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A question of trust: military defection during regime crises in Benin and Togo

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the role of trust between military officers and opposition forces in fostering mass defections of military personnel during pro-democracy uprisings. The current literature on military defection emphasizes the role of either opposition characteristics, or government control policies. Combining the two, however, takes better account of defection as an interaction between officers and the opposition. Through an analysis of civil–military relations during mass uprisings in Benin (1989–1990) and Togo (1990–1993), this article finds that loyalist stacking creates a core of military personnel with a strong stake in regime preservation, while counterbalancing leaves open the possibility for a military-opposition alliance. Alliance also depends on civic resistance campaign characteristics (the unity of the movement, its nonviolent character, the presence of opposition leaders with social ties to military personnel) and promises to military personnel that acknowledge the latter groups' interests. These findings provide a new theoretical framework for understanding military actions during regime crises.

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KEYWORDS African politics; Benin; civic resistance campaign; civil–military relations; coup-proofing; regime crisis; Togo

The ambiguous role played by the armed forces in African politics has puzzled researchers for decades. As military actions during recent crises in Burkina Faso, Burundi, Egypt, and Tunisia made clear, African armies have presented the greatest threats to popular uprisings, but have also been among the strongest proponents of regime change on the continent. Despite these contradictions, the armed forces remain deeply influential actors during regime crises.

This article sets out to explain the conditions under which civic resistance campaigns instigate mass defection among military personnel in Africa. I argue that the ability of civil society groups to encourage mass defection depends on their capacity to make promises about their respect for military interests, and to foster officers' trust in their promises. However, the trust-building process depends on a combination of opposition characteristics and coup-proofing policies.[1] Armed forces where a majority of officers and soldiers have been recruited for their loyalty to the country's leadership tend to stand with the incumbent government during a regime crisis. Conversely, armies

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where political leaders have created counterweights, factions both within it and outside that are seen as having the potential to rebel or defect, do not automatically choose a given side.[2] Non-loyalists, who have a great presence in counterbalanced armies, may defect if they trust the opposition's offers. However, the ability of the anti-regime movement to gain the trust of military personnel depends on the promises they make regarding military interests, and the credibility of their proposals. In other words, we would only expect a majority of military personnel to side with anti-regime forces in a scenario where a counterbalanced army was provided with credible promises.

By looking at opposition characteristics and military characteristics together, I fill several gaps in the existing literature. Above all, I provide a corrective to the tendency to emphasize either set of characteristics on its own, as military defection is about an interaction between the opposition and military personnel. Previous work linking coup-prevention measures to military behaviour during regime crises identifies regimes where defection is a risk, but does not explain why mass defection among military personnel only occurs during regime crises.[3] I argue that popular uprisings are a sign of the weakness of a regime that every non-loyalist faction can see. There is work that links civic resistance campaigns to the defection of military personnel, but it focuses on the number of campaigners and does not explain why uprisings of equal strength can have very different outcomes.[4] I argue that, in addition to size, the anti-regime forces' ability to make credible promises (through the cohesion of the movement, its social ties with military personnel and non-radicalism) is key to their ability to foster defection among military personnel.

I compare the 1989–1990 regime crisis in Benin with the 1990–1993 regime crisis in Togo to explore the influence of coup-prevention measures' and anti-regime forces' characteristics on military actions during regime crises. In Benin, the military personnel, affected by years of counterbalancing, refused to defend the incumbent government of President Mathieu Kérékou. A large majority rallied to the opposition cause once anti-regime leaders demonstrated their willingness to accommodate military interests and proved the credibility of their promises. In neighbouring Togo, President Gnassingbé Eyadéma could count on the support of an army stacked with his fellow Kabye when he was challenged by a civic resistance campaign.

This article proceeds in five sections. The first reviews existing theories, highlighting the main gaps in our current understanding of military actions in regime crises, and sets forth a new theoretical framework to fill them. In the second section, I explain my selection of the two cases: Benin and Togo. In the third section, I analyse the Togolese case in order to demonstrate how reliance on loyalists precludes trust-building between military personnel and civil society groups. In the fourth section, I explore how the use of counterbalancing secured the Beninese government against military coups, but left it vulnerable to a military personnel/civil society groups alliance. The final section discusses the implications of my work.

The armed forces' behaviour during regime crises

This research concentrates on military actions during regime crises. By regime crises, I refer to periods when "the political institutions of the country are insufficient to contain the political activities of the various domestic groups and political powers, and the political institutions are contested by certain forces within the state".[5] While regime crises are ignited for varied reasons, I only assess the military actions when such crises were

instigated by pro-democracy protests that demand regime change towards free elections.[6]

The main factor determining the success of pro-democracy protests, as multiple research concluded, is the decision of military personnel.[7] During this time, military personnel can side with protesters – through mass defection of soldiers and officers to the protesters' side, decisions by senior officers to publicly endorse the protesters' demands, a military takeover of the government followed by negotiations with protest leaders – and consequently mortally weaken the incumbent regime by denying it access to its main coercive tools. Alternatively, military personnel can obey demands by government officials to end the protests as military troops take to the street and use their coercive tools to force the protesters to end their campaign.[8]

The two major strands of the literature that analyse the factors behind military defection during regime crises instigated by mobilization from below focus respectively on the regime, and on the opposition. While insightful, these strands fail to consider the importance of military trust in opposition promises. As previous research on civil–military relations has highlighted, the actions of military personnel are guided by their desire to preserve their corporate interests, and their fear of being purged from the army by the current or future government.[9] Consequently, lack of attention to military trust leaves many unanswered questions, namely on the uneven effects of opposition movements of similar size, and the reasons military personnel defect to the opposition rather than take matters into their own hands. There are two other strands in the literature, on professionalism and international patrons, that look at the influence of these factors on military actions. There is disagreement among authors as to how professionalism influences military actions, since this socialization process could make military personnel either more *or* less prone to support an incumbent government.[10] However, scholars in the field agree that foreign patrons only temper military actions, and are not the primary factor behind military decisions.[11]

Even if the emphasis of their study is on the importance of non-violent strategies, Chenoweth and Stephan have concluded that larger resistance movements are more likely to foster mass military defection than former regime supporters who become convinced of the likelihood of an opposition victory.[12] While it is true that the increased size of anti-regime coalitions encourages defection, there is considerable variation in success. For instance, large civic resistance campaigns in China (1989) and Nigeria (1993) failed to ignite mass defection among military personnel; instead, the army repressed the members of those campaigns.[13] This uneven effect suggests that other factors influence an anti-regime coalition's ability to foster military defection, namely the military personnel's trust in the opposition forces' reform project.

I define trust as the willingness of one group to allow another group to take decisions that may affect the former group's interests in the future. In the case of military pro-democracy groups' trust, this implies offers of reforms that accommodate military interests and the belief among military personnel that opposition leaders will respect these promises when a new political regime is established.[14] Specifically, it implies that military personnel will agree to side with the protesters during the crisis phase and allow a new government to be established without staging a coup against it in return for certain guarantees from the protest leaders. A first factor influencing trust is the acknowledgment of the first group's interests by the second group. Because corporate interests are so important for military personnel, opposition leaders who hope to gain the trust of military personnel must demonstrate their willingness to protect them.[15] This usually

involves a general amnesty for human rights violations committed during the rule of the previous regime, budgetary guarantees, the integration of officers in the institutions in charge of proposing political and security reforms, or certain promises of reform demanded by officers – like the dismantling of rival paramilitary organizations. Previous work that looked at the importance of pacts failed to grasp a core problem, namely the trust military personnel place in said promises. While the opposition may make such guarantees, they might have an interest in breaking them in the future.[16] Particularly, military personnel fear being purged from security forces, and judicial prosecution for past human rights abuses if a new regime seeks revenge on defenders of the *ancien regime*.[17] Military personnel thus have a disincentive for reaching agreements with the opposition; they fear future negative repercussions, due to the problem of compliance. Because of this fact, a second factor, the provision of guarantees that tie a group's actions to their promises and, thus, reduce the uncertainty of the outcome, is a necessary part of the trust-building process.

Accordingly, anti-regime forces must demonstrate that they will respect their promises in the future.[18] The ability to make credible commitments is a function of four opposition characteristics. First, promises are more credible if they are proposed by an interlocutor respected by military personnel, such as a civilian bureaucrat who has worked with officers before, or a notable from the same ethnic group as most of the military personnel.[19] Second, the presence of individuals among the opposition coalition who share social ties with security personnel reassures the latter group that regime change will not lead to an ethnic purge among security forces.[20] Third, the opposition does not use violent strategies. Such strategies are far more likely to convince military personnel to rally behind the regime.[21] Finally, cohesive structures or unifying leadership in the anti-regime coalition can prevent the rise of radical groups that might reject agreements with the military or favour the formation of militias to accelerate regime change, which challenges the coercive monopoly of the army.[22]

Even when opposition forces are willing to accommodate the military, and demonstrate their willingness to respect their promises in the future, military defection does not always occur. For instance, efforts to appeal to the military, and assure them of the civic resistance coalition's goodwill failed in Burundi in 1993, and in China in 1989.[23] Why is this the case? I argue that the answer can be found in the literature on coup-prevention policies.

The armed forces are a critical part of an authoritarian regime's winning coalition. Relying heavily on military consent, these regimes exclude many social groups from power.[24] Accommodation of military interests is not a burden as long as the armed forces remain a united hierarchical institution and senior officers are able to provide a reasonable guarantee of their subalterns' obedience.[25] However, military involvement in political affairs leads to a disruption of the esprit de corps, and thus weakens the senior officers' control of their subordinates.[26] As senior officers cannot guarantee the full co-operation of their fellow officers, authoritarian leaders face the possibility that segments of the armed forces could stage a coup at any time.[27] Authoritarian leaders facing such challenges may implement coup-prevention measures that reduce the likelihood that a coup will occur and/or that such coups will succeed.[28] Two strategies are commonly used by authoritarian states: reliance on loyalists, and counterbalancing.

In the first strategy, group identification becomes a proxy for group loyalty/disloyalty and, consequently, forms the basic criterion for recruitment and promotion

procedures.[29] Officers from unreliable groups are pushed to peripheral positions or slowly removed from military institutions.[30] Individuals from identity groups seen as more reliable are promoted and occupy all strategic positions, particularly among the officer corps and elite units.[31] Military loyalists identify with the regime and are convinced that they "sink or swim" with the standing government, as regime change could mean their purge from the army.[32] Military loyalists have a group interest in keeping the current regime in place, because of this identification.

Stacking the army with loyalists is not always possible, however; autocrats in multiethnic states may need the support of more than one group to stay in power, and unreliable groups may simply be too powerful to be purged. Furthermore, stacking can lead to increased military disloyalty and coup attempts if loyalists do not become the majoritarian faction.[33] For these reasons, autocrats may instead foster divisions within the armed forces to create a situation where each faction, lacking trust in other groups, holds the others in check.[34] Autocrats using counterbalancing techniques foster divisions to make coordination among various factions, which is necessary to launch a successful coup, nearly impossible.[35] Three measures can be used by autocrats to foster such divisions: command shuffles, creation of paramilitary organizations and the diversification of recruitment and promotion across identity divides.[36] These techniques are effective in preventing successful coup attempts if they create a balance among rival factions. The factions generally fail to reach agreements with one another, and a single faction on its own is unable to overthrow the regime.

Previous research concluded that factionalized armies are more likely to abandon an incumbent regime during a regime crisis, but did not sufficiently explain why officers would defect to the opposition's side.[37] Counterbalancing strategies imply an increased motivation of marginalized cliques to overthrow the regime, as they exacerbate grievances among military personnel over security policies that favour some factions over others, yet they limit the opportunities to launch a coup. In this context, regime crises ignited by popular uprisings create new opportunities for embittered cliques to overthrow the regime, thus upsetting the balance – between the motivation and the opportunity to launch coups – created by coup-prevention policies. Mass protests signal to less enthusiastic members of the ruling coalition that regime change is possible, and that it is a good time to defect.[38] Furthermore, civic resistance campaigns break the communication barriers between different factions created through counterbalancing policies by offering a rallying point outside of the military institution. However, anti-regime leaders must offer credible promises of respect for military corporate interests, and the interests of non-loyalist military factions, in order to become this focal point of mass defection (Figure 1).

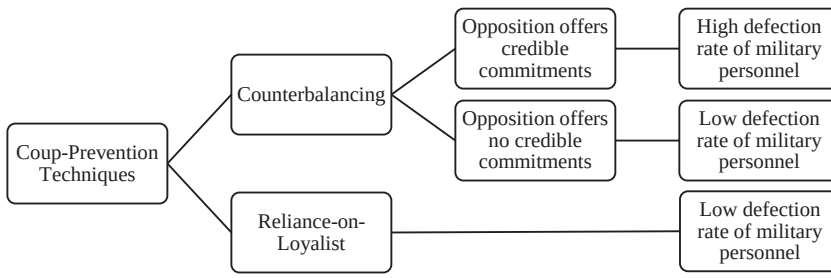

Figure 1. Summary of hypotheses.

Case selection: Benin and Togo

I draw on a most similar case comparison to assess the validity of the hypotheses stated above to control for alternative hypotheses.[39] I selected African cases to test my hypotheses as previous studies noted the important role played by the armed forces during multiple regime crises on the continent.[40] Furthermore, I selected two regime crises from the same period, the 1989–1994 democratic wave in Africa, to control for economic and international factors. Bratton and van de Walle identified 13 cases of military intervention during regime crises between 1989 and 1994 in African countries, seven cases of support for regime change and six against it.[41] I selected one case from each category: Benin, a case of military intervention in favour of regime change, and Togo, a case of military intervention against regime change.

I also selected Benin and Togo because of their numerous similarities. They were both under the control of French administrators before independence. There were significant north–south divides in each country in terms of ethno-cultural traits and economic development, as southern groups received the lion's share of infrastructure and development projects during the era of European dominance.[42] By 1972, military officers had established authoritarian regimes in the two countries. President Mathieu Kérékou, of Benin, and President Étienne Gnassingbé Eyadéma, of Togo, were each from the northern regions of their respective states, and each came from military ranks. Both regimes were military regimes, as neither head of government forfeited his officer rank.[43]

The crises that challenged their authoritarian regimes also have many similarities, as both were brought on by economic recessions that weakened the regime's hold on societal forces, in a context of international pressure to implement political liberalization measures. Mass mobilization began in January 1989 in Benin, and September 1990 in Togo. In both cases, the opposition movement forced the regime to start a reform process, by at first tolerating free press, and returning to multiparty elections. These reforms failed to appease domestic pressures, and the regimes ultimately had to concede to holding national conferences where political and economic reforms were discussed. Only in Benin, however, did this process lead to regime change. In Benin, the armed forces officially came out in favour of regime change, and their return to the barracks, during the national conference, while, in Togo, the armed forces, alongside members of the youth wing of the ruling *Rassemblement du Peuple Togolais* (RPT), attacked the transitory bodies on 27 November 1992, putting the RPT and President Eyadéma back in control.

There were notable differences in pre-independence security policies and civil society characteristics. During the colonial period, French recruitment practices were not the same in the two countries: only northerners, particularly Kabyes, joined the French army in Togo, while in Benin, northerners made up the majority of the rank-and-file, but not the officer corps, which was dominated by Fons, a southern group. This difference set the first stone for the difference in coup-prevention techniques, as, in Togo, successive leaders relied heavily on the military domination of northern groups, while Benin's leaders had to deal with a more ethnically divided army.

Second, there were deep differences between the civic resistance movements in the two states. Benin's anti-regime coalition was more unified than its Togolese counterpart was.[44] Second, there was a willingness among the Beninese anti-regime leadership to integrate regime representatives into the transitional process, while in Togo, there

was a clear attempt to push all regime dignitaries and their allies out of the political sphere.[45] In Benin, therefore, the opposition had a much greater ability to make credible commitments, which, I argue, is important to military defection.

Third, there were historical differences in their relationships to their main foreign patron, France. Historically, France favoured Togo over Benin, particularly in the aftermath of the Beninese regime's adoption of Marxist-Leninism.[46] However, the relationship between France and Benin became more cordial after 1982. By 1987, French aid to the two countries reached similar numbers per capita.[47] Furthermore, the French government had become "in general friendlier to a Marxist-Leninist Benin and more critical of Togo's right-wing regime" after François Mitterrand and the socialist party came to power in 1981.[48]

Togo: A loyalist army and an untrustworthy opposition

In this section, I demonstrate that the Togolese army's propensity to use coercive means against opposition forces can be explained by the domination of President Eyadéma's loyalists – particularly the Kabye people from Eyadéma's home village of Pya – within the military's ranks. Furthermore, anti-regime forces made no move to build trust between themselves and military personnel.

In January 1967, Lieutenant Étienne Eyadéma and his fellow officers staged a coup against the civilian government of Nicolas Grunitsky, which they had helped set up only a few years earlier. However, while Eyadéma was favoured by most officers, he had military rivals. A few months after the coup, he was targeted for assassination by a gendarme who favoured his main rival, Captain Emmanuel Bodjollé.[49] In 1970, some of Captain Bodjollé's partisans mutinied. There were coup plots and a series of assassination attempts by non-Kabye officers throughout the 1970s and 1980s.[50]

In response to these challenges, and in order to consolidate his control over the military, President Eyadéma overwhelmingly favoured the recruitment of Kabyes into the security forces, particularly Kabyes from his own town (Pya).[51] At the same time, ethnic groups that were associated with his rivals, or were themselves potential rivals, were pushed out. Two groups associated with Captain Bodjollé – Mobas, and Kabyes from the village of Kouméa – were completely pushed out of the army by the early 1970s. Ewe officers were increasingly sidelined, assassinated or forced into exile as a result of coup plots involving southern senior officers in 1977 and 1985.[52]

This ethnic stacking policy, and the accompanying purges, was an unmitigated success for President Eyadéma's regime. By the late 1980s, Kabyes represented more than half of all troops, and two-thirds of all officers; among Kabyes, those from President Eyadéma's own village – known as the Pya Circle – were favoured, receiving preferential treatment in recruitment for elite units, and commanding ten of the 26 military units.[53] The Togolese army was so associated with the Pya Circle that it was called an "army of cousins" by observers.[54] When the regime was challenged by civilian anti-regime forces in the early 1990s, the loyalty of this army was tested. While President Eyadéma in Togo did also establish an elite unit of the presidential guard dominated by loyalists, paramilitary forces represented a decreasing proportion of the Togolese security forces. As Figure 2 shows, this is in sharp contrast with Benin where paramilitary forces came to represent close to half of all security forces in the 1980s.

In October 1990, the regime's control of the country was compromised when students initiated a wave of mass protests. The regime's initial response, to send military

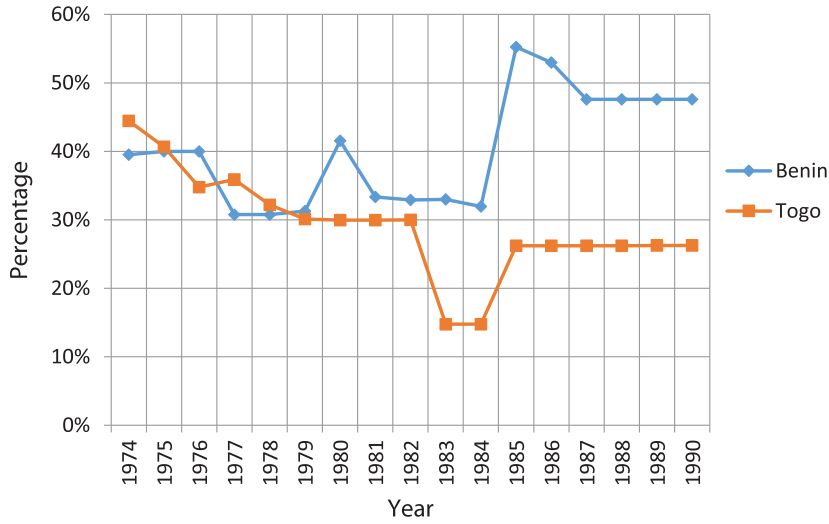

Figure 2. Paramilitary forces' ratio.

Note: Security forces personnel by country, 1959–2017 (The Military Balance). Supplemented by Decalo and Houngnikpo, *Historical Dictionary of Benin*, 75.

and gendarmerie units to quell the protests violently, only encouraged other social forces to join the civic resistance campaign. Nonetheless, mass protests failed to lead to mass defection of military personnel, since only the marine commandos, who were the last units not under direct Kabye control, and a few non-Kabye minor officers, expressed any sympathy for the protesters' cause.[55] Accordingly, no fear of military mutiny restrained President Eyadéma's actions. Throughout this period, his troops willingly launched major regime maintenance operations.

As the regime faced increased domestic and foreign pressure, it allowed the formation of new political parties, offered an amnesty to political prisoners and, finally, conceded to holding a national conference in the summer of 1991. While anti-regime forces had managed to push the regime to the negotiation table, its internal characteristics prevented it from reaching an agreement with military forces. The anti-regime movement was headed by southerners, whereas the regime was dominated by Kabyes, and, to a lesser extent, other northerners. In fact, the only military officers aligned with anti-regime forces were almost exclusively non-Kabye officers, many of whom had been purged from the army in the early 1980s.[56] Lacking links to military personnel, anti-regime leaders miscalculated their standing, and "thought that officers would massively defect and join their movement. This was a mistake as President Eyadéma had consolidated his control on the military even before the conference".[57]

The absence of social ties between military personnel and the opposition allowed President Eyadéma and his closest associates to portray the anti-regime force's demands as an attempt of southern elites to expel northerners from power.[58] In a meeting with a group of officers and soldiers, President Eyadéma declared: "We will not let them [the anti-regime forces] do whatever they want, we will show them we are a united army. […] Think about your promotions, your tranquility, your retirements".[59] The most radical anti-regime leaders passed a multitude of resolutions during the national conference that directly or indirectly threatened military interests.[60]

The military reaction was almost instantaneous, as units began to harass opposition leaders and to use their military power to return Eyadéma to full control of the country in the weeks that followed the end of the conference. These actions intensified when they launched a terror campaign in Lomé on 27 November 1991. In the process, Prime Minister Joseph Koffigoh, who had been appointed by the national conference, was taken prisoner after a week of siege on 2 December 1991. Thanks to military support, President Eyadéma regained control of the Togolese political sphere in the following months.[61]

There were notable changes in French foreign policy in this period from prioritizing political liberalization after June 1990 to emphasizing political stability after the Chaillot Conference in November 1991. While these policy changes seem to coincide with the decision of the Togolese armed forces to end the opposition attempts to reform the regime, the latter group had been preparing for this counter-offensive for months prior to the Chaillot Conference and had previously attempted to kidnap the transitional prime minister.[62] In other words, Togo's main foreign patron, France, had little influence on the military decision to repress the pro-democracy groups.

Benin: A counterbalanced army and a trustworthy civil society

In this section, I look at President Kérékou's coup-proofing strategies. Unable or unwilling to purge the army of his would-be rivals, he implemented a counterbalancing strategy that exacerbated rivalries within the security forces. While this strategy secured his rule from military coups, it left his regime vulnerable to challenges from civil society groups. The leaders of a civic resistance campaign in 1989–1990 used this weakness to push for regime change, as they were able to provide sufficient guarantees to disgruntled military personnel to convince them to side with the resistance against President Kérékou's regime.

In Benin, President Kérékou's rise to power in October 1972 was based on an alliance of "third-generation" officers, mostly southerners, who opposed two previous generations of officers.[63] The new government moved rapidly to purge senior officers, many of whom had been involved in previous coups or military governments.[64] This move failed to consolidate President Kérékou's political control, however, as he was opposed by prominent members of his military government – particularly Commander Janvier Assogba and Captain Michel Aikpe – as well as by partisans of the purged senior officers.

Reacting to these challenges, President Kérékou created policies that reduced the power of his military rivals. New social groups were incorporated into the forces through the implementation of regional quotas. In the process, northerners, seen as closely allied with President Kérékou, increased their representation in the officer corps, but southerners still represented half of all officers.[65]

President Kérékou also created new paramilitary organizations, in a move to curb the potential threat of the Fon clique within the regular army. The first President of Benin, Hubert Maga, a civilian, had used the gendarmerie as a counterweight to the army, with an en masse appointment of members of his own ethnic group, Baribas, to its ranks. Taking his cue from Maga, President Kérékou transformed the ceremonial *Batallion de la garde présidentielle* (BGP) into a highly trained guard, and equipped it with some of the best material the armed forces had to offer.[66] A new militia, the People's Militia, was recruited from among civilian partisans of the regime for added protection.

Because of these counterbalancing policies, the army was highly factionalized by the end of the 1980s. As Banégas observed, the diversification of soldier recruitment prevented any single ethnic group from controlling the military.[67] These divisions were used by President Kérékou and his allies in the ruling party, the *Parti de la révolution populaire du Bénin* (PRPB), to diminish the relative coup ability of their military rivals. In fact, there were numerous coup rumours and coup plots between 1985 and 1990 that failed because coup plotters could not make alliances with other factions.[68] Despite their failures, these coup plots point to the fragile equilibrium among military factions in Benin's armed forces in the late 1980s. This equilibrium compromised the regime's ability to use the armed forces once mass protests were sparked by students and teachers in January 1989.

While the Beninese regime could count on the army to quell protests in January–February 1989, the situation began to shift in April of the same year.[69] By April 1989, soldiers were no longer sent out against protesters as it was clear to the high command that its troops, and many officers, were not reliable. In fact, many soldiers and junior officers sympathized with the protesters' grievances.[70] This pushed the regime to adopt a more cooperative stance towards the protesters and, by December 1989, to concede to the protesters' major demand: to hold a national conference that would pave the way for major economic and political reforms. France also began to support political liberalization in this period, it only made this support official months after the end of Benin's national conference.

During the National Conference, civil society leaders worked constantly to sway the military to their cause. Opposition leaders were helped in their goal by the decision of the *Parti Communiste du Dahomey* (PCD) to boycott the national conference; the PCD promoted the violent overthrow of the regime and would have been seen as a threat to the military.[71] Military representatives were integrated into core committees, and thus had a voice in conference resolutions.[72] The opposition also made proposals aimed at reassuring the armed forces, such as immunity for past human rights violations, and a guarantee that military reforms would be decided at a later date in Military Estates Generals where military personnel would be granted near-veto power. Only after these Military Estates Generals in 1997 did the Beninese armed forces truly professionalize.[73] Disgruntled officers were offered specific guarantees, like the dismantling of paramilitary forces, the redistribution of paramilitary equipment into the regular forces, and a change of guard among the leadership of the army and the gendarmerie that would favour marginalized officers.[74]

These promises convinced disgruntled officers to rally to the anti-regime cause.[75] These officers began to shield opposition representatives from threats by regime loyalists.[76] As Decalo reported: "Southern senior military officers warned [President] Kérékou that they would refuse to move against their kinsmen."[77] In the final days of the conference, military representatives publicly endorsed regime change.[78] As a result, the regime could no longer suppress demand for political reform.[79] The decision of a majority of officers and soldiers to support regime change helped sway President Kérékou, as there were signs that large segments of the armed forces would act against the president's wishes if he did not accept the results of the conference.[80] On the final night of the conference, President Kérékou declared his endorsement of the conference's conclusions, and embraced regime change. An alliance between civil society forces and marginalized military personnel had managed to push President Kérékou and the PRPB out of power.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to explain military behaviour during regime crises. I argued that only by combining two critical factors, the incumbent regime's coup-prevention policies and the anti-regime force's provision of credible commitments, can we understand the decision of the armed forces during a regime crisis ignited by pro-democracy protests. I expected military personnel to side with protesters only when pro-democracy leaders make credible promises to an army subjected to counterbalancing. I theorized that there would be repression of the protesters in all other scenarios. The theoretical framework proposed in the first part was tested through an analysis of coup-prevention measures and the ability of civic resistance leaders to gain the trust of military personnel in Benin and in Togo. In Benin, President Kérékou and the PRPB government implemented a policy of counterbalancing that prevented any single faction from toppling the regime, but was vulnerable to mass defection during civic resistance campaigns. Once the opposition made itself a rallying point for these embittered factions, and demonstrated a credible commitment to upholding their interests, a large majority of the armed forces defected to the opposition cause. In contrast, President Eyadéma and the RPT stacked their army with Kabye loyalists who perceived the demand for regime change as an attack on their position.

There is an important debate in the literature over the need for military-opposition *entente* – known as pacted transition.[81] A key difference between the two regimes, however, was that anti-regime forces and military personnel in Benin did come to an agreement. Unlike their Togolese counterparts, Benin's civil society groups were highly credible, and convinced Benin's armed forces to rally to their call for regime change. Accommodation of military interests appears to induce the military to cooperate with an opposition movement.

This article leaves out a third potential combination: counterbalancing alongside an anti-regime coalition that offers no credible commitment. While I predict that this combination would result in the repression of opposition forces – and the decision of the few most-marginalized Togolese officers to rally to President Eyadéma's side seems to support this prediction – it is necessary to test this with factual data. It is also possible for an army to use opposition mobilization to topple the government and replace it with an alternative more to its liking, as the Egyptian crisis between 2011 and 2013, and the 2008 coup in Guinea seem to indicate.

This article suggests several new lines of research. Future research should look at additional cases, beyond Benin and Togo, to test the generalizability of the theoretical framework. For example, a more in-depth examination of Bratton and van de Walle's 13 cases of military intervention during regime crises between 1989 and 1994 would be a good way to proceed.[82] Recent political crises in Burkina Faso, Burundi, and Guinea would make interesting potential case studies. This theoretical framework could be applied to cases of military intervention during regime crisis in other regions of the world, such as Southeast Asia and the Middle East and North Africa, to test the results' dependency on spatial and temporal factors.

Notes

1. I define coup-prevention as policies aimed at thwarting the military's ability to stage coups or pressure the government. See Quinlivan, "Coup-Proofing," 132.

2. I conceptualize as non-loyalists any military factions that could potentially rebel or stage coups.
3. Albrecht and Ohl, "Exit, Resistance, Loyalty"; Lee, "Military Cohesion and Regime Maintenance"; Makara, "Coup-Proofing, Military Defection, and the Arab Spring"; Albrecht, "Does Coup-Proofing Work?"
4. Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*; van de Walle, "Tipping Games."
5. Marks, "Rational Sources of Chaos in Democratic Transition," 398.
6. Brancati, "Pocketbook Protests," 1504.
7. Bratton and van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa*, 211; Bunce, "Rethinking Recent Democratization," 175; Barany, "The Role of the Military," 24.
8. Bratton and van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa*, 211; Lee, *Defect or Defend*, 36, 48–49. A third decision, to stand aside, as in Madagascar in 2009, has the same result as supporting the opposition forces: the authoritarian government, deprived of its ability to use force to reinforce its dominance, is weakened and pushed to negotiate. There is also a fourth possibility: to use the regime crisis to stage a coup, as in Egypt in 2011 and 2013. As it involves returning members of the *ancien regime* to power, I conceptualize this option as similar to repressing the opposition. Harkness, "The Ethnic Army and the State," 598–599.
9. Geddes, "What Do We Know About Democratization after Twenty Years?," 125–128; Finer, *The Man on Horseback*, 35–52; McLauchlin, "Loyalty Strategies and Military Defection in Rebellion," 338–340.
10. Finer, *The Man on Horseback*, 41; Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 80.
11. Clark, "Armed Arbiters," 131–132; Brooks, *Political-Military Relations and the Stability of Arab Regimes*, 29.
12. Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*, 58.
13. Ibid., 33; Lee, *Defect or Defend*, 151–157.
14. This can be an official agreement, like the Naval Club negotiations in Uruguay in 1985, or it can be informal when leaders of both groups never officially meet, like in Mali in 1991.
15. O'Donnell and Schmitter, "Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies," 40; Barkey, "Why Military Regimes Fail," 171–172 and 176.
16. North and Weingast, "Constitutions and Commitment," 806.
17. O'Donnell and P. Schmitter, "Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies," 25; Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America," 10–11.
18. North and Weingast, "Constitutions and Commitment," 806; Persson and Tabellini, *Macroeconomic Policy, Credibility and Politics*, 5–6 and 33.
19. O'Donnell and Schmitter, "Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies," 40.
20. Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*, 39; Harkness, "The Ethnic Army and the State," 598.
21. Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*, 43–44.
22. Lawrence, "Triggering Nationalist Violence," 99; Pearlman, "Precluding Nonviolence, Propelling Violence," 24.
23. See Uvin, "Ethnicity and Power in Burundi and Rwanda," 261–262; Lee, *Defect or Defend*.
24. Bueno de Mesquita et al., *The Logic of Political Survival*, 42.
25. Geddes, "How Autocrats Defend Themselves against Armed Rivals," 3–4.
26. Luckham, "The Military, Militarization and Democratization in Africa"; Finer, *The Man on Horseback*.
27. This problem is intensified by the nature of coup-plotting, which is secretive and hard to identify. Roessler, "The Enemy Within," 308.
28. Quinlivan, "Coup-Proofing," 132; Brooks, *Political-Military Relations and the Stability of Arab Regimes*, 19.
29. McLauchlin, "Loyalty Strategies and Military Defection in Rebellion," 337–339.
30. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 551–553; Enloe, *Ethnic Soldiers*.
31. Harkness, "The Ethnic Army and the State," 594.
32. Bratton and van de Walle, "Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa," 464; Harkness, "The Ethnic Army and the State," 598.
33. Lee, "The Armed Forces and Transitions from Authoritarian Rule," 650–651 and 656–657; Kim, "Intra-Military Divisions and Democratization in South Korea," 705–707.
34. Belkin and Schofer, "Coup Risk, Counterbalancing, and International Conflict," 144; De Bruin, "Preventing Coups D'État," 4–6.

35. Singh, *Seizing Power*, 23.
36. Brooks, *Political-Military Relations and the Stability of Arab Regimes*, 9; Bethke, "The Consequences of 'Divide-and-Rule' Politics in Africa South of the Sahara," 2; Quinlivan, "Coup-Proofing," 141.
37. Snyder, "Explaining Transitions from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships," 381–383; Makara, "Coup-Proofing, Military Defection, and the Arab Spring"; Albrecht, "Does Coup-Proofing Work?"
38. van de Walle, "Tipping Games," 86–87.
39. Mahoney, "Strategies of Causal Assessment in Comparative Historical Analysis," 159.
40. Bratton and van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa*; Harkness, "The Ethnic Army and the State"; Houngnikpo, "The Military and Democratization in Africa"; Thiriot, *Démocratisation et démilitarisation du pouvoir*.
41. Bratton and van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa*, 211.
42. Decalo, "The Politics of Military Rule in Togo," 63; Decalo, "Regionalism, Politics, and the Military in Dahomey," 451.
43. Geddes et al. define military rule as, "autocratic rule by a member of the military, regardless of the nature of the rest of the leadership." See Geddes, Frantz, and Wright, "Military Rule," 152.
44. Heilbrunn, "Social Origins of National Conferences in Benin and Togo," 298.
45. Seely, "The Legacies of Transition Governments," 358.
46. Other former French colonies, like Congo-Brazzaville, Madagascar and Mali, also embraced socialist ideologies during the Cold War. The fear of further socialist propagation pushed French authorities to actively support the governments of its former colonies still aligned with France, and to undermine African socialist governments.
47. Seely, *Transitions to Democracy in Comparative Perspectives*, 79.
48. Ibid., 108.
49. By point, Captain Bodjollé had already been pushed out of the army after a failed power play in 1965.
50. Toulabor, *Le Togo sous Eyadéma*, 186.
51. Ellis, "Rumour and Power in Togo," 467.
52. They were also seen as potential allies to the exiled civilian forces affiliated with former President Sylvanus Olympio. *Decalo, Coups and Army Rule in Africa*, 234.
53. Toulabor, "Togo," 4.
54. Toulabor, "La 'bataille finale' du général Eyadéma au Togo," 18.
55. Thiriot, *Démocratisation et démilitarisation du pouvoir*, 295–296.
56. Tète, *Démocratisation à la togolaise*, 69–70.
57. Interview, National Conference Representative, Lomé [Togo], November 2013.
58. Interview, Ex-RPT dignitary, Lomé [Togo], November 2013.
59. Toulabor, "La 'bataille finale' du général Eyadéma au Togo," 18.
60. These resolutions included calls for the forced retirement of many senior officers, the arrest of some officers close to President Eyadéma and a complete overhaul of the army's recruitment mechanisms. See Thiriot, *Démocratisation et démilitarisation du pouvoir*, 390–394.
61. Heilbrunn, "Togo," 233.
62. Thiriot, *Démocratisation et démilitarisation du pouvoir*, 389.
63. The first generation, who were non-commissioned officers and rank-and-files in the colonial army, were opposed by a second generation, who had received their commissions after independence, and a third generation, who came out of the French military academies in the late 1960s and early 1970s and were influenced by the French radical-left movements. See Lemarchand, "Dahomey," 51–52.
64. For instance, Colonel Alphonse Alley – who had been a candidate to lead the 1972 junta before Major Kérékou was selected – was arrested in 1973. See Agboton, *Louis-Fabien Agboton*, 139.
65. Down from 80% at independence. Decalo, *Civil-Military Relations in Africa*, 6.
66. Decalo and Houngnikpo, *Historical Dictionary of Benin*, 57.
67. This ethnic diversification opened the path for the professionalization of Benin's armed forces as no ethnic group would dominate the armed forces. However, the professionalization process only truly started in 1997 after security sector reforms and foreign training programmes, notably by Belgium, were implemented. See Akindes, "Civil-Military Relations in Benin," 55–56; Banégas, *La Démocratie à pas de caméléon*, 70; Dickovick, "Legacies of Leftism," 1124–1125.

68. Allen, "Restructuring an Authoritarian State," 47.
69. Noudjenoume, *La démocratie au Bénin, 1988–1993*, 127.
70. Allen, "'Goodbye to All That'," 70.
71. In any case, the PCD lost most of its appeal, and influence, in the months preceding the National Conference. Banégas, *La Démocratie à pas de caméléon*, 147.
72. Adamon, *Le renouveau démocratique au Bénin*, 61.
73. Dossou, "L'expérience béninoise de la conférence nationale," 225; Akindes, "Civil-Military Relations in Benin," 50.
74. Seely, *Transitions to Democracy in Comparative Perspectives*, 240.
75. Akpo, *Mathieu Kérékou*, 135.
76. Fondation Friechrich Saumann, *Les actes de la conférence nationale*, 7–8.
77. Decalo, "Benin," 55.
78. Fondation Friechrich Saumann, *Les actes de la conférence nationale*, 7–8.
79. Omitoogun and Onigo-Itite, "The National Conference as a Model for Democratic Consolidation," 35.
80. It is estimated that 90% of all military personnel had stopped supporting President Kérékou by that point. Noudjenoume, *La démocratie au bénin, 1988–1993*, 166; Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, 293.
81. Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America," 10.
82. Bratton and van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa*, 211.

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