

When Soldiers Rebel

Military coups are a constant threat in Africa and many former military leaders are now in control of “civilian states,” yet the military remains understudied, especially over the last decade. Drawing on extensive archival research, cross-national data, and four in-depth comparative case studies, *When Soldiers Rebel* examines the causes of military coups in post-independence Africa and looks at the relationship between ethnic armies and political instability in the region. Kristen A. Harkness argues that the processes of creating and dismantling ethnically exclusionary state institutions engender organized and violent political resistance. Focusing on rebellions to protect rather than change the status quo, Harkness sheds light on a mechanism of ethnic violence that helps us understand both the motivations and timing of rebellion, and the rarity of group rebellion in the face of persistent political and economic inequalities along ethnic lines.

Kristen A. Harkness is a Lecturer in International Relations at the University of St. Andrews. Her research has been published in *Democratization*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *Journal of Peace Research*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, and *Parameters*. Her work on ethnicity and African militaries won the 2017 African Politics Conference Group Best Article Award and is currently being funded by the British Academy.

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Ethnic Armies and Political Instability in Africa

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*To my family.
For all the sacrifices over all the generations
that made my dream possible.*

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Acknowledgments

“C’est impossible,” said the head archivist at the Senegalese national archives after I described my project to him. The military files, he explained, had never been organized or catalogued. There were no guides to the holdings, just a large room with many dossiers full of mildewy paper that needed the attention of a proper conservationist. But he would help me, despite the difficulty, to track down possible duplicates in the civilian administration files. To say the least, the data necessary for this project was challenging to obtain. Beyond the normal decay of information over time, which all students of history lament, the decisions described in these pages, and the events they led to, were often controversial or clandestine. Both protagonists and observers thus had ample incentives to hide or distort information. There were many, including at times myself, who doubted that I could ever collect enough reliable data to write a compelling piece of social science. These acknowledgments are thus dedicated, first and foremost, to those who believed in this project – or, barring belief, helped me anyway.

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Parts of this book draw from work that has been previously published. Selections of the statistical analysis and excerpts from the Cameroon and Senegal case studies appear in my 2016 article, “The Ethnic Army and the State,” in the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. Some of the empirical narrative of Senegalese democratization overlaps with discussions in

my 2017 *Democratization* article, “Military Loyalty and the Failure of Democratization in Africa.” Finally, I first developed my ideas concerning the role that the international community could play in helping democratizing African states to reform their militaries, discussed in the conclusion, for a piece I wrote in 2015 for *Parameters*, “US Security Assistance in Africa.” I am grateful to the editors of these journals for allowing me to build on this prior work and bring some of my core insights into this book.

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