



A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

# Navigating the Complex Terrain of Militarization in Africa

As this special issue of *Nokoko* was being wrapped up for publication, two remarkable developments related to the focus of the special issue came to the fore. The first is a news-feature article in *The New York Times* on the deposed President of Niger, Mohamed Bazoum, titled, “The Bleak Life of a Deposed President and His Wife, Held Captive.” The second is a viral document making the rounds in Nigeria’s online communities titled “An Open Letter to Mr. President and the Leadership of the National Assembly (NASS) on the Dangers of the Relocation of American and French Military Bases from the Sahel to Nigeria” and written by prominent civil society leaders. Together, these two developing stories underscore, not just the significance of this special issue, but also the urgency of the subject matter. Within the two-year gestation period of this special issue, the Sahel region of Africa has witnessed seismic changes in its political configuration and fight against neo-colonialism that have prompted increased attention to what a freelance writer, Kent Mensah, has described as “Africa’s coup epidemic” in an *Al Jazeera* article of September 22, 2023.

Coping with the rapid trends in militarization while staying on course with the original idea for the special issue by the two editors, Toby Moorsom and Richard Raber, proved to be challenging. The journal was mindful not to produce a special issue with contents that would be stale on arrival. Hence, the issue offers more than the intricate and multifaceted subject of militarization in Africa, a topic that has shaped the continent’s past and continues to influence its present and future. Particularly noteworthy then is the inclusion of articles that some might find as surprising as their aesthetic timelessness from the interdisciplinary lens of cultural studies. These are exemplified by Danson Sylvester Kahyana’s essay, “Singing against the State’s Guns and Goons: Timothy Wangusa’s Poetry and the Quest for Democratic Governance in Uganda,” and the Photo Essay by Tshepiso Mabula, “Ukugrumba: Recollecting Dry Bones: Revisiting the Aftermath of the Liberation Struggle.”

As we present this special issue, we invite readers to engage critically with the content, reflecting on the complexities of militarization and its implications for the future of Africa. The articles highlight the importance of historical perspective, the interplay of local and global dynamics, and the necessity of inclusive and sustainable approaches to security and development. It is our hope that the insights provided here would contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for the continent.

We are particularly grateful to the editors of the special issue for painstakingly seeing it through even when the challenges seemed daunting. We are also grateful to the *Nokoko* board members for their invaluable support, and to the administrative crew at Carleton’s Institute of African Studies: Susaritha Chandrabose and Gabriel Habiyaemye.

Finally, we thank our contributors for their rigorous research and thoughtful analysis, and we look forward to continued discourse on this pivotal topic.

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Ottawa,  
May 5, 2024.