officers, as happened in Burkina Faso and Ghana, where senior officers who overthrew incumbents were replaced by disgruntled junior officers, who themselves gave in to the ostentatious excesses of authority and were replaced in turn (Schraeder 2003: 204). Only a few countries, including Botswana, Cape Verde, Eritrea, Mauritius, Namibia, and South Africa, emerged from this period unscathed. With the wave of democratization making landfall on the continent in late 1980s, the military seemed to “return” to the barracks. Yet, this trend also corresponded with an increase in armed conflict in Africa, and the coup phenomenon once again accelerated in the 1990s along with rebellion and regional cross-border proxy wars (Tamm 2016; Day 2015).

The sheer prevalence of military intrusions meant that coups d’état dominated much of popular representations and scholarly analyses of African politics. The coup also became the primary lens for conceptualizing civil-military relations, associated with the officer corps’ lack of professionalism and the failure to internalize norms of modern military conduct, human rights, and fidelity to civilian authority. By the 2000s, however, the frequency and duration of coups declined markedly, as shown in Figure 1.1. On its own, this phenomenon presents a compelling puzzle—what once was

Figure 1.1 Coups in Africa over Time



Source: Authors’ own.

a dominant feature of the African political landscape has dramatically faded from view, though it has not entirely disappeared.

The decline of the coup d'état raises important questions not just about how to develop a general explanation for this dramatic change, but also how to consider the attendant implications of this decline for broader civil-military relations. On the one hand, this trend suggests at least from the conventional view that civil-military relations in Africa are more institutionalized, and that militaries are more professionalized. The range of possible factors behind these changes include economic development, democratic reforms (see Aboagye and Clark this volume), regional normative changes that condemn unconstitutional means of taking power (see Damman and Day this volume), and foreign training of African armies (see Matisek and Reno this volume; Berg this volume). On the other hand, while there has been a decline of *successful* coups, a close look reveals that *coup behavior*—that is, attempted and thwarted coups—has remained relatively present (McGowan 2005, 2006; Khisa this volume). There have been structural changes in Africa's civil-military relations as regimes have figured out better coup-proofing and coup-disguising strategies independent of larger trends.

Outliers and the "Coup but Not a Coup"

The decline in the prevalence of coups has not meant their total eradication. The odd coup still occurs in Africa, as does the more ambiguous coup but not a coup, and even the "good coup" (see Damman and Day this volume). In the past decade, both overt and disguised coups d'état took place in Niger in 2010, Guinea Bissau and Mali in 2012, Egypt in 2013, Zimbabwe in 2017, Sudan in 2019, Mali in 2020 and 2021, and most recently in Guinea Conakry in September 2021. A related phenomenon is the "constitutional coup," where incumbents change laws to extend their rule once term limits expire. These have met with much shoulder shrugging from the AU and an international community equally reluctant to pointedly call them "coups" (see Khisa this volume). Either way, where coups were once a dominant and routine occurrence, these cases now represent curious outliers. Put another way, if the decline of the coup d'état in Africa presents an important puzzle, the obverse of this phenomenon is also one that requires interrogating: What explains these outliers and alternative forms of the traditional coup? From a comparative perspective, why do they occur in some countries, but not in others?

Among the recent outliers is Sudan's coup of 2019. While it resembled a straight-up deposition of the incumbent Omar al-Bashir, it was embedded within a set of broad-based popular protests. The Zimbabwe case of 2017 was more representative of the coup but not a coup. While the army chief of staff, Major General Sibusiso Moyo, adamantly declared "this is not a military takeover," it nevertheless bore the hallmarks of the military seizing

of power. The 2012, 2020, and 2021 coups in Mali were gripping reminders that it is too early to speak of a *postcoup* Africa, even as the country had lasted two decades as a stable and functional democracy. Similarly, the events in Egypt in 2013 represented a puzzling anticlimax in the highly anticipated democratic revolution following the historic ousting of long-surviving autocrat, Hosni Mubarak. The Egyptian coup—and others such as Mauritania in 2005, Mali in 2020, and Guinea Conakry in 2021—raised the old question of whether it is not morally justified for the military to topple a democratically elected regime that has turned authoritarian; thus, the notion of a *good coup*, which gets a lukewarm reception from the AU and a pass for the likelihood of democratic transition.

What should we make of these episodes? On the one hand, the increasing rarity of the traditional coup d'état in the past decade, compared to previous decades, is a clear positive trend. But the ongoing occurrence of occasional coups indicates continuity in residual patterns of previous civil-military relations. This answer appears to lie, at least partially, in the cumulative and path-dependent dynamic that conditions countries that have a prominent historical role of the military to remain trapped in a cycle of military intrusions of one form or another—a kind of “military malware.” On the other hand, as they have faced a broadening range of obstacles to direct intervention, African armies are correspondingly finding alternative ways to remain mired in or to freshly enter politics beyond the coup. Aside from the outliers, the camouflaged coups and the constitutional sleights of hand seem to confirm Samuel Edward Finer’s observation that “the absence of coups does not mean the absence of military influence in civilian regimes” (Finer 1962: 77).

The cases briefly discussed here, among others, underline two key points about military interventions in contemporary African politics. First, regardless of regime type, elite factional struggles and institutional fragmentation supply the easy justification for military intervention ostensibly to restore political order. This is of course hardly new, but it has recently been reproduced in quite instructive ways in, for example, Sudan in 2019 and Mali in 2020. That there remain grounds for coups speaks to considerable continuity in the role of the military in African politics. Second, the underdeveloped nature of African democratic institutions means military intervention of one form or the other tends to trump other methods of resolving political disputes when they arise.

Patterns of State Violence

Another empirical observation (and puzzle) in Africa’s civil-military relations is the changing nature of violence against civilians by state security forces. Historically, African militaries developed an appalling reputation for being unprofessional, undisciplined, and predatory. At best, this involved

individual, poorly paid soldiers shaking ordinary people down at checkpoints. At worst, it meant strategic violence targeted at a particular group in the service of control, or even worse, elimination. Yet, a quick and cursory look at data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) shows a downward trend of state violence, which tracks closely with violence carried out by state-sponsored militias.² Assuming the downward trajectory holds, at least at the surface level, it illuminates the changing relationship between state security forces and civilians in which state violence is not an effective or desirable means of control. By extension, if violence is on the decline, what then explains its continuity in some cases, and what factors drive ongoing violence in the cases that seem to disproportionately contribute to the overall tally? And what are the implications for civil-military relations?

It is not difficult to conjure up an image of the predatory soldier in Africa. Look no further than Fela Kuti's 1976 song "Zombie," a harsh portrayal of the Nigerian army that saw in response his compound overrun by 1,000 soldiers, which also resulted in his mother's death. Skip ahead two decades to Sierra Leone's Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) junta, which came to power in a coup in May 1997. Stopped by random soldiers and told to "give me your boots, we soldiers are guiding you!" many ordinary people in Freetown consider this period the worst in the country's civil war. To be sure, some of these snapshots are caricatures, but despite the contemporary decline in such behavior, similar patterns nevertheless persist.

Why do these changing patterns matter for civil-military relations? In analyzing the data, one caveat is certainly in order. Because these are conflict datasets, they do not necessarily capture state violence that happens in "ordinary" times, during popular protests, or in elections. The data are also hard to collect and verify. Again, however, decreasing violence may very well be a sign that the military in Africa is professionalizing, taming its excesses, and evolving from the days of being an "albatross" around the neck of state politics (Kieh and Agbese 2004). This trend may be a function of training and cultivation of professional norms and ethos, or it could be the result of institutional change and democratic transition. Alternatively, it may be that the costs associated with using violence against civilians have climbed beyond what regimes are willing to pay. Either way, whether state violence was by accident or by design, the space where this particular mode of coercion was commonplace has steadily constricted over time. This, of course, is not to say that state violence is a thing of the past.

Regional Security and Defense Operations

Still another key puzzle is Africa's steady march toward a common defense framework, which represents key institutional changes over time that also defy expectations of states traditionally protective of their sovereignty.

What once was a patchy arrangement, based on ad hoc measures and hamstrung by the principles of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), has since developed into the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) of the contemporary African Union. Since the AU took root in 2002, there has been a widening array of regional peace and security operations throughout the continent, undergirded by the development of a robust institutional and normative framework for deciding when and where such operations are necessary. This poses a compelling puzzle for civil-military relations, as there is an increased role for African militaries in regional relations, but normative changes have required a decreased role for these militaries within the political context of their own states. Moreover, it remains an open question as to whether the experiences of African armies that participate in regional operations matter to how they view their role in domestic politics, a role that is either circumscribed or accelerated by other factors depending on the state.

These changes are striking. During the days of the OAU, the regional body made several stillborn attempts to cobble together military operations such as one in Chad during the early 1980s (Amoo and Zartman 1992). By 1993, the so-called Kampala Document was a novel attempt at addressing conflicts. But the OAU still could not reconcile its need to collectively tackle regional instability with its overriding principle of noninterference, which prevented the intervention in the internal affairs of member states. In contrast, today's AU has a much more interventionist stance, undergirded by the Constitutive Act and the Peace and Security Council.

For instance, the AU has invoked the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, adopted in 2004, to denounce governments in Burkina Faso, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Niger that seized power by unconstitutional means (Souaré 2014; Day, Khisa, and Reno 2020). In March 2008, the AU launched Operation Democracy in Comoros to remove the incumbent administration on the island of Anjouan. And in 2017, it denounced Yahaya Jammeh in the Gambia, forcing him out of power with an Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) intervention force under Senegal that was mobilized to intervene if Jammeh did not relinquish power. More recently, the creation of the African Union Task Forces extends the remit of intervention even further. The Regional Task Force (RTF) and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) were established not as peace operations per se, but to provide a military solution to the transnational threats of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and Boko Haram, respectively (Brubacher, Damman, and Day 2017).

What do these developments tell us about civil-military relations in Africa? On one hand, the decline in coups d'état has unfolded in tandem with major changes in regional norms that proscribe military interference in domestic politics. Whereas the OAU's principle of noninterference created

permissive conditions for military interference in politics, the AU's shift to nonindifference has placed constraints on the political roles of Africa's armies (see Damman and Day this volume). Yet, on the other hand, rather than usher in the demilitarization of African states, these changes have instead *elevated* the role of African armies, but in a regional context and with an outward orientation. The key puzzle that these competing notions reflect rests on the assumption that African armies are working out their domestic civil-military relations in ways that (1) render them sufficiently professional as to keep their distance from their own political systems; and (2) allow them to be folded into the command structures of AU operations that, by necessity, interfere in domestic political systems of other African states. Solving this puzzle will certainly become more salient as the AU continues its move toward the creation of the African Standby Force (ASF).

Foreign Military Training

A final puzzle considers the complex relationships between African militaries and foreign training programs, often bundled into the language of security sector reform (SSR) and tied to a range of evolving global security partnerships. Since the early 2000s, there have been more than forty SSR programs across the continent, funded largely by the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union (Bendix and Stanley 2008a, 2008b; Hendricks and Musavengana 2010; Jackson and Albrecht 2010; Kohl 2014).

Why does foreign military training signify a puzzle? To be clear, this is not about evaluating the impact of foreign military training on civil-military relations per se, as this would translate into an upside-down research question that “leads with a cause” (Day and Koivu 2019: 2). Rather, it is to ascertain the range of outcomes associated with the foreign military training of African armies, and to hypothesize what antecedent conditions or intervening factors rooted in a specific state's civil-military relations bend the foreign training in one direction or another.

SSR programs are an influential part of the broader framework of foreign aid directed at state building, which includes foreign training of military and police personnel, institutional reforms and restructuring, support for peacekeeping missions, and counterinsurgency operations (Jackson 2018; Reno 2018; Berg 2020). These programs have entailed the supply of external financial and manpower resources toward state building ostensibly to ameliorate the problem of ungoverned spaces that incubate terrorism and to prevent coups from destabilizing African states, which can lead to mass displacements that contribute to migration flows into Europe.

All of this matters for Africa's civil-military relations in several ways. From the perspective of foreign trainers, the core assumption is that developing partnerships with African states helps shape their civil-military relations into the Huntingtonian ideal of “objective civilian control” through

the transmission of norms and values, and by developing military competences. Countries like the United States and France seek reliable partners for larger security operations, with the added benefit of creating professionalism in the military, reducing the likelihood of the military meddling in politics, and thus resulting in more stability and better security. On the other hand, SSR does not always successfully split the military off from politics and, quite to the contrary, may well accelerate or consolidate whatever mode of civil-military relations is rooted in prevailing networks of authority and informal channels—democratic or authoritarian, political or commercial, stable or unstable. Moreover, injecting African militaries with any array of material or ideational resources may confer on key actors the material and ideational wherewithal to ultimately intervene in politics after all, and the development of human capital can make trained soldiers suited for tasks that fall outside traditional military activities.

A key insight from recent research, then, is that domestic power distribution and political settlements shape SSR outcomes, sometimes contrary to Western expectations and assumptions (Onoma 2014; Berg 2020, this volume). Rather than shoring up political stability, SSR programs in countries such as Somalia and South Sudan fuel intraelite conflict, increase profiteering, and help incumbents repress their opponents (de Waal 2015; Reno 2018). In a sense, then, SSR suffers from the same perverse incentives that attend foreign aid generally, in part because the approach emphasizes technical fixes and tends to ignore political repercussions (Jackson 2018: 4). Again, the key perspective here is to frame the puzzle of foreign training not as an explanatory factor on its own, but as to how contrasting modes of civil-military relations in different states instrumentalize attendant resources of foreign training to produce certain outcomes, and why these occur in some cases and not others.

What We Think We Know

To be sure, not all roads lead to the coup d'état as the defining feature of civil military relations. Recently, Risa Brooks (2019) helpfully identified a range of extant phenomena undergoing comparative study, which includes coups but also military defections, civilian control of the military, and societal-military (dis)integration. This book represents an explicit attempt to build on these efforts and move beyond approaches to civil-military relations that focus on the coup d'état. The goal is to help reorient the subfield toward a broader range of relationships at different levels of analysis—not just dynamics between political and military elites or civilian institutions and armies, but also relations between militaries and wider society. This approach requires additional efforts to rethink the coup idiom, which still dominates work on civil-military relations in Africa.

This begins by casting a wide net around the prevailing scholarship to highlight the factors associated with the military's role in politics more generally, and also in the distinct African context. By situating this work into four categories at international, macro, meso, and micro levels of analysis, we hope to provide a scaffolding and a serviceable road map to an analytical reorientation that recognizes the ambiguous boundaries between coups and other modes of political transformation, which sit along a spectrum of political authority and military force (Luckham 1994; Hutchful and Bathily 1998).

International Factors

Our first level of factors considers how civil-military relations in Africa are subject to historical and more recent systemic changes in international politics (Clapham 1996). For instance, in her study of army mutinies in Africa, Maggie Dwyer (2017) identifies global economic trends of the 1980s that provided permissive conditions and public discourse not just for popular protest, but for discontent among junior officers in Africa's armed forces. A major contribution here is the distinction between coups and mutinies. Where coups are concerned with regime change, mutinies seek to change the military hierarchy and have no explicit political motives (Hathaway 2001; Dwyer 2017: 7). That said, both coups and mutinies are significant to civil-military relations, as the linkages between shrinking national budgets and increased military spending historically have become tangled up in externally oriented economics, debt, and structural adjustment (Bienen and Gersovitz 1985; Jenkins and Kposowa 1990; O'Kane 1983; Ihonvbere 1991; van de Walle 2001). The comparative literature confirms the observation that external economic shocks can be reliable predictors of coups (Kim 2016). The obverse can also be true, where foreign aid in postconflict countries nourishes regimes with resources to aid in coup-proofing (Girod 2015).

Other comparative work shows how the international security environment shapes civil-military relations (Desch 1999). In particular, the existence of external threats can reduce the risks of coups by cutting off avenues for military involvement in politics, as they are otherwise occupied with interstate conflict (Piplani and Talmadge 2016). Similarly, interstate conflict can create opportunities for deterring internal challenges through coup-proofing (Arbatli and Arbatli 2016). In some cases, regimes navigate the "guardianship dilemma" by calculating that the loyalty of the military will depend on its evaluation of external threats—the more severe the threat, the less likely a military will be willing to take on the dual challenges of overthrowing a regime and facing an international crisis (McMahon and Slantchev 2015). For those states that have suffered from international crises and chronic external threats, coups have become even less

likely as armies have sought to professionalize and retreat from politics entirely (White 2017).

In the African context, the impacts of international factors on civil-military relations have historical foundations. At independence, Africa's new national armies were essentially poorly institutionalized hand-me-downs from the colonial state's coercive apparatus, which uneven processes of decolonization and authority transfer did little to correct (Crocker 1974; Omara-Otunnu 1987; Parsons 2004). Colonially created distortions in recruitment and leadership hierarchies, and the lack of an overarching ideological commitment to a unified nationalist cause, shaped the praetorian proclivities of African militaries and set them up for the crises that followed independence. In some cases, particularly in francophone Africa, former metropolises continued providing coup-proofing guarantees to new regimes (Goldsworthy 1981; Luckham 1980). African armies were also drawn into regional geopolitical and superpower proxy wars, which invariably shaped civil-military relations by flooding the continent with arms and creating fresh challenges for regime security (Gleijeses 2002; Laidi 1990).

More recently, an important development at the international level of analysis has been the changing nature of foreign assistance to African security forces, both material and ideational. Material engagement includes direct training or arms transfers. While the effects of foreign assistance on coup probability are mixed (Wolpin 1972; Rowe 1974; Muller and Zimmerman 1987; Maniruzzaman 1987), there is evidence that the fungibility of foreign aid can actually bolster autocrats and undermine broader institutional development (Remmer 2004; Wright 2008; Licht 2010; Feyzioglu, Swaroop, and Zhu 1998). Ideationally, foreign assistance initiates a transfer of professional norms and national security doctrines while also providing professional reference groups (Price 1971; Janowitz 1977; Marenin 1982), which puts downward pressure on the risk of coups (Ruby and Gibler 2010; Atkinson 2006). An alternative view of foreign training is not so sanguine. Jesse Dillon Savage and Jonathan D. Caverley (2017) have shown that military training increases the military's balance of power relative to incumbent regimes, increasing the likelihood of coups.

Another perspective is found in the more critical scholarship on *militarism*, or the "preparation for war, its normalization and legitimization" (Stravrianakis and Stern 2018; 4). Here, African militaries are situated within the global "security-development nexus" (Gelot and Sandor 2019: 521) as conduits for great-power interests, particularly their international counterterrorism and peace operations (Abrahamsen 2018, 2019). This approach dovetails with recent work on security sector reform, which is designed to strengthen the coercive capacities of African security institutions, for better or worse (Jackson 2011, 2018; Reno 2018; Berg 2020), a topic that Louis-Alexandre Berg explicitly addresses in this book.

Macro-Level Factors

The macro level captures the structural features of Africa's institutional milieu and the nature of state-society relations, which ostensibly pull military actors into political roles. Echoing Samuel Huntington (1968: 194), Naunihal Singh (2014: 18–19) observed that macro-level factors reflect the “demand side” of the civil-military equation, where armies enter politics in response to any range of structural factors embedded within politics and society more broadly. Correspondingly, a series of cross-national studies have sought to conceptualize, count, and code the sheer number of coups in Africa (Jackman 1978; T Johnson, Slater, and McGowan 1983; Lunde 1991; McGowan 2003) and capture their macro-level correlates more generally (Powell and Thyne 2011).

One salient macro-level factor is ethnicity. While some view ethnic identity in armies as distinct from ethnic competition in state politics (Johnson and Thurber 2020), in the African context there is evidence that ethnicity, enmeshed with political institutions, is a key structural factor underpinning coups on the continent (Jackman 1978; Jenkins and Kposowa 1992; Houle and Bodea 2017). Indeed, with an already poor historical fit between state and civil society in Africa, active mobilization of ethnic (or even regional and religious) identities has hardened into sectarian markers that have situated different groups within political institutions (Luckham 1980; Young 2012). As state actors have sought to demobilize these institutions and their actors through ethnic exclusion, particularly via the mechanism of patronage, this has “activated” ethnic identities in many cases (Harkness 2018). And because Africa's armies often have high levels of ethnic skewness, they may also possess organizational endowments that can be marshaled toward violence should they face a reversal of political fortune, which works similarly to armed groups that consist of former elites (Day 2019).

These insights underline Africa's historical pattern of weak political institutions, among them the small and rickety armies hastily transferred from the colonial state at independence (Crocker 1974; Welch 1978; Meredith 2014). This inheritance was the foundation for a fragile power equation that created the permissive conditions for uneven civil-military relations, especially given the slow pace of institutionalization against accelerating social mobilization (Huntington 1968). Indeed, as Aristide R. Zolberg (1968) observed early on, the coup itself became an institutionalized pattern of how Africa's macrostructures operated. Moreover, there are even more moving parts to Africa's state-society relations and the fragile civil institutions that manage sectarian and class divides (Finer 1962). Beyond ethnicity, rivalries between the petty bourgeoisie and ruling classes can contribute to unstable civil-military relations (Hutchful 1979b; Othman 1984). And elites versus masses cleavages can emerge as urban lumpens

and rural peasants make class-based claims against the state, which can often blur with ethnic identity and result in “class wolves under tribal sheepskins” (Sklar 1967: 6; Abdullah 1998).

Another macro-level factor is regime type. A key insight from recent scholarship has been that democratic transitions risk dismantling the status quo of military institutions (Harkness 2018). Indeed, Eboe Hutchful’s (1997) analysis of Ghana’s failed democratic transition in 1979–1981 was that a “coup from below” resulted from an institutional breakdown between civilian and military elites vying for control over the reorganization of Ghana’s armed forces. And while coups can sometimes be catalysts for democratization, they can also serve to entrench preexisting authoritarian trajectories (Powell, Chacha, and Smith 2019), or simply allow dictators to be replaced by other dictators (Derpanopoulos, Frantz, Geddes, and Wright 2016). In fact, some illiberal regimes in Africa are able to instrumentalize the “securitization agenda” that foreign donors front-end as a condition for development assistance, where aid helps further entrench, extend, and maintain authoritarian control over state militaries (Fisher and Anderson 2015: 131). Indeed, such perspectives point to the military’s role in stabilizing Africa’s politics rather than upending it (Ojo 2009; Ehwarieime 2011; Bah 2015).

The broader comparative literature holds conflicting views. While there is evidence that coups in donor-dependent states often give way to competitive elections (Marinov and Goemans 2013), politicized militaries can pose obstacles to democratization (Tusalem 2014). Some argue that democracies are particularly vulnerable to coups (Bell 2016), while others claim that in authoritarian systems, coups are more likely to occur when small ruling coalitions proactively coup-proof through purges of troublesome elites (Marcum and Brown 2016; Sudduth 2017). Alternatively, sometimes auto-crats hold elections to gauge political opposition and “allow” coups to occur as a pretext to either accommodate or eliminate rivals (Wig and Rød 2016). And among the strongest predictors of coups is a state’s history of political violence, which causes uncertainty among military elites (Bell and Sudduth 2017).

Meso-Level Factors

The meso level considers the organizational and behavioral characteristics of African armies that push them into taking on political roles, often through coups. This is “supply side” of the civil-military equation where conflict *within* the armed forces can also shape civil-military relations and dynamics, and when militaries engage in conflicts with incumbents to protect their identity and interests (Singh 2014; Lammers 1969). Indeed, the classic literature on civil-military relations considers corporate grievances harbored by militaries, which can manifest in various and shifting

combinations, as major wellsprings of coups (Nordlinger 1977; Thompson 1980).

Meso-level factors are embedded in the weak organizational structures underpinning Africa's civil-military relations (Lofchie 1972; Adekson 1981; Jenkins and Kposowa 1992). While postcolonial armies remained dependent on former metropolises, their command structures were upended by rapid promotions, inflated ranks, and limited actual experience (Coleman and Brice 1962; Luckham 1971; Hutchful 1979a; Baynham 1988). Armies in new states were expected to be technocratic and modernizing agents whose devotion to a "national ideal" could overcome political fragmentation (Janowitz 1964; Hopkins 1966). Yet, more often than not, African armies became organizational "mesocosms" of national-level sectarian imbalances (Mazrui 1975; Adekson 1979; Cox 1976; Enloe 1980; Omara-Otunnu 1987), where the military emerged as a *nouvelle bourgeoisie* in competition with ruling classes (Meillassoux 1970; First 1970; Wolpin 1980). Idi Amin's 1971 coup can be understood as an extension of class-based antagonisms of the Ugandan army, which constituted a distinct social class of its own (Lofchie 1972). Similarly, Jimmy Kande (2004: 1) refers to a "militariat" whose "coups from below" represent subaltern class grievances and quasi-criminal enterprises more than traditional military intrusions into politics.

In the long run, Africa's armed forces have, on balance, fallen short of being vanguards of modern organization and meeting the expectations to *behave* professionally—incapable at best, predatory at worst (Howe 2001). Most were historically rife with rivalries along multiple vectors—between senior and junior officers, often leading to "coups of descending order" (Schraeder 2003; Ihonvbere 1991), and between officers and soldiers as well as among different armed services such as paramilitaries or police—which all contributed to exacerbating generalized indiscipline (Lofchie 1972; Baynham 1988; First 1970; Pateman 1992). In countries such as Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Sierra Leone, junior officers responded to dysfunctional politics and the destabilizing role of the military by overthrowing not just civilian governments, but military hierarchies as well. At another level, the army performed the role as a "traditionalizer" of formal institutions and a node of informal networks (Owusu 1986, 1989; Chabal and Daloz 1999). At the meso-level, the coup d'état became an organizational and behavioral mechanism for the patronage-based recycling of elites when political accommodation failed.

Meso-level factors also capture why coups fail. In some cases, a "stable minority" of civilian regimes asserted control of state armies (Decalo 1989a, 1998b). David Goldsworthy (1981: 66) credited successful civilian control to the "dominating presence" and personal authority of individual incumbents, and the role of foreign armies as external guarantors of stability.

Indeed, Boubacar N'Diaye (2001) attributed Côte d'Ivoire's long-term civilian oversight of its military to ongoing reliance on the French military, a strategy that ultimately backfired as it eroded the legitimacy of the country's civil-military relations over time.

But more often, failed coups result from incumbents' use of coup-proofing strategies to manage risk and intraorganizational conflict with state militaries (Belkin and Schofer 2003). Erica De Bruin (2020), for instance, explained how incumbents "counterbalance" by raising the costs of coups through the mechanisms of coordination and resistance which, respectively, hinder recruitment before coups start and disrupt communication while they occur. Coup-proofing in Africa often pivots on the ethnic composition of political and military institutions. Philip Roessler (2016) showed how regimes must balance ethnic inclusion within state militaries with the risk of certain groups developing an institutionalized power base from which to launch a coup. Yet, on the other hand, regimes must also factor in the risks of ethnic exclusion, which can lead to armed rebellion. In a similar vein, Kristen Harkness (2018) has observed that Africa's ethnically privileged armed forces, built during decolonization and under threat by democratization, can lead to reactionary coups as the status quo is dismantled and the military's place in political society becomes uncertain. Alternatively, regimes can stave off coup attempts by dividing armed forces into rival sectarian subgroups (Nassif 2015), often maintaining a loyal parallel force to check the regular army (Böhmelt and Pilster 2015; Quinlivan 1999). Lavishing armed forces with resources may also keep them in check, but it risks bolstering their ability to launch successful coups (Albrecht and Eibl 2018; Powell 2012).

Micro-Level Factors

Finally, at the micro level sit studies that focus on the psychological traits of individual coup makers and military rulers themselves. By extension, this analytical level includes a focus on how political and military actors behave as rational actors that square off in coordination games. According to Singh (2014), the success or failure of coups in Ghana depended largely on the dynamics of collective action as they unfolded; namely, the behavior of fence-sitters within the armed forces, who backed coup makers only after it was "made a fact" or became common knowledge. This means that once a coup has been widely communicated as a success, often via state-run media broadcasts (see Bleck and Michelitch 2017), it is more likely that the rank and file will fall in line as each individual expects others to follow suit in a broader coordination game, depending on the status of those making it a fact.

Indeed, broader comparative work supports the view of coups—and mutinies (Hamby 2002)—as coordination games. Confirming Singh's (2014) intuition that soldiers will back who they see as the winning horse,

learning also can factor into how actors coordinate in coup attempts. If regimes have survived previous coups, then support from junior officers and the rank and file is less likely (Little 2017). Another factor influencing the behavior of elites is popular protest, which reflects regime illegitimacy and provides coordination-facilitating signals to coup makers (Casper and Tyson 2014). De Bruin (2018, 2020) applies the coordination game approach to explaining levels of violence during coups, which vary according to which regime type is the target. Because military regimes have a better sense than civilian regimes of the likelihood of a coup's success, they will take measures to reduce the costs of being ousted while also positioning themselves for survival in a new political establishment.

An alternative approach traditionally focused on the African context has been associated with Samuel Decalo (1973, 1976: 3, 1989b) who argued that instead of broad systematic features of African states or even military organizations, coups are the direct result of personal idiosyncrasies, or the "officer cliques, corporate and personal ambitions" of career-oriented military officers. While this perspective helps explain modal patterns of "radical military rule," "personal dictatorships," and "military managerialism" in the wake of coups, it also conjures up the worst caricatures of Africa's military dictators such as Idi Amin, Jean-Bedel Bokassa, and Francisco Macias Nguema. Here, civil-military relations simply become a question of Africa's persistent patterns of neopatrimonialism, where the right to rule is given to a person rather than an office (Chabal and Daloz 1999; Bratton and van de Walle 1994). This occurs when rule is maintained not just through patronage, but also through the violence afforded by personal control of the state's coercive apparatus. Here is where vivid images of Samuel Edward Finer's (1962) *The Man on Horseback* loom large. The so-called leaders in khaki swoop into power as either temporary political caretakers, earnest reformers out to correct off-course regimes, transformational Marxist radicals, or straight-up usurpers seeking to promote themselves (Nugent 2004; Decalo 1989b). While thinkers such as Karl Marx (1978) and Antonio Gramsci (1971) narrowly touched on these categories with notions of "Bonapartism" or "Caesarism," respectively, framing military rule in such personal terms was still an institutional conceptualization more akin to praetorianism. A more accurate micro-level, actor-centered framing comes from Juan L. Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996), whose concept of "Sultanism" describes a personal, almost arbitrary form of leadership that is unrestrained by legal-rational institutions, which dovetails with Decalo's (1989b) work on the "authoritarian syndrome" characteristic of the Amins, Bokassas, and Nguemas.

These prevailing strands of inquiry that researchers have installed into international, macro-, meso-, and microanalytical categories have made valuable contributions to the study of civil-military relations in Africa.

Some scholars have also taken steps to dislodge African political phenomena from conventional Western paradigms (Williams 1998). Yet, together, they still reflect the coup studies approach, which has obscured efforts to explore broader theoretical implications of the military's role in African politics. In what follows, we take up Robin Luckham's call to move "beyond the problematique of the coup" by viewing "African states and social formations in their historical totality rather than singling out the coup as a distinct dependent variable" (1994: 32). As such, we develop an analytical framework anchored in our understanding of how African armies are embedded in political and social networks, and how civil-military transformations are situated in the broader shifts in African political development.

Civil-Military Relations in Africa: An Analytical Framework

At the heart of the civil-military problematique is the dual role the military plays in any society, as protector of the population and as guardian of the government. As a critical pillar of the state, the military is invested with enormous coercive power, which can be deployed for protection or predation. African militaries have had some untidy histories of preying on ordinary citizens with impunity, and of overthrowing instead of defending governments. It is therefore unsurprising that the coup d'état became emblematic of the central paradox associated with how state elites create institutions of violence for their protection, but then come to fear those very institutions. To date, efforts to untangle this paradox have analytically worked backward from theoretical and even normative assumptions about what constitutes the "proper" form of civil-military relations.

Departing from this approach, here we develop an analytical framework based on *regime proximity* and *social embeddedness* that reengages what we consider to be the two pillars of classic civil-military relations theorizing: the liberal (institutional) perspective of Samuel Huntington and the civic-republican (sociological) perspective of Morris Janowitz (see Feaver 1996). We base our analytical framework on the military's dual role of defending the state and protecting the civilian public.

The gold standard of solving the civil-military paradox has long been Huntington's *The Soldier and the State*. Here, ideal civil-military relations require a bargain between political actors and the armed forces to remain institutionally insulated from one another, and where militaries are subordinate to "objective civilian control" (Huntington 1957: 189–192; Feaver 2003; Owens 2011; Barany 2012). What makes this bargain attainable and sustainable is a high level of military professionalism, and a strict creed and code of conduct that guarantee political neutrality; that is, respect for clear boundaries between the civilian affairs of the state and the role of the armed forces. Professional officers therefore remain within

a “pure military space” where they pursue and perfect the “science of war” (Vajpeyi and Segell 2014: 6). Armies are at once insulated from politics, but beholden to political elites that determine the lawful deployment of violence on the state’s behalf.

An alternative perspective within the conventional canon is Janowitz’s (1960) *The Professional Soldier*, whose notion of “subjective civilian control” considers civil-military relations as a broader set of connections between the military and various elements of society that surround it. Rather than remaining insulated, armed forces are embedded within political and social institutions. In addition to fighting wars, professional armed forces are also socialized into taking on a range of tasks, among the most important is reflecting and upholding liberal-democratic norms. In other words, armed forces do not just protect democratic ideals; they proactively promote them. Such an arrangement is possible only through the establishment of a professionalized officer class that is attuned to changes in domestic and global environments, and that can adapt accordingly. Moreover, the armed forces gain legitimacy when they reflect progressive values, and when they are subordinate to subjective civilian control.

It is not our purpose here to rehash Huntington versus Janowitz or revisit the important critiques this debate spawned, as this has been sufficiently addressed elsewhere (Khisa and Day 2020; Feaver 1996, 1999, 2003; Bruneau 2018). It is important, however, to underline the central problem with these approaches vis-à-vis the African experience, which is how they have reinforced two dominant binaries in the literature. The first assumes that the prevalence of coups signals a low level of professionalism in armies, while the absence of coups presumes a high level of professionalism. The second binary associates coups and military rule with political instability and places a handful of states that avoid coups in the “stable minority” of civilian governments (Decalo 1989a, 1998b). In our view, these approaches seek to answer the wrong question, which is most often posed as “How do civilian leaders of governments control military actors?” Neither is the fundamental question here “What causes coups?” Rather, the key paradox that still holds is, as Peter D. Feaver (1996: 150) succinctly put it: “Because we fear others, we create an institution of violence to protect us, but then we fear the very institution we created for protection.” The key theoretical issue, however, is identifying the “others” and the “we” in this equation and considering how this plays out in the African context.

In rethinking civil-military relations in Africa, the dominant approaches of objective and subjective civilian control tend to abstract from Western democracies with little regard to the nuances in Africa’s political systems, which have followed alternative and divergent paths of political development (Williams 1998; Young 2012). A go-to observation is that most state institutions in Africa are uninsulated from politics and society, where the

informalization of politics regulates the distribution of resources down vertical networks in exchange for personalized political support (Chabal and Daloz 1999; Bratton and van de Walle 1994). With regard to civil-military relations, this reading of African politics renders Huntington's (1957) "objective civilian control" of little utility in a political environment where the exercise of political authority is much more informal and fluid. By extension, the professional boundaries between Africa's military organizations and wider society are fluid and permeable (Verweijen 2015; Valenzuela 1985). While this dovetails with Janowitz's (1960) view of the military's embeddedness in politics and society, the notion of "subjective civilian control" too assumes well-developed formal institutions that connect political elites and social actors.

Indeed, in many African states, the fundamental task of institutional development and exacting effective state penetration has been a challenge far more daunting than addressing the paradox of subordinating the military to civilian authority. Yet, while nuance is important, it is also a mistake to essentialize comparative cases, as there are substantial variations. A more recent scholarly turn suggests that "disorder" is not necessarily instrumental for the maintenance of elite authority networks, but can be counterproductive, particularly in violent political environments (de Vries and Mehler 2019). In many cases, the notion of "institutionlessness" is becoming more a scholarly cliché in the face of evidence suggesting that political institutions are becoming increasingly robust (Cheeseman 2018; Opalo 2019).

On their own, the classic arguments on civil-military relations are limited but, taken together, they provide useful insights. Alex de Waal (2014) offered a helpful way to square the circle, viewing African political processes as playing out in a "marketplace" where bargaining with, co-optation of, and elimination of rival power bases take place. They occur in the context of the nature of authority (institutional vs. patronage-based), the availability and sources of rents (external vs. domestic), the ways armed state actors deploy violence (centralized vs. decentralized/fragmented), and the level of social integration that exists in networks beyond the state. Such empirical observations (and their theoretical implications) most certainly apply to civil-military relations, where the reality on the ground shows substantial variation across cases and defies the standard assumptions transposed from Western institutions and political processes. To get at these observations, two factors are critical, to which we now turn.

Regime Proximity and Social Embeddedness

Our basis for rethinking civil-military relations in Africa is the complex set of joint interactions that play out between a range of actors, which can be mutually beneficial or exploitative, parasitic or mutually destructive,

depending on the power asymmetries associated with the prevailing political order (Day 2018). Here, we disaggregate these joint interactions into two constituent dimensions: the military's proximity to regime authority, and its level of embeddedness within societal networks and processes. This approach is anchored in a theoretical intuition about the internal drivers of African political processes and outcomes, standing in contrast to the prevailing approaches and allowing for cross-case and within-case comparisons.

Regime proximity describes the relationship between political authority and military power, the interface between civilian holders of power and the armed forces. Here, civil military relations are not about subordinating military power to objective civilian control per se. Instead, relations depend on the extent to which regimes of varying stripes manage potential rival sources of power and authority that may operate through military corridors. The driving idea here is that in maintaining hegemony—and political order—regimes deploy remunerative, normative, and sometimes coercive resources in relation to other actors as a set of joint interactions (Korpi 1985). These power resources can be derived from patronage networks, legal-bureaucratic institutions, or both, and are invested into state military organizations in an effort to either mobilize or demobilize them. Thus, on the one hand, regimes seek to tame military organizations as a way to coup-proof, but also draw them into serving key governance functions, but within certain thresholds. On the other hand, military organizations can seek to capture regimes to overcome obstacles to their expansion. This delicate balance is critical in shaping the contours of civil-military relations, as close proximity can pose a threat to regime security, while an exclusionary strategy can potentially trigger civil war (Roessler 2016).

Regime proximity varies along a spectrum and civil-military relations play out on a continuum. On one end, proximate military institutions are those that a regime will seek to bring into the orbit of its control through co-optation, accommodation, or subordination. For instance, Amos Perlmutter and William M. LeoGrande (1982) found that high levels of regime proximity are often present in Marxist-Leninist political systems, where vanguard parties have hegemony over all state institutions. In the African context, political ideology may be the mechanism that drives regime proximity, but it is more often about the overtly politicized or covertly embedded informal networks of a regime's ruling elites, thus blurring the line between the realm of military activity and that of political engagement, the ruling party, and the military establishment—for better or worse. Alternatively, military organizations that are less proximate to or distant from prevailing authority networks can reflect the mode of civil-military relations that Huntington (1957) envisioned, with a national army institutionally siloed from, but accountable to, civilian rule. While this is empirically

possible, low levels of regime proximity most likely reflect scenarios where a regime has failed to tame its military, which plays out through a process of omission or commission, neglect, or deliberate subterfuge.

The key insight here is that regime proximity as a key constituent dimension of civil-military relations occurs in various forms along a spectrum, irrespective of coups d'état. This speaks to the need to portray civil-military relations as about something other than the hard, institutional boundaries between civilian political authority and military power. Regime proximity conceptually captures the nebulous sources of political authority associated with illiberal regime types that characterize much of Africa's politics. Its utility is partly in providing a way of framing civil-military relations that constitutes the pivotal political and military structures that live in centrifugal and centripetal tension with one another. While we do not explicitly seek here to lay out granular indicators, regime proximity allows for further methodological refinements in measuring and marking out the nodes of complex joint interactions. Moreover, developing sharper indicators of where civil-military relations sit on this spectrum allows the comparison between and within cases over time.

Social embeddedness captures the complex relations between Africa's military organizations and the ordinary civilian populations they ostensibly protect. Here, we portray civil-military relations as entangled with a broader set of societal relations, connections, and networks, and they are not necessarily simply existing behind the institutional ramparts of military professionalism. Thus, on the one hand armies must maintain some structural emancipation and autonomy from wider society to operate unencumbered, yet on the other hand many individual commanders or soldiers invariably become tied to the civilian networks that surround them and in which their very effectiveness is embedded. These social dynamics complicate any standard assumption that draws a line between professional soldiers and civilian publics. Military organizations and the individuals who occupy them share joint interactions with the societal networks that produce and sustain them, which plays out at several levels of engagement.

This dimension should come as no surprise since, historically, African armies have been instruments of internal political order and tasked with putting down domestic opposition, therefore guaranteeing a formidable role of civilian populations in civil-military relations (Kandeh 2004). This means that armies seek to dominate networks of social control at the macro level. Yet, at both meso and micro levels of analysis, soldiers must negotiate norms of reciprocity with civilians within the territories they occupy. This is especially apparent with militaries that emerged out of guerrilla movements whose survivability depended considerably on forging hospitable relations with the civilian public. And on the ground, soldiers must interact with civilians daily through the mundane, ordinary

tasks of protecting political elites in urban areas, or manning checkpoints up country (Dwyer 2017: 72).

Social embeddedness also varies along a spectrum. In cases where armies are more socially embedded, individual officers in the field and the soldiers under their command may seek to develop informal power bases that run parallel to or behind their formal institutional remit, which depends on local bargains with civilians who in turn depend on soldiers for protection. This range of reciprocal relationships also shapes the conduct of military personnel by bringing mundane social values into everyday professional life. This means that, on the one hand, soldiers may be reluctant to turn their guns against those with a shared social identity (Johnson and Thurber 2020). On the other hand, the recent populist turns in comparative political systems suggest that civilians may increasingly support the role of the military in politics more generally (Kurlantzick 2018).

Social relations can involve the use of military power to build intelligence networks, but they can also extend to the establishment of informal status hierarchies or control over formal and illicit local economies that tie private actors to the military at the command level and among the boots on the ground. In contrast, less socially embedded armies that maintain key aspects of orthodox professional boundaries between soldiers and their immediate societal environment serve not as conduits for individual patronage networks, but as administrative containers for a state's military power that is projected within a given territory. While officers and soldiers still may build relationships with civilians for intelligence gathering, this takes place for strategic ends and not for the benefit of individuals within a given military organization, and not so much for broader societal needs as for the narrow interests of the state.

Again, like regime proximity, social embeddedness seeks to capture a key condition of civil-military relations—armies can vary in their degree in this factor. This is undergirded by the direct empirical observation that for many members of Africa's military organizations, their perception of civil-military relations is not so much about the relationship between civilian political authority and military power, but between the army and wider society. In rethinking civil-military relations in Africa, it is therefore essential to incorporate this key dimension, particularly because there is significant variation in social embeddedness and the extent to which armies have social organic roots. One concrete outcome here stems from the outsized role in army mutinies of junior officers, whose grievances tend to be less political (which are associated with coups) and more a reflection of nonelite societal networks impacted by economic hardship (Dwyer 2017). The rank and file are less likely to obey orders when they have a strong affiliation with the public based on shared material grievances (Pion-Berlin, Esparza, and Grisham 2014).

In some cases, armies fulfill their goal of protecting civilians. In others, however, they prey on civilians during war and in peacetime. Alternatively, armies can sin by omission rather than commission, neither offering protection for civilians nor directly abusing them while they pursue other agendas. This approach allows comparisons not only between cases, but also within cases, as levels of social embeddedness vary along key dimensions such as urban versus rural or domestic versus regional operations. One implication of social embeddedness is on postconflict peacebuilding, where the granting of amnesty for rebels, or their integration into state militaries, depends on their acceptance by political actors as well as wider society (Glassmyer and Sambanis 2008).

Configuring the Analytical Framework

To build an analytical framework, we can configure the key structural dimensions of regime proximity and social embeddedness to map out where they intersect in the broader space of civil-military relations (Figure 1.2). Placed on a rudimentary spectrum between high and low levels of each dimension, we seek to highlight exemplars that reflect ideal types. This effort builds on and slightly modifies our previously developed conceptual typology delineating varying modes of civil-military relations in Africa (Khisa and Day 2020).

Where regime proximity and social embeddedness are high sit states where military power is proximate to regime authority, serving as armed extensions of a ruler or a hegemonic political party, and where members of the military share cross-cutting links with the societies that generate them. Often there is an ideological foundation for such arrangements that simul-

Figure 1.2 Configurations of Regime Proximity and Social Embeddedness

		Social Embeddedness	
		High	Low
Regime Proximity	High	Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda	Sudan
	Low	Egypt	Central African Republic

Source: Authors’ own.

taneously legitimizes military power as a basis for regime authority, while also claiming fidelity to the public as the primary marker of successful civil-military relations. Tanzania, to take one example, slots into this configuration, with its military reformed after independence to be at once loyal to the ruling political class and at the service of ordinary Tanzanians (Parsons 2004). Rwanda and Uganda, each ruled by former rebels, maintain close control over their armies while also bringing into the construction of their regimes the Maoist approach to relying on civilians, which they deployed during their guerrilla struggles.

In direct contrast, at the bottom right of Figure 1.2, where regime proximity and social embeddedness are both low, sit states with security forces siloed from incumbent regimes that are also somehow disconnected from societal networks. While membership in the armed forces may draw on different segments of society, their widespread and systematic use of violence against civilians precludes anything justifiably described as “socially embedded” as relations sever irreparably. In addition, rulers may surround themselves with private security forces from other states that have no loyalty to regime authority nor any restrictions upon using violence against the citizens of their host country. The armed forces in Central African Republic (CAR), often operating in competition with parallel presidential guards, have historically been little more than a site of elite rivalries that carried over from regime to regime, which worked to harden sectarian divides as soldiers autonomously preyed on ordinary citizens outside their own ethnic group (Mehler 2012). In addition, Chadian soldiers have played overt roles in supporting (and undermining) successive regimes in CAR, and have been accused of human rights violations in that country while ostensibly serving its rulers (Debos 2016a; *Africa Confidential* 1999; Human Rights Watch 2007).

At the top right of Figure 1.2, where regime proximity is high but social embeddedness is low, one should expect to see civil-military relations characterized by political and military powers that are tightly fused. And while security forces may have a societal constituency, there are often patterns of military force against civilian populations that undermine linkages with societal networks. Countries ruled directly by military regimes, or by autocrats for long stretches of time, are illustrative of this configuration. Sudan’s president Omar al-Bashir, both a long-surviving autocrat and someone who came to power via a coup d’état, often deployed armed force against non-Northern Sudanese civilians as a strategy of undermining the guerrilla war economies of rebellions. Where the armed forces were made up of the same ethnic group targeted for counterinsurgency, as was the case of Darfur in the early 2000s, a dominant strategy was to foster and exploit interethnic tensions and use local militias as proxies against rebels and the civilians. This strategy also allowed the armed forces to remain proximate

to regime authority while sidestepping any mechanisms of accountability vis-à-vis the public.

Finally, where regime proximity is high and social embeddedness is low, sit states whose civil-military relations are characterized by institutional divisions between political authority and military power. This approximates the Huntingtonian model of effective civilian control—although low levels of regime proximity can occur in both democracies and autocracies. And while armies in these countries maintain a distinct corporate identity, they nevertheless do not sever their ties from the societal networks that produce soldiers. This also approximates the Janowitzian ideal of armies reflecting the values of wider society, while remaining professionally siloed from political authority. Most armies in these countries perform conventional tasks of national security, as opposed to regime security, and are seldom deployed against domestic rivals. For instance, Egypt's military, which has historically been viewed as a modern professional force, joined with the Arab Spring's civilian protestors of 2011 and helped usher in regime change as part of a grassroots movement.

This analytical framework of civil-military relations based on *regime proximity* and *social embeddedness* accomplishes three key goals. First, it avoids the problematic binaries of coup versus no coup and stability versus instability. It cuts through the circular argument that professional militaries ensure stable civil-military relations, and that civil-military relations are stable when the military professionalizes (Bruneau 2018: 347). This theoretical direction accommodates the fact that military involvement in politics does not necessarily translate into political instability and the absence of direct military intrusion does not signal diminished military influence.

Second, this framework moves toward integrating the international, macro, meso, and micro levels of analysis as outlined earlier in this chapter. Because regimes are essentially the programming of state machinery, they sit at the nexus of institutional conditions that give rise to certain kinds of organizations, which in turn promote or constrain the interests of individual actors that operate within them. In many cases, regime politics is not structurally differentiated from state-society relations, which means that military organizations coincide with the social networks that sustain political authority. This approach also speaks to how international and regional dynamics are factored into the multilevel institutional milieu, as structural conditions and sources of power instrumentalized by perceptive political and military actors (Reno 1999; Clapham 1996).

Finally, the regime proximity and social embeddedness framework provides a comparative anchor that allows civil-military relations to serve as either an outcome of interest requiring causal inference, or as a causal factor in its own right for explaining other phenomena such as the range of puzzles we laid out at the beginning of this chapter. In what follows, we

outline five theoretical levers that extend our consideration of regime proximity and social embeddedness.

Rethinking Civil-Military Relations in Africa: Five “Theoretical Levers”

To situate the changing nature of civil-military relations in Africa, we advance five theoretical levers which, taken together, provide a comprehensive interpretation of the transformations that have transpired on the continent in the past few decades. These levers grow out of the two theoretical dimensions—*regime proximity* and *social embeddedness*—outlined above and the empirical puzzles laid out earlier. While far from exhaustive, they represent what in our view is a necessary starting point for identifying the range of factors that have shaped and that are shaping contemporary civil-military relations in Africa. These theoretical levers are ideological providence, experiences with warfare, changing patterns in military recruitment, changing domestic institutional context, and changes in regional and global norms.

Ideological Provenance

During the 1970s and 1980s, there was heightened military intrusiveness, praetorian behavior, and pervasive political decay in Africa, which produced two sets of political challengers in a number of states. One group comprised political insiders that challenged the status quo as reformist coup makers. Often, these were junior officers. They sought to sweep aside the existing order, including the military establishment, and institute revolutionary change, denouncing colonially inherited militaries as patently “anti-people” and thus setting out to rearticulate wholly new and decidedly different ideological orientations aimed at attuning the military toward being “pro-people.” This new ideological posture was not purely rhetorical; it in fact brought about a fundamental transformation in relations between the public and the uniformed personnel in countries such as Burkina Faso and Ghana.

The other group, comprised largely of outsiders, followed the guerrilla path to overthrowing the prevailing political order and installing a new revolutionary order, shaped by an extensive and deep experience with Maoist-style guerrilla warfare carried out largely in the countryside (Reno 2011; Fisher 2020). Once in power, victorious rebels worked with the ideological predisposition developed during guerrilla insurgency, which often required cultivating ties with civilians to develop a guerrilla war economy and recruit followers. This was critical in shaping civil-military relations where relations with civilians, not civilian authority, was a defining feature.

Prominent examples of the first group include Jerry Rawlings in Ghana and Thomas Sankara in Upper Volta (Burkina Faso) and the second category comprises Isaias Afwerki in Eritrea, Meles Zenawi in Ethiopia, Fred Rwigema

in Rwanda, and Yoweri Museveni in Uganda. While they pursued different paths, both groups drew inspiration from Marxist-Leninist thought about violent revolutionary change and emerged in the throes of military dictatorships and one-party autocracies of the 1970s. On seizing power, they reoriented state military institutions as seamless extensions of regime authority and as a broader project of national renewal and social transformation.

In fact, such ideological orientations have historical antecedents. Colonial militaries were oriented toward total allegiance to the white colonial administrators, while simultaneously being repressive toward the public. By independence, colonial administrators had tried to model African militaries along the lines of European professionalism, with officer corps trained to be subordinate and loyal to the state and government (Parsons 2003; Reid 2012). This loyalty was transferred to new African leaders who Africanized the officer corps through rapid promotions and training in elite military academies in Europe and the United States. Yet, they retained the nature of their colonial antecedents as tools of repression rather than protectors of civilians (Day 2019: 24). Although short-lived, the resulting ideological orientation of new (African) senior officers and commanders duly paid allegiance to their civilian masters, developing a corporatist identity insulated from the mundane everyday of other state institutions, particularly civic interactions with the civilian public.

Why does ideological provenance matter to civil-military relations? From the perspective of regime proximity, it fundamentally shapes how regimes integrate or insulate the state security apparatus vis-à-vis the extant political authority structure. In terms of social embeddedness, a regime's ideological tenor also plays a role in the armed forces' orientation toward civilians, by engaging in cooperative or coercive behavior. Historically, because the postcolonial military was the key coercive instrument in defense of the state, military leaders had close proximity to state power and saw themselves not just as protectors of the ruling class but, in fact, as part of it. In the event of friction with civilian political leaders, the immediate course of action by military commanders was to launch coups.

Experiences with Warfare

Since independence, the scope, scale, and types of armed conflict have varied across Africa. Much attention has been on the nature of armed groups challenging incumbents—their internal cohesion and organizational strength, their ideological orientations, their access to material resources, and the role of regional geopolitics (Weinstein 2006; Reno 2011; Day 2019). Motivations and goals range from wars of liberation to reformist wars of the “second liberation” and warlord conflicts (Clapham 1998; Reno 2011; Williams 2016; Roessler and Verhoeven 2016). Many regimes facing down these challenges have experienced long, extensive, and protracted civil wars (e.g., Angola and

Sudan), while others have had low-intensity and episodic conflicts (e.g., Mali and Kenya). Some countries have had no experience with large-scale civil wars (e.g., Botswana, Ghana, and Tanzania), others have had interstate wars (e.g., the Ethio-Eritrea war, 1998–2001), and clandestine cross-border support of armed groups by state sponsors has turned many internal conflicts into regional “conflict systems” (Roessler and Verhoeven 2016; Reno 2011). Liberia, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have each been the eye of regional storms that have pulled multiple countries into proxy wars.

In some cases, war has been a catalyst for state reconstruction and social transformation with significant implications for civil-military relations (e.g., in Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Uganda). The rebel groups that captured power in these countries engaged in new ways of courting the civilian public and articulating a different civil-military creed before and after ascending to power. In other countries, however, the curse of war produced cyclical conflict and the attendant corrosive place of the military in civilian life, the DRC and Central African Republic being prime examples. More generally, countries that did not undergo independence or postindependence armed conflict tended to evolve a distinct form of relations between the armed forces and civilian authorities and the civilian public compared to those that experienced different forms of warfare. Botswana and Tanzania are representative of the first category that contrasts with Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda, and a good many others in the latter pool.

How, then, does experience with warfare matter to civil-military relations in Africa? Warfare has long reflected the political context, and the types of wars fought have often reflected the nature of states and the modes of authority that shape regime proximity (Reno 2011, 2018). The actual performance of African militaries against the various threats they face has been given short shrift (Herbst 2004). But their experiences with warfare play crucial roles in shaping the organizational outlook and orientation of armed forces in their relations with civilian authorities and publics. From the perspective of social embeddedness, it is important to note that during internal warfare, civilians invariably get caught between belligerents as extensions of counterinsurgency strategies, as unfortunate bystanders, or as targets in and of themselves (Day and Reno 2014). Either way, militaries make wars, but wars also make militaries, and wars vary along myriad social, political, and economic dimensions. This variation, in turn, informs the terms of relations between regimes and militaries, as well as between militaries and civilian publics. Relations during wartime have implications for peacetime relations.

Changing Patterns in Military Recruitment

Ethnic identity has long been salient to African politics and society, serving as a key marker for the structural issues that historically situate different

groups within political society and its institutions. Correspondingly, Africa's militaries have been microcosms of sectarian divisions, with patterns of recruitment directly reflecting regime strategies. The relationship between ethnic identity and military power has shaped how regimes construct power-sharing agreements among ethnic blocs, creating permissive conditions for what Roessler (2016: 5) has called the "coup-civil war trap," where too much accommodation positions rival elites to harness military institutions to launch coups, and where too much exclusion pushes these rivals into open rebellion. Nathaniel Allen (2020) has also observed that "ethnic stacking"—when regime elites recruit coethnics into the state security apparatus—in fact serves a range of functions that include coup-proofing at the officer level, but also the ability to carry out irregular counterinsurgency at state peripheries through the lower echelons of the military hierarchy. A closer look shows that such patterns have certainly persisted in some African states, while they have become markedly nonsectarian in others.

There is plenty of historical evidence pointing to sectarianism within Africa's armies. For instance, in the 1970s the Ugandan military was the primary mode of advancement for Idi Amin's coethnics, creating what Ali Mazrui called a military ethnocracy that tripled the number of commissioned officers, 68 percent of which came from Amin's West Nile region (Mazrui 1975; Omara-Otunnu 1987). In Samuel Doe's Liberia of the 1980s, the once marginal Krahn ethnic group found its way into the corridors of politico-military power, sparking off a period of violent political upheaval that had decidedly ethnic contours (Ellis 2006). In CAR, André Kolingba (1981–1993) stocked the Central African Armed Forces (FACA) with members of his Yakoma ethnic group. His successor, Felix Patassé, who created a 3,000-strong praetorian guard drawn from his northern Ouham-Pendé region, replicated this pattern.

But there are also cases where strategies of ethnic stacking have been abandoned in favor of more deliberate efforts to build integrated national armies, or at the very least sidestep the problems of sectarianism. To this latter point, CAR's Patassé and his successor-by-coup François Bozizé, having seemingly learned from the country's coups and countercoups, sought to build an additional layer of coup-proofing by surrounding themselves with Chadian troops. In Uganda, the National Resistance Army (NRA) came to power with an explicitly nonsectarian agenda although its command structure was dominated by individuals from Museveni's Ankole ethnic group. On its victory in 1986, the renovation of Uganda's army involved forming new battalions based on patterns of communal integration developed while rebelling, which included incorporating fighters from a range of ethnic groups (Kuteesa 2006; Ori Amaza 1998).

How do these patterns relate to contemporary civil-military relations in Africa? A clear implication is on social embeddedness, where the anatomy

of armed forces either reflects sectarian divides or obviates them. To be sure, none of this is to say that recruitment has necessarily transitioned from sectarianism to ethnic-neutral meritocracy in all cases. However, there is some evidence that as Africa's armies modernize and professionalize, there is an expectation that emergent modes of civil-military relations are prioritizing a code of professional ethics that is replacing tribal and parochial interests, particularly as militaries are increasingly reflecting broader patterns of institutionalization of African states. In the context of SSR, particularly in post-conflict environments, building security forces that are representative of a given state's ethnic anatomy is viewed as a strategy of conflict prevention.

Changing Domestic Institutional Context

In recent decades, the domestic institutional context of most African states has undergone major changes, with important consequences for the place of their armed forces in political processes and social engagements. While much of the scholarly attention has traditionally focused on Africa's patronage-driven informal institutions, a recent turn in the literature has reconsidered how formal institutions have progressively placed a range of constraints on African rulers, reshaping prevailing conceptions of Africa's weak states and the everyday lives of the societies that occupy them (Cheeseman 2018). One form of these changes has been in political institutions—legislatures, judiciaries, and electoral commissions—where divergent trajectories of democratization may well be associated with corresponding outcomes in civil-military relations. Another form of institutional change has been economic. Against stalled and, in some instances, even negative growth in the 1970s and 1980s, the economies of several African countries have rebounded to show significant periods of sustained economic growth, with implications for power dynamics between politicians and soldiers.

Consider the changes in political institutions. As the Cold War wound down, Botswana and Gambia were designated as Africa's only two Free countries in Freedom House's 1989 ranking (Freedom House 1990: 17). Until then, most African states were ruled by single-party or military regimes in varying and shifting combinations, which gave way to a wave of democratization in the early 1990s (Bratton and van de Walle 1997). Since then, at least six states have acquired sustained democratic governance and a considerable level of democratic consolidation (Freedom House 2019: 16). And although most of the continent is still considered only Partially Free by these same metrics, military rule as a mode of illiberal democracy has eroded substantially.

From the vantage point of economic institutions, van de Walle's comprehensive survey from two decades ago identified civilian and military rulers who "accommodate themselves well, not only to the vagaries of the business cycle, but even to unmitigated economic disaster" through a marriage of

international assistance and domestic patronage politics (2001: 44). Since then, countries such as Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, and Ghana managed growth rates of over 6 percent by the mid-2010s (World Bank 2019: 108). The size of Ethiopia's economy quadrupled in twenty years, sustaining one of the highest growth rates in the world.

How might such patterns of institutional change shape civil-military relations? Politically, democratically consolidated countries have built professional national armies that approximate the conventional pattern in institutionalized democratic political systems, which reflect Huntington's (1957) "objective civilian control." Ghana's political development illustrates this shift from the era of coups d'états (1966–1981) amid continued economic decline and political instability. It reflects a more "proper" mode of civil-military relations, but much of the continent has shown alternative patterns and pathways. In this sense, then, in systems with more democratic accountability, we would expect to see a mode of civil-military relations with low levels of regime proximity, but the trajectory of social embeddedness less clear.

If economic decline ran parallel to the engagement of armed forces in politics, in some cases total disintegration of political order, these conditions have also diminished though they have not dissipated. It is now far more difficult for a small group of conspirators to seize and run relatively large, more complex, and technocratic government administrations, as in the past, because rising middle classes are more difficult for military rulers to govern. Alternately, militaries in some fast-growing economies (e.g., in Ethiopia and Rwanda) occupy a variety of new roles in supporting economic growth and diversification, building new relationships with foreign investors, and participating in the development of new domestic and global networks of professionals.

Changes in Regional and Global Norms

Where Africa's regional and global normative environments may have once created permissive conditions for certain modes of civil-military relations, they have since changed in ways to constrain them. As mentioned earlier, the coup d'état no longer represents the widely available viable path to power that it once did, running afoul of AU proscriptions on noninstitutional means of assuming power (see Chapter 3) and the international coup taboo (see Chapter 4). Indeed, there was a time when coup makers easily captured power in the city by taking over the radio station, the airport, and the executive mansion. Occupying these simple sites in a national capital somehow meant securing the right to claim legitimacy on the international stage and the use of whatever value and benefits that came with international recognition. Christopher Clapham termed this "letterbox sovereignty": whoever opened the letterbox in the presidential palace had the invitation to go to the UN and meetings of other international bodies and fora (1996: 20). This occurred irre-

spective of actual internal administrative efficacy and empirical statehood. Today, there is a fundamental departure from bestowing external legitimacy to whoever falls backward into controlling the government—thus representing an end to “capital city rule” (Roessler 2016: 309).

Yet, normative shifts have changed the nature of civil-military relations in ways that stretch beyond the coup. Evidence from Mobutu Sese Seko’s Zaire is particularly illustrative. As “a pure product of the Cold War,” Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja (2002: 142) pointed out, Zaire reflected geopolitical survival strategies that flourished within permissive normative conditions of the period. Mobutu was a key Western ally and his rule epitomized personal rule that worked well within the imperatives of the Cold War. To maintain his status as a US ally, he ensured that the military was a fraternity under his direct, personal control. Predatory behavior of the army and militias, including the frequent act of paying themselves, was often tolerated by their patron, whose behavior was in turn unchecked by Cold War external patrons. As the Cold War wound down, changing norms considerably upended this style of transactional politics, and the Zairean military soon embodied general state decay, so corrupt that fighter planes were personalized by individual commanders for commercial profiteering (Bayart 2009: 235–236). Civil-military relations in present-day Democratic Republic of Congo, much like in other countries in the region, are now underpinned by a different set of domestic political calculations, local bargains that include militia activities, warlord actors, and regional geopolitical dynamics.

What are the implications of norm transformation for civil-military relations in Africa? The assumption is that militaries silo themselves from regime proximity and networks of social embeddedness. Yet, in what we observe as changing organization and behavior of Africa’s armies in domestic and regional politics, there has been a corresponding increase in foreign training programs and participation in peacekeeping missions ostensibly designed to reinforce these new norms. The conventional view of security sector reform has been that injecting resources into African militaries through foreign training or support for peacekeeping operations will transfer norms that decrease the likelihood of military interference in politics and maintain professional distance from the public. Yet, SSR often occurs without a nuanced appreciation for the political context in which civil-military relations occur, and foreign training can yield distinct outcomes in interaction with prevailing practices and norms, acting as an accelerant and not a retardant vis-à-vis modes of regime proximity and social embeddedness (see Chapter 7).

Why This Book?

Like many intellectual pursuits, the genesis of this book was in the field. As we quickly burned through a seed grant that funded several trips to Uganda and Rwanda, it soon dawned on us that our initial research goals, which

included conducting surveys of African military officers in an ambitious continent-wide study, were unobtainable in the short term. These trips nevertheless confirmed our starting intuition that civil-military relations in Africa needed a solid rethink. This led to a one-day workshop at North Carolina State University in the fall of 2018, where we invited a group of scholars to participate in a collective rethinking exercise. The contributions were so many that they provided the basis for not one, but two, interrelated projects: a special issue of the journal *Civil Wars* and this book, which bears the workshop's title. It is our goal here to make several key contributions to the study of civil-military relations in Africa.

The first is to try to jump-start a literature that seems to have stalled out somewhere in between historical work and more recent policy-oriented research. As we have shown, there is a deep reservoir of scholarly work on African militaries, but much of it tends to be theoretically one-note and temporally static, fixated on the coup d'état and fizzling out toward the turn of the century. We view the prevailing scholarship as stranded in a place that has blown past key markers on the road to understanding African politics and society. To date, there is no corresponding conceptual and theoretical language to help navigate the normative expectations of Africa's militaries and their actual practices in contemporary politics, or how and why civil-military relations on the continent have changed over time. It is therefore our intention to provide an essential bridge over these gaps and hopefully lead the scholarship to new territory.

The second contribution is how we quite deliberately situate civil-military relations in a fairly distinct African context. What we think we know is that states do not necessarily institutionalize uniformly. We suspect strongly that a given state's mode of civil-military relations is a close reflection of internal processes of institutionalization. To be sure, scholars and practitioners alike have been historically drawn to Africa's patterns of political instability and the associated human costs for normative and empirical reasons. This has fostered an orientation toward solving the "problem" of Africa's civil-military relations without paying sufficient attention to how politics and society work in African states at fundamental theoretical and empirical levels quite apart from Western expectations. In fact, what to many observers appears as malfunctioning civil-military relations is something we view as an extension of the politics of the ordinary rooted in social networks and historical experiences. This perspective also means taking the *longue durée* view of Africa's experience with the uneven historical development of the international state system more generally.

Finally, we seek to provide a baseline for new directions of research that help illuminate previously unforeseen gaps in the prevailing scholarship. There are multiple opportunities to examine civil-military relations not just from the perspective of the military's role in regime politics, but also as a

function of state-society relations. Here, Africa's armies sit along two spectra—one of embeddedness within political institutions, and another of embeddedness within societal institutions—the boundaries between which are not always crisp and clear, but fluid and malleable. Equally, Africa's civil-military relations are not simply bound by domestic politics, but also have significant regional and international dimensions. Here, the security concerns of multiple actors intersect with changing and continuous authority structures, resource flows, norm construction, and norm maintenance to create new institutional configurations that require scholarly attention. It is therefore our hope that this collection's chapters outline what we see as a significant repositioning of the study of civil-military relations in Africa.

Organization of the Book

The remainder of this book is roughly divided into two trios of chapters. The first trio revisits the range of relationships between the changing nature of the coup d'état and Africa's civil-military relations at domestic, regional, and global levels of analysis. It begins with "Political Legitimacy and Military Interventions" (Chapter 2), where Michael Ohene Aboagye and John F. Clark consider contrasting trajectories of either increasing or decreasing legitimacy as key to the likelihood of coups in Africa. *Legitimacy* is chiefly defined by prevailing studies as a combination of political liberalization or high economic development performance, particularly during the post-1990 era of political reform. Since that time, however, there has been growing disaffection with the results of democratic reform in Africa. Accordingly, the chapter tests the proposition that declining political legitimacy correlates with a higher incidence of coups, and the obverse. We then turn to the regional and global perspectives. "The African Union and the 'Good Coup'" (Chapter 3) by Erin Damman and Christopher Day, examines the African Union's role in the changing nature of coups in Africa. Given the sharp decline of coups on the continent, the chapter argues that the African Union has become a useful partner (wittingly or not) in coup-proofing incumbent regimes regardless of the legitimacy of these regimes. More broadly, the authors look at the African Union's role in civil-military relations through the promotion of professional armies, the expansion of peacekeeping missions, and the transmission of norms where soldiers are socialized into becoming "guardians" of good governance. In "The 'Coups Taboo' and Authoritarian Politics" (Chapter 4), Moses Khisa analyzes the deepening of the norm against military coups, which has taken on the status of a taboo, simultaneous with parallel military actions that imperil democratization processes. Khisa argues that a coup taboo in international relations has led to the decline in coups, but has also created permissive conditions for antidemocratic practices through the power of the military, including unorthodox coups.

The second trio examines some of the consequences of such changes, moving beyond the coup d'état to consider other aspects of civil-military relations in contemporary Africa. It begins with Jahara Matisek and William Reno's "African Militaries and Contemporary Warfare" (Chapter 5), which focuses on the development of African militaries over time, outlining changes in their institutional capacity that also trace the shift away from coups and toward more robust counterinsurgency and increasing participation in regional peace operations. In "Military Effectiveness: The African Alternative" (Chapter 6), Jahara Matisek surveys conceptions of military power and effectiveness to highlight why African military effectiveness needs to be reconceptualized to speak to the particular contexts of African states. He argues that variations in military effectiveness are driven by the distinct security environment in specific African states, characterized by civil wars and peacekeeping operations. "Security Sector Reform and Civil-Military Relations" (Chapter 7) by Louis-Alexandre Berg analyzes the implications for civil-military relations of external assistance and institutional reform programs, a topic that has received little attention in the literature. Taking up two features of the SSR agenda—its emphasis on looking beyond the security sector to broader political dynamics, and its emphasis on external involvement—the chapter shows the incongruence between on the one hand donors' operational short-term objectives, and on the other the domestic political context.

Finally, in "Beyond the Coup d'État?" (Chapter 8), Erin Damman, Christopher Day, and Moses Khisa revisit the major outlines of the book and how the different chapters speak to the regime proximity–social embeddedness framework laid out in Chapter 1. Part of Chapter 8 highlights the unfinished business of understanding civil-military relations in Africa and the different directions of new research, ranging from the state-society interface, patterns of recruitment, and SSR. The chapter also deals with foregrounding the distinct African context and how to liberate the study of civil-military relations from the straitjacket of Western normative assumptions and prescriptions.

Notes

1. Part of our recent work reconfigures the analytical tools to move beyond the binary conceptualization of "coup versus no coup." See Khisa and Day (2020); Day, Khisa, and Reno (2020).

2. This observation is based on the authors' analysis of curated data downloaded from The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, <https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/> [last accessed January 22, 2022].