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   African Military History and Politics: Coups and Ideological Incursions, 1900-Present by A. B. Assensoh ; Yvette M. Alex-Assensoh
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ment.\textsuperscript{2} These texts, especially the report of Francesco da Pavia, which was not published earlier in full, are welcome and will complement Teobaldo Filesi's publication of the original language version of most of the documents relating to the Antonian movement.\textsuperscript{3} As with his work on Andrea da Pavia, Toso has fully annotated and introduced these texts, placing them in both their missionary contexts and the study of Kongo history.

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Military interventions in Africa are difficult phenomena to study. Rebellious generals rarely sit for candid interviews and the barracks are most always off-limits to researchers. Moreover, there is considerable personal risk for those who seek to observe the collapse of civil authority first-hand. As a result, researchers have largely had to examine the seemingly endless cycle of military unrest and coups d'éetat from a safe geographic or temporal distance. Given these limitations, the task of offering a comprehensive historical and political explanation for the widespread military instability in postcolonial Africa is a daunting one.

A. B. Assensoh, an African journalist turned historian, and Yvette M. Alex-Assensoh, an American political scientist, have gamely undertaken such a project. Declaring their intention to analyze the historical roots of military interventions and their role in the political history of Africa, the authors offer chapters covering a history of Africa's colonial era, the historical evolution of African armies, character studies of African rulers and military leaders, an assessment of whether military intervention can bring stability, a survey of foreign involvement in coups, and military unrest in a theoretical and comparative perspective. What separates the book from similar projects is Assensoh and Alex-Assensoh's "Pan-

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Africanist” perspective on these issues. By stressing continuity in African history they de-emphasize the importance of the colonial era, and make their task easier by arguing that there were enough broad similarities in the armed forces of post-colonial Africa to make detailed case studies of particular incidents and armies unnecessary.

This approach has its limits. The authors rely almost exclusively on secondary sources, and their analysis skips freely across geographical, temporal, and theoretical boarders without offering the reader the assistance of a unifying narrative. Even more problematical, the direct impact of colonial rule on postindependence African political and military institutions is not so easily dismissed. To be sure, African politicians and generals were relative free agents who made their own policy choices but they inherited language, schools, constitutions, and armed forces from their former colonial rulers. Assensoh and Alex-Assensoh's suggestion that protests by eighteenth-century tin miners in northern Nigeria and opposition to slavery in nineteenth-century Elmina help to explain postcolonial military interventionism is not very convincing; the authors would have been better served by paying closer attention to colonial institutions like the Royal West African Frontier Force that produced the original national armies in Nigeria, Ghana, and Sierra Leone. The book would also have benefited from more rigorous editing. The text is peppered with curious bits of extraneous information. In addition to providing readers with the university affiliation and publisher of most authors cited, we also learn the address of Africa Magazine in London, that A.H.M. Kirk-Greene is “affably called Tony,” and that Alex-Assensoh assigns a book by Farai Chideya in her courses at Indiana University.

The book's primary strength is that the authors have direct firsthand knowledge of contemporary anglophone West Africa. They make no apologies for the brutal behavior of African generals turned politicians, and, unlike many scholars and journalists, they offer concrete recommendations for bringing security to troubled African nations. These include high standards of journalism to ensure political transparency, an expanded peacekeeping role for regional international bodies like the West African economic community, and political, economic, and moral support from Diasporan African communities abroad. Assensoh and Alex-Assensoh would have been best served by abandoning the ambitious project of producing a comprehensive historical survey of African military unrest to make better use of their personal expertise to help readers better grasp the factors of the last decade that plunged Liberia and Sierra Leone into chaos while Nigeria and Ghana came to enjoy a measure of new-found stability.

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