

## **Military Intervention in Politics: A Case Study of Third World Countries**

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*Abstract – In this paper we study the phenomenon of military intervention in the governance of the Third World Countries. We analyzed the causes of the frequent coups which have taken place mainly in these countries, their impact on the governance of these countries, their effects on the general life of the people of these countries, and the impact of these coups on the economic development of these countries. This study also compares the various theories propounded by other leading scholars in this field and a framework is developed to study this phenomenon in greater detail in future.*

*Key Words – Military Intervention, Coups, Civil Military Interface, Democracy, Third World Countries, developed Countries*

The endemic phenomenon of military intervention in politics in the less developed countries has come to characterize, in varying forms and degrees, a fairly large number of states since the end of the era of decolonization began after World War II. Soon after independence many Asian, African and Latin American countries witnessed an almost total erosion of democracy with many charismatic leaders being discredited in those societies. In these countries, in comparison to developed and highly developed countries armed forces play central rather peripheral roles in decision making. Therefore, coups are relatively common in less developed countries and relatively rare elsewhere.

According to an estimate, there were 32 out of 51 states existing in or before 1917 which underwent the ascendancy of the Armed Forces to power. Likewise, in 15 out of 28 states which came into being between 1917 and 1955, coups took place so as to overthrow democratic or other forms of governance [S.E.Finer,1968]. According to another estimate made in this regard, more than 200 military coups rocked and vigorously shook the political system of different Third World Countries between 1960 and 1972 [Gavin Kennedy,1974].

The most striking among these lies precisely in the fact that among all the human institutions that have evolved since the dawn of history, military veritably stand out as “one of the most ancient, vital, organized and hierarchy- based one [K.L.Kamal,1982]. True to the seminal role it usually plays in the overall context of polity, it has always been regarded as the backbone of the state as the politico-administrative power centre.

The significance attached to military can be explained and comprehended to some degree by the fact that within the framework of any state, irrespective of various models it choose to adopt (that could be the western democratic liberal model, scientific socialist model authored by Marx and realized by Lenin, Third world model and so on), military precedes any other institution. to quote David Whynes” History attests to the fact that every nation, society or culture possessed some form of institutionalized arrangement whereby resources may be mobilized, for the purpose of perpetrating and resisting aggression” [David K. Whynes,1979} Obviously, military was just ‘a form of institutionalized arrangement’ acknowledged universally in the past, but it also served as a means to mobilize resources ‘for the purpose of perpetrating and resisting aggression’ [David K. Whynes1979].

### **Types of Civil- Military Interface and Role of Military in Politics**

The nature of relationship between the military and the society in general has shown a host of variations and diversities in different temporal as well as spatial contexts so much as to defy generalizations. At certain point of time and in some of the nations in the world, the military has been assigned by the prevailing political circumstances a pivotal role to play in the emergence of novel social institutions determining the warp and woof of the of the social system. But in most of the countries where democracy is firmly rooted into the collective political consciousness of the masses as the best and most viable political system, the military remains largely confined to the specified border areas situated far away from the pale of common men's world. So, the possibilities of military rarely fructify except in the form of occasional coups, anti establishment rebellions etc.

it would be more appropriate therefore to analyze civil-military relations in terms of the role played by the military in politics rather than the social system as a whole. On this terrain the influence of the military is pregnant with far reaching consequences. As Veena Kukreja puts it, "the role of the military in politics ranges from minimal influence by means of recognised channels inherent in its position and responsibilities within the political system to the other extreme of total displacement of the civilian government in the form of overt military intervention in politics [Veena Kukreja, 1985]. This 'overt military intervention in politics' mentioned here obviously refers to one form of military intervention and even if it lies beyond the pale of the military's sphere of influence as 'a legitimate institutional pressure group', there can be no denying the fact that at times, it exercises a legitimate influences as some sort of an institutionalized pressure group having a lion's share in political decision making.

in almost all the developed countries, which are also sincere about modern strategic needs, the role of the military seems to have undergone a sea-change over the last few decades. In spite of the increasing power and influence exercised by the armed forces roots of civilian-democratic traditions and values have not been threatened over there. The role of the military remains well within the bounds of civilian supremacy [Veena Kukreja, 1985].

Another salient feature of the role of the military is that it does not remain the same in all the societies as regards crucial policy decisions. There are states. which assign vital role to the military in respect of policy formulations whereas there are others which prefer to attach a subordinate role and functions to the armed forces. in case of the former. the military has a significant, at times pioneering role to play in politics whereas in the context of the latter, "it remains in the sidelines as a mute servant"[Veena Kukreja, 1985]. There are instances of the military profession being held in high esteem even though its functions and the overall role it play, remain largely confine to specific sphere of activities. it might open up a different picture before us.

### **Typologies of Civil-Military Relations in Developing Countries**

As such relations far as civil-military relations in developing countries are concerned, one can take into consideration five types of such relatios as propounded by Morris Janowitz. These are. namely;[Morris Janowitz, 1964]

1. Authoritarian-personal control;
2. Authoritarian- mass party;
3. Democratic-competitive and Semi-Competitive systems;
4. Civil –military Coalition;
5. Military Oligarchy

Among the new states that have come in existence in the wake of the new international situation as a consequence of the Second World War, there are very few states, which can be put under the rubric of Democratic-Competitive type. India among many others, offers a good instance to it. the most significant aspect of this type of civil-military relations is that it operates on the basic parameter of the army being controlled by the civilian authority. In countries like Indonesia, Turkey etc there seems to be 'an understanding between civil-military authorities to rule the country [K.L.Kamal1982]. In a country like Pakistan, 'the military oligarchy would prefer to rule by itself the moment the political initiative is shifted to it even temporarily' [K.L.Kamal, 1982].

In a number of developing countries, the phenomenon of military intervention seems to be quite in vogue. As a scholar maintains – 'in these countries, in comparison with the developed countries, the armed forces are more likely than not to be among the most potential or well established

contenders for political power [Veena Kukreja,1985]. The most manifest difference between the role of the military in the developed countries and the same in the developing countries lies in the fact that 'military intervention is a characteristics feature of the less developed countries which are often called praetorian societies'[Samuel P.Huntington 1968]. On the other hand, "none of the super or major world powers are victims of the military intervention"[Veena Kukreja,1985].

Another salient aspect of military intervention in developing countries is that it does not take place uniformly in these societies [Veena Kukreja1985]. A great number of typologies of civil-military relations with their basic thrust on the phenomenon of military intervention has been propounded by scholars belonging to various schools of comparative politics. One of these typologies has come down to us in the form of S.P. Huntington's three fold categorizations of coups namely, (i) Palace Coups, (ii)Coups for Reform (iii) Revolutionary Coups [S.P. Huntington,1962]. Another classification has been offered by Fred Von Der Mehden, which takes a rather wide ranging view of this phenomenon and construes the roles played by the military not just in terms of the engineers or architects of coups but in terms of (i) Constitutional Caretaker, (ii) Reformer or Revolutionary and (iii) Backer of Civilian Government {Fred R. Von Der Mehden,1964}. Yet another classification has been provided by S.E. Finer who suggests four levels of intervention brought about in four respective forms namely, (i) Influence (ii) Blackmail (iii) Displacement and (iv) Supplant [ S.E.Finer,1962].

A.R. Luckham's typology, however seems to be more broad-based as it not only encompasses the governments where the military is directly involved in but also the regimes the military indirectly influences [A.R.Luckham,1971]. Sang Seek Park offers another typology, which is 'constructed on the basis of Luckham's classification with slight modifications'. In his view, civil-military relationship can be put under the following rubrics [Sang SeekPark,1977}. (i) The Military – Dominant, (2) The Civil-Military Fused,(3) The Civilian-Dominant, and (4) The Civil – Military Balanced Systems.

The typology suggested here takes a closer view of 'the mutual strengths and weaknesses of the civilian and military sectors 'as well as 'the degree of mutual penetration'.

Besides the aforementioned scholars, many others have been drawn towards dwelling upon different dimensions, typologies and categorizations of civil-military interaction as well as direct or indirect intervention of the military in political system of developing countries. Though scholars have yet to reach a consensus in this regard, numerous studies focused on instances of coups and military intervention in developing countries have brought forth some positive results.

### **Military and the Third World Countries**

History shows that pre-colonial period in these countries witnessed the prevalence of strait-jacketed institutions and practice with hardly any scope for the tides of progressive and modern thoughts to get into the social-cultural system. So, most of the pre-colonial societies were essentially "peasant societies with paramount religious values and more social dissension than the modernized societies". Colonial period introduced a highly scientific and advanced system of political administration that was instrumental in bringing about unprecedented changes in the traditional modes of existence.

The military, as an indispensable component of the existing system, also underwent a great change in its outlook structural pattern and functions as it went on to assume a broader, national character. Gradually, it became highly organized, gained considerable influence as well as efficiency in performing different tasks assigned to it by its political masters and also, succeeded in getting beyond the confines of its stereotyped image as a crisis organization ... necessary only when an external aggression takes place or serious internal disturbances occur. It is this readiness of the military to play greater and more important part in socio-political changes that has enabled it to emerge as a very powerful national institution in most of the Third World Countries.

One significant reason for the kind of enormous influence exercised by the military in the Third World countries can be traced in the fragile law and order situation prevailing there. The problem, in many cases, seems to be so serious that the military out of necessity or compulsion, been catapulted into being 'the only stable alternative'. And in most of these cases, the military, on its part, has responded positively by contributing to the establishment of peace more successfully than the pre-existing democratic institutions in general.

Besides, the military has boosted the confidence and trust of the masses as a great driving force for the implementation of numerous plans and programme taken up by political authorities. In many countries, it has acted as the most progressive link between the representatives of central political administration on the one hand and the grassroots, the populace lying at the bottom edge or say, the receiving end of the entire system. Among numerous developmental initiatives taken up by the military, mention can be made of activities such as 'teaching people the use of first -aid, sanitation medical and dental care, and helping the nation in civil assistance, industrial and agricultural production, etc'.

The role of the military as an agent of modernization and peaceful development can be further explained and illustrated by the fact that in many Third world countries such as Brazil, Iran Israel, Peru etc., the military has become a part of the domain of civil duties whereas in many other like El Salvador, Pakistan ,Thailand , Ethiopia, Philippines, etc., it

serves as 'the most institutionalized agency to grapple with the situation whether this relates to the domestic scene or the external aggression'.

**Conclusion** – The study discusses the causes of various coups in Third World Countries and their impact on the socio-economic developments of these countries. By comparing the theories of military intervention into the political spheres and governance of these Third World Countries, the study have prepared a conceptual framework of this phenomenon which will be found beneficial by the future researchers of these field.

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