H-**Diplo** | **ISSF** Review Essay 60

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Military disloyalty and disobedience can take several forms. Some acts of disobedience are individual in nature—a single officer refusing to follow a direct order, for instance, or deserting his or her unit.[1] Others, such as mass desertions or defections, coups d'état, and mutinies, are collective endeavors.[2] While instances of collective disobedience have often been treated as broadly similar types of behavior, there are important distinction between them.

As Maggie Dwyer and Oisín Tansey emphasize in their excellent new article, "Explaining Divergent Trends in Coups and Mutinies: The End of the Cold War and the Role of Military Agency," coups and mutinies tend to be carried out by different actors and have different goals. Mutinies are primarily a tactic of rank-and-file soldiers, which target military leadership in order to address grievances. In contrast, the aim of a coup is to overthrow the incumbent regime. While some coups originate from within the junior ranks of the military, most are perpetrated by senior officers.

Moreover, trends in coups and mutinies diverged dramatically following the end of the Cold War. As Dwyer and Tansey document, while coups became less common, the opposite is true of mutinies. Drawing on data from West and Central Africa, the article demonstrates that mutinies are much more frequent today than they were during the Cold War. The numbers are striking: between 1960 and 1989, there were 69 coup attempts in the region; from 1990 to 2019, this number dropped to 46, which represents a decline of one-third. In

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[1] Eric Hundman and Sarah E. Parkinson, "Rouges, Degenerates, and Heroes: Disobedience as Politics in Military Organizations," *European Journal of International Relations* 25:3 (2019): 645-671, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066118823891; Theodore McLauchlin, "Desertion and Collective Action in Civil Wars," *International Studies Quarterly* 59:4 (2015): 669-679, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/isqu.12205.

[2] See, for example, David Pion-Berlin, Diego Esparza, and Kevin Grisham, "Staying Quartered: Civilian Uprisings and Military Disobedience in the Twenty-First Century," *Comparative Politics* 47:2 (2014): 230-259, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414012450566; Maggie Dwyer, *Soldiers in Revolt: Army Mutinies in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

comparison, there were just fourteen mutinies during the Cold War, but 65 after—a more than fourfold increase (871).

Dwyer and Tansey attribute the diverging trends in coups and mutinies in the region to larger macropolitical shifts associated with the end of the Cold War that affected officers and rank-and-file soldiers in different ways. The article emphasizes three shifts in particular—in the extent of democratization in the region, development of robust international norms against coups, and rates of participation in international peacekeeping missions. In developing their theory, Dwyer and Tansey bring together insights from their own prior scholarship as well as a wide range of other quantitative and qualitative work.[3]

Overall, the article's arguments are logically developed and well-supported. In West and Central Africa, Dwyer and Tansey contend, the initial instability brought on by democratization resulted in a temporary increase in the incidence of coup attempts. Over time, however, the consolidation of democratic regimes increased regime legitimacy and thus the potential costs of a coup. Senior officers also came to see that it was possible to maintain privileged positions under democratic rulers. At the same time, the rhetoric of accountability and participatory politics that accompanied democratization encouraged demand-making by rank-and-file soldiers, resulting in more mutinies.

The article also convincingly argues that the development of more robust anti-coup norms following the end of the Cold War—and an increased willingness by international actors to sanction coup-installed regimes— made coup attempts costlier, while having no effect on mutinies. These arguments track with other research that finds that international actors have become more likely to collectively penalize coups in the post-Cold War period.[4]

Finally, Dwyer and Tansey argue that experiences of participation in peacekeeping missions, which increased rapidly in the region after the end of the Cold War, diverged for those at the top and bottom of the military hierarchy. The article acknowledges that there has been some debate about whether participation in peacekeeping increases or decreases the likelihood of coup attempts in troop contributing countries, but draws support from recent research suggesting that peacekeeping can provide vital income to militaries and promote norms of subordination to military rule that result in fewer coups.[5] For rank-and-file soldiers, in contrast,

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[3] Dwyer, *Soldiers in Revolt*; Maggie Dwyer, "Peacekeeping Abroad, Trouble at Home: Mutinies in West Africa," *African Affairs* 114:455 (2015): 206-225, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adv004; Oisín Tansey, "The Fading of the Anti-Coup Norm," *Journal of Democracy* 28:1 (January 2017): 144-56.

[4] Takaaki Masaki, "Coups d'État and Foreign Aid," *World Development* 79 (2016): 51-68, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2015.11.004; Megan Shannon, Clayton Thyne, Sarah Hayden, and Amanda Dugan, "The International Community's Reaction to Coups," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 11:4 (2015): 363-376,. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/fpa.12043.

[5] On this debate, see: Jesse Dillon Savage and Jonathan D. Caverley, "When Human Capital Threatens the Capitol: Foreign Aid in the Form of Military Training and Coups," *Journal of Peace Research* 54:4 (2017): 542-557; Philip Cunliffe, "From Peacekeepers to Praetorians–How Participating in Peacekeeping Operations May Subvert Democracy," *International Relations* 32: 2 (2018): 218-239; Magnus Lundgren, "Backdoor Peacekeeping: Does Participation in UN Peacekeeping Reduce Coups at Home?," *Journal of Peace Research* 55:4 (2018): 508-523; Rebecca

peacekeeping missions often present new hardships. Many soldiers blamed both political and military leaders for sending them into dangerous situations without adequate preparation, and for failing to compensate them fairly for the risks that they were undertaking. As a result, the authors argue, participation in peacekeeping missions served as "a source of potent grievances for rank-and-file soldiers," which resulted in more frequent mutinies (888).

While these explanations are largely compelling ones, the argument about peacekeeping is ultimately less persuasive than those about democratization and anti-coup norms. The article is successful in documenting the hardships soldiers faced due to participation in peacekeeping missions; it also notes that mutineers often cited grievances related to peacekeeping in explaining their actions. However, the evidence presented in the article does not provide a way to assess whether these peacekeeping-related grievances were any more widespread or severe than grievances soldiers had during the Cold War. As a result, it is not yet clear whether mutinies are more common today because soldiers have more grievances or because they have more opportunities to express them.

The article also would have been stronger if it had explicitly considered (and attempted to rule out) other potential explanations for the diverging patterns in coups and mutinies. One in particular that I would have liked to see addressed was the role of changing patterns in conflict. For several of the countries in the region, the decades following the end of the Cold War also saw repeated attempts to conclude civil wars via peace agreements that frequently included provisions for demobilization and/or rebel-military integration. While there is some evidence that ongoing civil wars create incentives for coups by officers and soldiers alike, the processes associated with the end of civil wars can create more hardships for those in the junior ranks.[6] It can also create new opportunities for recently integrated soldiers to press their demands via mutinies.[7] In Côte d'Ivoire, for instance, several of the mutinies that have occurred since 1990 were over the terms of demobilization and rebel integration into the military.[8]

On the whole, however, this article represents a major contribution to our understanding of collective disobedience within the military. While scholarship in civil-military relations has long treated the military as a unitary actor, this article contributes to recent efforts to disaggregate the interests and incentives of those at different places within the military hierarchy. It builds in particular on Naunihal Singh's influential work on the dynamics of coups, which emphasized the different resources coup plotters at different ranks have to stage

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Schiel, Jonathan Powell, and Ursula Daxecker, "Peacekeeping Deployments and Mutinies in African Sending States," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 16:3 (2020): 251-271.

[6] Curtis Bell and Jun Koga Sudduth, "The Causes and Outcomes of Coup During Civil War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 67:7 (2017): 1432-1455, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002715603098; Peter B. White, "The Perils of Peace: Civil War Peace Agreements and Military Coups," *The Journal of Politics* 82:1 (2020): 104-118, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1086/705683.

[7] Jaclyn M. Johnson, "Things Fall Apart: The Determinants of Military Mutinies," University of Kentucky (2018), DOI: https://doi.org/10.13023/ETD.2018.190.

[8] Rebecca Schiel, Christopher Faulkner, and Jonathan Powell, "Mutiny in Côte d'Ivoire," *Africa Spectrum* 52:2 (2017): 106, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/000203971705200205.

coups.[9] While existing work in this vein has examined how attention to agency within militaries affects the dynamics of coup attempts and patterns of military defection during unrest,[10] Dwyer and Tansey's article shows that it can also help make sense of broader trends in the incidence of both coups and mutinies.

The article focuses on West and Central Africa for reasons of data availability—drawing on Dwyer's previously published data of mutinies in the region[11]—and because the region has a particularly high rate of coup attempts. At the same time, it aims to "build a new theory that can be subsequently tested in a wider set of cases, from both Africa and other regions" (866). Recent work has made progress on compiling the data that would make this possible. Building upon Dwyer's efforts to document mutinies in West and Central Africa, Rebecca Schiel, Jonathan Powell, and Christopher Faulkner compiled additional data on mutinies across the continent as a whole, 1950-2018. Their analysis finds that while economic development and growth are both negatively associated with coups and mutinies in Africa, other factors commonly associated with coups—including legacies of civil-military relations, regional anti-coup norms, and military regimes— are not associated with mutinies.[12] Jaclyn Johnson's new global data on military mutinies and defections also documents an increase in mutinies over time.[13] In other words, the empirical trends that the article documents in West and Central Africa also appear to hold elsewhere. As more data on mutinies becomes available, the extent to which the specific arguments the authors advance to explain these trends hold elsewhere can also be tested.

Another question this article raises is extent to which soldiers have come to see mutinies as a substitute for coups in an international context that has become more hostile to overt efforts to seize power. The article briefly notes that mutinies can lead to coups, and vice versa (865), but does not probe the relationship between them further. Yet it seems plausible that the two trends it documents—the decline in coups and rise in mutinies—are, to some extent, related to one another. While coups and mutinies tend to be staged by different actors, with different goals, coups from within the enlisted ranks do occur; senior officers can also encourage mutinies as a way to put pressure on political leaders. Future work might explore the extent to which a substitution effect is occurring. Finally, future research might also put this work in dialogue with

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[9] Naunihal Singh, *Seizing Power: The Strategic Logic of Military Coups* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014). For an overview of other recent scholarship focusing on intra-military divisions, see: Risa Brooks, "Integrating the Civil-Military Relations Subfield," *Annual Review of Political Science* 22 (2019): 379-398.

[10] In addition to Singh's work, recent scholarship includes: Holger Albrecht and Dorothy Ohl, "Exit, Resistance, Loyalty: Military Behavior During Unrest in Authoritarian Regimes," *Perspectives on Politics* 15:1 (2016): 38-52, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592715003217; Holger Albrecht and Ferdinand Eibl, "How to Keep Officers in the Barracks: Causes, Agents, and Types of Military Coups," *International Studies Quarterly* 62:2 (2018): 315-328, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqx085.

[11] Dwyer, *Soldiers in Revolt*.

[12] Schiel, Jonathan Powell, and Faulkner, "Mutiny in Africa, 1950-2018." *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0738894220934882.

[13] Jaclyn M. Johnson, "Military Mutinies and Defections (MMDD) 1945-2017: A New Dataset," *Journal of Peace Research*, in press.

scholarship on acts of individual insubordination to examine the conditions under which individual versus collective defection is most likely.

In the meantime, this article succeeds in its central aim of demonstrating that coups and mutinies operate according to distinct, rather than parallel, logics. It documents a striking divergence in the trends of coups and mutinies in a particularly coup-prone region of the globe, and develops a theoretically rich and nuanced account to explain it. In doing so, the article helps to provide an important corrective to decades of coup-centric scholarship within the study of civil-military relations. It should be of interest to scholars of both political violence and democratization.

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