Revisiting Africa in Canadian Security Planning & Assessment

Guest Editors: **Chris W. J. Roberts & Tim Stapleton**

During the Second World War, Canadian expeditionary forces played a proportionally significant role in the war in Europe, but, just like the First World War, Canada avoided or was not asked to consider deployment of land forces in any significant way to African theatres of operations. Not since the South African War (also known as the Second Anglo-Boer War) of 1899-1902 had Canadian-raised combat arms units been sent to the continent. Between 1956 and 1969, however, Africa became an active theatre of operations for the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), but in substantially new roles: peacekeeping (Suez, Congo) and military training and assistance outside the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (Ghana, Tanzania and Nigeria). Africa was the experimental lab for both of these new taskings, and the first time Canadians served alongside, under, or trained soldiers from newly independent African states. Canada's early engagement with post-colonial Africa was led by security, commercial, and world order considerations, with the CAF and not official humanitarian and/or development assistance at the forefront.

Where commercial and security concerns characterized Canada's initial activity (1955-1965), between 1965 and 1975 *development*, "facilitated by, rather than caused by, the public's increasing responsiveness to the humane internationalism of the era," came

to dominate Canada-Africa relations.[1] From one of the lowest contributors to foreign aid on a proportional Gross National Product basis in the early 1960s, Canada had surpassed many other major and minor Western donors by the middle of the 1970s.[2] Not unrelatedly, the 1970s also marked a nadir of Canadian defence spending, with the CAF shrinking in personnel, its presence in Europe halved, and its ships, aircraft, vehicles, and even small arms aging without replacement. Under Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau, from 1968 to 1979, the government's international fiscal envelope skewed spending heavily towards development at the expense of defence. Peacekeeping – or at least support for "*Collective Measures* for maintenance of peace and security embodied in the Charter of the United Nations"[3] – that rated first mention in the 1964 *White Paper on Defence* – dropped to last in the foreign policy priorities articulated in the 1970 foreign policy overhaul, *Foreign Policy for Canadians*,[4] and the subsequent 1971 *White Paper on Defence*. Military training assistance efforts shrank to a care and maintenance basis in the 1970s, totalling less than 0.25% of Canada's growing annual foreign aid budget.[5] Kilford concludes his chapter on the winding down of military assistance in the early 1970s with the observation that it took thirty years (until the early 2000s) "before the funds allocated for military assistance even came close to the amount spent in the 1960s."[6]

These periodic shifts that privileged defence/security over development, or development over defence/security (to use two of the "3Ds" of diplomacy, defence, and development now in regular use), have represented a somewhat regular thematic influence in Canadian relations with Africa. At times, especially during the "human security" era of the late 1990s, development and security were seen as complementary.

---

[1] Cranford Pratt, ed., *Canadian International Assistance Policies: An Appraisal*, 2nd ed. (Montreal & Kingston: McGill - Queen's University Press, 1996), p. 338.

[2] Ibid., pp. 339-40.

[3] The 1964 *White Paper on Defence* is available here:
http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2012/dn-nd/D3-6-1964-eng.pdf (emphasis in original).

[4] The titles of the five (of six total, the first being a general overview) regionally or topically themed volumes notably left the African continent off the focus list, with Latin America, the United Nations, the Pacific, Europe, and International Development each getting their own volume. Of course, Africa would be subsumed under the UN and, predominantly, the International Development volumes. In neither the 1964 nor the 1970 foreign/1971 defence policy papers did Africa, as a subject of Canadian attention, feature prominently, if at all.

[5] Christopher R. Kilford, *The Other Cold War: Canada's Military Assistance to the Developing World, 1945-1975* (Kingston, Ont.: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2010), see Chapter Ten.

[6] Ibid., p. 229.

In the mid-2010s, however, there is wide consensus that security, development, *and* governance are the three crucial interlocking pillars required to underpin Africa's economic prosperity, human empowerment, and regional stability. In other words, one cannot be prioritized at the expense of the others if any kind of long-term stability is the goal of local and international stakeholders. Over fifty years of pursuing development and conflict-management in Africa and fifteen years of doing the same in Afghanistan have produced agreement on the three pillars but no consensus about how to go about cultivating them concurrently. Many good intentions around state-building, poverty alleviation, humanitarian intervention, and conflict amelioration have foundered on the shoals of the hard reality of political and economic complexity and vested interests, both local and international.

This is the conundrum which lies behind this "African security" themed issue of the *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies.* It follows a workshop the editors co-chaired, in June 2016 at the University of Calgary, on the precise theme of "Revisiting Africa in Canadian security planning and assessment," an initiative which grew out of that conundrum.[7] As Canada signals it will again increase its involvement in addressing African security and development challenges,[8] the workshop examined the difficulties in mobilizing consensus around what Canada and other external actors can and should do, as well as some of the multifaceted security challenges facing contemporary Africa,

---

[7] More information about the workshop is available here: www.cwjroberts.com/revisitingafrica. The organizers wish to acknowledge the significant financial support provided by the Department of National Defence - Defence Engagement Program, as well as financial and in-kind support provided by the Department of Political Science, the Department of History, and the Centre for Military, Security, and Strategic Studies, all at the University of Calgary.

[8] Canadian political and military leaders publicly said in mid-2016 that there would be an expanded CAF presence in Africa soon. In August 2016, Minister of National Defence Harjit Sajjan undertook a fact-finding mission to East Africa, see Government of Canada, "Minister Sajjan Concludes Fact-Finding Week in Africa" (16 August 2016): http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?mthd=index&crtr.page=1&nid=1112319. Two weeks later, a restructured program to address fragile and conflict-affect states was announced. See Government of Canada, "The Peace and Stabilization Operations Program" (26 August 2016): http://international.gc.ca/world-monde/world_issues-enjeux-mondiaux/psop.aspx?lang=eng. Two weeks later it was announced that Canada would host the 2017 peacekeeping ministerial forum, following up from the 2015 Leaders Summit hosted by President Barrack Obama and the 2016 ministerial hosted by British Defence Secretary Michael Fallon. See Government of Canada, "Speaking Notes for the Honourable Harjit S. Sajjan, Minister of National Defence" (8 September 2016): http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?mthd=index&crtr.page=1&nid=1121579.

from terrorism and transnational criminal networks to political elites who are not that interested in deepening constitutionalism. This collection of essays showcases the research and insights of a handful of the over thirty participants at the June workshop.[9]

Canada in Africa: A persistent yet marginalized security concern

As noted above, Canada has been engaged in African security and development issues since the decolonization era. There have been periods of greater or lesser engagement, and there have been periods where the policy tools used by Canada emphasized military capabilities (rarely military power), technical assistance, financial transfers, bilateral and multilateral diplomatic initiatives, support for foreign direct investment and macroeconomic adjustment, or some combination. We know, for example, that in the last decade development budgets did initially reach high levels under the Harper Government as a legacy of previous Liberal commitments, but then fell back, and that Canada still mostly shied away from any significant personnel contribution to numerous peace operations. However, we also know that security issues were prioritized and emphasized by that government, and active participation in more kinetic missions (including anti-piracy patrols, the Libya air campaign in 2011, counter-terrorism operations and associated military training) as well as support and humanitarian operations (air transport for French forces in Mali in 2013, the Ebola mission in West Africa, materiel and training contributions in support of African contingents in peace operations, etc.) characterized that period. But, overall, Africa as a regional subject of Canadian foreign policy attention declined. That declining interest stemmed from an already low base: unlike many other countries—ranging from Denmark and Norway to China and even the US (if Africa Command is taken as a signal of greater strategic planning and coordination)—Canada has never had anything remotely like a comprehensive "Africa strategy".[10]

---

[9] Unfortunately, Ulf Engel had to cancel his trip from Germany to participate in the Calgary workshop, but we acknowledge his important contribution here on the recent evolution and expansion of Germany's involvement in African security issues, an interesting comparator for Canada.

[10] The closest Canada has come to a coordinated, Whole Of Government (or WOG) approach to Africa occurred in the 2000s: first, as a consequence of hosting the 2002 Kananaskis G8 Summit, Canada earmarked $500 million to a Canada Fund for Africa that supported a range of activities—from health and agriculture to security and private investment—in support of NEPAD objectives (evaluation

Thus, in October 2013, during that last period, Canada's Strategic Joint Staff (SJS) prepared an internal report for military and political leaders that apparently "was not presented to the minister and the government [had] not considered its contents."[11] Even if it did not reach the minister's desk, it reflected the assessments of senior staff officers about potential expeditionary deployments, both in terms of better integration with allies and which regions of the world should receive more attention than others. Africa ranked last, following the political priorities of the Conservative government. The media story highlighted the themes of the SJS report and included some direct quotes taken directly from the report:

> Military planners offered the Western Hemisphere as the central focus of the military's foreign military engagement, followed by the Asia-Pacific region, Europe and the North Atlantic, the Middle East and North Africa, and finally, the rest of Africa. In each case, apart from Africa, there was a recommendation for more engagement.

> "The [Strategic Joint Staff] assess that the [Canadian Armed Forces] current footprint in Africa is sufficient to meet Canadian foreign policy objectives at this time," the planners wrote.

> The staff also recommended the military not increase the number of troops deployed on Peace Support Operations (PSOs), such as United Nations or African Union peacekeeping operations.

> "An ongoing mission review is occurring to validate whether CAF presence on PSOs provides desired strategic benefit to Canada."[12]

---

summary here: http://www.international.gc.ca/department-ministere/evaluation/2011/dev-aeer-aer11.aspx?lang=eng); second, in 2007 the Senate released a report (http://www.parl.gc.ca/Content/SEN/Committee/391/fore/rep/repafrifeb07-e.pdf) nearly two years in the making, that recommended ways to reshape Canadian relations with Africa including the creation of an "Africa Office" to ensure comprehensive WOG coordination. However, in the first case the Fund was a limited term spending plan rather than a long-term strategy, and in the second case the Senate report in 2007 was killed by the government within a week of its release, even if it generated spirited debate within the small community of scholars, development NGOs, and associations active in Canada-Africa relations.
[11] James Cudmore, "Canadian Military Ponders Integrated Force with U.S. To Respond to Hotspots," in *CBCNews-Politics* (Toronto: CBC, 15 September 2015). It may be interesting to note that Cudmore, a long-time reporter for CBC, joined the staff of then new Minister of National Defence Harjit Sajjan in January 2016.
[12] Ibid.

Africa's bottom ranking for Canadian military planners is consistent with historical practice reaching back over a century: they have always expressed reticence about Africa, generally in alignment with politicians. However, as the map below illustrates, the continent has been a regular theatre for the CAF since 1956 across the entire spectrum of operations. This perhaps challenges the idea about the relative straightforwardness in determining Canadian national interests, and the place of an entire continent in that process. From one perspective, Canada has considerable latitude of choice in its decisions to get involved in African security crises or challenges. On the other hand, however, various pressures come to bear on Canadian policy-makers to get involved and make a contribution. While the Cold War offered a specific environment for making those decisions (around both development assistance and peacekeeping), there are always wider considerations and pressures at work at any time, both international and domestic.

Given that reality and the record of Canada's involvement in African security and development efforts since the decolonization era of the 1950s and 1960s, the case can be made that Canadian foreign policy and national security interests cannot easily sideline African issues and crises. That cyclical trend is again on an upswing. The new Liberal government of Justin Trudeau has intimated, through policy announcements and mandate letters to ministers, that there will be some reappraisal of Canada's overall approach to Africa, including reprioritizing African development partners, increasing development and humanitarian assistance budgets and reinvigorating Canadian involvement in peacekeeping.[13] Indirectly, this reappraisal also involves a bid to win a

---

[13] Even after committing to its largest deployment in Europe in over a decade (a command element plus troop contribution for a multi-national battalion in Latvia, with CF-18 detachments and frigates on rotation), senior Liberal officials continued to express their openness to a significant peacekeeping mission: see Lee Berthiaume, "Liberals back peacekeeping mission despite plans for sizeable military contingent in Eastern Europe," *The Globe and Mail* (9 July 2016): http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/liberals-back-peacekeeping-mission-despite-plans-for-sizeable-military-contingent-in-eastern-europe/article30843737; see also Robert Fife, "Canada seeking UN peacekeeping role in Africa to counter extremism," *The Globe and Mail* (13 July 2016): http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/canada-seeking-un-peacekeeping-role-in-africa-to-counter-extremism-sajjan/article30905966; Matthew Fisher, "Truck attack in France ups the ante for Canada's peacekeeping mission in Mali," *National Post* (15 July 2016): http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/matthew-fisher-truck-attack-in-france-ups-the-ante-for-canadas-peacekeeping-mission-in-mali; Chris W. J. Roberts, "Peace operations in Africa: Is Canada making decisions before knowing its strategy," OpenCanada.org (26 August 2016): https://www.opencanada.org/features/peace-operations-africa-canada-making-decisions-knowing-its-strategy; Stephen Priestly, "Peace Support Operations in

UN Security Council seat in 2021 since the lack of African support was partly responsible for Canada's failure to win a seat in 2010. Some recent debate in Canada focused around how any move towards increased involvement in UN peacekeeping would represent merely a tactic to help win that Security Council seat, but compared to many of its Western allies, Canada has not been engaged in any significant way in African PSOs since the brief deployment to the Ethiopian-Eritrean border in 2000-2001. At a time when Africa is home to the majority of UN missions, and most of them are rather large, multidimensional operations[14], Canada is noticeably absent other than a handful of troops and police. Nevertheless, the CAF have deployed troops (individually, in small groups, or larger units), ships and aircraft to Africa on numerous occasions since 1956, across the entire operational spectrum, as the map illustrates. While the continent has been a persistently salient theatre of operations for the CAF and for wider security and humanitarian policy responses, Canada has never invested concerted energy into deeper strategic or operational thinking about Africa's security challenges. That, of course, increases the risk that enhanced military or development contributions might meet the political objective of looking more engaged, but without suitable benchmarks for measuring success or effectiveness. Even the basic admonition of "do no harm" may not be met without some kind of strategic Canadian reassessment of African security and development.

Africa – A Canadian mission in Mali?", CASR – Canadian American Strategic Review (September 2016): http://www.casr.ca/id-psop-africa-mali-neth-1.htm.; John Ivison, "Canada peacekeepers seem set for Central African Republic deployment before end of year," *National Post* (7 October 2016): http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/john-ivison-canada-peacekeepers-seem-set-for-central-african-republic-deployment-before-end-of-year.

[14] Jessica Piombo, an Africanist at the US Naval Postgraduate School, outlined during a public workshop session four analytical levels required to understand the multidimensional nature of security in Africa: local, national, regional, and transnational. She argued that outside actors often focus on the manifestations of underlying problems rather than the governance, economic, and environmental deficits that drive insecurity and underdevelopment. While UN "multidimensional missions" and other international interventions are trying to grapple with a range of interlocking problems, they still operate mostly at a surface rather than a fundamentally political economic level. See also her edited book, Jessica Piombo, ed., *The US Military in Africa: Security and Development?* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2015).

CAF Deployments across Africa since 1956 (excluding JTF2/SOFCOM)
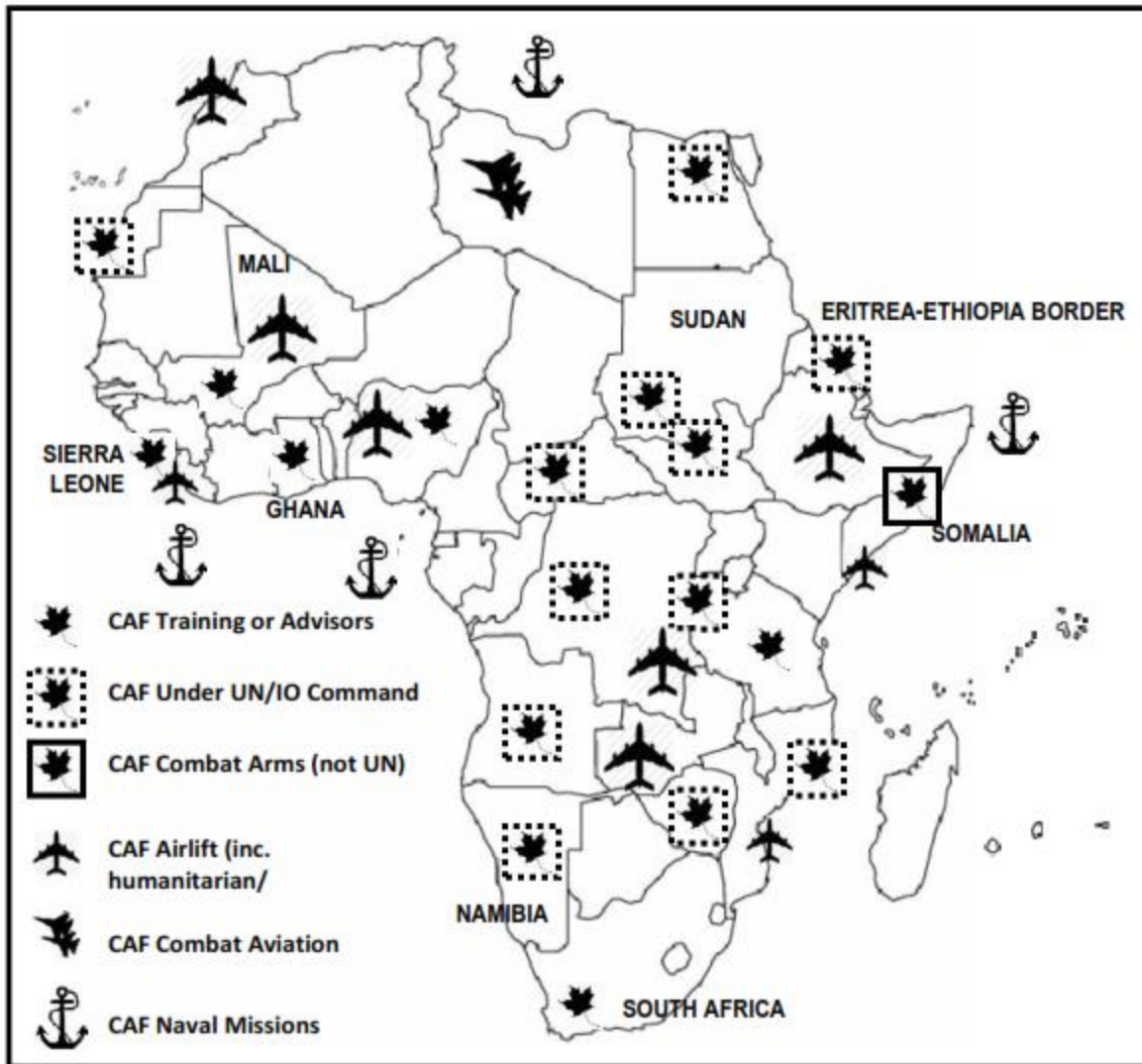
After our workshop we anonymously polled our participants, as well as others who participated in a preparatory workshop in Ottawa organized by the Africa Study Group (affiliated with the Canadian International Council), on a series of policy positions which were broached during our discussions. Analysis of 26 policy items showed a few with considerable consensus, a few with considerable polarization, and others with a diverse range of positions (including a neutral or no preference position).[15]

---

[15] Results were collected between 9 and 21 June 2016 via an anonymous, online Survey Monkey survey which comprised a list of policy statements. Respondents selected a response along a five point Likert scale to assess their level of agreement or disagreement with 26 policy statements/assertions. Each scale was assigned a numerical value for analysis purposes and thus each statement produced a weighted average between 1 and 5, and each item's rating is thus given in the format of (4.36/5). Thus, in general,

Thus, even those most interested in African security and development issues cannot agree on every point, which suggests a note of caution over any impulse to just "do something" by policy-makers. The top six items with the most shared support, in order of strength, were the following:

o Canadian foreign policy towards Africa needs to be depoliticized as much as possible to constrain the cyclical, inconsistent policy attention and resource commitments made over time towards African security and development challenges. (4.36/5)

o Canada should develop an explicit, comprehensive "Africa policy" as other countries have done. (4.28/5)

o The Department of National Defence (DND) and the CAF need to expand their planning, information, assessment, and intelligence gathering capabilities related to Africa before significant new military commitments on the continent are considered. (4.17/5)

o The Royal Canadian Navy should play a bigger role in partnership with African navies and coast guards in terms of training, human smuggling and narcotics interdiction, and counter-piracy and -illegal fisheries patrols. (4.04/5)

o African Diaspora communities in Canada should be better leveraged by Global Affairs Canada, DND, etc., for their knowledge, expertise, and linkages to their countries of origin. (4/5)

o The CAF should be considering deeper, direct linkages with African (incl. African Union) military planning and multinational force development, including with regional stand-by brigades. (3.92/5)

---

weighted averages moving towards 5 displayed more agreement than disagreement, those close to 3 were relatively neutral or evenly spread, and those moving towards 1 displayed more disagreement than agreement with the statement/assertion. Total respondents were 25 out of 45 people invited to participate in the survey. Note that not every respondent answered every question. Full results can be requested from the editors.

Two items registered considerable consensus against:

- o The CAF should refuse all commitments to future African missions as the continent does not represent any core, national interests for Canada. (1.42/5)[16]
- o "African solutions to African problems" should be taken at face value, meaning Canada should remain on the sidelines of African security and development challenges and focus its international engagements elsewhere. (2.04/5)

The areas of polarization are particularly interesting, and are listed here in order of most equally divided (numbers may not add up to 25 due to some answering "neutral/no preference" or skipping the question):

- o Canada should focus predominantly on rule of law support activities, including the police, court systems (domestic and regional), and governance-related programming, and leave peace operations and counter-terrorism to others. (12 Agree v 11 Disagree; 3/5)
- o The CAF should never accept a UN peace operations leadership role without a significant Canadian contingent (beyond HQ staff) also being deployed to that mission. (7 Agree v 9 Disagree; 2.96/5)[17]
- o The CAF have sufficient capabilities across the spectrum of operations and support services to undertake specific, if limited, missions on the African continent without NATO/Western allies. (11 Agree v 9 Disagree; 3.25/5)
- o The "long war" in Afghanistan provides considerable cautionary lessons learned that should limit possible future Canadian engagement in African security and development challenges and crises. (15 Agree v 9 Disagree; 3.28/5)
- o Canadian security planning and assessment on Africa should explicitly incorporate consideration of Canadian economic interests, including the

---

[16] It should be noted that the wording of the question likely skewed the results towards the disagree end of the spectrum, given that the word "refuse" was meant to be a crude shorthand for "not recommend" but was taken by some respondents as a potential breach of civilian control of the military. That was not the intention of the question.

[17] However, the same caveat applies regarding the wording of "never accept", which was meant to denote "never recommend" but could trigger concerns over civil control of the military and skew the results.

extractive sector, in decisions about where to commit military and development resources. (10 Agree v 13 Disagree; 2.6/5)

These differences among stakeholders suggest divisions around interests and values underpinning Canadian involvement in African security and development as well as differences about Canada's capabilities and proper forms of engagement. Comparing the consensus items against those with considerable polarization, however, a common thread emerges: Canada needs to do more to expand its policy and analytical capabilities specifically related to assessing security, development, and governance challenges in Africa. We hope that this thematic issue of JMSS responds in part to that sentiment.

Evolving security challenges and responses

Marina Caparini, with twenty years of scholarly and policy experience across a wide spectrum of international security and justice issues, examines the significant challenges faced by the numerous and large PSOs in Africa including the involvement of non-state actors within fragile states, the rising expectation to focus on protection of civilians without appropriate resources, African suspicions of neo-colonial agendas by Western powers and the pursuit of ambitious yet vague mandates. Based at the University of Leipzig's Institute for African Studies, Ulf Engel assesses the recent evolution of German security policy towards and engagement in Africa which should serve as a useful comparative model for Canada. Notably, in 2014 the German government adopted a comprehensive and networked approach through its *Africa Policy Guidelines* which is something completely lacking in Canada. Kwesi Aning and Lydia Amedzrator of the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre in Accra, Ghana, provide an overview of the impact and challenge of transnational organized crime which often overlaps with Islamist insurgency in West Africa. Although these developments threaten the foundations of the state in West Africa, the regional Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has been unable to deal with the situation. Canadian policy makers pondering a troop commitment to Mali should pay particular attention to this piece. Pacifique Manirakiza, a law

professor at the University of Ottawa who also served on the African Union (AU) Commission of Inquiry on violence in South Sudan in 2014, investigates the AU's approach to mitigating unconstitutional changes of government. While military coup d'état's were once the most common form of regime change on the continent, the post-Cold War democratization process and the adoption of anti-coup diplomatic interventionist policies by the AU have reduced this phenomenon. However, it remains uncertain as to the effectiveness of the AU in curtailing the new trend of undermining African democracy by manipulating national legal structures so as to extend the life of a regime. Once again, Canadian policy makers considering enhanced engagement across Africa should think carefully about these issues. Finally, in the "Notes from the Field" section, Alex Prieur, a research assistant for the Calgary workshop, examines all the invited submissions to the Canadian Defence Policy Review that referenced Africa.[18] Of 114 written submissions to the various invitation-only roundtables held across Canada, only eight mentioned Africa in any way and only one of those contributors possessed academic qualifications and scholarly expertise related to Africa. This appears shocking given the relatively strong contingent of Africanist scholars present across Canadian universities and raises grave concerns about Canadian government decision-making over deploying CAF personnel to African-based PSOs.

---

[18] Government of Canada, "Defence Policy Review," (online consultations, 2016): http://dgpaapp.forces.gc.ca/en/defence-policy-review/index.asp