The Dynamics and Diversity of African Militaries:
The State of Knowledge

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Writing in a sweeping history of African armies, Edgerton (2004) asserts that the role of armies on the continent has gone from one of honor to one of infamy.[3] Other popular conceptions paint African militaries as "unprofessional," "irrelevant," and "dangerous" (Howe 2005). Is this the case? If so, why? Now, almost sixty years after the first wave of postcolonial independence swept across the African continent, what do we know about the nature of African militaries, their evolutions, and their location at the intersection of the interests of states, leaders, civil societies, and the broader international community? We here examine the state of knowledge and debates on African militaries, offering insights and empirical examples to contextualize subsequent articles in this special issue of *Afrique Contemporaine*.

At the most general level, we can distill four broad features of African militaries, and African armies in particular.[4] First, African militaries employ a smaller proportion of the total population than militaries elsewhere: only around 0.2% of the population, compared to the U.S., which employs 0.44%, and European countries, which collectively employ around 0.3%. Second, African militaries, overall, tend to lack funds and, consequently, basic equipment and supplies. Third, African armies tend to suffer from a lack of professionalism. Fourth, African militaries, by and large, have historically been leveraged abroad not in coercive combat, but rather, have been employed in stabilization, peacekeeping, and peace support operations (Chuter and Gaub 2016; Howe 2005; Ouédraogo 2014).

Beyond these general contours, is there validity to the critiques by Edgerton (2004), Howe (2005), and others that "African armies" have, categorically, become infamous and dangerous? We suggest no, on two fronts. Taking seriously critics who admonish against reductionism in studying all things "African" (Mudimbe 1988; Appiah 1992), we argue that there is no singular approach to understanding "African militaries" as an overarching category; nor can African armies in aggregate rightly be characterized as uniformly "infamous." Despite trends mentioned above, heterogeneity, not homogeneity, characterizes African militaries. while African militaries face many problems, given the breadth of their mandates and their limited resources, deviance from Western ideals of

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[3] For key early works on African militaries, see e.g. Lefever (1970) and Foltz and Bienen (1985).

[4] While this piece is about militaries in general, it gives most attention to armies. Most African air forces, if they exist, are underdeveloped, while not all African states possess navies, with many countries landlocked and others having only rudimentary coast guards. South Africa, Nigeria, and Egypt are exceptions. Works on African air forces in general are rare, though see Brent (1999); for case studies see e.g. Cooper (2015) and Cooper, Grandolini, and Delalande (2015). Research on African navies is thin, and recent attention has largely focused on responses to piracy; see e.g. Ibrahim (2009) and Vogel (2009).

professionalization, operational conduct, and lamentably, human rights standards, is likely inevitable. Given African militaries' existence at a fluid nexus of the pursuit of external and internal state interests; regime interests; civil society legitimacy and disdain; and an often powerfully influential international context. Each African military is pulled differentially by one or another of these poles of power, resulting in unique characters that defy categorical analysis.

Keeping in mind this heterogeneity, we examine variation across four of the realms of interests within which African militaries act: statist interests (both external and internal); regime interests; domestic civil societies; and the international community. In each section, we anchor our discussion on particular issues or concepts, offer evidence and examples from different countries' experiences, and discuss the state of social science knowledge about these topics.

The Origins and Evolution of African Militaries

When the broad sweep of independence arrived in Africa in the late 1950s and early 1960s, nearly every African state began to stand up armies as symbols of sovereignty, status, and "honor," in the international system.[5] Yet, precisely because of the nature of the emergence of most African states - which came about via decolonization, and not through the process of war-making, as was typical elsewhere in the world - African armies were, by nature, far less developed than their peers globally. To that end, in 1963, the average African army had on 0.73 soldiers for every 1,000 citizens: as a point of comparison, in 2005, only seven countries had a smaller soldier to citizen ratio (Herbst 2000, 105).

The character of initial post-independence armies varied widely, however, depending on the manner of decolonization and regime formation. In most French and British colonies, independence was a largely bloodless bureaucratic transition and militaries were formed without coherence or a clear historical mission, often incorporating soldiers who had served in colonial-era armed forces.[6] Other African armies emerged instead from bloody liberation struggles. The independent Algerian military derived from the insurgent National Liberation Front (FLN), which fought a guerilla war for independence from France between 1954 and 1962. Kenya's national army formed partly through integration of the so-called "Mau Mau" insurgents, while in southern Africa, armies emerged from victorious liberation movements in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC), Mozambique (Frelimo), Angola (MPLA), and Zimbabwe (ZANU).

In other cases, African armies were formed by wars of independence from *other African* states, including in Namibia, where SWAPO won independence from South Africa; Eritrea, where the EPLF seceded from Ethiopia; and in the SPLA's long fight for South Sudan's independence. African rebel movements have also toppled non-colonial governments, with groups like the EPRDF in Ethiopia,

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[5] Armed forces in Liberia (independent in 1847 after colonization by freed U.S. slaves) and Ethiopia (independent besides the 1936-1941 Italian intervention), which uniquely avoided European colonization and control, predated the mid-20th century waves of African independence and their contemporaneous international system.

[6] Colonial armies at times provided roots for post-colonial reactionary rebellion (as with Portuguese *flechas* in Mozambique helping form Renamo), or training and referents for aspiring dictators, such as French army veteran Jean-Bédel Bokassa, who led a coup to become leader of the Central African Republic.

NRA/M in Uganda, and RPF in Rwanda forming new national militaries after victory. Where civil wars have ended in negotiated settlements, militaries have often been reconstituted by merging government and rebel forces, more successfully in cases like Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Sierra Leone, and unsuccessfully in cases like the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Mozambique (see case studies in Licklider 2014).

Due to - or perhaps in spite of - these varied origins, many African armies faced identity crises in the post-independence era: unlike in other world regions, African states generally did not fight one another, so militaries were almost never required to project force across their territories. The post-World War II norm of respect for juridical state sovereignty and boundaries gave decolonized states *de facto* legitimate international borders, even if states failed to exert a Weberian monopoly of violence over their territories. Facing generally few external threats, early post-independence African states and their militaries quickly found the most pressing threats coming from within their own boundaries, a uniquely "Third World Security Predicament" (Ayoob 1995).

Simultaneously, as single-party rule, often featuring charismatic, authoritarian rulers, consolidated in many post-independence states (Jackson and Rosberg 1982), many African armies adopted what Howe (2005) describes as an "unprofessional" character: the civil-military divide disappeared, and militaries were instead deployed at the whims of the head of state. This trend, which would continue throughout much of the 1970s and 1980s, led to a troubling dichotomy: personalized African militaries were either loyal to the regime or competent, but rarely both (Howe 2005). The new strategic utility of armies for authoritarian rule is evidenced in their growth: by 1979, the number of soldiers in African armies had nearly tripled from early post-independence numbers to 3.1 soldiers per 1000 citizens (Herbst 2000).

Unsurprisingly, the development and purposes of African militaries were shaped by the contours of the Cold War. Most broadly, both the West and Soviet allies offered extensive military aid to allies: states like Zaire and Liberia received substantial aid from the United States, with Ethiopia, Angola, Benin and other Afro-Marxist republics receiving military aid from the U.S.S.R. In addition to African militaries serving as sources of extraversion from which to extract resources from international patrons (Bayart 2000), many African militaries grew dependent on external donors, throwing the status of African militaries into a certain degree of disarray when the Cold War ended. Thus, observers have argued that when the bipolar world order collapsed with the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, the dual superpower retrenchment from the continent created a "security vacuum." The 1990s have therefore saw African armies "in decline, beset by a combination of shrinking budgets, international pressures to downsize and demobilize, and the lack of freely accessible military assistance that characterized the Cold War period. With few exceptions, heavy weapons lie dormant, equipment is in disrepair, and training [was] almost non-existent" (as quoted in Herbst 2000). Indeed, by the mid-1990s, African armies had only 2 soldiers per 1000 citizens, and were prone to disproportionately cutting military spending as compared to overall national budgets (Herbst 2000).

1: African Militaries and the Pursuit of State Interests

1.1 African Militaries: Suppressing External Threats

Having discussed the emergence of African armies, we now turn to an investigation of the four forces - state interests, regime interests, civil society, and the international context - that inform the particular characters of African militaries in the 21st century.

Perhaps the most pressing concern for contemporary African militaries is monitoring and halting a litany of transnational threats. The fluid and generally artificial nature of African borders has meant that African militaries' primary threats come in two forms: transnational insurgencies and transnational trafficking. Contemporary African armies are engaged in combating deeply transnational insurgencies in the form of Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin; a slew of Al-Qaeda and increasingly ISIS-affiliated insurgencies in the Sahel and Sahara; the occasionally transnational al-Shabaab insurgency in the Horn of Africa; and the overlapping insurgencies and counterinsurgencies in the Congo Basin. A second top priority for African armies and maritime forces in the 21st century is monitoring and halting trafficking of various sorts, including of humans, arms, drugs, cigarettes, diamonds, gold, and ivory, both on land and at sea. Often, these transnational threats feed off of one another: insurgencies are funded by trafficking efforts, and conversely, traffickers join and depart from insurgencies themselves.

Beyond simply patrolling borders against these non-statist transnational threats, African armies are (ostensibly) charged with defending the homeland from external state aggression. Although African armies have indeed engaged in interstate wars with neighbors throughout history,[7] orthodox academic accounts suggest that African armies have rarely engaged in direct interstate war. Because early post-independence African states recognized their mutual vulnerabilities, they cemented a non-aggressive, sovereignty-respecting normative framework - embedded in the Organization of African Unity - that forbade attempts to remake colonially-inherited borders (Herbst 2000; Jackson and Rosberg 1982; Lemke 2002). So profound was the norm of respect of sovereignty, Lemke (2002) finds that Africa has far fewer interstate wars than would be expected based on global patterns, with dyads of African states one-tenth as likely to fight as state pairs in other regions.

Indeed, African militaries are called upon to fulfill these "typical" military tasks, despite frequently facing tremendous material and logistical impediments; as Chuter and Gaub (2016) suggest, African militaries have responsibilities that are "constitutionally assigned regardless of their usually inadequate capabilities." In a thorough assessment, Howe (2005) describes African armies as conducting themselves with a lack of professionalism. Among other issues, he cites a lack of command and control capability; poor training standards; limited military education; poor morale; and indiscipline. At the level of personnel, the character of soldiering as an occupation in many African countries serves as an impediment to well-functioning militaries. Such issues include poor and inconsistent pay for soldiers; uncertain retirement and pension benefits; perceived nepotistic, rather than meritocratic, promotion; inadequate resources on the battlefield and in the barracks,

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[7] Notable examples of interstate militarized conflicts include those between Libya and Chad over the Aouzou Strip, the Somali-Ethiopian war over the Ogaden between 1978 and 1979, the Uganda-Tanzania War that toppled Idi Amin, the 1998-2000 war and extensive border clashes between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and the many states fighting in "Africa's World War" in the Great Lakes region (Haggis 2009, Prunier 2008).

including limited and substandard, arms, food, and housing; and the impacts of HIV/AIDS (Dwyer 2015; Howe 2005, Feldman 2008; Ouédraogo 2014; Whiteside, de Waal, and Gebre-Tensae 2006; Feldman 2012; Sagala 2006).

Given this lack of professionalism, many African militaries are afflicted with numerous problems. These include desertions, which are common in Nigeria, DRC, Madagascar, and Eritrea (Bailliet 2007; Warner 2013; Baaz and Verweijen 2013; Ouédraogo 2014); rape of female service members, especially common in Eritrea (Bailliet 2007; Warner 2013); and mutinies, as seen in 2011 in Burkina Faso (Dwyer 2016). Underlining the diversity of African militaries, a number of militaries are considered professional, including those of South Africa, Botswana, Senegal, and Ghana.

1.2 African Militaries: Ensuring Domestic Peace and Stability

Apart from ensuring external security, African militaries are tasked with accomplishing a variety of internal security functions. Keeping in mind "The Third World Security Predicament" (Ayoob 1995) - that states born of decolonization see the majority of their threats emanating from *inside* the state - one of the primary functions of the military in Africa is the suppression of violent insurgencies, which often arise in peripheral areas outside of state control (Herbst 2000; Fearon and Laitin 2003). Uganda's military, for instance, has faced at least fifty armed groups and potential insurgent movements since the NRA/M government took power in 1986 (Day 2011). The *Forces Nouvelles* rebellion nearly split Côte d'Ivoire in two in the early 2000s, while Chad, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Sudan, and Mali have all had histories of ethnic and national rebellions, Relatedly, militaries are also called upon to suppress secessionist movements, such as in Cabinda in Angola, the Casamance region of Senegal, Darfur in Sudan, and Katanga in DRC, in addition to successful secession movements that led to the creation of Eritrea (from Ethiopia in 1991) and South Sudan (from Sudan in 2011).To explain why African militaries produce different outcomes when it comes to suppressing domestic insurgencies, authors have pointed to various factors: state size;[8] nature of terrain;[9] nature of military origin;[10] or available resources.[11]

Another domestic role of African militaries has been counterterrorism efforts, especially in the Sahara, Sahel, and the Horn of Africa. While the threat of Islamist militancy is real, African armies and their leaders have also instrumentally leveraged the U.S.-led Global War on Terror to pursue their own politicized goals. For instance, President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda has painted domestic

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[8] Herbst (2004) has argued that size matters: the larger the African state's territory, the more difficulty the military has in defeating insurgencies, as compared to smaller countries where the capital city is the only strategically important place of capture.

[9] The rough terrain of mountains, deserts, and forests and the relative lack of financial resources or popular legitimacy of governments can also hinder militaries' counterinsurgency efforts (Fearon and Laitin 2003).

[10] Militaries with revolutionary origins may enjoy superior cohesion and thus achieve better counterinsurgency outcomes and maintenance of support (Levitsky and Way 2012; Thaler 2012).

[11] The comparatively wealthy Ugandan military has since 1986 been able to effectively counter most insurgencies it has faced while operating in a relatively small territory (Day 2011). By contrast, the militaries of large African states like Angola and Sudan have difficulty defeating rebels even while enjoying significant resources. In states like Mozambique and Chad, poorly-resourced militaries must contend with large territories containing difficult terrain, enabling insurgencies.

groups like the West Nile Bank Front and the Lord's Resistance Army as tied with Al-Qaeda, in hopes of receiving greater international assistance to combat these non-Islamist groups (Solomon 2015, 112). Keenan (2009) has argued, contentiously, that the Algerian government, eager to join the Global War on Terror to benefit from generous post-9/11 US funding, colluded with US forces to orchestrate kidnappings as a pretense for military aid. Counterterrorism interests can also make Western actors less critical of militarization and democratic regression on the continent, a case leveled at Uganda (where Museveni's leadership against the LRA and Al-Shabaab suppressed criticism of his electoral fraud and repression in 2016) and Ethiopia (where the authoritarian ruling EPRDF has largely escaped U.S. criticism, due to its cooperation in counter-terror efforts in the Horn of Africa).

Precisely because the challenges of managing *internal* security usually outweigh the imperatives of *external defenses*, African militaries often usurp police roles. A practice derived from the colonial period, the use of the military for policing in Africa is a phenomenon that continues today (Branch and Mampilly 2015). African militaries are often deployed to put down civil society protests - see the 2015 and 2016 Oromo and Amhara protests in Ethiopia and the 2016 election tensions in Uganda - where police would have sufficed elsewhere in the world. In South Africa (Samara 2003) and Uganda (Baker 2006), for instance, the military is used for large-scale anti-gang and anti-drug operations.

2: African Militaries and African Regimes

2.1: African Militaries and Regime Protection

Beyond their role in pursuing statist national security interest interests, African militaries are often intimately tied to the governments they serve, a politicization at odds with ideals of military professionalization. Given the tendency for personalized rule in many African countries, the military or components of it are often tasked with protecting leaders from overthrow, making them beholden to an individual or party, rather than the broader state and nation (Howe 2005).

Leaders or their parties have numerous ways of coopting militaries or maintaining control over them. One method is filling the military with co-ethnics, especially if leaders are from a minority group, as has occurred with the over-representation of Krahn in the Liberian military under Samuel Doe; the domination of the Rwandan military by Tutsis; or Tigray military dominance in Ethiopia. This favoritism is especially common in authoritarian regimes, marked by leaders' discretionary power. Works suggest that the more authoritarian the regime, the greater the tendency for militaries to mimic the leader's personality (Howe 2005), as has been demonstrated, for example, in Eritrea (Warner 2013) and Liberia (Thaler 2016).

Finally, the military establishment in certain African states is rightly conceived as one possible element of the lucrative state apparatus, able to be "captured" by elements interested in personal material gain. Cases are rife of high-ranking members of African militaries using their positions to participate in illicit activities. In Guinea-Bissau, the former head of the Navy, José Américo Bubo Na Tchuto, and the head of the Air Force, Ibraima Papa Camara, facilitated illicit drug flows through the Bijagos Archipelago (Thaler 2009), and in Nigeria, former National Security Advisor Colonel Sambo Dasuki was arrested for allegedly embezzling some $2.2 billion from phantom helicopter and jet

contracts. Soldiers in Kenya were accused of looting the Westgate Mall in the aftermath of the 2013 attacks, while service members in Uganda have allegedly trafficked ivory (Ouédraogo 2014). More broadly, Dietrich (2000) and Howe (2005) have described "military mercantilism," the tendency for African leaders to deploy their militaries regionally for material gain, as in exploitation of natural resources in Eastern DRC by Rwandan and Ugandan forces (Prunier 2008; Samset 2002), or the infamous cases of looting in Liberia by Nigerian soldiers during the ECOMOG I intervention, when "ECOMOG" was said to mean "Every Car or Movable Object Gone" (Adebajo 2002, 174).

2.2: African Militaries: Threatening to the Regime?

While African armies can and do protect incumbent regimes, they can just as easily work to overthrow them. Beginning with the military coup in Egypt in 1952, the African continent had, by April 2016, experienced 175 coup d'état attempts, of which 75 succeeded. Scholars have noted a "contagion effect": African military coups are concentrated in West and Central Africa; by contrast, they virtually never occur in Southern Africa (Chuter and Gaub 2016, 26; McGowan 2003). Thus, African leaders are in a perpetual balancing act of strengthening the army to the point of being effective, but undertaking various tactics to ensure it never grows so powerful that it can overthrow the government.

Leaders have therefore undertaken strategies to insulate themselves from the very militaries over which they preside. One tactic to forestall military overthrow has been constant military reshuffling, such that one officer or set of officers can never get too powerful. Another tactic is the process of "counterbalancing" or pitting better-trained and equipped presidential guards[12] or other units counter to the broader military in an effort to "coup-proof" the government (see De Bruin 2014; Pilster and Bohmelt 2015). Tasked primarily with protecting the head of state, presidential guards' proximity to the leader can create divisions based on ethnicity, prestige, and salary, among others, that place them in an adversarial position vis-a-vis the military, with shared ethnicity with leaders a strong incentive to loyalty (De Bruin 2014). Counterbalancing and concentration on threats from within the military can, however, cause African leaders to undercut the effectiveness of their militaries to the extent that they are impotent against actual security threats to the state from rebels or external rivals (Howe 2005, 2-3).

Military coups may have been on the decline in Africa since the 1980s (Clark 2007), yet the underlying dynamics that have led to coups in the past - ethnic tensions, inequality, intra-military competition, and neopatrimonialism - have not disappeared. Thus, scholars have continued to examine the broad patterns (e.g. Jenkins and Kposowa 1992; McGowan 2003) and microdynamics (e.g. Decalo 1990) of coup attempts, their successes or failures, and their aftermaths. If and when military coups succeed, military rule in Africa has generally followed a series of trends as summarized by Agbese (2004): claims that the military is protecting national unity or values to legitimize control; emphasis on military efficiency and patriotism; diversion of resources to the military; military dominance over civil society and civilian officials; private enrichment of military

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[12] Many African countries have featured presidential guards, or other special praetorian units tasked with protecting the leader(s), like Muammar Qaddafi's corps of female bodyguards in Libya or Charles Taylor's Executive Mansion Special Security Unit in Liberia.

officers; and violent repression in response to social dissidence. Military rulers tend to be reluctant to give up power, often trying to legitimize themselves through rigged elections, which can lead to a cycle of countercoups or civil wars (Agbese 2004; Kandeh 1996).

3: African Militaries and Civilian Populations

3.1: African Militaries and Civil Societies: A Question of Varied Legitimacy

The relationships between African armies and their civil societies show no generalizable pattern. As Chuter and Gaub (2016, 31) state:

"…there is no direct correlation between military performance and civilian appreciation of the armed forces. Forces which have rarely seen combat, such as in Tunisia, tend to be seen very positively, whereas the very active Nigerian forces…have a more mixed image. Where national political cultures have been strongly marked by the military as a cohesive national factor, their perception tends to be positive - as is the case in Algeria. High levels of corruption, low levels of education and lack of trust in non-military political figures ….are all variables which play a role in the popular perception of the military."

Afrobarometer poll data from 2014 and 2015 across 36 countries shows the varying opinions of African citizens towards their militaries. Across the sample, 39.5% of respondents trust their military 'a lot,' 24.6% 'somewhat,' 19.0% 'just a little,' and 13.6% 'not at all.' Trust in the military is particularly high, with over 75% of respondents answering 'a lot' or 'somewhat,' in Burundi, Egypt, Malawi, Senegal, Tanzania, Tunisia, and Uganda. There is, by contrast, low trust in the military in Benin, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, and Togo, all having over 40% of respondents say they trusted the military 'not at all' or 'just a little.'

While the previous sections have shown how African leaders employ militaries for self-interested ends, civilians have often been victimized by the armies that ostensibly operate for their protection. Bates (2008) has shown how African leaders, even in peacetime, think about the role of their militaries in relation to economic accumulation: when formal taxation of populations is difficult, attacking civilians for monetary gain can be a more effective way to generate state incomes. Civil-military relations during times of war are usually even more fraught. Particularly during counter-insurgency and counterterrorism operations, African armies' have shown widespread disregard for human rights. For instance, the Nigerian military today is critiqued heavily - even having been referred to the International Criminal Court - for its violations of human rights in the course of its anti-Boko Haram efforts, including extrajudicial detentions of civilians; torture and rape of suspected Boko Haram militants; and the discovery of mass graves of the military's victims (Amnesty International 2015).

A particularly acute problem has been allegations of sexual predation against members of African armies, with reports across the continent of soldiers sexually abusing civilians (see Arieff 2011; Bastick, Grimm, and Kunz 2011). Sexual violence allegations have been been particularly

pronounced in recent conflicts in DRC (Baaz and Stern 2009) and South Sudan (Kindersley and Rolandsen 2016). Sexual violence by soldiers is not restricted to wartime, however, with women in Eritrea reporting rape by military members (Bailliet 2007; Warner 2013). Sexual abuse and exploitation, meanwhile, have also been alleged against peacekeepers, many of them from African militaries, in DRC, Eritrea, Liberia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Sudan (Bastick, Grimm, and Kunz 2011: 28).

The nature and actions of African militaries also have often unintended impacts on societal norms. Militaries' structures and practices can at times challenge local traditions and understandings of hierarchy, and can "be seen as a threat to the hidden patrimonial and clan linkages by which a country is governed" (Chuter and Gaub 2016, 29). Further, as Le Gouriellec (2016) observed in the call for submissions for this current special edition of *Afrique Contemporaine*:

[African] militar[ies] also play a significant social role: training, socializing and providing jobs for young people, integrating individuals from diverse backgrounds, giving women high-level jobs, and even creating a sense of citizenship….More generally, [the military] constructs normative images of masculinity, family organization, labor divisions, and social roles.

The activities of African militaries have also become sources of civil society protest. Notable examples include widespread protests in Nigeria over the country's deployment of forces to the ECOMOG mission in Liberia in the early 1990s (Abegunrin 2003, 136-137) as well as the more famous recent protests urging the Nigerian military to do more to bring back the so-called "Chibok Girls." Moreover, the potential location of AFRICOM raised eyebrows amongst civil society members (LeVan 2010). The reverse situation may also occur, where civilian protests lead militaries to revolt, as has occurred across West and Central Africa (Dwyer 2015, 2016).

3.2: Uneasy Location: African Armies Between State and Civil Society

African militaries might be said to exist at an uneasy nexus *between* state and civil society actors, able to shift toward one or the other. We briefly examine some of these aspects that mark the occasional *fluidity* of military-state-civilian interactions.

Around the continent, there exist informal, sub-state armies: in states where the military cannot or will not protect citizens, substatist militias - or more informally, vigilante groups - have arisen to fill the void of the state (see Baker 2004; Smith 2007). In Nigeria, groups like the Bakassi Boys have worked to restore order in the Niger Delta, while in the Central African Republic, vigilante justice against the Muslim perpetrators of Seleka that overthrew the government in 2013 led to ethnic cleansing by Christian "anti-balaka" forces. To the extent that non-national militias remain pervasive, it was noted recently that "the Somali Army is still….years away from coalescing regional militias into a unified army" (Mazzetti, Gettleman, and Schmitt 2016).

Indeed, African governments themselves have been known to leverage these non-statist militias for their own goals. The Janjaweed militias responsible for attacking rebels and civilians in Darfur in western Sudan are a recent example: not official elements of the Sudanese military apparatus, they

were nevertheless paid by the Sudanese state (Flint 2009). Other authors have documented states' cross-border support of armed groups (Salehyan 2011; Craig 2012), especially in the Great Lakes region (Prunier 2008), with almost all African states at some point having sponsored armed groups fighting against other governments on the continent (Craig 2012).

A second example of the sometimes indeterminate location of African service members between state and civil society is captured in the rise of so-called "sobels," or "soldiers by day, and rebels by night." Authors have documented how soldiers switch allegiances between being pro-state and anti-state, especially for material gain. The phenomenon has been discussed most prominently in the context of Sierra Leone's military, as well as how the 'sobel' trend has been tackled by advisers seeking to professionalize the Sierra Leonean forces (Feldman and Arrous 2013; Chuter and Gaub 2016, 29).

Third and finally, militaries may also act in the interests not of their own states, but of domestic or foreign corporations, especially in extractive industries, rather than for the protection of citizens (e.g. Dietrich 2000). This issue is particularly notorious in the case of the Nigerian military repressing protests against oil extraction by Shell and other foreign companies in the Niger Delta (Adunbi 2015).

4: African Militaries and International Security

4.1 African Militaries and Intra-African Collective Security

Beyond more traditionally-defined national security interests, in many contexts, African leaders have begun to use their militaries for (ostensibly) collective regional and continental security promotion. Underwritten by a series of overlapping international organizations at the continental level - in the form of the African Union - and subregional levels - in the form of so-called "regional economic communities" - African states have created a patchwork system of collective security, called the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). Based at the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa, APSA includes various institutions to help protect collective peace and security (see Akokpari et al. 2008; Franke 2009; Williams 2009, 2014).

Among APSA's military components, arguably the most important is the "African Standby Force" (ASF), the African Union's rapid-deployment capability. It is intended to be deployed, as per the Article 4(h) of the AU's Constitutive Act, in the event of "grave circumstances, including war crimes, genocide, or crimes against humanity." Despite having been created, in theory, in 2002, the five regional brigades that comprise the ASF have yet to reach full operational capability as of early 2017, though other rapid-deployment capabilities have been developed (Warner 2015). Moreover, the African Union's Military Staff Committee, which is supposed to meet regularly to discuss security-related exigencies, is essentially defunct, rarely meeting and, when doing so, generally not discussing issues germane to improving the AU's military responsiveness (Lulie 2016).

When the African Union does deploy peace support operations,[13] what motivates African states to commit their forces to them? Rationales vary: Victor (2011) finds evidence that African states are more likely to deploy peacekeepers if they are poor, suffer domestic legitimacy, but also have low political repression. Some focus on reputational factors, including perceptions of prestige or serving as good continental or global citizens. In the case of Nigerian peacekeeping participation, scholars understand it as a means to assert Nigerian hegemony, or *Pax-Nigeriana* in West African and pan-African affairs (Adebajo 2010; Warner 2016). Other analysts have focused on the material factors compelling African states to contribute to peacekeeping missions, including the fact that soldiers often make higher salaries serving as peacekeepers - particularly for the UN - than they do serving otherwise. Finally, others suggest that African states are especially prone to commit troops to African peacekeeping missions when they occur in neighboring states, allowing their own soldiers legitimately into areas of operations abroad, so they can attempt to remake neighborhood politics in their own favor. This motive is often suggested for the engagement of regional African hegemons like South Africa, Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Uganda in local conflicts (Adebajo 2002, 2010; Firsing 2014; Damman 2014; Gebrewold 2014).

The extent to which African militaries - and their host countries - have alone been able to work to effectively ensure pan-African security, has been limited, however. African militaries require substantial outside assistance prior to deployment. For one, the African Union does not self-fund: approximately 97% of its budget for peace support operations comes from external donors - particularly the EU - which causes a host of impediments when it attempts to rapidly deploy. Moreover, the AU lacks strategic airlift capacity, relying on a handful of its member states, especially South Africa, as well as international partners (Warner 2015; Williams 2013). Other problems in intra-African cooperation in AU missions include doctrinal differences; diversity of languages and cultures; and a lack of interoperability of hardware (Feldman 2008).

5. The Future of African Militaries

We conclude with ideas about the future challenges confronting African militaries. When it comes to improving the efficacy of African militaries war-fighting capacity, salient concerns are African militaries' improvement in respecting human rights and the rule of law; improved coordination between land air operations; better training; and creative solutions for operating with limited resources and uncertain political an economic environments. Culturally, important issues will involved be working towards gender parity in militaries, better including women in African peace operations as well as continued efforts at professionalization. More broadly, we can expect African militaries to be called upon to undertake profoundly multidimensional missions, ranging from peacemaking to peacekeeping to DDR efforts and post-conflict reconstruction: to that end, African militaries will increasingly be more involved in kinetic operations - not just peacekeeping - especially as counterterrorism becomes a more prominent concern. Topically, scholars "new" threats on the African continent will include challenges posed by African megacities - like Lagos, Kinshasa, and

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[13] As of late 2016, the African Union currently has three peace support operations: The African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM); the joint AU-UN Mission in Darfur (UNAMID); and the AU-led Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army (AU-led RCI-LRA).The AU has also mandated the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to fight the Boko Haram insurgency.

Dar es Salaam - and the future of urban warfare; desertification and climate change; and population pressures and the "youth bulge."

In closing, the suggestion that "African armies," *per se,* are uniformly "infamous" is wrongheaded. While there is significant room for improvement in many of the continent's armed forces, casting a wholly negative pale upon them overlooks contemporary successes and obscures a nuanced understanding of their potential futures.

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