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.

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When Soldiers Rebel

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.

Contents

Figures

Tables

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.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to the members of my dissertation committee, who nurtured this book in what I now consider its infancy. Jennifer Widner was my committee chair, my mentor, and the one who lured me into African politics to begin with. Had I taken my graduate field seminar in comparative politics from anyone else, this book would never have been written. Beyond the superb feedback and sound professional advice that she has always given me, what I have valued most about Jennifer is her unrelenting faith in me – that I belong in this community of intellectuals and that my research will contribute in important ways to how we understand our world. Bob Keohane reached out to me early

in my graduate school career, offering to read my work and assist in any way he could. He has unfailingly followed through on that promise. His critiques pushed this book to levels of excellence I doubt would have been achieved in his absence. When my project took a strong turn towards analyzing the dynamics of ethnic politics, Evan Lieberman did me a great service by agreeing to come on board. He has encouraged me to think more deeply about the complexity of identity and taught me to better frame my arguments, present source material, and discuss methodology.

I am also grateful for the support and encouragement of the broader Princeton intellectual community. Many colleagues read pieces of this project and provided me with valuable feedback, including the participants of the Comparative Politics Research Seminar and the Pizza and Politics graduate student working group. I benefited, in particular, from the insights of Mark Beissinger, Sarah Bush, Stephen Chaudoin, Rex Douglass, David Hsu, Sarah Hummel, Mike Hunzeker, Amaney Jamal, Dan Kliman, Alex Lanoszka, Oriana Mastro, Mike Miller, and Tom Scherer. I would particularly like to thank the members of my dissertation writing group: Jing Chen, Mike McKoy, Mike Woldemariam, and Alden Young. Our regular discussions over the course of two years were a priceless source of intellectual growth and shaped this book in ways beyond measure.

As I transformed my dissertation into a proper book, I had the good fortune to be nurtured by two other extraordinary intellectual communities and a great number of other colleagues. I spent my postdoctoral fellowship year at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame, where I had engaging and thought provoking conversations with colleagues across disciplinary boundaries, including Jaime Bleck, Laura Heideman, Jennifer Keister, George Lopez, and Kristin Michelitch. I then joined the faculty at the University of St. Andrews where I have been encouraged and nurtured by both senior and junior colleagues alike, especially Marc DeVore, Caron Gentry, Richard English, Jaremey Mcullin, and Nicholas Rengger.

I received invaluable feedback from a book workshop I held in October 2016. Jonathan Caverley, Erica De Bruin, Jonathan Powell, and Ches Thurber read the entire manuscript, provided detailed written comments, and engaged in hours of intense discussion with me. Even though they could not attend in person, Phil Roessler and Thomas Flores also volunteered to read the manuscript. I thank all of them for their deep engagement with my work and I hope that this final book reflects

their advice. I also thank Glenn Palmer and the Peace Science Society for institutionally supporting my workshop and providing tasty treats.

I am deeply thankful for all the support I received throughout the publication process itself. Caron Gentry shared all of her materials on book publishing with me and helped me to write a successful book proposal. Thomas Flores opened a door for me at Cambridge by introducing me to his editor. Two peer reviewers, including Hein Goemans, provided immensely supportive and yet still deeply thoughtful critiques of my work. I am further indebted to Rex Douglass and Tom Scherer for teaching me how to work with maps in R, which prevented a last minute catastrophe with one of my figures. And, of course, I must thank Cambridge University Press and my editor, Sara Doskow, for their enthusiastic support of this project.

I would also like to thank the countless others who assisted this project in myriad ways, both small and large. I presented selections or chapters of this book to the Comparative Politics Research Seminar at Princeton University; the Program on Democracy, Citizenship, and Constitutionalism at the University of Pennsylvania; the Buffett Center Working Group on Security Studies at Northwestern University; the Global Security and International Relations program at the University of Glasgow; the School of Government and Public Policy at the University of Strathclyde; as well as at the annual meetings of the American Political Science Association, the Midwest Political Science Association, and the Peace Science Society. Many discussants, fellow panelists, and audience members thought deeply about my work and shared their insights.

My many archival research trips were supported with funding from the Bobst Center for Peace and Justice, the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies, and St. Andrews University. Nicki List and Paul Ocobock provided crucial help with logistics and navigating the archives in, respectively, Senegal and Kenya. Lastly, but perhaps most importantly, I would like to thank the many dedicated and underpaid archivists and their assistants in Dakar, Nairobi, London, Paris, Aix-en-Provence, and Washington, D.C. They provide an invaluable service, not just to researchers like myself, but to all of us: they preserve our record of the past.

Parts of this book draw from work that has been previously published. Selections of the statistical analysis and excepts 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.

Finally, this book is dedicated to my family, and especially my parents Robert and Carla Harkness. I would not have been able to complete it without their love and support. They were even graciously willing to read and copy-edit chapters on short notice. Thank you.