Regime Vulnerability And the Military Coup

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In the past few decades, the world has hardly been deprived of military coups,[1] nor has it lacked analytical efforts to explain these intriguing political phenomena. The analyses have managed to run the gamut from cultural determinism, through quasi-class dialectics, to the bored-soldiers-in-the-barracks hypothesis. Be that as it may, a clearly dominant focus in the "military-in-politics" literature has centered on the question of regime vulnerability. In essence, a basic point is asserted again and again: governmental institutions and leadership in those systems subject to "domestic military intervention" are weak and therefore vulnerable to such intervention. To avoid what appears to resemble (in bald reductionist form) a tautology, writers on this topic customarily address the question of why the institutions are weak. A further step may be taken in an attempt to clarify the missing link—why military personnel sometimes attack the weak or weakened targets.

For all the volume of materials currently available, however, only rarely do any of the analyses come to grips with the apparent corporate and not-so-corporate motivations of the military coup-makers.[2]

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[1]A military coup is defined as occurring whenever members of the regular armed forces remove or attempt to remove a state's chief executive through the use, or threat of the use, of force.

[2]The reputed motivations and grievances of coup-makers for 274 military coups in 59 states (1946–70) are reported and examined in William R. Thompson, *The Grievances of Military*

Instead, analysts have chosen to dwell on institutional "vacuums" pulling a sometimes reluctant, sometimes eager, modernized military elite into political action in the alternative names of anticorruption, reform, and revolution on behalf of a new or middle-aged middle class (depending on the region) or to preserve the venerable status quo. Whatever the alleged rallying banner, political actors, at least as long as they wear uniforms, are viewed as obediently enacting the roles assigned to them by vague and impersonal systemic forces. To be sure, the teleological approach, however qualified or embroidered, does provide an answer to the missing link problem, but scarcely one to satisfy the behavioral skeptic. Not only does one feel uncomfortable with a heavy reliance on systemic pulls; but the predominant explanatory modes simply are not in full accord with available empirical data. Most of the explanatory paths taken in pursuit of regime vulnerability can be roughly, if not always charitably, clustered under five thematic headings: (1) legacies; (2) the failure of democracy; (3) the filling of the void; (4) the middle-class spear carriers; and (5) the disjointed system. In an attempt to demonstrate the inadequacies of these diverse arguments, each of the themes will be briefly outlined and they will be collectively subjected to critical scrutiny, relying upon both verbal arguments and quantitative data. In conclusion, an alternative and hopefully more satisfactory interpretation will be advocated.

Five Themes

Legacies: the pull of the past The pull of the past through historical and cultural legacies is, in some respects, the most simple explanation of the military coup. Some historians and area specialists are prone to contend that contemporary political behavior is inexplicable without due reference to the earlier foundations of present behavior.[3]

Coup-Makers, Sage Professional Papers in Comparative Politics (Beverly Hills and London, 1973). Corporate grievances encompass conflicts which stem from the fact that military coup-makers are socialized members of a more or less professionalized organization with interests and needs of its "own." Corporate grievances are hence concerned with the position and resource standings of the military organization. But within the military organization, there are individuals, factions, and minority groups with their own positions and resource standings to protect and advance. Thus, a second category—not-so-corporate grievances —refers to conflicts which are sometimes linked to corporate loyalties and perceived interests, but which more acutely reflect the elementary behavior of elites and suborganizational groups engaged in political competition.

[3]Various treatments of the legacy factor(s) may be found in the writings of: T. Zinkin, "India and Military Dictatorship," *Pacific Affairs*, XXXII (March 1959); John J. Johnson,

The Arabist emphasizes Islamic political theory and the conditioning of Muslim history, religion, and culture. The Latin Americanist prefers to delve into the societal consequences of the reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula, *machismo,* and the significance of the *caudillo.* The Africanist cannot overlook the effects of recent colonial rule. These legacies are generally used to preface other considerations and approaches, but occasionally there seems to be an implication that, given the "unique" experiences as conditioning antecedents, little more need be said to explain current political behavior. Governments have been either too weak or too strong in the past because of their history and culture and will continue to be so until the survivals of the past are somehow overcome.[4]

The failure of democracy: the pull of the experimental failure The most general and perhaps best exposition of the second theme is advanced by Rupert Emerson.[5] His argument consists of drawing attention to three basic reasons for the abandonment of representative institutions in many of the post-World War II new states: (1) the extent of internal diversity and the lack of national unity led to continued threats of disruption and a perceived need for centralization; (2) the preconditions for democratic success were almost completely absent; and (3) the masses, lacking experience

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"The Latin American Military as a Politically Competing Group in Transitional Society," in Johnson, ed. *The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries* (Princeton, 1962), pp. 93–104, and *The Military and Society in Latin America* (Stanford, 1964), pp. 13–90; Lyle N. McAlister, "Civil-Military Relations in Latin America," in John D. Martz, ed. *The Dynamics of Change in Latin American Politics* (Englewood Cliffs, 1965), p. 259; Eric R. Wolfe and E.C. Hansen, "Caudillo Politics: A Structural Analysis," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, IX (January 1967); Manfred Halpern, *The Politics of Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa* (Princeton, 1963), pp. 251–53; George M. Haddad, *Revolutions and Military Role in the Middle East: The Northern Tier* (New York, 1965), pp. 11–39; John B. Glubb, "The Conflict between Tradition and Modernism in the Role of Muslim Armies," in Carl Leiden, ed. *The Conflict of Traditionalism and Modernism in the Muslim Middle East* (Austin, 1966), and "The Role of the Army in the Traditional Arab State," in Jack H. Thompson and Robert D. Reischauer, eds. *Modernization of the Arab World* (Princeton, 1966); Eliezer Be'eri, *Army Officers in Arab Politics and Society* (New York, 1970), pp. 275–92; William Gutteridge, *Military Institutions and Power in the New States* (London, 1964), pp. 15–25; James O'Connell, "The Inevitability of Instability," *Journal of Modern African Studies,* V (September 1967); and J.M. Lee, *African Armies and Civil Order* (New York, Institute for Strategic Studies: Studies in International Security, no. 13, 1969), pp. 25–51.

[4]Space does not permit an adequate treatment of this theme. A somewhat more expansive consideration may be found in William R. Thompson, *Explanations of the Military Coup,* pp. 83–95.

[5]Rupert Emerson, *From Empire to Nation* (Boston, 1960), pp. 272–92. See also Majid

with democratic traditions but subject to rising expectations, could not be expected to defend novel forms of government when these failed to produce adequate and quick results. The results of this fundamental "erosion of democracy" took two forms—the military seizure of power, or the creation of a one-party system. Regarding the former, Emerson further argued that the relative power of the military virtually ensured that leading elements in the officer corps would "swing into action" if any serious weaknesses developed in civilian governments.

The fillers of the void: the pull of the vacuum The third theme essentially represents an extension of Emerson's influential arguments.[6] Constitutional rulers had been imposed by external forces and therefore lacked traditional foundations. With the withdrawal of the external forces and the advent of a myriad of political problems, politicians misunderstood or corrupted the rules of the new political game. The absence of traditional loyalties either to the rules or to the politicians led to the atrophy of the strength of political organizations. As governmental structures became weaker, intraelite struggles for control intensified and any initial agreement on the rules evaporated. The situation was summarized by the frequently invoked Hobbesian phrase—clubs become trump when no rule of trump is established. Lacking constitutional alternatives, the military entered the resulting "political vacuum" in order either to force a popularly desired change of government or to save a crisis-ridden political system.

The middle-class spear carriers: the running leap of the modernizers/protectors Presumably as a partial antidote to the

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Khadduri, "The Role of the Military in Middle East Politics," *American Political Science Review,* XLVIII (June 1953).

[6]Writers on "the pull of the vacuum" include: P.J. Vatikiotis, *The Egyptian Army in Politics: Pattern for New Nations?* (Bloomington, 1961), pp. 248–50; H. Daalder, *The Role of the Military in the Emerging Countries* (The Hague, 1962), p. 15; John C. Campbell, "The Role of the Military in the Middle East: Past Patterns and New Directions," in Sydney N. Fisher, ed. *The Military in the Middle East* (Columbus, 1963); Dankwart A. Rustow, "The Military in Middle Eastern Society and Politics," in Fisher, ed. *The Military in the Middle East;* Hisham B. Sharabi, *Nationalism and Revolution in the Arab World* (Princeton, 1966), pp. 56–66; Gutteridge, *The Military in African Politics* (London, 1969); B.J. Dudley, "The Military and Politics in Nigeria: Some Reflections," in Jacques Van Doorn, ed. *Military Profession and Military Regimes: Commitments and Conflict* (The Hague, 1969); Howard J. Wiarda, *Dictatorship and Development: The Methods of Control in Trujillo's Dominican Republic* (Gainesville, 1968), pp. 88–89; and Ruth First, *The Barrel of a Gun: Political Power in Africa and the Coup d'Etat* (London, 1970).

continuing problem of institutional weakness, the late 1950s and early 1960s witnessed the development of a new theme centered primarily on the contrast between the theoretical strengths of the military and the very real weaknesses of the governments which they served. Lucian Pye contended that, in the attempt to build modern organizations in the non-Western world, the creation of modern armies had been the most successful effort and the easiest to achieve.[7] Forced to look abroad for suitable models, military officers in transitional political systems became sensitized to the benefits of industrialization and technology. As a result of this accelerated exposure and development, non-Western military organizations and their leaders became "champions of change and development."

Other analysts have been predisposed toward similar lines of thought. Guy Pauker argued that in Southeast Asia, armies were the only group with the organizational strength, leadership, and discipline capable of competing with Communists for "control of the vacuum."[8] Manfred Halpern advanced the thesis that the more Middle Eastern armies were modernized, the more their very existence "constituted a radical criticism" of their respective political systems.[9] A new generation of officers quickly evolved as representatives of a salaried "new middle class." As the vanguard and standard bearers of social reform and nationalism, they could hardly be expected to resist the temptation to remove a recalcitrant and traditional ruling elite. Samuel Huntington has also stated that, whereas all coups do not produce reforms in the underdeveloped areas, virtually all reforms are produced by coups.[10] In a later work about which more will be said in the discussion of the fifth theme, Huntington generalized Halpern's thesis by stating that the middle class makes its debut on the political scene in the epaulettes of the colonel.[11] In alliance with civilian groups, the colonels overthrew traditional oligarchies in order to eliminate their corruption, incompetence, and passivity.

The fourth theme has yet to be applied to sub-Saharan Africa, at least so far. African analysts are quick to emphasize that military coups modify little and they are hard pressed even to locate a middle

[7]Lucian W. Pye, "Armies in the Process of Political Modernization," in Johnson, ed. *The Role of the Military*.

[8]Guy J. Pauker, "Southeast Asia as a Problem Area in the Next Decade," *World Politics*, XI (April 1959).

[9]Halpern, *The Politics of Social Change*, pp. 253–74.

[10]Samuel P. Huntington, "Patterns of Violence in World Politics," in Huntington, ed. *Changing Patterns of Military Politics* (Glencoe, 1962), p. 40.

[11]Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, 1968), p. 207.

class.[12] But José Nun has advanced a Latin American variant.[13] While rejecting the developmental vanguard approach, Nun argues that the Latin American military have developed a propensity for assuming a protective responsibility for an incapacitated middle class. Thus, the military are said to have first supported the middle class in obtaining political recognition from the oligarchies, then in consolidating their political power, and more recently in suppressing the threat associated with increasing lower-class political participation and demands.

The disjointed system: marching on to praetorianism The fifth theme does not differ greatly from the preceeding four. Its distinguishing characteristic lies rather in the relative sophistication and elaboration of the regime vulnerability explanation provided. An early expression of the fifth theme is found in Samuel Finer's *The Man on Horseback* which, despite several drawbacks, remains one of the more comprehensive treatments of the "military-in-politics." On the subject of regime vulnerability, Finer states that the various degrees of military intervention are directly and negatively related to the nature of the society's "political culture." The "level of political culture" is considered high when: (1) the political formula justifying the ruler's right to rule is widely accepted; (2) the political system's civil procedures and organs are widely recognized as worthy of authority; and (3) the public's participation and loyalty to the political system's institutions are intense and widespread. In Finer's scheme, military coups are only characteristic of low and minimal "level" political cultures where the three conditions prevail in a weak, or extremely weak, fashion.[14]

This last theme's better known and more influential analyses are, however, to be found primarily in the works of three analysts—David Rapoport, Samuel Huntington, and Amos Perlmutter.[15] In the inter-

[12]See Aristide R. Zolberg, "Military Rule and Political Development in Tropical Africa: A Preliminary Report," in Van Doorn, ed. *Military Profession and Military Regimes* , and First, *The Barrel of a Gun*, pp. 217–18. A partial exception is Jon Kraus who mentions the Nun middle-class variant as a future possibility for Ghana. See his, "Arms and Politics in Ghana," in Claude E. Welch, Jr., ed. *Soldier and State in Africa: A Comparative Analysis of Military Intervention and Political Change* (Evanston, 1970), p. 211.

[13]José Nun, "The Middle Class Military Coup," in Claudio Véliz, ed. *The Politics of Conformity in Latin America* (London, 1967), and *Latin America: The Hegemonic Crisis and the Military Coup* (Berkeley, Institute of International Studies, Politics of Modernization Series, no. 7, 1969).

[14]Samuel E. Finer, *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics* (London, 1962), pp. 83–89.

[15]David C. Rapoport, "A Comparative Theory of Military and Political Types," in

ests of condensation, Huntington's approach will be emphasized here. He describes transitional societies as "wholes out of joint." The crux of the problem, in his view, resides in the fact that there is no or little agreement among individuals and groups on a legitimate and authoritative formula for conflict resolution. The result is an absence of political institutions and leaders capable of ameliorating conflict between various social forces directly confronting one another in the political arena. In the absence of mediating institutions, demands are made on the government through means that employ the resource advantage of the demanders. This situation is continually reinforced because the primacy of particular interests and the absence of a sense of community preclude the structural development of the all-important political institutions. To this edifice, Huntington neatly grafts both versions of the middle-class theme. The role of the military is said to shift with changes in the society. In traditional oligarchies, the military participates in the intraelite struggles in which only the names of the actors are changed. With the rise of a middle class and the advanced development of the military organization and its officer corps, the military plays a functional role in overthrowing a corrupt and incompetent oligarchy. Praetorian oligarchs are thus replaced by radical praetorians spearheaded by a radical and middle-class army. But as political participation broadens even further, the number of actors increases, their methods become more diverse, and conflict becomes more intense. In the absence of institutional development and in the face of rapid mobilization, the military's role evolves into one of conservative guardianship. In sum, domestic military intervention is described as an evolutionary reaction to a product of the actions of other groups in a changing environment—a pull of a disjointed sociopolitical system.

Of Pulls and Running Leaps

With the advantage of hindsight, the regime vulnerability themes may be viewed as having been conceived through an imperfect and incremental process of conscious/unconscious accretion. Each theme has been gradually differentiated from the preceding perspective, but not to the extent that any single theme constitutes a radical departure. The "failure of democracy" theme at first represented only a slight modification of the legacy approach. The democratic experiment

Huntington, ed. *Changing Patterns of Military Politics*; Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, pp. 192–263; and Amos Perlmutter, "The Praetorian State and the Praetorian Army," *Comparative Politics*, I (April 1969).

failed because the areas in question were not, for reasons of cultural and historical background, prepared for the new ways of politics. An emphasis on the abstractions of democracy was shortly revised by pointing out that the new institutions were too weak to withstand the pressures encountered in transition from the old to the new. A resulting "vacuum" had to be filled by someone or some group. The army was available, undiscredited, and, on paper, the perfect candidate. By the late 1950s, some analysts began seeing the availability of the army as a political blessing. The military were considered to possess an organization of advanced development. The officers corps was believed to be predominantly middle class. Therefore, it was not illogical to reason that the military would become the champion of middle-class hopes and fears. The praetorian thesis contributed by offering a more sophisticated explanation of the institutional "vacuum"; in one version, it synthesized both variants of middle-class representation. Yet, even so, all five themes share a common image of the military coup: weak political systems pull the military into action.

It is difficult to take exception to the notion that those states that have experienced coups have had governments that can be characterized as weak and vulnerable. But by continually stressing this point, the linkage between vulnerability and coup is either given short shrift or distorted. Instead, the all-pervasive vacuum imagery seemingly dictates the rather weak conclusion that the military are pulled into the situation to save the teleological day. Too rarely is the possibility that military coup-makers are as equally worthy of the label *homus politicus* as the incumbents they remove entertained. This basic misperception dominates much of the literature despite the ironic fact that, when some of the thematic theorists assume the different roles of descriptive historians, their own accounts provide evidence for far more earthy coup motivations and explanations than those suggested by some remote and functional pull of the system.

Vacuums The overemphasis on systemic pulls could be in part a product of relying on poor concepts. The use of "vacuum" and its euphemisms is particularly treacherous. The term, which has also proved useful in justifying great power interventions, has long since deserved a hasty purge from the vocabulary of objective political analysis. A vacuum is an empty space. But where are these empty spaces in politics? Why should any person or any group either desire or allow him or itself to be pulled into one? This fuzziness is compounded by the venerable myth which somehow places the mili-

tary outside the political system. Hence, when they "intervene," they are perceived as entering (or being pulled into) the political system.[16] But whether the military are minimally perceived as lobbyists for a share of budget allocations or maximally as part of an insidious military-industrial complex, they have always been very much within and a part of the political system.[17]

Reforms The persistent accent on reform in four of the five themes is equally misleading. If one sees the military as being pulled into a void, it is only natural to expect them to do something about it. Yet, of the military coups that took place between 1946 and 1970, only nineteen (8 percent) could be described as "strikingly reformist" in nature.[18] The abundant emphasis on reform may also reflect an inclination to accept postcoup announcements at face value. Rarely can these communiqués omit some appeal to reformist justifications. One could hardly expect a coup leader to proclaim to his troops, his countrymen, and to the world that a president had been abruptly removed in order to save the coup leader's political skin or the army's privileged position. In most cases, however, there is little cause for observers to accept the benevolent trustee-cum-reformist public image that coup-makers claim.

A more plausible argument might be that military officers are interested in economic changes and reforms for reasons of institutional self-interest. Morroe Berger, in his study of the early nineteenth century defensive modernizer, Mohammed Ali, presents the straightforward formula that "political independence requires military strength which requires technological advance."[19] To the extent that

[16]The conceptualization problem is equally applicable to the term "military intervention." James N. Rosenau has pointed out that "intervention" implies that the intervenor crosses some conventional boundary, abandoning a prior mode of conduct. See his, "The Concept of Intervention," *Journal of International Affairs*, XXII (Summer 1968). In reference to coups, the term is appropriate for a first coup or after a lengthy period without coups. But when a political system has experienced a series of coups in a few years, the coup must then be considered fairly conventional behavior, and the term "intervention" no longer applies.

[17]The notion that the military exist somehow outside the political system may derive from the liberal – conservative struggles of nineteenth-century Europe. The military were viewed as reactionary bastions of conservative support. For liberalism to triumph, the conservatives' ally had to be "removed" from the political system. What actually transpired was an imperfect diminution of military political influence to that of an important interest group.

[18]This finding is discussed in William R. Thompson, *The Grievances of Military Coup-Makers*, pp. 44–45. Coup-maker motivations were coded as strikingly reformist when reform—an attempt to correct societal injustices and abuses—was evidently a primary motivation rather than a verbal pledge overshadowed by the overt prominence of corporate and not-so-corporate grievances.

[19]Morroe Berger, *Military Elite and Social Change: Egypt since Napoleon* (Center for International Studies, Princeton University, Research Monograph no. 6, 1960), p. 1.

military strength is intrinsically tied to economic and technological development, military institutions and their leaders might be expected to favor certain economic reforms.[20] But whatever the case, several analysts have observed that rapid development has become such a pervasive goal in lesser developed areas that few elites can escape publicly acknowledging the primacy of the need for economic change.[21] And if reform is a preeminent source of legitimation, coup-makers can certainly be expected to invoke its powers of justification, regardless of the nature or success of postcoup policies.[22]

Finally, it should be noted that analysts have tended to exaggerate the representativeness of the few strikingly reformist cases presently available. These cases tend to be well publicized, extensively studied, and often cited as thematic examples. Still, coups, such as that in Egypt in 1952, remain atypical and should be regarded as deviant cases rather than as the norm. On the other hand, if analysts assume that reforms and modernization are occurring or destined to occur, it is not surprising that reform forces are found where they "must" be found. What is more likely is that thematic theorists have built their conceptual constructs of vacuums and reforms prior to or without close analysis of actual military coup situations. Although, in all fairness, some thematic theorists are not directly interested in the politics of the coup but, instead, have attempted to put forth broad statements about the nature of politics in the developing world.[23] As a consequence of prematurely closed frameworks or broader goals, analytical expectations, and dataless inquiries, the military coup has become an analytical casualty.

[20]See McAlister, "The Military," in Johnson, ed. *Continuity and Change in Latin America* (Stanford, 1964), p. 140. The plausibility of this contention has not gone unquestioned. Eric A. Nordlinger reports negative mean correlations between "political strength of the military" and seven indicators of economic change during the 1957–62 period. This is interpreted as evidence in support of his argument that officer-politicians are unconcerned with realizing economic change and reform. In direct contradiction to the spear carrier theme, Nordlinger further argues that, where civilian organizations press for economic change, the military will purposefully oppose them. See his, "Soldiers in Mufti: The Impact of Military Rule upon Economic and Social Change in the Non-Western States," *American Political Science Review*, LXIV (December 1970).

[21]See Martha Detrick, "A Review" covering Johnson, ed. *The Role of the Military*, E. Lieuwen, *Arms and Politics in Latin America*, and Vatikiotis, *The Egyptian Army in Politics*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, VI (December 1962), 379; Irving L. Horowitz, "Political Legitimacy and the Institutionalization of Crisis in Latin America," *Comparative Political Studies*, I (April 1968), 62; and James M. Malloy, *Bolivia: The Uncompleted Revolution* (Pittsburgh, 1970), p. 10.

[22]It is highly questionable whether most coup-makers possess concrete plans for postcoup rule.

[23]Daniel S. Lev suggested this point to the author.

The middle-class connection The "middle-class connection" suffers similar problems. The military, not unlike operatic spear carriers waiting in the wings for a chance to perform their walk-on function, are pulled into action on behalf of an admittedly weak sector with whom military officers are believed to share some form of class identity. Alternatively, the vanguard of reform takes a running leap into the political vacuum. In the absence of substantial contradictory or supporting evidence, a consensus has by and large developed that military officers tend to possess predominantly middle-class backgrounds, at least where social class is considered a meaningful distinction. Given only this single "fact" of social background, some analysts conclude that military coup-makers must represent their own class. The conclusion is unwarranted if only because the essential survey data on officers' values and allegiances remain largely uncollected. One noteworthy exception, however, interestingly found that, while Brazilian officers admitted to middle-class origins, they tended to view themselves as a classless group with no specific class interests.[24]

The tendency to assume otherwise may well stem from the perspective that, at the time when military leaders were largely drawn from the upper class, the military tended to support the rulers. Military revolts were seen to be likely as long as the military leadership was able to identify with the interests of the ruling class. With the advent of nonupper-class officer recruitment, it was conversely assumed that the new generation of officers would no longer be able to identify with oligarchies. If the argument was stopped at this point, such a development would constitute a plausible facilitative factor for coups. Traditional inhibitions to revolt might no longer pertain.

But the spear carrier theme does not rest here. An emergent middle class will demand the removal of incompetent upper-class rulers. Yet these same emerging sectors are characterized as incoherent and unorganized. How, then, do the coup-makers know for whom or how to act?[25] Why do coups continue to occur once the middle class or its leaders have ascended to power? An oligarchy need be removed only so many times. Insistence that the military's role then switches to suppression of the lower class may apply to some systems; but to

[24] Alfred Stepan, *The Military in Politics: Changing Patterns in Brazil* (Princeton, 1971), p. 42.

[25] These criticisms have been made before. See Perlmutter, "The Arab Military Elite," *World Politics,* XXII (January 1970), 292–93 and "Egypt and the Myth of the New Middle Class: Some Lessons in Social and Political Theory," *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* XII (January 1970); and Stepan, *The Military in Politics*, pp. 46–47.

make it a general rule seems a bit contrived. It ignores as usual the coup-makers' own very real interests. It is difficult to view the military as spear carriers when they are apt to seize the starring roles for themselves. Lyle McAlister presents what is probably the best approach at this stage when he observes that the middle sector (in Latin America) is so heterogeneous that to say it provides the majority of officers "reveals more about where officers do not come from than where they do."[26] His observations need not be restricted to Latin America.

It is possible to supply still more verbal criticisms; but a most telling evaluation is available through the examination of quantitative data. To be sure, not all of the themes can be tested directly; but a sufficient number of the various theme strands can be. Furthermore, the outcome of such an examination will present a different and less subjective approach and yet lead the course of the critique in the same direction—namely, that the themes of regime vulnerability shed less light on military coup politics than hitherto assumed.

The vulnerability of the past Unique legacies possess severe explanatory limitations. The Latin American experience per se cannot explain seventeenth-century English military coups any more than it can provide insight on more recent coups in Laos or Burundi. Nor can legacy factors account for the regional exceptions to the determinancy of the past. Uruguay and Mexico have avoided overt and successful coups for some time, yet these states are heirs to many of the same legacies as Bolivia, Argentina, and Ecuador. Legacy factors also tend to lack precision. Is everything that took place in the past relevant to an explanation of contemporary events, or is it possible to be more selective? If it is possible to be selective, on what basis are the linkages to be made, justified, or tested?

These criticisms can be underscored statistically, albeit rather crudely. If we restrict our attention arbitrarily to the three principal regions for recent coup events and the areas for which legacy arguments are most often invoked, we might hypothesize that there is a relationship between the occurrence of military coups and the historical-cultural experiences of Latin America, the Arab world, and sub-Saharan Africa.

Hypothesis 1: Systems with "certain" historical-cultural background

[26]McAlister, "The Military," p. 164.

tend to be more prone to military coups.[27] The hypothesis can be operationalized in the following fashion: (1) the "Latin American historical experience" encompasses the former Spanish colonies of South and Central America; (2) the "Arab historical experience" encompasses the Middle East and North Africa, excluding Afghanistan, Israel, Turkey, Pakistan, and Iran; (3) the "sub-Saharan African historical experience" encompasses Africa south of the Sahara and north of the Union of South Africa, excluding Rhodesia, Ethiopia, and Liberia. Each of these gross legacy categories can then be compared to the rest of the world in terms of which group has contributed more states to the cluster of countries experiencing military coups between 1946 and 1970.

While positive relationships are to be found (the respective lambda asymmetric coefficients are .26, .09, and .07) in all three cases, the strengths of the nominal measures of association are not exactly overwhelming. Nor is this surprising, for such statistical exercises, numerically speaking, are "stacked decks" for the unique legacy factors. For that matter, the availability of data for 1946–70 does not necessarily provide the ideal time frame in which to test the historical-cultural background hypothesis. Even so, if we were to add the three measures of association, the sum would amount to a respectively moderate .42. This can be done easily in a statistical exercise, but its verbal equivalent requires abstracting what is common to the historical backgrounds. This highlights the major problem of approaches which stress the unique, for they tend to overlook the more informative commonalities of the past. The past cannot be denied, but unique legacies are tantamount to explanatory frills when we seek regularities and spatio-temporal free generalizations.

Economic vulnerability The state of the economy has long been recognized as an important factor in the evaluation of governmental performance. If the economy is generally weak or underdeveloped, numerous restrictions are inevitably placed on what regimes can and cannot attempt. These restrictions are unlikely to contribute to the image of any given government.

Hypothesis 2: Systems with lower levels of economic development

[27]The dependent variable is "military coup proneness." States are considered more coup prone if a military coup, regardless of outcome, is attempted during a specified time period. In reference to Hypothesis 1, the period is 1946–70. Less coup prone systems are, conversely, those that do not experience military coups during the same period.

tend to be more prone to military coups.[28] Similarly, industrialization and economic development are frequently associated with the degree of political competition and, indirectly, military "political abstention." The more advanced the economy, the greater the probability that more people will have access to resources with which to compete in politics.[29]

Hypothesis 3: Systems with lower levels of industrialization tend to be more prone to military coups. More dynamically, it is argued that economic deterioration invites the military coup or, conversely, that coups are less likely when economic conditions are improving.[30] In a deteriorating situation, political leaders are likely to be blamed whether or not the circumstances are within the scope of governmental control. Obviously, in an improving situation, leaders are equally apt to take credit, whether deservedly or not.

Hypothesis 4: Systems experiencing economic deterioration tend to be more prone to military coups. Deterioration is commonly associated with economic systems that are highly reliant upon the fluctuations of world trade. As examples, declining prices for cotton (Sudan, 1958) and cocoa (Ghana, 1966) have been cited as background factors for military coups. Several indicators are available for this form of structural reliance. Economic systems characterized by a lack of diversity in export commodities and conceivably trading partners might be expected to be the most vulnerable to world price fluctuations.

[28]The intractability of the dependent variable's highly skewed distribution to a number of transformation attempts led to the reduction of the data to the ordinal level. Even so, subsequent regression examinations utilizing transformed and interval independent variables with the proneness index produced outcomes highly similar to the association measures reported here. However, the advantages of multivariate analysis were more than offset by severe multicollinearity problems.

[29]See Morris Janowitz, *The Military in the Political Development of New Nations: An Essay in Comparative Analysis* (Chicago, 1964), pp. 18–23; Robert D. Putnam, "Toward Explaining Military Intervention in Latin American Politics," *World Politics,* XX (October 1967), 85; Horowitz, "The Military Elites," in Seymour M. Lipset and Aldo Solari, eds. *Elites in Latin America* (New York, 1967), p. 148; Egil Fossum, "Factors Influencing the Occurrence of Military Coups d'Etat in Latin America," *Journal of Peace Research*, IV (3/1967), 230–31; and First, *The Barrel of a Gun*, p. 498.

[30]See Johnson, *The Military and Society*, p. 260; Fossum, pp. 236–37; Martin C. Needler, *Political Development in Latin America: Instability, Violence, and Evolutionary Change* (New York, 1968), pp. 61–62; Kraus, "Arms and Politics in Ghana," p. 179; Warren Dean, "Latin American Golpes and Economic Fluctuations, 1823–1966," *Social Science Quarterly,* LI (June 1970).

Table 1 Association of Economic Background Factors and Military Coup Proneness (Somers $D - N$ in Parentheses)

Hypotheses	Years 1951–55	1956–60	1961–65	1966–70
Hypothesis 2				
a. GDP/C	–.20(68)	–.17(83)	–.12(106)	–.24(120)
b. GNP/C			–.31(96)	–.26(111)
c. Energy consumption/C	–.24(62)	–.30(77)	–.31(103)	–.26(115)
Hypothesis 3				
d. Industrial GDP/C	–.28(57)	–.29(69)	–.29(78)	–.23(87)
e. Percent GDP industrial	.00(64)	–.36(69)	–.16(78)	–.16(87)
Hypothesis 5				
f. Commodity ratio 1	.22(45)	.38(68)	.21(89)	.23(99)
g. Commodity ratio 2	.27(44)	.30(67)	.21(89)	.27(99)
h. Partner concentration	.22(46)	.08(70)	.14(89)	.05(108)

NOTES

Variables: a. gross domestic product per capita; b. gross national product per capita; c. energy consumption in kilograms per capita; d. gross domestic product per capita originating in industrial activity; e. percent gross domestic product per capita originating in industrial activity; f. value of single largest export commodity/total value of a country's exports; g. combined value of three largest export commodities/total value of a country's exports; and h. value of exports purchased by single largest trading partner/total value of a country's exports.

Data Source: variables a. through e. and the control variables, Arthur S. Banks, *Cross-Polity Time Series Data* (Cambridge [Mass.], 1971), pp. 255–82; variables f. through h., calculated from data in *United Nations Yearbook of International Trade Statistics* (New York, 1952, 1957, 1961, 1967).

Control Variables: for variables a. through e., area and population; for variables f. through h., area, population, GNP/C and exports/GNP. None of the relationships is particularly affected by the control variables.

Hypothesis 5: Systems with higher levels of dependence upon the fluctuations of world trade tend to be more prone to military coups. Hypotheses 2 and 3 are multiply and conventionally operationalized.[31] Both hypotheses are not surprisingly supported by the associa-

[31]Data for the appropriate independent variables were collected for the years 1950, 1955, 1960, and 1965. Each independent variable was first reduced to an ordinal level (see the appendix) and then tabulated against the dependent variable encompassing the next five years (e.g., a GDP datum for 1950 was measured for association with a country's coup proneness index for the 1951–55 period). The level of analysis is universal; regional level examinations would require different conversion formulas and are thus a subject for further investigation. Finally, the possible influences of several logical control variables also were examined.

tion measures reported in Table 1. Testing Hypothesis 5 involves three less familiar indicators. The first two refer to the extent of commodity concentration. Ratio 1 is the value of the single largest export commodity, divided by the total value of a country's exports. Ratio 2 substitutes the three largest export commodities in the numerator. The third variable requires that the value of the exports purchased by the single largest single trading partner be divided by the country's total exports. Hypothesis 5 predicts a positive association between commodity and partner concentration and military coup proneness. The appropriate measures in Table 1 also support the fifth hypothesis. Even though none of the three hypotheses is discredited, special note should be made of the consistently weak to slightly moderate association measures. Economic background factors are hardly deterministic, at least in relation to military coup proneness.

Hypothesis 4 requires a less static analysis. Annual fluctuations in exports per capita were employed as rough indicators of economic deterioration. If the hypothesis is valid, we would expect more years of military coups to coincide with years of deterioration than might be expected if we also knew the total proportion of years of deterioration, improvement, and no change. Presumably, this relationship would be most striking within the group of states experiencing military coups, hence permitting examination of a restricted *N*. Table 2 gives the results of such an examination. The imperfect evidence is only partially consistent with the hypothesis. At the world, Latin American, and African levels, the percentage differences range from 1 to 6 percent. Arab and Asian aggregations show more impressive differences of 8 and 11 percent. Yet, in the case of Asia, the proportional differences between years of improvement in the first two columns are roughly the same as for years of deterioration. On the chance that a year lag between years of fluctuation and coup years might provide a more accurate test, the third column of Table 2 was calculated. Latin America consistently provides little support for the hypothesis. The Asian figures appear simply erratic. Marked increases in proportional differences are shown in Africa and the Arab world. Thus, allowing a year lag between fluctuations and later coups, Hypothesis 4 is best supported by the experiences of these two latter regions. Nonetheless, Table 2 does not indicate any strong and systematic association between coup proneness and economic deterioration. While this is naturally a tentative conclusion, additional and supporting evidence is summarized in Table 3.

Each of the military coups uncovered for the 1946–70 period was coded for the mention of economic deterioration or a synonym, such

Table 2 Annual Fluctuations in Exports per Capita and Military Coup Years, 1946–66 (in Percentages)

Area	Fluctuation Distributions		
	Total Years	Coup Years (t)	Coup Years (t–1)
	%	%	%
World (N = 49)			
decline	33	39	40
improve	52	49	45
no change	15	12	15
Latin America (N = 17)			
decline	36	37	39
improve	54	49	47
no change	10	14	14
Arab countries (N = 7)			
decline	31	39	50
improve	59	57	45
no change	10	4	5
South East and East Asia (N = 6)			
decline	32	43	35
improve	31	43	30
no change	37	14	35
Sub-Saharan Africa (N = 14)			
decline	32	35	43
improve	49	41	47
no change	19	24	10

Data Source: export/capita data — Banks, *Cross-Polity Time Series Data*, pp. 171–206.

Table 3 Reputed Economic Deterioration and the Military Coup, 1946–70

	%	N
World	16	274
Latin America	14	136
Arab countries	20	49
South East and East Asia	8	36
Sub-Saharan Africa	29	38

as stagnation, as a reputed "causal" factor.[32] Given Table 3, it would appear that the literature has overstressed the importance of economic adversity vis-à-vis coups. Overall, it is attributed only to about one in every six. Moreover, supporting the analysis connected with Table 3, Arab and African coups are the most likely to be linked to conditions of economic decline. It is possible that the prominence of economic deterioration in the thematic literature can be traced to an appreciation of the glaring, if less directly relevant, economic woes of much of the Third World. There may also be something of a "thematic legacy" traceable to the dramatic Latin American economic reversal in the early twentieth century and the accompanying resurgence in coup frequency. At the same time, it is revealing that thirty-eight of the forty-five coups (nearly 85 percent) linked to economic deterioration were successful. While economic problems may not be as commonly and directly related to coup politics as previous analysts have suggested, deterioration may well be a highly facilitative factor in coup success.[33] This qualification notwithstanding, economic difficulties should be viewed in general (there are certainly exceptions) as conditions promoting regime vulnerability rather than as motivational sources for the coup-makers.

Sociopolitical vulnerability Edward Luttwak has narrowily summarized a great deal of the regime vulnerability literature through his first "coup precondition": "The social and economic conditions of the target country must be such as to confine political participation to a small fraction of the population."[34] The reasoning behind this "precondition" is not particularly obtuse. The more restricted the scope of political participation, the less likely it is that the regime will be in a position to obtain nonmilitary support; or the fewer who care who controls the government, the fewer likely to oppose any attempted changes. One country specialist has captured the atmosphere perfectly in a Gabonese peasant's reaction to the 1964 coup: "The peasant says that this is the affair of the big politicians; it does not concern me. Let them fight it out!"[35]

[32]This does not imply that economic deterioration was necessarily a motivating factor in the coup-makers' calculus. The sources utilized involved 171 political histories and country/case studies and 8 world and regional news digests.

[33]Gutteridge has previously made this point. See his, "Why Does An African Army Take Power?", *Africa Report*, XV (October 1970), 19–20.

[34]Edward Luttwak, *Coup d'Etat: A Practical Handbook* (New York, 1969), p. 24.

[35]B. Weinstein, *Gabon: Nation-Building on the Ogoove* (Cambridge, 1966), p. 259.

Table 4 Association of Social Mobilization and Military Coup Proneness (Somers $D - N$ in Parentheses)

	1951–55	1956–60	1961–65	1966–70
Hypothesis 6				
a. Urbanization/C.	–.03(64)	–.21(69)	–.13(92)	–.18(103)
b. Percent literate	–.16(76)	–.30(83)	–.20(107)	–.29(119)
c. News circulation/C	–.20(76)	–.30(80)	–.29(101)	–.29(112)
d. University enrollment/C	–.19(76)	–.41(82)	–.19(105)	–.20(119)
e. Radios/C	–.17(73)	–.26(79)	–.23(102)	–.13(115)

NOTES

Variables: a. population in cities of 50,000 and more per capita; c. newspaper circulation per capita; d. university enrollment per capita.

Data Source: Banks, *Cross-Polity Time Series Data,* pp. 55–98, 207–82.

Control Variables: for variables a. through e., area, population, and GNP/C. The control variables did not have a large impact on the five indicators. The negative association for urbanization per capita becomes slightly positive for systems with medium-sized populations, while the negative association for lesser and more populated systems is stronger. University enrollment per capita is weakly positive for middle-level GNP/C systems. The radios per capita relationship is weakly positive for systems with large areas, and weak to moderately positive for systems characterized by a low level GNP/C. These qualifications do not appear to have any particular significance.

Karl Deutsch has postulated that the politically relevant stratum increases as a function of social mobilization. This for Deutsch refers to the breakdown of traditional psychosocioeconomic commitments and the subsequent opportunity for new patterns of behavior.[36] More people will come to expect and desire more control over their political environment. More people will be expected to participate in politics and to possess or to be more interested in access to resources enabling them to do so.

Hypothesis 6: Systems with lower levels of social mobilization tend to be more prone to military coups. Once again, Table 4 offers no ground for rejecting the hypothesis;[37] and again, the tendency is not particularly pronounced. One reason for the low measures of association is that an emphasis on low political participation can be misleading. Regimes in systems characterized by higher levels of mobiliza-

[36]Karl Deutsch, "Social Mobilization and Political Development," *American Political Science Review,* LV (September 1961), 498.

[37]The five indicators might have been aggregated to form a single composite index. Attempts to do this using factor-score coefficients (after principal factoring with iteration and varimax rotation) were frustrated. The five cluster well at the global and Latin American levels but not

Table 5 Association of Cultural Heterogeneity* and Military Coup Proneness (Somers $D - N$ in Parentheses)

	Racial	Linguistic	Religious
World	.08(113)	.14(115)	−.06(109)
Latin America	−.01(20)	.25(20)	.20(19)
Arab countries**	.33(13)	.16(13)	.67(13)
South East and East Asia	−.50(14)	.29(14)	−.25(9)
Sub-Saharan Africa	.10(25)	−.03(25)	−.19(24)

*The following distinctions were made: racial, (1) more homogeneous—90 percent or more of population of same race; (2) more heterogeneous—less than 90 percent of population of same race; linguistic, (1) homogeneous—a majority of 85 percent or more speak same language with no significant single minority; (2) weakly heterogeneous—a majority of 85 percent or more speak same language, but a significant minority of 15 percent or less exists; (3) strongly heteregeneous—no single language group of 85 percent or more exists; religious, (1) more homogeneous—80 percent or more of population share a common religion; (2) more heterogeneous—less than 80 percent of population share a common religion.

**The data for Arab religious heterogeneity have been altered to take into consideration significant intra-Moslem differences (i.e., Sunni vs. Shi'ite).

Data Source: Arthur S. Banks and Robert B. Textor, *A Cross-Polity Survey*, (Cambridge [Mass.], 1963).

tion can lose their civilian support.[38] A populace can be either traditionally indifferent to the course of political events or a critical segment of the populace may become temporarily indifferent, apathetic, or antagonistic to the fate of a specific government. In either case, the regime lacks alternative—to the military—political support. A case in point is the attempted French coup of 1962. This failed largely because de Gaulle was able to mobilize sizable resistance, especially among draftees in Algeria, against the aspiring coup-makers. The same coup-makers had seriously underestimated the government's access to nonmilitary (and military) support.

Cultural cleavages are customarily considered conducive to regime vulnerability.[39] Cleavages produce fractured political cultures, differentiated subsystems, and related loyalties. The potential for intra-

for the Arab world and sub-Saharan Africa. Consequently, it is doubtful that a composite index would have universal meaning. Either social mobilization processes, as represented by the indicators, are different in various parts of the world, or the indicators require different interpretations according to regional context. Nevertheless, this would not seem to invalidate this article's use of the several indicators as a means of grasping at something we choose to term social mobilization.

[38]See Stepan, *The Military in Politics*, pp. 85–121, for an innovative attempt to operationalize this point through the analysis of Brazilian newspaper editorials.

[39]An example is Perlmutter, "The Praetorian State," pp. 385 and 388.

societal conflict is increased, and the odds against high levels of governmental performance are correspondingly increased.

Hypothesis 7: More culturally heterogeneous systems are more prone to military coups. The statistical outcome is mixed. At the world level, coup prone states have only a slight tendency to be more heterogeneous in terms of race and language and a bit more homogeneous in terms of religion. This, of course, does not pertain to the various regional aggregations examined. Heterogeneity would appear to be most significant in the Arab world, but less so in Africa and Asia. Naturally, consideration of other forms of cleavage or primordial affiliations might well alter this finding. In any event, Hypothesis 7, like many of the others examined in this article, seems to be only weakly and partially sustained, depending upon the level of aggregation.

Another of the ideas advanced in the literature is that only a few years are required after independence for a regime to be sufficiently discredited—thereby setting the stage for the first coup.[40] According to Morris Janowitz, "the chance of political involvement (on the part of the military) increases year-by-year after independence."[41] If newly independent states are to be singled out, it is possible to speculate according to the next hypothesis.

Hypothesis 8: Systems with colonial backgrounds tend to be more prone to military coups. Hypothesis 8 is weakly corroborated by a lambda asymmetric of .26. Unfortunately, the hypothesis is unspecific as to what it is about colonial backgrounds that is conducive to military coups. It might simply reflect what Charles Taylor has termed "the honeymoon effect"; that is, the military's tolerance for civilian incompetence is dissipated after a few years of independence. Or it could be a spurious relationship better explained by any number of other background factors. Hypothesis 9 is therefore helpful in clarifying the meaning.

Hypothesis 9: "Newer" systems tend to be more prone to military coups. "Newness" or system age was operationalized by a state's

[40]See Rustow, "The Military in Middle Eastern Society," p. 10.

[41]Janowitz, "Armed Forces and Society: A World Perspective," in Van Doorn, ed. *Armed Forces and Society: Sociological Essays* (The Hague, 1968), p. 22.

Table 6 Association of System Age and Military Coup Proneness (Somers $D - N$ in Parentheses)

	1951–55	1956–60	1961–65	1966–70
World	.10(76)	.07(83)	.04(107)	−.07(122)
Latin America	.31(20)	.31(20	.30(20)	.44(20)
Arab Countries	*(7)	*(8)	−.50(11)	.27(13)
South East and East Asia	.33(8)	−.40(13)	−.06(14)	−.24(15)
Sub-Saharan Africa	—	—	−.40(13)	−.45(30)

*An asterisk in the association measure columns indicates that there are no ordinally measureable differences among the data population. All entries fall either in the row or column of the contingency table.

Variable: system age is operationalized by counting the number of years that have passed since the state qualified as a member of the international system according to the Singer and Small criterion.

Data Source: Banks, *Cross-Polity Time Series Data*, pp. 297–98.

length of membership in the international system. Interestingly, Hypothesis 9 finds slight support, at the world level, only in the most recent five-year period. The reversal in statistical relationship, never particularly strong (except at certain regional levels), can be readily traced to the recent emergence of a number of vulnerable Afro-Asian states. In part, this finding should remind us that military coups are not restricted to the Third World and that a preoccupation with recent Third World political history is not necessarily a sufficiently enlightening approach. What validity the timing factor has is better related to the discussion of political credit accumulation problems, which will be taken up in the final section of this article.

The economic subsystem's international extractive capability was tested by Hypothesis 4. A regime's domestic extractive capability should be equally indicative of its vulnerability. Governmental control is partially a function of the revenue resources a regime can generate. Revenues are also imperfect indicators of support. At the same time, governmental control is necessary in order to collect revenues. Accordingly, the amount (revenues per capita) and scope (revenues/GNP) of a government's extractive capability should plausibly covary with regime vulnerability.

Hypothesis 10: Systems with low levels of domestic governmental extractive capability tend to be more prone to military coups. Evidently Hypothesis 10 is also weakly supported. However, when we control for GNP per capita, the association measures diminish for "scope" and become minutely positive for "amount." It seems

Table 7 Association of Domestic Governmental Extractive Capability and Military Coup Proneness (Somers $D - N$ in Parentheses)

Hypothesis 10	Years 1951–55	1956–60	1961–65	1966–70
National Government Revenues/C	−.22(58)	−.29(65)	−.25(92)	−.24(109)
National Government Revenues/GNP			−.13(88)	−.12(103)

Variables: national governmental revenues per capita: national governmental revenues/gross national product.

Data Source: Banks, *Cross-Polity Time Series Data*, pp. 99–136, 269–82.

Control Variables: area, population, and GNP/C. Control impacts are discussed in the text of the article.

plausible that revenue generation capability is closely linked to the level of economic development which has already been found to be modestly associated with military coup proneness.

A final factor conducive to regime vulnerability is crisis. One type, economic deterioration, has already been mentioned. Another type might be termed "political predicaments," frequently referred to as stalemates. According to one definition, "stalemate" is a term for a situation that cannot be resolved or in which actors are unable or unwilling to do something to bring the problem to an end.[42] The military then move in to break up the stalemate. Such statements have the appearance of a modified vacuum theme: the military resolve the unresolvable. Without wishing to split more semantic hairs, it might be more accurate to refer to these crises of governmental control as predicaments.

Six types of predicaments were found to coincide with military coups: (1) intrabranch; (2) interbranch; (3) intraparty; (4) interparty; (5) government versus nongovernmental groups; and (6) public disorders. The first, intrabranch predicaments, are political struggles waged between high officeholders within a single governmental branch. An example is the Ecuadorian coup of 1961, which was preceded by a conflict between the president and vice-president and precipitated by the former's arrest of the latter. In the process, the

[42]The definition is offered by D. A. Strickland, Larry L. Wade, and R. E. Johnston, *A Primer of Political Analysis* (Chicago, 1968), p. 57.

vice-president had become a symbol of popular opposition to the president.[43] Interbranch conflicts are fought between two branches, as in executives versus legislatures. They invariably involve attempts by one or both sides to diminish the institutional control exercised by the other. An example is the 1957 breach between Jordan's King Hussein and his cabinet and parliament over the direction of foreign policy and the extent of royal prerogatives.[44] Intraparty conflicts entail serious splits within a ruling party, either along personality lines or ideological issues. Thus, left-right cleavage within the Bolivian National Revolutionary Movement (MNR) helped bring about an attempted coup by the military in alliance with the right wing (January 1953).[45] Interparty predicaments involve the ruling party's attempt to suppress a rival party, as in Paraguay (1947) and Turkey (1960). The fifth category refers to governmental conflicts with specific groups, such as trade unions or ethno-regional units. The crisis is apt to become acute when the government attempts to suppress the opposition. Examples are offered by Upper Volta (1966) and Syria (1954). Finally, public disorders represent situations of unrest and the deterioration of general security, ranging from large political demonstrations through political strikes to guerrilla warfare.

All six categories represent predicaments for governments in that they demonstrate variable levels of incapacity to control the political environment. Serious and prolonged predicaments have been considered fair indicators of prevailing or impending "vacuum." Table 8 summarizes the apparent frequency of the various types. What is most interesting is that they appear to be less commonly linked to military coups than is usually supposed. In general, less than one-fifth of the 274 coups studied can be linked with the five nondisorder categories. Among reasons for believing otherwise is probably the high proportion of African coups involving these forms of political crisis which were taking place at a prominent time for capturing the attention of thematic analysts. The sometimes related notion that the military act as impartial referees in these cases should be largely restricted to a few African coups. More often than not military coup-makers take the side of one of the parties to the predicament. In the somewhat more common case of public disorders, an estimated one-fourth of the situations can be directly linked to apparent coup-

[43]See Needler, *Anatomy of Coup d'Etat: Ecuador 1963* (Washington, Institute for the Comparative Study of Political Systems, Special Article Series, no. 1, 1964), p. 15.

[44]For further details, consult Vatikiotis, *Politics and the Military in Jordan: A Study of the Arab Legion, 1921–1957* (London, 1967), pp. 128–29.

[45]Malloy, *Bolivia: The Uncompleted Revolution*, p. 231.

Table 8 Political Predicaments and the Military Coup, 1946–70* (in Percentages)

Type of Predicament	World	Latin America	Arab Countries	South East and East Asia	Sub-Saharan Africa
(N)	(274)	(136)	(49)	(36)	(38)
Intrabranch	1	2	0	0	0
Interbranch	4	2	4	0	11
Intraparty	6	5	14	3	0
Interparty	3	5	4	0	8
Nongovernment group	4	1	8	3	11
Subtotal.	18	12	30	6	30
Public disorder. . .	29	24	29	36	37

*A coup may be coded for only one of the first five types. The sixth is not mutually exclusive, however.

maker grievances (i.e., the coup-makers fear or dislike disorder per se and act to suppress it). In a good number of cases, it appears that the predicaments "simply" heightened regime vulnerability, thereby providing exceptionally good opportunities for coups.[46]

An Alternative Perspective and a Conclusion

The five themes of regime vulnerability have been reviewed and criticized for the inadequate manner in which they handle the military coup phenomenon. The author of such an article must now feel obliged to provide an alternative perspective, for merely throwing stones at the works of others does not necessarily improve our understanding of military coup politics. In attempting to do so, we must unhesitatingly acknowledge that the alternative is neither novel nor completely divorced from its predecessors on the regime vulnerability subject. In other words, the process of explanatory accretion continues.[47]

[46] Alternative hypotheses are easily conceivable. The coup-makers may be sympathetic to the civilian grievances, or the unrest may be intended to invite or provoke a military coup. Such alternatives are difficult to verify, however.

[47] The alternative perspective on regime vulnerability borrows liberally from the works of several authors, particularly the following: Rosenau, *Calculated Control as a Unifying Concept*

Regimes and their leadership are never self-sufficient. Information is needed to guide policy choices and to evaluate policy performance. Taxes are required to finance policy choices. Support and authority legitimize the decisions that lead to the choices. Coercion is necessary to execute the decisions to some extent, and always to buttress the claim to the continued supply of the other vital resources. Legitimacy has a particular significance in that it represents a grant of approval given to the regime by the political system's relevant actors. With its bestowal, the regime and its leadership acquire authority and begin to accumulate credit. Political credit, in turn, may be utilized as a reserve resource when unpopular policies are to be executed. The ability of a regime or its leadership to draw upon these credit reserves gives legitimacy and authority a multiplier effect in extending the regime's control capabilities. Sufficient reserves may offer an opportunity to improve governmental products, or they may allow prolonged survival in cases of inadequate performance. In fact, if Richard Merelman's psychological reinforcement approach to legitimacy creation processes is accepted as highly persuasive, the legitimate regime can reach a position where it may rely on symbolic credit without providing continued material benefits to its consumers.[48] Depending on the amount of credit accumulated, nonproductive regimes can survive deteriorating conditions which are sufficient to topple lesser endowed regimes.

Regimes and their leadership need not remain legitimate forever. Many never manage to accumulate much credit. As a consequence, they are required to do without the efficiency of legitimacy and authority. Other regimes and leaders are faced with crisis conditions

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in the Study of International Politics and Foreign Policy (Center of International Studies, Princeton University, Research Monograph no. 15, 1963); Robert A. Dahl, *Modern Political Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs, 1963); Peter M. Blau, *Exchange and Power in Social Life* (New York, 1964); Talcott Parsons, "Some Reflections on the Place of Force in Social Process," in Harry Eckstein, ed. *Internal War* (New York, 1964); Moshe Lissak, "Social Change, Mobilization, and Exchange of Services between the Military Establishment and the Civil Society: The Burmese Case," *Economic Development and Cultural Change,* XIII (October 1964); Neil A. McDonald, *Politics: A Study of Control Behavior* (New Brunswick, 1965); Deutsch, *The Nerves of Government* (New York, 1966); Robert L. Curry, Jr. and Wade, *A Theory of Political Exchange: Economic Reasoning in Political Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs, 1968); Zolberg, "Military Intervention in the New States of Tropical Africa: Elements of Comparative Analysis," in Henry Bienen, ed. *The Military Intervenes: Case Studies in Political Development* (New York, 1968); Dorwin Cartwright, "Influence, Leadership, Control," in Robert Bell, David V. Edwards, and Robert H. Wagner, eds. *Political Power: A Reader in Theory and Research* (New York, 1969); and Warren F. Ilchman and Norman T. Uphoff, *The Political Economy of Change* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969).

[48]Richard M. Merelman, "Learning and Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review,* LX (September 1966).

long before they have experienced the lengthy period required to accumulate credit. Still others slowly gravitate toward bankruptcy as they expend their credit and resources and fail to replenish them. Whenever the accumulated political credit is dissipated, consumers of the governmental product may choose to withdraw their deposits of support. Regimes and their leadership must then be able to demonstrate a command of physical force—the hard currency of politics. A display or the actual use of force may convince the dubious that the regime still possesses what Deutsch has termed a "primitive sort of political solvency."[49]

Clearly, all sectors of the political system are nct created equal when it comes to the continued maintenance of the regime. In the circumstances just outlined, physical force and the managers of force, the military, assume a unique significance. This perspective is hardly novel. It was customary for medieval Islamic scholars to distinguish a ruler's administrative personnel as either men of the sword or men of the pen. Ibn Khaldun, the fourteenth-century Arab historian, economist, and sociologist, once observed that both the sword and the pen were appropriate instruments for the ruler's use.[50] Even so, the need for the men of the sword was far greater than for those of the pen when a dynasty was either beginning to establish its control or was in the inevitable process of losing it. Since the sword possessed a clear comparative advantage in this vulnerable situation, Ibn Khaldun found it less than surprising that the men of the sword enjoyed higher rank, more benefits, and more splendid fiefs than their less useful counterparts with less coercive skills. Although dynasties are exceedingly rare these days, the potency of Ibn Khaldun's observation has weathered the centuries, for his basic point is fairly simple—the military are most valued when the regime's control is weak or threatened.

As regimes and their leadership become increasingly dependent on force, the regime-military exchange process—the application of force in return for a share of the regime's allocations of money, manpower, status, and autonomy—is likely to become asymmetrical. Regimes that lack the other essential supporting resources of government can hardly be expected to retain control over the military. Those people who do control the military in such circumstances possess an option of temporarily dissolving the exchange relationship and replacing the regime or its leadership. Possession of the option means that

[49]Deutsch, *The Nerves of Government*, pp. 122–23.

[50]Ibn Khaldun, *The Muquaddimah: An Introduction to History*, 2d ed., trans. Franz Rosenthal (Princeton, 1967), 2:46–47.

demands from the military will logically receive preferential treatment lest the official physical force resource be withheld or turned against the nominal incumbents. Where this political logic prevails, the regime, its leadership, and the political system are subject to increasing control by the military. Where the logic breaks down, a military coup may institute a more favorable return from the exchange process, especially if corporate and not-so-corporate interests are threatened. One of the ironies of coup politics is that there is a tendency for weak and weakening leaders, desperately attempting to establish or retain control, to be the most likely and frequent sources of threat to potential military coup-makers.

This perspective is not limited by temporal or spatial boundaries. The process outlined is just as common to the historical experiences of the Arab countries, Latin America, Africa, Asia, and a respectable portion of the rest of the world as it is to contemporary political history. It is both a legacy and a guide to current events. Still, the framework does not fully explain coups; rather, it underscores the opportune stage setting for military coups.[51] Thus, regime vulnerability develops when the regime or its leadership is without, has lost, or is in the process of losing alternative (to the military) support. These situations are weakly to moderately associated with a previous history of regime vulnerability; with a number of systemic indicators (e.g., levels of economic development and social mobilization) which measure background conditions related to the development of alternative regime support relationships; and with processes of deterioration in terms of economic welfare, public order, and governmental performance—all of which contribute to regime vulnerability.

Regime vulnerability is likely to lead to an asymmetrical regime–military exchange relationship which, in turn, heightens the probability of a military coup. There are two basic reasons for this: first, regime vulnerability is increased; and second, the likelihood that the positions and resources which military actors value will be threatened is enhanced. Given the grievances of the coup-makers, the coup is facilitated by the structural conditions of a political system in which the regime leadership has few if any defenses. Borrowing from the praetorian perspective, coup-makers are encouraged to attempt to

[51] I have argued elsewhere that the regime vulnerability perspective is only a partial approach to explaining military coups. Other foci include the study of coup-maker grievances, the internal dynamics and structure of the military organization, and such external factors as foreign aid, "coup contagion," subversion, and "global structural inequalities." See Thompson, *Explanations of the Military Coup*, pp. 239–49.

control their milieu to an extent which would be considered abnormal in systems accustomed to conditions more favorable to civilian supremacy. The situation is hardly a "vacuum," it is simply one conducive to the coup. The military need not be perceived as being "pulled in" by the system; they are already in, and fully capable of marching to their own drums and for their own reasons. Regime vulnerability only makes it easier and more likely.

Appendix

Ordinal Conversions for Independent Variables

Variables	Low	Medium	High	Units
GDP/C	0–299	300–599	600+	US$
GNP/C	0–299	300–599	600+	US$
Energy consumption/C	0–999	1000–3499	3500+	Kilograms
Industrial GDP/C	0–99	100–399	400+	US$
Percent GDP industrial	0–14	15–49	50+	(.001)
Commodity ratio 1	0–249	250–499	500+	(.001)
Commodity ratio 2	0–249	250–749	750+	(.001)
Partner concentration	0–249	250–499	500+	(.001)
Urbanization/C	0–99	100–340	350+	(.001)
Percent literate	0–49	50–89	90+	(.01)
News circulation/C	0–999	1000–2499	2500+1	(.0001)
University enrollment/C	0–19	20–99	100+	(.0001)
Radios/C	0–999	1000–2499	2500+	(.0001)
System age	0–29	30–99	100+	years
Government revenues/C	0–49.9	50–199.9	200+	US$
Government revenues/GNP	0–9	10–19	20+	(.01)
Population	0–5.99	6–24.99	25+	millions
Area	0–74	75–299	300+	thousands square miles
Exports/GNP	0–9	10–19	20+	(.01)