Military Coups in Sub-Saharan Africa

How to justify illegal assumptions of power

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Scandinavian Institute of African Studies
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ABSTRACT

Wiking, S., 1983. *Military Coups in Sub-Saharan Africa: How to Justify Illegal Assumptions of Power* 144 pp, The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala 1983, ISBN 91-7106-214-9 is a comparative study of military coups in Africa south of the Sahara between 1958 and 1980. The study is divided into three parts. The first part deals with some different theories found in literature concerning coups d'etat on a more general level. The second part is an empirical review concentrating on the justifications given by military leaders for their interventions. The third part is an attempt to compare the explanations given by the researchers in Part one with the justifications presented in Part two.

Central for the study of the justifications are the initial declarations (ID), i.e. the first statements made by the new military rulers in connection with their assumption of power. The ID:s are found in transcriptions of the radiomessages broadcast as soon as the radiostations have been occupied. An important assumption is that the ID:s might have more to say about the new rulers' political expectations and interpretations than any other statements made when power already is secured.

In Part one as well as in Part three the study starts with explanations and justifications connected with foreign influence and foreign interests and then continues with societal conditions, government-military relations, intramilitary conditions and individual perspectives. It is noted that the researchers and the coup-makers differ in many ways in their attempts to explain the military interventions. Among other things the military rulers are extremely sensitive when it comes to foreign recognition of the new regimes. They do not, as some researchers think, act in direct connection to societal disturbances and they are quite sensitive to civilian intrusion into what they regard as primarily military business, although they are fairly reluctant to justify a coup on such a ground. Even when a coup is followed by a raising of the military budget, the officers do not use inadequate budget allocations as a justification. Finally, the officers themselves never justify a takeover on personal grounds, not even when it is quiet clear that the instigator has had personal reasons for the change of power.

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Uppsala, April 1983

Staffan Wiking
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INTRODUCTION

In the Old Testament it is written that King David was blessed with many sons. One of these sons, Absalom by name, had himself ambitions of becoming King of Israel and in order to achieve his goal Absalom secretly joined with the most prominent leaders of Israel’s twelve tribes. It was decided that at a given sign Absalom was to be proclaimed king. The conspiracy against David was, however, disclosed at the last minute and David barely succeeded in fleeing from Jerusalem before Absalom entered the city with his followers.

Since David had time to escape from the city before the coup could be staged, he was able to retain his authority as king. Absalom and his forces were then defeated in battle, Absalom died and David was able to return to Jerusalem.¹

The story of Absalom’s attempted coup was written by David’s historian and we are not told in detail about the preparations for the coup. It appears, however, that Absalom secretly gathered around himself a number of eminent people, the idea apparently being that if Absalom was suddenly proclaimed king and was at once recognized by many of the important leaders, he would thus have the legitimate power to overthrow David. Central to the whole coup were the element of surprise and an organized information campaign. This would keep the fighting to a minimum and thus enable Absalom to take over with a comparatively limited force. Thanks to his intelligence service, however, David managed to flee in time and to mobilize enough people to be able to defeat Absalom on the battlefield.

The history of illegal exercise of power and of illegal assumption of power is long and many examples are recorded in the history books. With the increased armament of today and the development of military technology, the number of people involved in an illegal takeover has been reduced and it is only those who are directly associated, or who have very good connections with the armed forces, who are able to carry out a coup. A minimum requirement for a coup to be successful is that the coupmakers can rely on the support, or at least the neutrality, of the armed forces. Thus in a study of coups d’état it is natural to include the military. This book deals with illegal military takeovers.

Military takeovers and military intervention in politics do not constitute isolated or unique events in today’s world politics. After World War II more than two thirds of the countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa have experienced varying degrees of military intervention in politics. Violent attempts to overthrow governments have been more frequent than general elections.² The

armed forces have thus evidenced a strong inclination to participate in politics, both through the illegal exercise of power and the illegal assumption of power. The political scientist's interest in such actions by the armed forces and in the underlying causes in quite understandable considering the political consequences.

When studying military intervention in politics, one is immediately confronted by a number of questions. These may be theoretical questions concerning, for example, conditions which either foster or preclude intervention, the capacity and historical significance of the military and the part these two factors play in the success of a coup, the efficiency of the political system that the military is trying to replace, etc. But questions of morality and norms are also involved. The system that the military replaces may be considered by some people as "good" and the military intervention may then cause a sensation of sorrow or horror in the observer. But it also happens that the armed forces remove hated and feared oppressors and the change of power is then greeted with hope and satisfaction.

If we return to the story of Absalom's attempted coup against King David, there is evidence of some discontent with David's rule. According to the Bible, Absalom would stand near the city gates and approach those who were seeking audience with the king in order to have their legal matters settled. These people were evidently dissatisfied with the way the legal system functioned and Absalom used this discontent to win the hearts of the eminent leaders. It is written that Absalom used to say to people who came to the king for judgment: "Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!"3

The story of David and Absalom highlights some of the normative questions. Was David's rule "just"? If not, was it then "right" of Absalom to try to dethrone David? Though I shall certainly not be able to avoid questions dealing with norms, I intend to exclude my personal views from this study as much as possible. Nevertheless, I think it only proper to present my basic position in this introduction so as to leave it to the reader himself to judge whether I have been successful or not.

A coup d'état, as I said earlier, may be greeted with hope and satisfaction. Although I may in some cases feel sympathy for such a coup, generally speaking, I consider a coup d'état to be an undue interference in the politics of a country. When a coup is of a revolutionary character, that is when the masses support the coup and the revolutionary element is not merely limited to the rhetoric of the coupmakers, I find it easier to feel sympathy for and to accept the coup. I base this opinion on the assumption that most countries have some form of order of succession. If this system functions satisfactorily, if it has been determined by the members of a society and if there are rules as to how it may be altered, then the possibility exists for the people themselves to decide who is to rule or not. If, on the other hand, the system does not function (which is far too often the case) or if the

people lack the means to change the order (from monarchy to republic, for example), then I believe the people may and must avail themselves of whatever means they have in order to establish the kind of order of succession they themselves wish to have. Armed revolution is one of these means, popular support for a coup d'état is another.

Political scientists have in the past taken a rather half-hearted interest in military coups d'état. The coups were often considered to be isolated and exceptional events from which no general conclusions could be drawn. The coups were generally treated descriptively, often separately, unrelated to each other or to the international political sphere. The extent to which coups in underdeveloped countries could contribute to "modernization" interested American researchers in particular. Soviet studies also focused on the potential of coups for development in the countries concerned. But in the middle and the latter part of the sixties there was a wave of coups in the newly independent African states and these events helped to create a new interest in coups d'état as political phenomena worthy of the interest of the political scientist. S. E. Finer wrote in the sixties.

"...None of this suggests that we are observing a mere set of ephemeral, exceptional and isolated adventures. On the contrary, it does emphatically suggest that we are in the presence of a peculiar political phenomenon: one that is abiding, deep seated, and distinctive."

The realization that the coups are not isolated events has led to an increased interest on the part of the political scientist and the sociologist. With the aid of computers, attempts have been made to correlate the enormous amount of data available nowadays. However, coups have proved to be common in both large and small, sparsely and densely populated, "rich" and "poor", high or low urbanized countries of the Third World. Nor does it appear as if the number of political parties or the size of the military organization are of any significance when it comes to explaining the occurrence of coups. One can only state with certainty that military coups are far more frequent in underdeveloped countries than in industrial nations.

The failure to explain the occurrence of coups in quantitative terms has led to attention being focussed on the qualitative differences. Researchers have wondered, for instance, whether there are socio-economic conditions which determine the kind of coup that is most likely to take place in a country. Also, armies have been studied to see if there are internal factors which affect the likelihood of a coup occurring. One such factor is army professionalism, which has been used as an explanatory variable both to investigate why coups are launched and why they are not. The form of training and the historical traditions of the armies have also been dealt with in theories of coups d'état. Finally, there are researchers who have tried to explain coups using a psychological or a

4 See B Tibi (1972) chap. 1.
personalistic approach. The explanation and motive for the coup would then be found for example, in the financial situation of the officer who bears most responsibility for the coup.

Among the attempts which have been made to explain military coups, there are also approaches which take into account the geographical situation. To begin with, some researchers try to find general explanations which can apply to all countries. But it soon becomes clear that certain types of explanations are more applicable in certain geographical areas, due, among other things, to the fact that military organizations have reached different stages of development in different regions. Moreover, the level of socio-economic development varies from country to country. The variables which are applicable in Latin America, for example, may in themselves be of a general character, but are nevertheless of little value in explaining African coups since the military organizations in the African countries have not attained the same level of development and since class conflicts are not as manifest as in Latin America.

The confinement of this study to a given geographical region calls for a few comments. I have chosen Africa south of the Sahara not only because that particular geographical area is a rather clearly defined one, but above all because the nations of the African continent share a somewhat similar historical background. Most of the nations in question have been independent for about the same length of time, that is since the beginning of the sixties. Moreover, many of these nations have been faced by the same kind of problems, such as the problem of creating a national consciousness within different, sometimes mutually hostile, ethnic groups. In comparison with Latin American countries, the African states are much more dependent on rural production and, on the whole, the level of industrialization is far lower. This means, for instance, that Africa has a much smaller and much less developed proletariat.

That I have confined my study to the African sphere is not only due to the fact that I must set a quantative limit to my work, but such a limit also enables me to draw a greater number of individual comparisons between different coups and to present a more detailed description of each single one. The fact that I have only dealt with the African coups allows me certain generalizations which are only applicable to this area.

The book consists of three parts. In the first part there is a presentation and a discussion of some of the more important theories as to why the armed forces in Africa have been so willing to assume political responsibility. In part two there follows an empirical presentation of the military coups covered in this study. A systematic review of the justifications which the officers themselves cite, forms an important part of this presentation. These justifications are taken from the initial declarations (ID) which the coup-makers have made in the immediate aftermath of the takeover. In the empirical section I have also divided the coups into different types according to their respective political character. Finally, the third part is a comparison between the explanations which the officers on the one hand and the researchers on the other have given for the coups.
d'état. In this section the research theories from part one appear together with the justifications from part two. For the purpose of comparison, the disposition of part three is identical with that of part one.

One may also discern in this disposition the principal line of my study. I have considered it an important task to present the various coups, but my presentation falls within the scope of the following questions: How do the officers themselves justify their takeovers and to what extent do these justifications agree with the researchers' explanations of military coups in Africa south of the Sahara?

It should be noted here that the officers' own explanations are in no way definitive. The officers very often change their explanations once they have established themselves as rulers. The question of how the officers themselves justify their takeovers is therefore limited to how they justify themselves when they make their first statement. This first statement, which I call the initial declaration (ID), is part of the takeover itself. The IDs are in a way performative statements, that is to say, the military actually take over when they announce over the radio that they have assumed power. In a sense, the ID is the actual takeover. That is why greater importance has to be attached to how the officers justify the coup in the ID rather than to how they justify it at another stage.

Almost all IDs can be found in the BBC Summary of World Broadcasts Part 4, which is a publication that appears daily in London. It is part of the BBC activities to listen in to most of the radio stations around the world, and the most important radio messages are first translated into English and then reproduced in the above mentioned publication. Part 4 is a summary of the African and Middle East broadcasts. The IDs which I have treated have all appeared in the BBC publication and have thus been translated into English.

The "BBC Summary of World Broadcasts" is an interesting source, making it possible to follow the course of events immediately after a coup. The radio reaches far more people than any other form of mass-media in the whole of Africa. Newspapers do not have the circulation nor the range to compete with radio transmissions. Thus it is via the radio that the contents of the military's first statements after a coup can reach the widest public. The officers are well aware of this and for this reason they prefer to make use of the radio. However, the BBC material is not quite perfect as a source. Interference can sometimes make it very hard for the monitors to interpret certain words or sentences. Furthermore, the BBC reports cover only a selection from the total number of transmissions and what is later to be printed must of necessity follow certain principles of selection, which may give the material a certain bias. My main interest, however, has been focussed on the actual IDs and these have been reproduced in the "Summary of World Broadcasts" on almost every occasion. But the BBC material is not only affected by the principle of selection. Many of the broadcasts are in French or in a local language and when translated into English, certain nuances may be lost. In an in-depth analysis of a single coup the lack of such nuances may distort the result. In my work, however, which is based on a comparative analysis, the nuances are of less importance than the question of whether certain issues are represented or not.

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The "BBC Summary of World Broadcasts" Part 4 is the most important source for my study, but I have throughout compared this material with *Keesing's Contemporary Archives* and with various handbooks on Africa, in particular *Africa South of the Sahara*, which is published annually.

Another document which I often cite is my own *Afrikanska militärkupper, en studie om militärkupper i Afrika söder om Sahara*. This work arose out of seminar discussions and was intended to relieve the thesis of rather extensive empirical material. "Afrikanska militärkupper" was thus intended as empirical reference material for this study and though it is not part of the study itself, it is worth reading in connection with the analysis of military coups.

Like this book, "Afrikanska militärkupper" is largely based on BBC material. All of the military coups that are examined in the thesis, with the addition of some others, are treated in "Afrikanska militärkupper". The countries which have experienced military takeovers are presented with a short retrospect, which primarily aims at describing the evolution of the political institutions from the colonial period up to the time of the military coup. I have focussed my interest on the months preceding and the weeks following the coup. It has not been my intention to describe the military regimes which developed after the takeover, but the events following the coup are nevertheless of interest since one may assume that many of the decisions made at this time were based on the political views which the officers held before they could be influenced by their position of power. Central to the study are the officers' *justifications*, but in "Afrikanska militärkupper" I have also discussed the possible *motives* behind the interventions. Such a discussion must for natural reasons be based on rather vague assumptions since one can hardly expect a coupmaker to give a truthful account of all his personal motives. Nevertheless, I have found it useful to present all available evidence.

"Afrikanska militärkupper" was written as reference material for this book. But it may also be read separately as an historical documentation of the military coups. The study is available (though only in stencil form) in a number of libraries, including those at the Scandinavian Institute of African Studies and at the Department of Political Science in Uppsala. It may also be ordered directly from the author.

Finally, I would like briefly to explain why some of the takeovers which are treated in "Afrikanska militärkupper" have been omitted from this book. Basic to this study is a comparative analysis of a number of military coups, which are defined as being strictly coup-like, that is to say, as *sudden* seizures of power. A number of takeovers, which have not been treated here, have been gradual takeovers, such as those in Congo/Brazzavile 1968 and in Ethiopia 1974. Others came as the result of unsuccessful takeovers, in which the coupmakers themselves failed to seize power, as was the case in the two changes of power in Nigeria 1966. Some events which have sometimes been defined as coups in the literature, but which I have omitted in this book, are those where the military already hold real power and where the "coup" only means that they assume power formally. Examples of such "coups" which are not dealt with here are Lamizana's return to

In my attempt to "explain" the African military coups I shall therefore describe the coups first of all and then attempt to construct a typology. This typology is based primarily on the justifications the officers themselves have given to explain their actions as well as on the suppositions as to what the actual motives may have been. These motives are based both on the justifications and the historical circumstances surrounding the coups.

However, in this study I shall take an extra step on the path towards an explanation, beyond description and typology. This is when in the third part of the book I compare the coupmakers' own justifications with the theories presented in part one. This provides me with the opportunity for a tentative examination of hypotheses which may be drawn from the theories of the researchers.
American research during the 1960’s dealt with the issue of military coups mainly through an examination of the extent to which military rule was more suitable for new nations than the civilian governments it replaced. Interest was focussed above all on those qualities of the military establishment which could be looked upon as being favourable to development and modernization. Military rule was seen as "... a dynamic and self-sacrificing military leadership committed to progress and the task of modernizing transitional societies that have been subverted by the 'corrupt practices' of politicians". For Lucian W. Pye, the key to progress lay in the creation of modern organizations and the most modern organization in developing countries was, according to Pye, without doubt that of the military.

The modern society which Pye and the modernization theorists had in mind was clearly a reflection of contemporary Western society. When civilian leadership failed to build upon the administration established by the colonial powers, it was hoped that the military with its technical training and rigid organization would be more capable of promoting economic development. Since the military establishment was also regarded as being more "objective" than civilian leadership, this would in turn facilitate co-operation with the Western nations. Moreover, military rule was conducive to political stability and one could expect "... firmer policies against communism".

Such a positive attitude to military regimes leads to a positive view of assistance to developing countries in the form of military aid. Pye maintained that there were many examples of how the military had helped to build roads, schools and hospitals, thereby contributing to development. In this way military aid could be seen to involve economic aid. This view was shared, among others, by Samuel Huntington, who denied any connection between U.S. military aid and military coups: "Military aid and military training" were according to Huntington "by themselves politically sterile".

One of the reasons for the modernization theorists’ positive assessment of military regimes was that their conception of modernization and development was based on modern Western society. Thus it became essentially a question of economic growth, while political development tended to be ignored. Huntington did point out how important it was that political institutions developed at the same rate as the various social strata became politicized and began to make demands, but this institution-building was viewed mainly in relation to

5 Ibid p 184.
6 S Huntington (1968) p 193.
"political order". Military intervention was seen as the answer to acute social and political unrest, promoting, as did institution-building, "political order" and stability.\(^7\) Once the armed forces had gained control, the best conditions existed for the ideal Western form of development. "...It has been through the military that we have best been able to establish effective relations with the most strongly neutralist nations in Southeast Asia. With both Burma and Indonesia we have ... been able to develop more genuine and straightforward relations with their military than with any other political element", Pye wrote. And he continued, "... military leaders are often far less suspicious of the West than civilian leaders because they themselves are more emotionally secure".\(^8\)

The modernization theorists did not regard the military simply as the best alternative to civilian governments. Huntington maintained that the military establishment was the only organization, apart from the politicians, that had the ability to rule. Clergy, students and workers did not have this capacity.\(^9\) They might well be able to influence politics in other ways, such as through demonstrations and general strikes, but they had neither the strength to seize power nor the capacity, should they ever succeed in overthrowing the government, to rule. Alternatively, they could align themselves with the armed forces and support a military regime. As for the military, they lack the means to exert influence at lower levels. "Paradoxically, the military establishment has no readily available means of direct action to achieve limited policy objectives", Huntington wrote.\(^10\)

The progressive nature of the armed forces varies from one continent to another. In Latin America the armed forces have become increasingly conservative at the same time as the lower social strata have been able to participate in politics.\(^11\) Africa is marked, according to Huntington, by "radical praetorianism". The officer corps, together with students, especially those that have been educated abroad, form the most modern and progressive group in society. These radical officers come, again according to Huntington, from the middle classes and play "a highly modernizing and progressive role".\(^12\)

A further argument, according to the modernization theorists, for the superiority of the armed forces as nation-builders is the nationalistic element of the military establishment. Through training and as a result of its role as defender of the nation, the army has assumed a nationalistic attitude. It can thus identify first and foremost with the nation and does not need, to the same extent as the politicians, to take regional and ethnic factors into account. "... the more effective leadership in institution-building should come from groups which are not so directly identified with particular ethnic or economic strata".\(^13\)

\(^7\) Ibid p 216.
\(^8\) L W Pye (1966) pp 185 f.
\(^9\) S Huntington (1968) pp 217 and 239.
\(^10\) Ibid p 217.
\(^11\) Ibid p 228.
\(^12\) Ibid pp 200 ff.
\(^13\) Ibid p 239.
This positive assessment of military rule is in fact partly shared by Soviet-Marxist research on developing countries. Building on a theory of a "non-capitalistic development path", Soviet-Marxist researchers have concluded that the armed forces can in certain contexts fulfil a progressive function. The notion of a "non-capitalistic development path" centres principally on the proposition that it is possible for some countries in the Third World to become directly socialist without having to pass through the capitalistic phase of development, providing, of course, that these socio-economically weak countries of the Third World are not already dominated by the capitalistic means of production. "Mit Unterstützung der sozialistischen Staaten können die Völker, die sich in einem vorkapitalistischen Stadium der gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse befinden, das kapitalistische Stadium überspringen". Support from the socialist states is to be given to the progressive forces in those countries where the "non-capitalistic development path" is feasible. These progressive forces are to build a united front to which "... vom sozialen Standpunkt aus (...) Arbeiter, Bauern, das städtische Kleinbürgertum, die Intelligenz, der revolutionäre Teil der Offizierer und in einigen Ländern auch der linke Flügel der nationalen Bourgeoisie (der mittlern Bourgeoisie), die vorübergehend mit den revolutionären Demokraten paktieren müssen, angehören". As to which forces can form the united front, specific reference is made to "die patriotischen Kräfte der Armee".

Just as the American modernization theorists regard nationalism and patriotism as important factors in encouraging development, so, too, do the Soviet-Marxists look upon the nationalistic attitude of the armed forces as being favourable to development. As the army constitutes by far the most highly developed organization in these countries and since the officers have a natural interest in the outside world and have through their training come into contact with other countries, the officer corps, more than any other group in society, is most likely to be aware of the backwardness of the state. In this way the army becomes a school for nationalism and patriotism.

Yet despite the surprising unanimity existing between these two schools of thought, it is apparent that in practice their evaluations of the role of the armed forces differ. Huntington saw in African praetorianism a radical and progressive process. He expected the military, belonging as it did to the middle class, to prove itself capable of modernizing the society in these countries. The Soviet-Marxists, on the other hand, regarded the wave of military coups which swept through Africa during the 1960's as the outcome of an imperialist offensive. The military leaders of these coups were reactionary and as such could not be considered part of that united front which would make a non-capitalistic development possible.

Bassam Tibi has criticized both the American and Soviet-Marxist research for...
primarily conducting a process of legitimization. In his view, the positive interpretation of the role played by the armed forces in development is closely related to the foreign interests of the U.S. and the Soviet Union respectively. Tibi criticizes both approaches for their lack of an empirical basis. The interpretation of nationalism as a progressive force in new nations might have been appropriate at the time when these countries were striving for independence, he adds, but it has often been the case that nationalism has lost its progressive character once independence has been achieved. "Es ist evident, dass der Nationalismus in der Phase der Dekolonisation eine antikolonialistische Stossrichtung hatte und somit ein progressives Moment in sich barg: in der postkolonialen Phase wirkt er aber offensichtlich vor allem als integrative, herrschaftsstabilisierende Ideologie". Nationalism in developing countries often neutralizes the progressive forces opposed to a regime and is used by all, even by military dictatorships, for the purpose of legitimization.

Though military regimes still find favour among some researchers, others are more sceptical towards the self-imposed roles of the armed forces in politics. Erik Nord finds "... little which suggests that military regimes (in Africa, my note) will be able to solve the economic and social problems better than the politicians". And Erik Nordlinger contends that the performance of military regimes "... is significantly and almost consistently poorer than that of civilian governments". Nordlinger also maintains that military regimes have not succeeded in achieving any economic progress, neither on traditional lines in terms of G.N.P. growth, industrialization and agricultural output, nor in terms of the redistribution of industrial and landed wealth and the expansion of social services and welfare programmes. On the basis of a comparative study of the lengths of office of different regimes, he also maintains that military regimes have shown themselves to be extremely unstable. Nor does Samuel Decalo accept that the armed forces play a progressive role in Africa. In his opinion, the military has not by itself been able to generate any economic development, and in the cases where a country has experienced an economic upswing after a military takeover, this is almost always due to the policies of the previous government, the fruits of which then fall to the military. Nor has military rule succeeded, according to Decalo, in improving social conditions. And the political changes which military rule has effected in Africa can hardly be described as promoting development. As a rule they have only meant a return to the apolitical government of colonial days. Decalo also argues that military regimes are no more nationalistic than their political predecessors. Instead they have usually established far closer relations with the metropolitan country than their civilian counterparts had ever done. Ethnic and regional
interests have been just as large a feature of military policy as of that of the overthrown governments.\textsuperscript{23}

Once the armed forces have taken control in a country, they are often confronted by the same sort of political, cultural, social and economic problems which may have beset the civilian government. They may sometimes be able to cope with these issues, but it is often the case that they fail miserably in their self-imposed tasks. Be that as it may, the reason why the armed forces seize power is not to be found in the success or failure of the subsequent administration, but one has rather to examine the various factors and events preceding the intervention. It may also prove worthwhile to study closely the intentions stated by the coup-makers during the initial stages, regardless of whether these intentions were later realized or not.

I shall now consider the explanatory value which some authors have attached to relevant factors both before and at the time of the actual coups.

2. Explanations Connected with Foreign Interests and Foreign Influence

During the Autumn of 1978 the Swedish National Board for Economic Defence together with representatives of trade and industry conducted a game, *Spel -78* (Game -78), with the aim of assessing Sweden's dependence upon the supply of certain raw materials.\(^1\) It was assumed that there was a crisis in Southern Africa and that it would involve one or more countries (the countries included were Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zambia, Angola, Namibia, South Africa, Botswana and Zaire). It was then assumed that the crisis would have varying effects on the export of raw materials from the countries concerned. Of particular interest in *Spel -78* was an assessment of the effects of a possible decrease in the export of certain metals used for alloys, such as copper, cobalt, chromium, manganese and vanadium, but also of alternative metals such as nickel (a substitute for chromium), molybdenum and aluminium. These metals are important for Swedish industry, cobalt, for example, being needed for the Swedish hard metals which are so attractive on the export market.

*Spel -78* showed that Sweden would already be affected by a crisis in Southern Africa after six months, mainly because of the export restrictions on cobalt which, it was assumed, the E.E.C. would introduce within half a year. Cobalt ore, produced in Zaire, is sold to Belgium, where it is then stockpiled and refined. As Sweden relies on Belgium for the import of cobalt, it would thus be affected by E.E.C. export restrictions. As far as the supply of other metals is concerned, with the exception of copper and aluminum, it was shown that a crisis in Southern Africa would have serious consequences for Swedish industry.

The example of *Spel -78* illustrates how vulnerable a small industrial nation such as Sweden is to the repercussions of political complications in Southern Africa. Many of the metals used in alloys come from Africa. Zaire, for instance, has the world's largest production of cobalt, Nigeria has the world's largest production of columbium (a chemical element used amongst other things for the covering of fuel cells in nuclear reactors), Gabon has very large resources of manganese ore, etc.\(^2\) Some of the alloys which are dependent upon African export are extremely important for the modern armaments industry, which shows that

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\(^1\) Information about Game -78 was gained from the news broadcast "Rapport" on Swedish television, channel 2 (in week 42, 1978) and from an interview with one of the participants.

the political situation in Africa is of interest, not only to Sweden, but also to other and larger industrial nations.

On the issue of African coups d'état it is very common to presume that foreign interests have been more or less actively involved in many of the coups. Evan Luard points out, for example, that "Almost every coup (is probably) of some advantage to either one side or the other in the Cold War. And in almost every case evidence of foreign involvement can be provided for anyone who so wishes". Luard also believes that coups have nowadays become an increasingly attractive international activity. Furthermore, the concealed influence behind such occurrences can usually remain unknown.

The motivation for any foreign involvement in the domestic affairs of African states is related, amongst other things, to the need of industrial nations of a steady supply of cheap raw materials and to the international balance of powers. A secure establishment of certain industries, such as branches of industry requiring a cheap labour force, may also be a motivation for political intervention. Of importance here, however, is not the form these interests take. For the moment it is sufficient to note that these interests do exist.

An examination of the literature on coups d'état reveals that the authors approach the question of international influence mainly along three separate lines of interpretation:

(a) The coups are seen as purely internal affairs without any foreign influence.
(b) The coups are seen as internal affairs, but it is assumed that the officers might have been influenced, for instance, by foreign education and traditions.
(c) It is assumed that foreign interests desire political change and that they therefore encourage and/or influence the armed forces.

It would perhaps not be inappropriate to point out that no writer makes the claim that, all coups are caused by some form of foreign intervention. The question is rather as to the possibility of such an involvement and if so, the form this involvement takes.

Apart from the three patterns of influence, or non-influence, which I have mentioned, the international situation may be reflected in a country in such a way as to encourage a political climate that is favourable to coups. This applies both to so-called cases of "contagion", that is to say when officers in one country are inspired by successful coups in neighbouring countries to attempt a takeover themselves, as well as to instances where the international economic situation affects the political climate of a country in such a way as to encourage the possibility of intervention. If there is a drastic fall in the world price of a country's main export product, as in the case of cocoa in Ghana, the outcome may be an economically based dissatisfaction which the military can exploit in an intervention. These forms of foreign influence have nothing to do with the actual

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3 E. Luard (1971) p 182.
motives of a coup and are not the results of any conscious intentions on the part of another nation.

Coup d'état are sometimes interpreted as purely domestic affairs. The writers who develop this approach point out, amongst other things, that one of the preconditions for a coup is that no nation is expected to intervene in another nation's domestic affairs. Edward Luttwak notes, for instance, that one precondition for a coup is that "the state in question must have a substantial degree of independence: the influence of foreign powers over its domestic politics must be relatively limited". But if a foreign power exercises a decisive influence, then it is necessary for "the coup to have the approval of the major power if the latter has military or civilian advisers in the country".5

On the whole, interpretations developed purely and simply according to pattern a. are unusual. As a rule, the possibility of some form of foreign influence is recognized, even if it is not accepted that this influence has the function of inspiring coups. In the section above concerning researchers' views on military rule, reference was made to Lucian Pye and Samuel Huntington on the subject of military aid as assistance to developing countries. Huntington categorically denied any connection between U.S. military aid and military coups. He maintained instead that "military aid and military training are by themselves politically sterile".6

Claude Welch also admits the possibility of a certain form of influence, primarily in the form of a "contagion" resulting from the common ties between officers of different countries who have trained and served in the same colonial army. Otherwise, Welch would appear to concur with those who deny any foreign influence. In the list of significant factors which he considers as having contributed to military intervention in Africa, there is nothing which would indicate foreign influence. He does maintain, however, like Luttwak in the above quotation, that the possibility of external intervention on the part of the former mother country, for example, reduces the likelihood of a coup. "Lessened likelihood of external intervention in the event of military uprising" may contribute to the coups.7

Turning to influence according to pattern b., we find a variety of hypotheses. In the case of Africa, it was usual during the 1960's to assume that the likelihood of coups was related to the officers' place of training. The French military academy at St. Cyr was said to view the officers' political responsibility in a completely different light to the English academy at Sandhurst, which laid greatest stress upon the British tradition of the army in total subordination to the politicians. These hypotheses were abandoned, however, when the armed forces in a number of former British colonies seized power in their countries.8

Robert M. Price approaches the question of the influence of training from a

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5 E Luttwak (1969) p 35.
6 S Huntington (1968) pp 192 f.
8 E Nord (1967) p 12.
slightly different angle from that which is normally found in American organization theory. The traditional interpretations argue that the influence of training in former mother countries results in the military having a modern education, thus making it the best agent of modernization and development. Price starts out from his "reference group theory" and in agreement with traditional organization theory maintains that the officer corps have been inspired by the various "mother" countries and that Sandhurst and St. Cyr have influenced the officers' frames of reference. Once the officers have identified themselves with foreign reference groups, they are no longer in a position to represent an autonomous nationalism in their own countries. The officer corps which have been inspired by the West, Price continues, are then severely restricted in their ability to rule, this due to the loss of contact with the norms and values of their original reference groups. 

Unlike Price, Huntington perceives a foreign frame of reference as a positive factor in the military's ability to rule. He maintains that the officer corps are particularly responsive to foreign ideas of nationalism and progress. The officers develop distinctive managerial and technical skills, and together with university students, especially those who have studied abroad, they constitute the most modern and progressive group in the society.

Bassam Tibi speaks of four types of armies to be found today in different countries. In Africa the "ex-colonial army" is usual. During the colonial period the metropole recruited troops from within the colony. These were to act chiefly as punitive and disciplinary forces, and on the whole they maintained their structure and composition even after independence. "Sie identifizieren sich nicht mit der einheimischen Bevölkerung und sind bei dieser auch nicht beliebt".

According to Tibi, an analysis of these armies can be made using Price's reference group theory and it then becomes evident that they have their reference groups in the former metropoles and not in their native countries. Hence the mechanism of identification for these soldiers is still of a colonial nature. "Resumierend können wir sagen, dass die ex-koloniale Armee die traditionelle Aufgabe der Kolonialarmee qua erweiterte Polizei wahrnimmt und die Aufrechterhaltung des Status quo garantiert. Sie ist im Kern konservativ".

An example of identification with the former mother country is General Bokassa's self-proclamation as Emperor of the Central African Empire with the subsequent ceremony modelled on Napoleon's coronation.

The third line of interpretation is based on the theory that foreign interests can be brought to bear on and directly influence the proclivity to military intervention. Contrary to Huntington, Tibi contends that the U.S., among others, has acquired for itself a powerful influence through its military assistance. Coups directed from the metropoles were, according to Tibi, particularly common during the sixties in Africa. This conservative type of coup is not only

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9 Price's theories are discussed in B Tibi (1972) pp 35 ff.
10 S Huntington (1968) p 201.
11 B Tibi (1972) pp 56 ff.
aimed at apparently progressive regimes, but also at civilian rule which has not been able to uphold the political stability which the metropoles find desirable.\textsuperscript{12}

Kwame Nkrumah thought he saw quite clearly the relationship between the imperialistic ambitions of the metropoles and coups d'état. "The imperialistic aggression materializes not only in coups d'état, but also in the assassination of revolutionary leaders, and in the setting-up of new intelligence organizations", he wrote in his book, "Class Struggle in Africa". "Behind every coup or attempted coup is a similar situation. We have on the one hand the neo-colonialist powers ... and on the other, the awakening African masses ..."\textsuperscript{13}

But the problem with foreign intervention is that its existence is so difficult to prove. According to international law, sovereign states must be respected, and active intervention in the question of another state’s legitimate political rule cannot be justified in international law. That is, of course, why any intervention by a metropole is effected with the greatest of discretion, and consequently the substantiation of such an intervention becomes very difficult. It is possible that intelligence officers may sometimes abandon their assignments and testify to political intervention, but since foreign intervention also demands a certain internal interest in a change of government, the coups can usually also be explained in terms of domestic factors.\textsuperscript{14}

Ruth First has drawn attention to the difficulties faced when proving foreign intervention, which, she says, does exist and which can eventually also be proved, but, she continues, there are also factors of equal importance within the countries which inspire and make coups possible.\textsuperscript{15}

In order to identify a possible foreign intervention, one is usually limited to the circumstantial evidence. There is a doctrine in international law, the so-called Wilson-Tobar Doctrine from the beginning of this century, which says that recognition should not be given to a regime which has assumed power by force, at least not until it has been legitimized by public opinion. It should then be possible to discern which governments are directly supporting a new regime from their recognition of that regime. Unfortunately, however, there is another rule of international law which says that recognition of a new government does not have any direct legal effect. The new government is recognized in practice anyway until it has been clearly stated that the government has not been recognized.\textsuperscript{16}

Thus the Wilson-Tobar Doctrine can be got round by merely taking no action whatsoever and in the case of military regimes this seems to be the usual course of action for most nations, thereby making it difficult to judge from the attitude of a metropole its possible community of interests with the new regime.

Nevertheless, it does happen that a possible influence is inferred from the attitude of a metropole. When Idi Amin seized power in Uganda in 1971, Great

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid p 79.  
\textsuperscript{13} K Nkrumah (1970) pp 70 and 73.  
\textsuperscript{14} See e.g. J Stockwell (1979).  
\textsuperscript{15} R First (1972) p 17.  
\textsuperscript{16} H Eek (1966) pp 18 f.
Britain's interest in this takeover was obvious. Ulf Rundin points out, for instance, "that the British ... hastened to recognize the Amin regime ...", indicating a British interest for a change in the policy of the former president, Obote. Rundin says, however, that other factors played a very important part in the triggering of the coup. Helge Hveem, in his discussion of Idi Amin's coup, has also considered Britain's interest in replacing Obote with a ruler more favourably inclined to British policy. Hveem points to the conflicts of interest between the British and Obote which reached a climax at the Commonwealth Conference in Singapore just before Amin's takeover. He also notes that it was British pilots who were responsible for the plane which was to take Obote back to Uganda and which for some reason was delayed for two days, enabling Amin to capture power in the absence of the country's true ruler.

There is really no doubt that examples of pattern c. may be found in reality. It is generally known, for example, that the U.S. has on various occasions been more or less actively involved in political issues and government crises in the American hemisphere. U.S. intelligence played an active part in the Bay of Pigs invasion attempt in Cuba, they were involved with U.S. marines in the government crisis in the Dominican Republic and they had a hand in the overthrow of Allende's government in Chile. In the case of Africa, we do not have the same positive proof of direct foreign intervention, but we know that France on at least one occasion took action against a coup. This was in February, 1964, when the French sent troops to Gabon to reinstate the deposed president, Léon M'Ba.

But direct foreign intervention is, as I have stated above, by its very nature secret and difficult to prove. Indeed, the favourable outcome of an intervention is in large measure dependent upon secrecy being maintained. For this reason, the formulation of testable hypotheses on the extent and impact of intervention becomes problematic. Those cases of intervention which can be proved are in a sense failures since secrecy could not be maintained. One is then confronted by a distorted selection in which the worst examples of active intervention are overrepresented. The cases which are counted as non-intervention may be increased by the addition of the most successful cases of intervention, that is to say, those in which absolute secrecy has been maintained.

There is a risk of over-emphasizing foreign intervention in coups. It is often a question, not of a unique event, but rather of the culmination of influence and pressure which may have constantly been brought to bear on the civilian regime in the form of political and economic pressure over various issues. Yet one may well assume that the likelihood of a coup increases if the military can expect the coup to be welcomed with satisfaction by the metropole. In certain cases, foreign reactions following a coup may then support any suspicions of foreign influence, even though these reactions do not in themselves prove anything.

It should also be borne in mind that the influence of training in the former mother country becomes increasingly less important as the day of independence

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17 U Rundin (1973) p 155.
18 H Hveem (1972) pp 73 ff.
recedes. Many states nowadays have their own military academies and it is also becoming more usual to have one’s officers trained in a number of countries.\textsuperscript{19} For instance, many African officers today receive their training in the East bloc, too. What is more, it is not only the military which is educated abroad, thereby coming into contact with foreign reference groups. In many cases the intellectual elite has such reference groups as well, particularly those who have been studying abroad.\textsuperscript{20} This also applies to a good many politicians, even if the nature of their work obliges them to pay more attention to the frames of reference of specific national groups. Thus President Leopold Senghor of Senegal, for example, has become known through his African philosophy. In his policies and his poetry he has asserted the intrinsic nature of the African people and has constructed his philosophy around such concepts as "negritude" and "africanism". Yet this does not stop his frame of reference from being to a great extent French. He has, for instance, a French wife and he spends a good part of the summer months in Normandy.

Surprisingly many African politicians have been educated at missionary schools, which would indicate that they, like the officers, have received frames of reference from outside of the African culture. In 1958 Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda returned to Malawi after forty years in Europe and America to become President for life ...

Due to the expansion of international trade and the establishment of multinational corporations in Africa, the frames of reference of the economic elite in many countries are also of an international character. Consequently, it is doubtful whether it can be argued that the armed forces in present-day Africa, more than any other group in society, have stronger ties to the metropole. On the contrary, evidence suggests that it is as often as not the military regimes, rather than their civilian counterparts, which show a greater tendency to call upon specific African traditions.

\textsuperscript{19} B Tibi (1972) p 37.
\textsuperscript{20} S Huntington (1968) p 201.
3. Explanations Connected with Societal Conditions

In recent times it has become more and more usual for military training to include courses other than the purely military. Cadets are often taught economics, politics, sociology and psychology. Naturally this helps to improve the ability of the military elite to act as political leaders, but it also affects the officers' attitude to and interpretation of the performance of civilian leaders.¹

Among the coups there are a number which appear to have a specifically political objective. Here the armed forces assume power in order to implement basic political changes, as was the case in Somalia in 1969, when the armed forces seized power and pursued, to a far greater extent than the previous civilian government, a policy of mass-mobilization. Changes may also be of an economic nature, as when the 1968 military coup in Peru led to the extensive nationalization of foreign-owned companies. Velasco and other young officers in Peru had undergone an unusually socially oriented training, which enabled them to examine the performance of the politicians critically and to analyse the country’s economy. Both Eric Nordlinger and Bassam Tibi have analysed the actions of the military in Peru and have reached the conclusion that the officers had probably been influenced by their social awareness in their decision to intervene and in the drawing up of an alternative policy. For Nordlinger and Tibi, the military takeover was brought about by the fact that the officers regarded themselves as better fitted than the civilian rulers for the protection and promotion of the interests of the middle class.²

But it is not always the case that the military considers itself better suited, even if political changes are warranted. It may sometimes happen that the conflicts within a society are so marked that the government cannot rule the country without continually relying upon the active support of the armed forces to control popular strikes and demonstrations. In some of these cases the civilian government may, as it were, go into liquidation, in the sense that it can no longer control the situation in the country without the support of the armed forces. In the People’s Republic of Congo (then Congo Brazzaville) President Youlou was forced to resign in 1963, having lost the active support of the armed forces. In this instance, the armed forces held power for a brief period until a new government was formed under President Massemba Débat.³

Both of these examples have in common the fact that the civilian government has in one way or another "failed". In the first case, the military, drawing on some form of social analysis it has made, comes to regard itself as more competent, and in the second case, the civilian order has collapsed and the military considers itself the only viable option for the period of transition. Common to both types of coups is the claim by the military that the government in office has "failed" and that it therefore lacks legitimacy.

The question of a fallen government's legitimacy is not simply an empirical one. It is not sufficient, on the basis of a generally accepted definition of the concept of "legitimacy", to determine whether a regime meets the demands that may be made upon it. Illegitimacy is used by the armed forces in justification of a coup, but it is seldom or never the actual reason for the takeover. This is reflected, for instance, in the fact that the military government itself is often guilty of the same malpractice with which the civilian government has been charged, malpractice which was used to demonstrate the illegitimacy of the civilian government.

Even if researchers do not agree upon the moment when a regime is to be regarded as illegitimate, it may be said that in general the military requires a far lower "failure" rate from a regime for it to be condemned as illegitimate. The definitions of legitimacy/illegitimacy that exist are often vague and difficult to operationalize, so that it is difficult to prove empirically whether deposed governments were legitimate or not. Nordlinger claims, for example, that "Where the overwhelming majority of the politicized stratum believes that the government does not have a moral right to govern, it is thoroughly illegitimate". But how large is an overwhelming majority and which groups are in fact politicized? The difficulty of defining "legitimacy" and of grading it according to a scale that is valid for the countries concerned limits the usefulness of the concept in an analysis of coups d'état.

The Timing of a Coup d'état

The timing of a coup often depends on the civilian regime's performance "failures". These failures are not necessarily the result of the regime's political incompetence, but may be due to external factors, such as the falling price of raw materials. The important thing is that the armed forces can refer to a failure in order to claim that the regime is illegitimate. Nordlinger makes the observation that the military establishment is extremely reluctant to intervene against a regime which cannot be said to be confronted by a crisis of legitimacy. Such a crisis may be explained by three different forms of performance failures, of which the military usually claims the civilian regime is guilty:

1) Unconstitutional or unlawful behaviour, particularly corruption.
2) Economic failures with high prices and inflationary spirals.
3) Inability to cope with political opposition, including political disorder.

5 Ibid pp 93 f.
Nordlinger contends that these failures help to precipitate coups d’État. This does not imply, however, that they are *motives* for military takeovers, rather that they primarily create possibilities for the armed forces to *legitimize* their own rule.\(^6\)

Thus according to Nordlinger, it is unusual for the armed forces to intervene against a regime which cannot be *said* to be faced with a crisis of legitimacy. What is important is not that this crisis is acute and manifests itself in, for example, demonstrations and strikes, but above all that there are performance failures which the military can *cite* and of which the citizens are aware. S.E. Finer maintains, however, that the opportunity for intervention is dependent upon the population’s *active* relationship to the regime. When public support for the government weakens and the government resorts more to physical force, the opportunities for a military intervention increase in number. The most opportune moment for an intervention is when the level of confidence in the civilian institutions is low at the same time as the armed forces are enjoying a degree of popularity.\(^7\)

For Claude Welch Jr., too, the regime’s performance failures appear as an important factor in explaining the timing of an intervention: “Opportunities to intervene occurred in many forms – widespread strikes or demonstrations against the government, severe economic difficulties, the undesired dependence of the government upon the armed forces to maintain control over a rapidly deteriorating situation”.\(^8\) Like Finer, Welch emphasizes the people’s *manifest reactions* against the civilian regime as being a positive factor in the timing of a military intervention. Being able to cite various performance failures is not enough. The people must first manifest their displeasure over these failures and thus have reason to welcome the military takeover with a certain amount of satisfaction.

Samuel P. Huntington regards the political involvement of the armed forces as a product of rapid social change and rapid mobilization of new groups into politics together with a slow development of political institutions.\(^9\) The discrepancy between wider political participation and the inadequacy of political institutions, through which the people are able to act, results in an increase in political violence. When the people cannot achieve their political objectives through the normal political channels, they make their demands using other means, such as demonstrations, strikes, insurrections or, as far as the armed forces are concerned, coups.

For Huntington, military intervention is often the answer to *acute* social and political unrest. "Military intervention, in short, often marks the end of a sequence of violence in politics".\(^10\) To a greater degree than other writers, Huntington stresses the civilian government’s performance failures as the *cause* of

\(^6\) Ibid pp 85 f.
\(^7\) S E Finer (1962) p 84 (a summary).
\(^8\) C Welch Jr (1970) p VIII.
\(^10\) S Huntington (1968) pp 216 f.
military intervention and not merely as being crucial for the timing of the coup. For this reason coups are often followed, according to Huntington, by a sense of relief and by a decrease in political activity.\(^{11}\)

Whether the decrease in political activity in the aftermath of a coup is due to the fact that the people feel relieved, or whether it can be explained by the state of emergency which normally follows a military takeover, is open to question, but for the moment it suffices to note that Huntington, too, holds the view that *acute* social and political unrest fosters a climate in which coups may occur.

A more theoretically based analysis of the behaviour of the populace and its bearing upon coups is to be found in Ted R. Gurr’s book, "Why Men Rebel". The starting point for Gurr’s analysis is the concept of "relative deprivation" (R.D.). This concept is defined as the discrepancy people perceive between their value expectations and their value capabilities, that is, the difference between what they consider they are entitled to and what they can attain or maintain.\(^{12}\) Gurr maintains that the potential for collective violence varies strongly with the intensity and scope of R.D. among members of a collectivity.\(^{13}\)

Ted Gurr differentiates between three forms of R.D.. These can be summarized and illustrated as follows:

1) "*Decremental deprivation*”, where value expectations are constant, but the value capability declines.

![Decremental deprivation graph]

2) "*Aspirational deprivation*”, where the capability is relatively constant, but the expectations increase.

![Aspirational deprivation graph]

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11 Ibid p 218.
3) "Progressive deprivation", where a substantial increase in expectations is accompanied by a decrease in capability.

(The figures correspond to Gurr’s figures 1, 2 and 3.\textsuperscript{14})

In former colonies the commonest form of R.D. is probably "aspirational deprivation" since in many of these countries a good deal was expected from independence and as a rule these expectations were impossible to meet. When the African colonies became independent in the early sixties, there were probably a number of cases of "progressive deprivation" in connection with the drastic fall in prices of raw materials such as cocoa and coffee.

Ted Gurr also distinguishes between different forms of R.D. depending upon who is perceiving R.D. A distinction is made between whether a large section of the population is experiencing R.D. or whether only a small, more or less privileged group is involved. This leads to the categories "Mass R.D." and "Elite R.D.". By elite, Gurr means those individuals who have inherited and/or acquired qualifications which are cultural prerequisites for high value positions, regardless of whether the individuals hold these positions or not. In order to illustrate elite R.D., Gurr cites as an example "... military officers given what they regard as inadequate resources".\textsuperscript{15}

With these two categories, "mass R.D." and "elite R.D.", Gurr constructs a four-field table to show the forms political violence takes in different contexts. The three forms of violence which appear in the table are mutually exclusive.

Forms of political violence

\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Intensity and scope of Mass R.D.} & \textbf{Intensity and scope of Elite R.D.} \\
\hline
\textit{Low} & \textit{Low} \\
\hline
\textit{minimal violence} & \textit{conspiracy} \\
\hline
\textit{turmoil} & \textit{internal war} \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

(The table corresponds to Gurr’s figure 22.\textsuperscript{16})

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid pp 46 ff.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid pp 335 f.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid pp 334 f.
Turmoil is defined by Gurr as "Relatively spontaneous, unorganized political violence with substantial popular participation, including violent political strikes, riots, political clashes, and localized rebellions". Conspiracy, on the other hand, is defined as "Highly organized political violence with limited participation, including organized political assassinations, small-scale terrorism, small-scale guerrilla wars, coups d'état, and mutinies" (my italics). 17

It is interesting to note here Gurr's assumption that the probability of conspiracy varies directly with the intensity and scope of "elite R.D." and inversely with the intensity and scope of "mass R.D.". 18 Furthermore, "Conspirators are substantially less likely to have publicly articulated economic or social motives than rioters, and are quite likely (...) to be motivated primarily or exclusively by a desire for political power". 19

Judging from Finer's and Welch's analysis, it would appear that social unrest is an important precondition for creating an opportune moment for a military takeover. Huntington prefers to go one step further and argue that social unrest not only fosters conditions favourable to a coup, but that in addition it is often a cause of the coup. Contrary to these assumptions, we have Gurr's theories of "mass R.D." and "elite R.D." and the assumption that elite R.D. leads to conspiracy, whereas mass R.D. causes turmoil and that these forms of political violence are mutually exclusive.

It is not difficult to substantiate or, if one wishes, to argue against, both points of view with the help of empirical evidence. One can hardly claim that the military mutinies in East Africa in 1964 were preceded by any general social unrest (Gurr includes mutinies in his definition of conspiracy). Nor is it likely that the coups in the Central African Republic (C.A.R.) or in Mali, for example, were preceded by any precipitating social unrest. However, the coups in the People’s Republic of Congo and in Upper Volta were preceded by strikes and demonstrations, that is, by what Gurr would term "turmoil".

Military coups occur both in connection with overt social and political unrest and in situations where political and social unrest has not been manifest. If the military can give the impression that the former government has failed in some respect, it may activate a latent dissatisfaction and so avoid active resistance during the first days of the new regime.

Nordlinger's observation that the military is extremely unwilling to intervene against a regime which cannot be said to be faced by a crisis of legitimacy would seem to be the most realistic. Social and political unrest may be overt as Finer, Welch and Huntington argue, but it may also be latent, as suggested by Gurr. However, it would appear to be reasonable to assume that military intervention varies with the degree of active involvement on the part of the population against the civilian regime's performance failures. According to Gurr, the likelihood of internal war varies with the intensity of mass R.D. and elite R.D. 20 and it is thus

17 Ibid p 11.
18 Ibid p 335
19 Ibid p 340.
20 Ibid p 335.
probable that the military must pay considerably greater attention to the people whenever they manifest their discontent. If the people actively question the legitimacy of the civilian regime and the armed forces intervene, though without attempting to give the appearance that the intervention is related to the civilian crisis of legitimacy, there are obvious risks that the civilian unrest will remain and possibly end in civil war.

If one accepts Ted Gurr’s theories of R.D., that is to say, if one accepts that the gap between what people can attain and what they believe they have a right to attain causes social discontent, which may eventually turn into violence, then the question as to what causes R.D. becomes of great interest. For authors dealing with African states south of the Sahara, certain phenomena are usually considered particularly important in explaining the discontent which often precedes a coup d’etat. Among these phenomena, ethnic conflicts, nepotism, concentration of political power, corruption and economic stagnation may be mentioned. In initial explanations of military takeovers, all of these phenomena are usually cited as causes, but in those instances where the officers endeavour to specify their criticism, the discussions focus above all on economic problems.

Economic Difficulties can Create the Opportunity for Intervention

Economic difficulties can create the opportunity for armed forces to intervene in politics. There is no doubt that the economic difficulties experienced by many of the world’s poor countries are used by the military to demonstrate the civilian regime’s performance failures. In some cases, public opinion has openly opposed what it considers an unsatisfactory economic policy, but it is also common for the military to actualize the economic issues. A connection between economic factors and military coups can be seen to exist. This relationship is noted by many researchers, even if they do not always take into account the distinction between the actual motive and the justifications.

Welch points out that ”Economic malaise, leading to ‘austerity’ policies most affecting articulated, urbanized sectors of the population...” contribute to military interventions in Africa. As an example he cites the situations in Dahomey and Upper Volta, where dissatisfaction over salaries helped to set off the disturbances which preceded the coups. Welch also maintains that the fall in the standard of living, caused by inflation, wage restraints and chronic shortage of imported goods and domestically produced foodstuffs, considerably undermined the legitimacy of the Ghanaian government.

Nordlinger, too, cites high prices and inflationary spirals as factors which affect the military disposition to intervene. Nordlinger maintains that coups are far more common after a country has experienced an economic decline. This decline can influence the military in two ways. Firstly, it weakens the legitimacy

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81 See e.g. G Hydén (1972) pp 211 ff.
23 Ibid pp 29 and 31.
of the regime, thereby creating suitable conditions for a coup. Secondly, it threatens the economic position of the middle classes and the regime's efforts to improve the situation (restraints, etc.) provide the armed forces with a motive and reinforces the officers' disposition to intervene."^24

The relationship between economic problems and political discontent is also discussed by Göran Hydén. Like Welch above, he states briefly that economic issues lay at the root of the discontent which preceded the coups in Dahomey and Upper Volta. Hydén's study also supports the view that public discontent first and foremost creates the opportunity for the coup and does not therefore need to be the actual motive for the coup. He points out, for instance, that it was only after the military takeover in Upper Volta that the economic squeeze came, this despite the fact that the discontent which created the opportunity for the intervention was due to President Yaméogo's policy of economic restraint."^25

In his essay, Erik Nord has also noted a relationship between economy and coups. "Those countries which can show a degree of economic success have been better protected against coups", he writes."^26 And as an example, Nord cites the Ivory Coast, which enjoys considerable economic expansion.

Evan Luard, too, finds it "stiking that, with the exception of India, the developing countries which have been free from coups are those that have been economically most successful ... ."^27

A study, which I myself have made, showed that income in terms of per capita G.N.P. in African countries varied significantly with the incidence of coups d'état in those countries. Out of fifteen of the "poorest" countries, all but two had had military coups, but of fifteen of the "richest" countries, only six had experienced coups. In my study I also examined the level of education and the degree of urbanization in relation to coups and it appeared that even with these variables taken into account, coups were far more frequent in the economically weaker countries."^28

There is a consensus among most researchers that the state of the economy in a country affects the probability of a coup occurring in that country. The views examined above indicate that the propensity to coups diminishes with increased economic development. However, the term economic development may be construed in different ways, and it is used by researchers without always being specified and defined in a satisfactory manner. Hence it comes as no surprise and there is no real contradiction involved when one finds that some writers support theories that the likelihood of a coup increases with economic development.

As I have stated previously, Samuel Huntington maintains that the armed forces intervene in politics after periods of political instability. Huntington is interested in the question of why political order is difficult to maintain and he

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24 E Nordlinger (1977) p 89.
25 G Hydén (1972) p 220.
26 E Nord (1967) p 15.
28 S Wiking (1974) pp 76, 74, and 77 (the figures are made up to mid-1978 and deals with African states south of the Sahara).
comes to the conclusion that political violence is due, among other things, to the lack of political institutions through which the public interest can make itself heard. Political unrest is especially common, or becomes particularly pronounced, when the country in question has undergone a period of socio-economic development with the result that new sectors of the population become politically conscious, begin to make political demands and to participate in politics. Such a politicization comes, for example, through increased urbanization, industrialization, literacy and mass media expansion, etc.\(^{29}\)

That socio-economic development increases the likelihood of coups is also stressed by Michael Sahlin in the introductory discourse to his doctoral thesis. According to Sahlin, who cites Blondel, among others, military takeovers are not as common in countries where the level of socio-economic development is low or where there is hardly any development at all. Whenever there is a measure of socio-economic development, the likelihood of coups increases accordingly, but in the case of countries which are even more socio-economically advanced, the armed forces are again less willing to intervene.\(^{30}\) Sahlin illustrates this correlation by means of a diagram taken from Blondel’s "An introduction to Comparative Government".

\[\text{Diagram:} \]

What has been said above indicates that there are at least two distinct views among researchers as to when coups are most common. Nord’s and Luard’s and to a certain extent my own studies indicate that coups d’état are most common, or at least very common, in countries where the level of socio-economic development is low. According to Sahlin (citing Blondel) and Huntington, however, the likelihood of a coup is greatest in countries where there is some measure of socio-economic development. The other researchers, Welch, Nordlinger and Hydén, do not attach as much importance to the level of a country’s socio-economic development, but are chiefly concerned with the existence of economic problems in one form or another at the time of the coups.

It is not completely impossible, however, to bring Nord’s and Luard’s empirically based observations into line with those of Huntington and Sahlin, which are more theoretically based. In the latter case, they appear to start out

\(^{29}\) S Huntington (1968) pp 4 f.
from a sort of "zero point", where socio-economic development has not yet begun. Sahlin speaks of moving from tradition to modernity, and Huntington refers to development in terms such as urbanization, industrialization, etc. The traditional society which would be placed to the extreme left in Blondel's diagram is an ancient society which is hardly to be found anywhere these days. Most nations today have been incorporated in the international economic system and consequently some form of socio-economic development has already begun, even though in many cases only a minority of the population is involved. The apparent discrepancies between the empirical and the theoretical descriptions may therefore be due to the fact that Erik Nord's and Evan Luard's observations start out from societies which are already a part of the way along Blondel's socio-economic axis. This may be illustrated by the following revision to Blondel's diagram:

![Blondel's Diagram](image)

The African states with which I am concerned all lie relatively near the Z-axis that I have added to Blondel's diagram. Consequently, the risk of military intervention is quite high, even in those countries which are low on the socio-economic development scale. Now, the emergence of new groups into politics without access to political institutions is not sufficient to generate a climate in which coups may occur. The likelihood of a coup increases only when these new politicized groups begin to make demands or experience some form of what Gurr calls relative deprivation. The economic failures referred to by Welch, Nordlinger and Hydén, among others, lead to a situation in which R.D. is latent and may be exploited by the armed forces in the event of a coup.

What has been said about the timing of a coup and the significance of economic problems may be summarized as follows: The timing of a coup depends upon the performance of the civilian government. The armed forces are reluctant to intervene against a regime which cannot be accused of illegitimacy, which often means that the government has in some way failed. These failures do not, however, have to lead to overt social unrest, the main point being that the people are conscious of these failures. The failures are then used by the military in justification of the takeover, even if there may in fact be other motives. If the risk for a coup d'etat increases in relation to the civilian government's being found guilty of some form of failure, then the probability of a coup becomes even greater if these
failures are related to economic problems. This, of course, is tied up with the fact that economic problems affect many different groups in society, groups which can be expected to support the armed forces.

**Class Conflicts in the Society**

Class conflicts in society also number among the variables which researchers have used in order to explain the causes and the timing of coups d’état. Naturally enough, class conflicts do not on their own constitute any separate variables. They indicate more precisely how social discontent and economic failures affect the possibility of intervention. Through an examination of class conflicts one may also approach the question of what the actual motives of a coup are, even though the military justification may have been a discontent which is not connected to class interests. However, not all researchers agree that class conflict has really been of significance of African coups, or that there has been any class consciousness at all among the groups that have been involved in the political course of events. It would perhaps then be appropriate to present briefly some of these divergent opinions.

Bassam Tibi has criticized V. Matthies, who in his book, "Militarische Staatsstreiche und Militärregime in Afrika südlich der Sahara", claims that in the case of the African coups, a class analysis is of little value since there are no pronounced class groupings in these societies. Matthies cites, among others, R.E. Dowse, who has "the strong feeling that class interest is not important". Tibi makes the point that one cannot replace a genuine class analysis with "feelings of ..."). Classes and class conflicts exist in Africa, even if they are not as pronounced as in some other countries. Tibi’s view is that

"Zu den 'neuen' Klasse in den subsaharischen afrikanischen Ländern gehört als wichtigsten die Verwaltungsbourgeoisie, die ihre materielle Basis im Staatsapparat hat. Als Teil dieser neuen Klasse existiert das Militär mit seinen zusätzlich korporativen Interessen ...".31

Tibi believes that he can differentiate between three types of military coups:

I. Coups which are caused by conflicts between two sectors of the ruling social class. According to Tibi, such coups, which have been common in Latin America and Africa, do not result in any real change in the social structure or the power structure, but in fact lead only to a change of government.

II. Another type of coup can be distinguished, in which a relatively conservative sector of the officer corps seizes power from a relatively progressive government. Tibi suggests that this type of conservative coup is often supported and planned by the metropole and its intelligence service. They are directed not only against progressive regimes, but also against regimes which are not able to maintain the political stability which the metropole finds desirable. This type of coup, usually controlled from the metropole, was common during the rash of coups in the sixties in Africa. Tibi also notes that it is not only the former

31 B Tibi (1972) pp 72 ff.
metropole which intervenes and exerts influence, but also in large measure the U.S., which
through its military aid has acquired a powerful influence.

III. Thirdly, there is also a type of coup which appears revolutionary and progressive.
These coups remove reactionary oligarchal systems which have blocked social change.
They are seen as being radical in that they remove monarchies, initiate reform, etc.
According to Tibi, it is mainly this type of coup which has been analysed by earlier
research and which has contributed to the positive view of military regimes. The regimes
which come to power through this type of coup are fairly quickly compelled to align
themselves alongside a class, and though an alliance with workers and peasants would be
the most natural step, a necessary one if they are going to be able to implement their
promised reforms, even so it is usual that they side with the bourgeoisie.32

Like Tibi, Huntington also believes that he can identify three different objectives
in military takeovers. Citing examples mainly from Latin America, Huntington
describes the role of the armed forces at various stages of development. The
military belong to the middle class and their interests are the same as those of the
middle class. Thus the role of the military is to "open the door to the middle class
and close it on the lower class". Hence the societal role of the armed forces is also
dependent upon the nature of the regime in power. "As society changes, so does
the role of the military. In the world of oligarchy, the soldier is a radical; in the
middle-class world he is a participant and arbiter; as the mass-society looms on
the horizon he becomes the conservative guardian of the existing order".33

Tibi's view is that mainly the first (status quo) and the second (conservative)
types of coup are to be found among the African coups. Huntington, however,
contends that the African coups are marked by "radical praetorianism". The
officers who execute such a coup usually come, according to Huntington, from
the middle ranks. Furthermore, the officers are united by a common cause, rather
than by an individual as in the "oligarchal coups". Normally they have a
programme of social and economic reform and national development.34

Finer has also discussed the significance of class interests for military
interventions and he notes especially that one cannot work from a theory which
says that the military "support the civil power when this is drawn from a similar
social class, and overthrow it when it is drawn from a different and hostile
class".35

Finer continues with an example from Venezuela, where the military
intervened three times between 1945 and 1958, the first time for 'Accion
Democratica', then against it in 1948, and again for it in 1958. "Is it to be therefore
argued that the ruling classes of Venezuela had altered three times in that interval
of twelve years?" asks Finer. But Finer also admits that the class ties of the
military may sometimes have a definite influence on its political actions.36

32 Ibid pp 79 ff.
33 S Huntington (1968) pp 221 ff.
34 Ibid pp 200 ff.
35 S E Finer (1962) p 40.
36 Ibid pp 40 ff.
I have referred above to Eric Nordlinger and to his statement on the relationship between economic decline and the likelihood of military intervention. Nordlinger maintains that an economic recession, resulting in attempts by the government to implement retrenchment programmes, is a threat to the economic position of the middle class and consequently to that of the officers.\(^{37}\)

For Nordlinger it is self-evident that the officer corps are principally recruited from the middle class. He says, however, that one significant variation is that the officer corps in Africa and the Middle East are drawn mainly from the lower middle class, whereas those in Asia and Latin America generally come from a solid middle class and upper middle class background. When the question of class conflict arises in a military intervention, the officers act in the interests of the middle class since it is the class to which they belong and with which they identify.\(^{38}\)

One can detect in Nordlinger's argument similarities to Huntington's thesis that the military opens the door to the middle class and dose it on the lower class. In Nordlinger's opinion, the evidence of data has indicated that there is a correlation between military regimes and the rate of industrialization, at the expense of agricultural development, even though the potential of the latter might be greater and could lead to a higher economic growth rate. It has also been shown that there is a significant correlation between military regimes and economic growth in relation to a country's level of development. In more developed economies civilian governments are usually able to achieve a faster rate of growth. Modernization, according to Nordlinger, is associated with the politicization of the lower classes, which accounts for the fact that the military is more restrictive and cautious or less successful when it is a question of stimulating growth in more developed economies.\(^{39}\)

It is very common to assume that the officer corps belong to a certain class and therefore have class interests by referring to their recruitment base. Nordlinger points out that the officer corps are mainly recruited from the middle classes, even if there are geographic variations (see above). But for Bengt Abrahamsson this is not so certain. Military professionalization is accompanied by the indoctrination and internalization of certain values, opinions and modes of conduct.\(^{40}\) This implies that any identification with a class is not determined by the officers' social and economic background, but by the training they have received and the positions they hold. A good many conservative attitudes are part and parcel of the military profession and these attitudes and convictions are adopted by the officers, even if they have come from the lower classes, where considerably more radical ideas are usual. The significance of professionalization for the attitudes and class identification of the officer corps is illustrated by Abrahamsson with an

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\(^{37}\) E Nordlinger (1977) p 89.

\(^{38}\) Ibid pp 32 ff.

\(^{39}\) Ibid pp 169 f.

\(^{40}\) B Abrahamsson (1972) p 14.
example from Sweden. During the 20th Century the recruitment base of Swedish officers has broadened considerably so that nowadays many officers also come from working-class homes. In 1962 24% of the Swedish officer corps came from the upper class, but as much as 85% of the officers favoured the Conservative party.41

Bearing in mind the significance of professionalization for the attitudes of the officers, Abrahamsson draws a natural conclusion. He maintains that no prediction regarding the class identification of an officer corps can be made on the basis of the social background.42 (Professionalism is discussed in greater detail in chapter five.)

Most writers seem to share the view that military intervention in politics primarily benefits the middle class. However, there is a divergence of opinion when it comes to determining the implications of this for the development of the society. Huntington, Lucian Pye, Manfred Halpern et al. see in the growth of the middle class possibilities for the modernization of society and its development. Eric Nordlinger and Bassam Tibi are far more doubtful about the development potential of the middle class. They note, too, that even in those instances where it appears in the beginning as if the armed forces are enjoying wide popular support and appear to rule to the advantage of the masses, it soon becomes clear that the military aligns itself first and foremost alongside the middle class and protects the middle class interests.43

It is important to remember that by no means all military coups are marked by conflicts between different classes. Many of the coups correspond with Bassam Tibi’s first type of coup, that is, the type which is caused by clashes between one sector of the ruling class and another sector from the same class.

Military involvement in class struggles might be said to be due to a common economic group interest. In Latin America, for instance, it is precisely the economic group interests which govern the attitudes and behaviour of the officers. As for sub-Saharan Africa, it is to be expected that ethnic group interests are also of great significance when one is determining the cause of military intervention.

**Ethnic and/or Regional Group Interests**

Ethnic and/or regional group interests have been given as variables in many of the attempts to explain coups d’état in Africa. It is hardly necessary in this context to review African history in order to explain the background to the ethnic conflicts existing in many African states. It is sufficient to recall that the present national frontiers are on the whole the same as those which were determined by the colonial powers when they divided the African continent among themselves. These boundaries have on the one hand split large homogeneous ethnic groups so that they are now spread throughout several different countries, and on the other hand bundled together within the boundaries of the same countries groups which

41 Ibid p 54.
42 Ibid p 73.
have by tradition vigorously asserted their own separate ethnic identity. Despite an agreement by the African states to respect the borders in existence at the time of independence, ethnic conflicts have led to bloody incidents and battles, both in the form of the movement towards unity, as in the case of Somalia, and in various attempts at secession, as in Katanga and Biafra.

In the literature there is no one single interpretation of the significance of ethnic structure. There is a conflict of opinion concerning the ethnic ties of the armed forces and what significance such ties may have for the military involvement in politics. It is not uncommon among African researchers to take the ethnic conflicts into consideration and to use them to explain both the behaviour of the military as well as the failures of the civilian authorities. As for attempts at more generalized observations on the societal role of the armed forces, there is no lack of hypotheses which are based on the supposition that the armed forces stand above ethnic and regional disputes. Two distinct schools of thought can be distinguished. One says that the army, because of its modern organization and its main task (the defence of the nation), is essentially to be regarded as a national organization which bridges the ethnic and regional confrontations. The other school maintains that the armed forces are as equally open to internal conflict as any other group in society. Thus if the civilian government has difficulty in resolving regional/ethnic conflicts, then it is just as likely, according to this school, that the military authority will also have difficulty in finding a solution to these problems.

It is above all the modernization theorists who claim that the armed forces can maintain a position outside and above the regional and ethnic disputes. Lucian Pye sees in the armed forces a modern organization with a modern training and possessing modern technological knowledge. Furthermore, the officers' interest is focussed on the international scene, enabling them to disregard the internal conflicts. As a modern organization the army can keep its distance from society and concentrate on the standards of the industrialized world.44

Huntington, too, appears in fact to share the view that as a modern organization the military establishment constitutes one of the groups which can remain above or outside ethnic conflict. With regard to the military as institution-builders, he writes, "In theory, consequently, the more effective leadership in institution-building should come from groups which are not so directly identified with particular ethnic or economic strata. In some measure, students, religious leaders, and soldiers may fall into this category."45 Of these groups, Huntington adds, students and religious leaders are not suitable as institution-builders, whereas soldiers are.

Aristide Zolberg assumes a far more sceptical attitude toward the ability of the military establishment to rise above ethnic and regional differences. Among the factors which he believes have widened the gap between the military and the

45 S Huntington (1968) p 239.
leaders, he names, among other things, the differences in ethnic and regional origins (between leaders and military).\textsuperscript{46}

Claude Welch is also of the opinion, at least as far as Africa is concerned, that it is wrong to claim that the armies are regionally/ethnically representative and he maintains that one cannot expect to find within the armies any particularly national spirit which is different from that of the remainder of the population.\textsuperscript{47}

Samuel Decalo, who attempts to explain military takeovers through the actions of individuals, criticizes military rulers, maintaining that they are just as likely as their civilian predecessors to favour their own ethnic or regional interests as well as any other possible group interests they may have.\textsuperscript{48} Like Zolberg, Decalo is chiefly concerned with the African states.

An empirical study of conditions in Africa soon reveals that many of the continent’s armies are marked by ethnic and regional conflict. Citing Shabtai, Eric Nordlinger writes that of thirty African armies only ten have a reasonable degree of ethnic balance. Regional and ethnic conflict can very easily make itself felt in such a way that groups which are underrepresented demand promotion on a proportional basis and those which are overrepresented (possibly in terms of education, too) demand promotion according to criteria based on merit and seniority. The two changes of government which took place in Nigeria in 1966 exemplify both of these types of demands. Nordlinger adds that a study has shown that in 27\% of the coups in Africa, the cause was in part that the coup-makers felt that their own people were threatened. He also refers to a study by Shabtai which shows that of thirty-two investigated coup attempts in Africa, communal considerations played a significant part in eleven cases and a less significant part in a further six cases.\textsuperscript{49}

Among the researchers who are chiefly interested in Africa and African affairs, there would appear to be no great disagreement that ethnic and regional ties play a very important part in explaining the course of political events, including military takeovers, in these countries. If one lays stress upon the distinction between motive, that is, the true reason or motivation for an action, and justification, the statement made to explain or rationalize a certain action, regardless of whether the statement is true or false, it is then possible to come to a somewhat different evaluation of the relationship of ethnic and regional conflict to politics and coups than that which is usual in research literature. It is possible that the growth of industrialization and urbanization, combined with an extended national consciousness due to an improved educational situation and the expansion of the mass media, may result in the economic class interests successively taking over the role played by ethnic and regional conflict. The groups which would then reject the ethnic and/or regional group interests in favour of the economic group interests are those which would have most to gain

\textsuperscript{46} A R Zolberg in van Doorn ed (1970) p 178.
\textsuperscript{47} C Welch Jr (1970) pp 41 f.
\textsuperscript{48} S Decalo (1976) p 30.
\textsuperscript{49} E Nordlinger (1977) pp 39 ff.
from the economic factors, that is, the economic and political elite, or, in other words, the middle and upper classes.

This argument implies that the criteria for group identification of the economic and political elite are other than those of the sectors of the population which do not yet benefit to any great extent from the economic development. The outcome of this may in turn be that political action which is essentially founded on economic motives may come to have a non-economic justification. This means in practice that conflicts within the ruling social class can result in various sectors of this class seeking support from the regional and ethnic groups with which they identify. In countries with a multi-party system this would most likely be reflected primarily in the actualization of any ethnic and/or regional conflict at the time of elections.\footnote{During a journey to West Africa in the Spring of 1977 I happened to be in Gambia just as general elections were being held. I took the opportunity to interview several people, including a police officer and a leading representative of trade and industry, and the information I received clearly indicated that ethnic conflicts usually come to the fore whenever there are general elections. Gambia's economic life is dominated by the Wolof, an ethnic group that is also found in Senegal. However, the largest ethnic group is the Mandingo, who form almost half of the population. The President and leader of the largest party, the People's Progressive Party (PPP), Sir Dawda Jawara, is a Mandingo, and I was told that during the previous elections he had addressed his electoral propaganda, in which he criticized the Wolof, mainly to the Mandingo. His criticism was that the Wolof, though a minority, dominated the economic life of Banjul, the capital. This situation, according to Jawara, was unacceptable and he promised to make changes if the people would support and re-elect him. In the oversimplified language of election propaganda, Jawara promised that the Mandingo would take over the positions and houses occupied by the Wolof, with the result that crowds of people flocked in from the countryside to Banjul and set up temporary dwellings on the pavements outside of the homes they expected to receive after the elections. When Jawara was re-elected, however, he had the pavements cleared and the hopeful electors who had counted on moving into Banjul's finest area were sent back home.

This incident was often told in order to demonstrate the rottenness of politics and to show how easy it is to deceive the voters, but I believe it demonstrates best the difference between economic and ethnic conflicts. The most important structures in the capital have been formed on economic lines, but at election times the politicians can rely on the rural ethnic structures in order to consolidate their positions in the power elite. Once the elections are over, the ethnic conflicts lose their interest and once again it is the economic factors which are decisive.}
MOTIVE
ex.: economic
group interests

JUSTIFICATION
ex.: ethnic conflict

COUP

Satisfies primarily the motive
4. Explanations Connected with Government-Military Relations

In the chapters above I have primarily considered questions concerning external factors and their bearing on coups d’état. I have spoken of the influence of foreign interests and of the difficulties faced in proving the existence of such an influence. Among other things, I have said that the chances for a successful coup are best when the coupmakers can expect a favourable reaction from the metropole.

I have also spoken of how social unrest, especially when economic-based, can generate a political atmosphere favourable to a coup, even if the reason for the discontent may not coincide with the motive of the coupmakers. Finally, there was the problem of whether the armed forces can resort to ethnic-based justifications even in cases where an ethnic conflict does not constitute the actual motive for the coup.

In this chapter the relationship between the armed forces and the civilian government will be discussed, attention being focussed in particular on the true motives of coups d’état. The relationship between government and armed forces centres largely on the issue of the autonomy of the military establishment, and those factors which I have considered deal precisely with the degree of autonomy in various contexts. Three separate areas in particular will be discussed:

a) Attempts by the politicians to control.

b) The establishment of alternative military organizations.

c) Government use of the armed forces for police action.

Attempts by the Politicians to Control

The political control of the armed forces by the civilian authorities can be seen as a continuum, from no control at all to absolute control. It is perhaps most natural to expect that the disposition of the military to intervene would evidence the same continuity, with a steadily increasing or decreasing willingness to intervene. The greater the control the government attempts to exercise, the stronger the military reaction, or the greater the government control, the greater the risks involved in staging a coup and the less disposed the officers are to intervene. The truth probably lies somewhere in the middle, i.e. the likelihood of intervention increases as the government tries to control the armed forces, but it then diminishes when the control begins to be effective. Moreover, the likelihood of a coup is greatest precisely in connection with the implementation of a form.
government control. This relationship between the likelihood of a coup and the implementation of civilian control may be illustrated by the following diagram:

There are many different systems, or methods, which the civilian authorities can use in order to control and dominate the military establishment. A number of these methods are weak and ineffective and do not arouse any notable irritation among the officers. But there are other methods which are very effective, even if they are controversial and provoke many officers. Jacques van Doorn has described three options which new political systems (e.g. states which have undergone a revolution, new nations, such as former colonies, etc.) have for integrating the armed forces. These options are:

1) They can alter the system of recruitment, promotion and discharge so as to retain the most reliable officers and troops and at the same time recruit new members from the most loyal milieus.
2) They can control through indoctrination and political education, inculcating the new political formula and at the same time endeavouring to remove vestiges of loyalty to the old regime.
3) Direct control, using party leaders and political commissars within the military establishment.¹

Van Doorn’s system of control may certainly be singularly effective, but its limitation lies in the fact that it can only be implemented in already established societies at great risk. In many countries the military establishment already has such a strong position that it is not prepared to accept civilian intrusion into what it considers to be purely military affairs. Van Doorn’s system is perhaps the most effective control system, but there are and have been other ways for the civilian rulers to exercise control over the military establishment. Eric Nordlinger describes three models of civilian control which may be compared to Van Doorn’s control system.

1) The traditional model. The model is based on the premise that there are no distinct civilian-military differences. If no difference exists, then the military has no reason to intervene. The model is exemplified by the feudal system from

the Middle Ages, in which the feudal lords also had a military responsibility. During the 19th Century the system began to break down with the introduction of standing armies and the greater attention paid to education and skill in the recruitment of officers.

2) The liberal model. This model is characterized by an explicit differentiation between the roles of the civilian and the military authorities, the former assuming a distinctly superior position. The armed forces must have an attitude which Nordlinger calls "civilian ethic" and the civilians must for their part respect military honour, expertise, autonomy and political neutrality. They must not interfere in professional military affairs, nor introduce political considerations into the armed forces.

3) The penetration model. According to this model the civilian authorities obtain loyalty and obedience by penetrating the armed forces with political ideas and political personnel. Coupled with indoctrination is a system of surveillance, control and punishment. Nordlinger maintains that the penetration model has reached its most developed form in Communist countries. The model has also been adopted in a milder form in, for example, Guinea and Tanzania.2

Nordlinger's "penetration model" resembles van Doorn's control system. Both authors also share the view that many of the coups have been possible because of the absence of, or failure in, the establishment of a political control system.3 Eric Nordlinger notes as well that the penetration model is powerful in ensuring civilian control. He adds that there has been only one attempted coup in countries where such a model exists and that no successful coup has been executed. "...it might even be said that penetration comes close to guaranteeing civilian control".4

Nordlinger points out, however, that the actual introduction of control may lead to difficulties. One of these is the unwillingness of the armed forces to be controlled, which means that an attempt at penetration can create a motive for the military to seize power.5 In many states the armed forces wield a great deal of political influence and this influence they are hardly willing to surrender. It is then even less likely that they would allow themselves to be controlled. This is the main idea, for example, in Per-Aage Jacobsen's essay (Civil Military Tension and Political Underdevelopment in Black Africa) and Nordlinger also starts out from the premise that "The armed forces of all countries exert considerable political influence".6

Bengt Abrahamsson, too, observes that "Apart from the possibilities of exerting influence by means of force ... the military profession has considerable economic power at its disposal. The military profession in many countries today

5 Ibid.
constitutes one of the most significant pressure groups by virtue of the tremendous resources at its disposal”. ⁷

Another problem with the penetration model is that it cannot be applied to all political systems. For indoctrination and political control to be carried out successfully, there must be a degree of unanimity within the society as to which political ideas are to be indoctrinated and to what is to be controlled. This means that the penetration model is implemented most easily in states with a single political ideal, that is, with a single-party system or the like. ⁸ This does not mean, however, that the locus of political power should be geographically centred. In his manual for coups d'état, Luttwak has described how important it is for the armed forces that the political power is centred on a limited area, thus making it possible for the coup-makers to concentrate their efforts. A regional diffusion of the political power immediately makes the success of a takeover far more unlikely. ⁹ If the political power is decentralized, so that there are several political units, each with the ability to function independently, that is to say, they can continue to function even if the political centre has been neutralized by the armed forces, then the chances of a successful military intervention are greatly reduced. Such a distribution of political power might well be achieved through the mobilization of the masses and the creation of political organizations, such as trade unions and youth movements.

Nordlinger’s “liberal model” is perhaps the commonest form of political control. It rests on the assumption that, in simple terms, the armed forces do not intervene if they are left alone. S.E. Finer also considers this control system and concludes that “Firm acceptance of civilian supremacy not just professionalism, is the truly effective check”, ¹⁰ that is what Nordlinger calls “civilian ethic”. This interpretation of the liberal model says, however, very little. Finer’s statement is well-nigh tautological and all one learns is that the most effective way of preventing coups is for the armed forces not to stage a coup at all. They accept civilian supremacy until they can no longer accept it and then they assume power themselves. Finer’s thesis is not to be refuted, as far as I can see.

Henceforth, the term political control will refer to a form of control according to van Doorn’s model or to Nordlinger’s penetration model. The liberal model does not constitute any real control and the traditional model is an historical phenomenon that is unlikely to be found anywhere today. The relationship between political control and coups d’état may be summarized as follows: When the civilian authorities begin to exercise political control over the armed forces, the likelihood of there being a coup increases. But when this control becomes more effective, the potentiality diminishes. Furthermore, effective political control is easier to implement when a single political ideal prevails.

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⁷ B Abrahamsson (1972) p 7.
⁹ E Luttwak (1969) p 44.
The Establishment of Alternative Military Organizations

A well-organized political control of the armed forces by means of indoctrination, political infiltration and biased recruitment may then be a singularly effective factor in the upholding of a system. This is probably also true for the existence of effective alternative military organizations, such as security forces and people's militia, provided that they are totally independent of the armed forces and that they have sufficient physical strength to constitute a genuine threat to the military establishment in the event of an attempted coup. Of course, alternative military organizations give rise to alternative coup-makers, but as long as the organizations remain completely independent of each other, they will have the effect of counterbalancing one another. The situation in Ethiopia in December 1960 may serve as an example of this. There the imperial bodyguard seized and held power for several days until the emperor was reinstated with the assistance of the loyal army.

But just as the implementation of political control can precipitate a coup, so, too, is the establishment of alternative military organizations highly provocative. A political control system can be implemented gradually without evoking an immediate reaction from the armed forces, but when it comes to alternative organizations, their very creation is a critical moment. Eric Nordlinger writes, for example, that "autonomy and exclusiveness are highly valued within almost all military establishments. Civilian interference with internal military affairs and the creation of rival militias consequently trigger powerful interventionist motives." The relationship between the establishment of alternative military organizations and the likelihood of coups occurring may also be illustrated by a diagram:

Finer, too, has stressed the close connection between coups and the establishment of alternative military organizations. He writes that "Anxiety to preserve its autonomy provides one of the most widespread and powerful of the motives for intervention". Citing a number of examples from Latin America, he

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attempts to show that the armed forces react strongly when a government is suspected of wanting to create some form of militia.\textsuperscript{13}

It should perhaps be emphasized that the military establishment perceives the establishment of alternative organisations by the civilian government as a direct motivation for a takeover. On the other hand, citing the new organizations in order to justify a takeover is not a simple matter. It is hardly likely that a large section of the population will understand and accept the military claim for exclusiveness since the principal function of the armed forces, at least officially, is to protect the country from foreign aggressors, and the introduction of compulsory military service or the creation of a people’s militia may also serve the same purpose. Thus when the military justify a coup in their initial declarations by citing the existence of alternative organizations, the justification must be modified so that the real motive is not revealed. Alternative organizations have been cited in many African coups, but the coupmakers have been careful to focus their criticism on a particular aspect of the problem and not on the organizations as such. Sometimes, for example, security forces are criticized for having been organized and trained with foreign assistance. Nkrumah of Ghana was criticized for having had a Cuban-trained presidential bodyguard, the President’s Own Guard. Amin accused the Obote government of having created an elite security force allegedly recruited with an ethnic bias, and Obote’s plans to introduce a ”civil service” was criticized on the grounds that it would force able-bodied men away from their homes and encourage crime, not because it involved military training outside the direct control of the regular army.

The problem with paramilitary organizations is to be found in many of the African coups. It goes without saying that the reaction of the armed forces to these organizations is strong, but it is not always possible for the military to stage a coup directly in connection with the creation of the organizations. The coupmakers must wait for a suitable political climate to arise, such as an economic decline (see chapter 3). That coups do not always occur in direct connection with the establishment of alternative organizations is thus due, not to the fact that the armed forces lack a motive, but to their lack of acceptable justifications.

\textbf{Government Use of the Armed Forces for Police Action}

Most of the authors are in complete agreement that there is a connection between military coups and the use of the armed forces in police actions. The more the civilian government is obliged to rely on the army to maintain order in the country, the greater the risk that the soldiers themselves will assume power. The relationship may be illustrated as follows: (see next page)

When it comes to interpreting the implications of this relationship, or its cause, the researchers no longer agree. There are two separate, though not necessarily mutually exclusive, interpretations. The first, which is supported by Finer, among others, is based on military professionalism and the military conception of

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid p 55.
the true function of the armed forces. Finer describes it in the following way: "There is yet a third reason why professionalism may give rise to intervention. This is the military reluctance to be used to coerce the government’s domestic opponents. The professional army sees itself as the nation’s custodian against foreign foes; the foreigner is the enemy, not a fellow national. It also sees itself as a fighting force, not as a body of policemen. It often vents its discomfort at having to act against its own nationals by blaming the 'politicians', and by thinking of itself as being 'used' by these for their own sordid purposes. The strain which such duties put on the loyalty of the armed forces is often too great and impels them to disobey or even to act against their government". Eric Nordlinger, too, discusses the reluctance of the military to being used for police action. The officers value their hierarchy and discipline very highly and are thus afraid that the slightest sign of disorder is fraught with the direst of consequences. If political order cannot be maintained, it is blamed on the weakness of the politicians and the military dislike having to come to the aid of the politicians in order to quell riots and prevent demonstrations, etc. Nordlinger also argues that the armed forces are likely to intervene whenever political turbulence is so great that the government is forced to call on them for assistance. Such action is not considered by the armed forces to be a part of their duties.

The argument for the supposed concern of the armed forces for their own countrymen and thus their unwillingness to act as policemen is perhaps most clearly expressed in the above quotation from Finer. But if we examine the situation in a number of states in which the armed forces have seized power, the concern for fellow countrymen hardly appears to be overwhelming. We need only to recall the events in Argentina, El Salvador and Chile to realize that the violence of the repression exerted on "fellow countrymen" far exceeds the measure of police action which the armed forces may be called upon to perform by the civilian governments. Concern for "fellow countrymen" can scarcely account for military coups.

In the quotation from Finer there is also a reference to the real function of the professional army, that is, to be "the nation’s custodian against foreign foes".

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14 Ibid p 27.
15 E Nordlinger (1977) pp 54 f.
16 Ibid p 91.
When a country is torn by political strife and the armed forces are obliged to intervene, attention is drawn away from the proper field of duty and one can expect the professional soldier to react strongly. Yet this is not sufficient to explain why the armed forces sometimes seize power when they are being used for police action. The officers must be very well aware that a takeover requires a far greater degree of commitment in the sphere of domestic politics. The very running of the government would absorb a considerable amount of time and energy on the part of the top officers and the upholding of the military regime may demand further police action. In this way, the real duty of the armed forces suffers more from a military coup than from any duties which the civilian government might have imposed.

There is, however, one particular kind of military takeover which may be explained in terms of the officer's sense of duty. In states where the armed forces have already assumed power, a new, often younger group of officers may revolt against their senior colleagues in the government. This second coup is sometimes carried out only to reinstate a civilian form of government and may well be due, among other things, to a feeling among the younger officers that the real duties of the armed forces have suffered because of the involvement in politics.

Support for my argument that the armed forces are not so averse to taking police action against their own countrymen is to be found in the work of Bassam Tibi. In his typology of present-day armies, which I referred to above, we find the "ex-colonial army". These armies were recruited during the colonial period and acted principally as punitive and disciplinary forces. To a great extent they have retained their structure and composition and "Sie identifizieren sich nicht mit der einheimischen Bevölkerung und sind bei dieser auch nicht beliebt". According to Tibi, this type of army is common in Africa south of the Sahara. 17

Another interpretation of the relationship between military coups and police action by the armed forces lays greatest stress upon the fact that the civilian authorities are forced to turn to the armed forces in order to maintain order. Military distaste for police work is therefore not seen as a motive for a takeover. The emphasis is placed instead on the fact that the situation creates an opportunity for a military intervention. "Opportunities to intervene occurred in many forms - widespread strikes or demonstrations against the government, severe economic difficulties, the undesired dependence of the government upon the armed forces to maintain control over a rapidly deteriorating situation", Welch writes. 18 He also holds that the dependence on the armed forces reflects a loss of prestige for the civilian government. 19

Huntington discusses various ways in which the armed forces can act whenever the workers of a country go on strike. One possibility is for the armed forces to support the regime, but it is also possible for them to support the workers against the regime. A third possibility is for the armed forces to seize the

17 B Tibi (1972) pp 56 ff and p 71.
18 C Welch Jr (1970) p VIII.
opportunity to "restore law and order" and so assume power themselves, without for that matter supporting the workers, against whom they might soon turn.\textsuperscript{20} According to Huntington, the second possibility, that the armed forces support the workers, is relatively unusual.

Huntington does not deal directly with the question of how the armed forces react to police duties, but his examples show how they can exploit the situation in order to come to power. Huntington regards military professionalism primarily as a guarantee against intervention, in contrast to Finer, who maintained that professionalism lay at the root of military intervention.\textsuperscript{21}

Bearing in mind the often quite brutal repression of citizens by military regimes, it seems hardly likely that police action would constitute a \textit{motive} for intervention. Alternatively, it is highly probable that the armed forces would cite such a situation in \textit{justification} of a coup that has been executed for completely different reasons. The correlation between coups and police action performed by the armed forces can probably be explained by taking into account the situation prevailing in a country where the civilian government is forced to use the armed forces to maintain order. The coup can be justified by citing, on the one hand, the police work, which is not part of their real duty, and on the other, the situation in the country which gave rise to the disturbances. If the armed forces have a motive for a takeover, then such a situation presents no lack of justifications that may be acceptable to the population.

\textsuperscript{20} S Huntington (1968) pp 214 ff.
\textsuperscript{21} J van Doorn (1970) pp 28 ff.
5. Explanations Connected with Intramilitary Conditions

The armed forces are never completely isolated from the rest of society. This means that there are no purely military factors which in themselves can fully explain military intervention in politics. As already noted in the previous chapters, certain phenomena cannot be isolated to account for military intervention solely on the basis of, for example, the situation within a society. Similarly, the situation within the armed forces is in part formed by factors present in society or by the relationship between the society and the military. In the research literature there are, however, certain explanations which are derived from the situation within the armed forces and which endeavour to explain why the armed forces of one country refrain from seizing power, whereas in another country they decide to take over, even though other factors, within the society or in the relationship between the armed forces and the government, are constant and similar in both countries.

In the literature on military coups there are quite often explanations which concern the degree of professionalism of the officer corps. A number of other explanations deal with class and group conflicts within the military hierarchy and with ethnic conflict within the armed forces. Of these explanations, those which deal with professionalism in particular are marked by ambiguity and contradictions.

The confusion which exists with regard to the concept of professionalism has in some measure to do with the fact that the concept is inadequately defined, or defined according to different criteria and that these include factors which both encourage and discourage coups. As a result, some writers view a higher degree of professionalism as a guarantee against military intervention in politics, while others maintain that the degree of professionalization is irrelevant, or that it quite frankly increases the likelihood of coups. The prevailing confusion calls for a closer examination of how the concept is treated.

Military Professionalism

The meaning which is commonly ascribed to the term "professionalism" is related to the distinction between conscripted armies and professional, regular armies. Professional in this case is understood simply to mean that the individual soldier has chosen the army as his particular career. However, as far as the countries discussed in this thesis are concerned, the distinction is superfluous since only professional armies are involved.
A simple and not completely uncommon interpretation of the term is to be found in the works of authors who have sought the causes of coups in the different forms of military training. The officers who have been trained in the British tradition at the Sandhurst Military Academy are thus considered more "professional" than those who have been trained by the French at St. Cyr. The difference is said to lie in the attitude towards the state. Like the British civil servant, the British officer is trained to be loyal to the civilian government regardless of which political party is in power. This interpretation of professionalism seems mainly to be interested in the actual practising of the profession and as long as an army devotes itself to the execution of the duties assigned to it by the political decision-makers, it can be regarded as professional. This distinction has, however, not been able to shed light upon the African coups.

Investing the concept of professionalism with a more complex meaning has consequently made it more controversial. In his book, "The Man on Horseback", Finer has, for instance, criticized the way in which Samuel Huntington has used and defined the concept in "The Soldier and the State". It is the concept of "social responsibility" in Huntington’s definition of professionalism which Finer accuses of being self-fulfilling (see below). According to Huntington, professionalism is characterized by professional skill, social responsibility and corporative loyalty. Using this definition, he argues that a highly professionalized officer corps is little disposed to intervene in political issues. The sense of social responsibility means, among other things, that officers feel a sense of responsibility toward a client, that is, toward the state. Their duty is to organize and train a force which is capable of defending the nation. In addition, they must equip this force, plan its activity and possibly lead it into action. This is a full-time occupation and the greater the degree of professionalism is developed, the more the officers become involved in their own technical assignments and the less time they have over for political issues which do not directly concern them. Therefore the best way to keep the armed forces isolated from politics would be to encourage them to be as professional as possible.

There are, however, a couple of weaknesses in this argument. Firstly, responsibility toward a client by definition excludes the possibility of a coup. With this sort of definition it is not surprising that Huntington can speak of the military as being "politically sterile and neutral..." since the definition implies that no officer corps which intervenes in politics can be fully professional. It is this weakness which Finer has noted and he has thus tried to extract "responsibility" from the definition. In this way the concept of professionalism becomes a usable analytic variable. However, we are confronted by a new contradiction when

2. See Finer’s critics on Huntington in S E Finer (1962) pp 24 f. But in "Political Order ..." Huntington has stressed that the reasons for the coups are not to be found within the military establishment. Instead one should look for them in the political and institutional structures in society. See more in S Huntington (1968) p 194.
Finer claims that "if the armed forces are not to intervene, they must believe in an explicit principle – the principle of civil supremacy".3

This new thesis cannot be disputed, but it does not say anything about the causes of coups d'état since every army which intervenes in politics must also be said to lack belief in the explicit principle.

The second weakness lies in the premise that the professional army is completely occupied with the practice of its profession. The thesis may hold on the condition that the civilian leaders readily fall in with all that the military establishment wishes, but reality shows that there is almost always a sharp divergence of opinion between politicians and the military over the question of determining the size of budget allocations to the armed forces. If the military lays claim to a decisive role in the planning of the state budget, one can hardly speak of a politically sterile and neutral officer corps. The military interest in defence allocations, however, may very well be of a professional nature and may even be related to "the responsibility toward a client". On the basis of its professional skill, the military can thus come to the conclusion that it requires increased allocations in order to satisfactorily fulfil its responsibility as protector of the nation. In this way the paradox arises that the military, in order to meet its responsibility to the nation, sees itself forced to betray its responsibility to the government by seizing political power.

It is the duty of the professional commanders to modernize and develop the armed forces and it is with this in mind that they are to estimate their financial requirements. Thus it is as professionals that the officers make their allocation demands and that is why it is the professional officer who reacts when he is confronted by a government refusal to allocate to the armed forces an "adequate" budget. Claude Welch has assumed that it would be possible for the African states, which have proportionately by far the world's smallest armies, to reduce the incidence of, or even to preclude, military intervention if they were to increase their military budgets.4 Eric Nordlinger, too, suggests that many of the coups can be explained by military dissatisfaction over budgetary allocations and that "... one of their chief motivations in taking power is to increase the defence budget ...".5

Military professionalism may therefore precipitate a coup whenever a conflict arises between the civilian and the military authorities over the size of an adequate budget allocation. There is another way in which military professionalism may affect the possibility of a coup occurring. This is in the particular event that the armed forces have already taken power and the top-ranking officers are highly involved in the political sphere. If this is so, the officers who are more concerned with the military aspects may choose to intervene in order to cut down the political involvement of the armed forces. In the eyes of the

5 E Nordlinger (1977) p 68.
professional officers, military rule is in this case harmful to military unity and
effectiveness.\textsuperscript{6}

The above account of the significance of professionalism vis-à-vis coups d’état
shows on the one hand the importance of a clear definition of the concept, and on
the other, that the significance of professionalism vis-à-vis coups is not
unequivocal. If a professional officer devotes himself wholly to the practice of his
profession, he may consequently have no time for politics, but than again, he may
begin to demand a degree of political/economic influence in the planning of the
defence budget. However, before I proceed in the attempt to determine the
explanatory value of professionalism, I shall endeavour to find an acceptable
definition of the concept.

In his thesis, ”Militärer, makt och politik”, Bengt Abrahamsson has defined a
profession as an occupation in which the members
a) possess a high degree of specialized, theoretical
knowledge and have the means of
applying this knowledge in their daily duties.
b) The members of the profession are moreover expected to perform their duties
in accordance with a code of ethics and
c) the members are united by a high degree of esprit de corps derived from a common
training and a common adherence to certain doctrines and methods.\textsuperscript{7}

Eric Nordlinger summarizes what he considers to be the most important
elements of professionalism in the following manner: ”Like other professionals­
doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers and scientists - military officers are
professional in the sense that they place a high value upon autonomy,
exclusiveness and expertise”\textsuperscript{8}. Thus for Nordlinger, it is autonomy, exclusiveness and
expertise which characterize professionalism. This definition differs from both
Abrahamsson’s and Huntington’s definitions. Huntington named professional
skill, social responsibility and corporative loyalty as important factors.

Finally, if one looks up the word ”professionalism” in ”Sociologisk
uppslagsbok” (sociological ref.book)\textsuperscript{9} one finds, for instance, the following:

”...Members of a profession have a common conceptual framework since the long and
specialized education creates a sense of community and solidarity and exclusiveness as well
as a distaste for outside interference in questions of professional ethics and assessment of
performance. The group possesses special skills which are of great importance for the
system of values obtaining in society or to those who are dependent upon the
services of the group...” (my italics).

In order to reach a definition which as far as possible covers the most important
criteria of professionalism but which at the same time conforms more or less with
the usage in the relevant literature, I shall summarize the most important criteria
according to some of the authors in tabular form:

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
Criteria & Authors & Definition \\
\hline
High degree of specialization & Abrahamsson & Members possess specialized knowledge. \\
\hline
Code of ethics & Abrahamsson & Members perform duties in accordance with code of ethics. \\
\hline
Esprit de corps & Nordlinger & Members united by common training and adherence. \\
\hline
Autonomy, exclusiveness, expertise & Nordlinger & Essential elements for professionalism. \\
\hline
Common conceptual framework & Sociological ref. book & Members have shared values and skills. \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{6} C Welch Jr (1970) pp 54 f.
\textsuperscript{7} B Abrahamsson (1972) pp 11 f.
\textsuperscript{8} E Nordlinger (1977) p 47.
\textsuperscript{9} M Bengtsson and B Hjern (1973) pp 215 f.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Special knowledge</th>
<th>Code of ethics</th>
<th>Esprit de corps</th>
<th>Exclusiveness</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abrahamsson</td>
<td>specialized, theoretical knowledge</td>
<td>code of ethics</td>
<td>esprit de corps</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordlinger</td>
<td>expertise</td>
<td>autonomy</td>
<td></td>
<td>exclusiveness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huntington</td>
<td>professional skill</td>
<td>social respons-</td>
<td>corporate</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>ibility</td>
<td>loyalty</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Sociologisk uppslagsbok&quot;</td>
<td>specialized education special skills</td>
<td>professional ethics</td>
<td>community</td>
<td>exclusiveness</td>
<td>common conceptual framework</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the table shows, it is above all Nordlinger who differs from the rest. Nordlinger has consciously excluded "service and responsibility to a client" since he, like Finer, believes that such a definition precludes the possibility of a military intervention. Finer has pointed out, however, that the military responsibility to a client could be directed toward the nation instead of toward the government in office and with such an interpretation of the ethical rules, the contradiction disappears. Indeed, the armed forces very often justify their coups precisely on the grounds of their responsibility to the nation.

*Sociologisk Uppslagsbok* and Nordlinger have also included the concept of "exclusiveness" in their definitions, by which they mean that professionals consider themselves the only ones entitled to execute the duties of their profession. Although this concept is closely related to the concepts of "autonomy" and "esprit de corps", it touches upon an aspect of professionalism which does not emerge with the help of the latter two concepts. With regard to the empirical reality, the inclusion of "exclusiveness" in an analysis of coups d'état is well justified. On a number of occasions it seems clear that there has been a very distinct connection between the government's creation of alternative military organizations and the immediate response of the armed forces. From the point of view of common usage, too, it is reasonable to include "exclusiveness" in a definition of the wider concept of professionalism.

The concept of "autonomy" is also specific to Nordlinger and *Sociologisk uppslagsbok*. It may perhaps be said to be embraced in some measure by Abrahamsson's "esprit de corps" and Huntington's "corporative loyalty", but it involves more than these concepts. Professional autonomy is the desire to independently make a number of decisions concerning the practising of a profession and the claim for autonomy is justified on the grounds of the professionals' special expertise. Like exclusiveness, autonomy is of considerable explanatory value in an analysis of military coups, but autonomy is a more differentiated concept and is without the polarization of exclusiveness. Either a
professional group is the sole performer of a profession’s principal function or it is not. Absolute autonomy for a profession is, however, hardly conceivable since the duties themselves are linked to the surrounding society. The political leaders can make decisions concerning defence treaties with other nations and they can sign international disarmament treaties and the like without the armed forces being able to claim that their autonomy has been challenged. On the other hand, political decisions concerning officer recruitment and promotion may be taken as intrusion and as a threat to the autonomy of the profession.

I noted earlier that Nordlinger consciously avoids including ethical precepts, especially "service and responsibility to a client", in his definition of professionalism. However, it is obvious that most professions do have a code of ethics for professional conduct. Most professional armies accept, at least formally, certain international agreements on conduct towards the civilian population and on how, for instance, prisoners-of-war are to be treated. But even if professional ethics clearly do exist, they do not constitute any constant variable and they do not appear to add to the understanding of military coups. As noted above, Finer has shown that responsibility to a client can be re-defined to apply to the nation rather than to the government and this flexible interpretation of ethical precepts can also be found in relation to other rules of professional conduct. It has often happened in war, for example, that, contrary to the existing code of ethics, prisoners-of-war have been shot and outrages committed against the civilian population. Thus military objectives may take precedence over ethics and in explaining coups d’état, ethics are of less importance than exclusiveness and autonomy.

In its definition of professionalism, Sociologisk uppslagsbok also refers to a "common conceptual framework" and Abrahamsson has dealt at length with "the professional way of thinking". Such a common way of thinking is imparted to the members of a profession partly through indoctrination during the period of training and partly in connection with the practising of the profession, but it may also be the outcome of selection to the profession. "To a large extent individuals who enlist in the armed forces are already a quite special group since many have chosen the profession according to their set of values; ...", Abrahamsson explains. He goes on to specify the variables which are normally part of the military way of thinking. These are: 1) nationalism 2) a pessimistic view of human nature, 3) alarmists (fears that war is highly probable), 4) political conservatism and 5) authoritarian attitude. Political conservatism arises from the fact that the military usually identify with parties or groups which are openly nationalistic and it is therefore not as pronounced in some Third World countries, where even radical parties and groups can often be strongly nationalistic. Furthermore, the authoritarian attitude of the military establishment is generally a reflection of the military hierarchy within the

10 B Abrahamsson (1972) pp 88 ff.
11 Ibid p 88.
12 Ibid p 93.
organization and it is therefore possible that a change in the structure of the organization may weaken the authoritarian attitude.

If a special army mentality does exist, as Abrahamsson maintains, it is reasonable to suppose that this way of thinking in some way influenced the officers in their decisions to intervene in politics. Such a supposition is supported by Claude Welch, among others, who presumes that officers have a puritanical disposition and that they consequently react strongly, for example to corruption in society.\(^{13}\)

It is evident from the above that military professionalism cannot be treated as a single variable. Henceforth, a military professional army is to be understood as a military organization which is characterized by:

- a high degree of specialized, theoretical knowledge and professional skill,
- certain ethical precepts,
- a high degree of esprit de corps, which is manifested, for example, in
  - demands for a degree of autonomy and
  - demands for maintaining exclusiveness, as well as
- certain common conceptual frameworks.

The various aspects of military professionalism affect the possibility of coups in different ways. The variation of the sub-variables can be determined and it should then be possible to find the relationships between these variables and the likelihood of coups occurring. Even so, it is unlikely that a generalization can be drawn on how "professionalism" as an overall concept is related to coups.

a) Military training has been regarded by many as a guarantee that the professional army will keep out of politics. Huntington, as well as a number of other theorists, believes that the effect of proper professional training is that the officers are so caught up in the practising of their profession that they have no time over to become involved in any form of politics. Alternatively, Erik Nordlinger, Bassam Tibi and others have maintained that today's officer training often includes a social content with courses such as sociology, political science, economics, etc. With such an education the officers may be tempted to conduct their own analysis of society and to come with their own solutions to societal problems. If the officers, on the basis of their modern, socially-oriented training, find that the policies of the government are not conducive to the development of the nation, then the probability of a military intervention becomes greater.

b) There does not appear to be any special military code of ethics governing the professional army's conduct toward a sitting government. As noted above, the officers can justify their actions on the grounds of their loyalty to the nation and not to the government in office. In a number of cases, the officers have referred to their "moral duty" in connection with a takeover, but just as often there are no references to what might be called a military code of ethics. It is quite evident that no military code of ethics effectively prevents military coups, since, among other reasons, ethics are more flexible than other military interests. On the other hand, the armed forces may justify their intervention on the grounds of ethical rules.

c) Esprit de corps, expressed in terms of the demand for autonomy and exclusiveness, mainly concerns the relationship to the government and has been discussed in chapter four. But esprit de corps can also be understood to mean a special form of group loyalty which may lead to the corps as a whole acting on behalf of a colleague. This kind of reaction is certainly closely related to the demand for autonomy since the reaction comes when an "outsider" interferes in the "affairs" of the corps, but even so, this aspect of esprit de corps may well be worth noting.

d) Without a comprehensive sociological study it is difficult to ascertain which conceptual frameworks are common to all, or to most, African armies. Some writers argue that the military distrust politics in general and adopt a negative attitude to the frequent compromises of the politicians. 14 On the other hand, even many military rulers have been drawn into political compromises and other political affairs following a coup, which would suggest that the aversion to politics is not too deeply anchored in the military conceptual framework. Abrahamsson includes an authoritarian attitude as a variable in the military mentality (see above) and this may indeed explain how the officer corps can gain the support of the men in a coup. It does not explain, however, the reasons for the coup since the authoritarian attitude exists in many armies which do not intervene in politics.

The Military Organization

The significance of the military organization for coups can be viewed in two ways. Firstly, organization can account for why it is the military which stages a coup, and secondly, according to some authors, why the military stages a coup.

One may say that the armed forces, apart from the police, are normally the only large group in society which has the legal right to bear arms. This, combined with the hierarchical structure, means that a small group of officers has at its disposal a tremendous potential for violence. Furthermore, in the event of a coup d'état they seldom have any real enemy on whom to unleash this violence since they are themselves the guardians of the state against, amongst other things, the illegal assumption of power. As a rule, other groups in society have great difficulty in carrying out an unconstitutional change of power if they have not first secured the goodwill of the armed forces or at worst, if at least the armed forces are divided amongst themselves or can be expected to remain neutral.

The upper echelon of the officer corps constitutes the only group in society which can stage a coup without a good deal of planning and careful calculation. They are the only ones who can carry out in such a situation extremely well-organized actions spontaneously. The lower down one comes in the hierarchy, the fewer the possibilities become for "spontaneous" action and the greater the necessity for conspiracy and careful planning. It is common in the literature to look for different political motives depending upon which level in the hierarchy has executed the coup. Higher-ranking officers are associated with conservative policies and lower-ranking officers with more radical policies. But

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14 See e.g. E Nordlinger (1977) pp 151 ff.
what I have said above on the significance of hierarchy for "spontaneity" and the
greater necessity for conspiracy and planning on the lower levels, means that one
can expect that a coup which has been carried out by lower-ranking officers will
result in a more collective assumption of power in the form of a junta or the like.
Similarly, one can expect a coup by lower-ranking officers to be based on some
form of jointly planned programme.

The form of the organization is therefore important in explaining why it is
precisely the military which carry out the coups d'état. But organization has also
been used to account for a number of coup motives. Some writers contend that the
officers compare the politicians' clumsy attempts to cope with all the conflicting
demands with the effectiveness of their own organizations and that they intervene
in order to pursue an effective policy with military precision and organization.15
This pattern has perhaps been particularly common in conjunction with acute
problems, such as, for instance, the severe famines in the countries on the
southern edge of the Sahara where the armed forces reacted against the poor
organization of the relief programmes.

Class Conflict and Ethnic/Regional Strife Within
the Military Establishment

Bengt Abrahamsson has pointed out that the recruitment base for the armed
forces, or at least for the officer corps, is of no major significance for group
identification since the officers will adopt the values of their profession.
However, the economic stratification within the military system may sometimes
lead to a form of internal class confrontation. Other types of group conflict may
also arise and lead to political action.

An important reason behind a person's class ties and class identification lies in
his relationship to the means of production. In some armies of a more traditional
nature an almost feudal fief system exists, which can result in class division
between the highest-ranking officers and the rest of the army. In such a situation,
the economic-based class conflicts may take on a greater importance than the
common set of values existing within an army. In this way, a situation may be
reached resembling that in Ethiopia, where the younger officers protested
against the system and arrested their senior colleagues. This is a form of class
struggle on a relatively low level of consciousness, where the actors are
principally aware only of the economic discrepancies within their own
organization. But such a reaction may also lead to a class analysis of the entire
society and, as in Ethiopia, culminate in a radical, subversive course of action.

The case of Ethiopia does not constitute, however, an example of a military
coup since the "coupmakers" had no ambition of assuming power in the country
when they mutinied in 1974. It was only later, when their awareness grew and
they were forced to make an analysis of the society, that they took the side of the
broad masses against the regime and its conservative policy (the example of
Ethiopia involves only the change of power itself, not the internal power struggles

which ensued). Thus class conflict within the army can be of significance for the army’s political activity, but it is only when the officer corps sees the situation in relation to the whole of society and to the conditions within the society that class conflict has direct consequences on the political level.

One type of group conflict which differs from the semi-feudal class conflict can be found in many of the African armies. This is a type of confrontation which Bassam Tibi, for example, has noted and which consists of a conflict between the older generation of officers, who acquired their position and authority through the acute need of indigenous officers, and the younger officers, who gained their positions on the basis of theoretical and practical qualifications. It is therefore a situation which is characterized by a lower level in the hierarchy being superior to the top level of the hierarchy in terms of theoretical knowledge. This generation gap is important to note since it may easily lead to conflicts over promotion.

In the case of ethnic and regional strife within the organization, it is difficult to determine how great a role such discord actually plays. It is clear that ethnic and regional conflict within society can have, and often has had, great significance for political development, but not all are convinced that such conflicts within the army can have political implications. There are some writers who contend that the national army is like a melting pot in which ethnic and regional interests are melted down into a single unified national interest. According to these writers, training and the high level of technology within the armed forces have the effect that the officers and men can more easily disregard the minor regional and ethnic interests. However, as far as Africa is concerned, this point of view is of little relevance since these armies have neither a high level of technology nor a high level of training. Instead, many African states attach more importance to attempts to make recruitment to the armed forces and to the officer corps as ethnically and regionally representative as possible. Such a recruitment policy may in some measure reduce the risks of conflict arising from the predominance of certain ethnic and regional groups within the military or the public sectors. But such a manipulated recruitment may also lead to discontent among groups whose dominance is based on merit and it can hamper political recruitment according to the control model as sketched in chapter four.

The ethnic and regional conflicts which occur within the armed forces probably lead primarily to a weakening of the organization’s readiness to act and can reduce the chances of a successful coup. If the armed forces are marked by internal conflict, then it is more likely that the conflict will turn into mutiny and insurgency rather than lead to a takeover. Ethnic or regional conflict within the society which is not manifested within the armed forces may, on the other hand, encourage the military to intervene in politics.

16 B Tibi (1972) pp 64 f.
17 See e.g. C Welch Jr (1970) pp 41 about the difficulties African armies have in bridging ethnic and regional cleavages. See also J van Doorn (1970) p 19 about recruitment and also chapter three above. Compare with the situation in Nigeria in 1966 as described in S Wiking (1981) pp 75 ff.
6. Explanations Connected with Individual Perspectives

The explanations which I have so far considered have all been of a relatively general nature. Yet there are also researchers who argue that the most important cause of military intervention is related to specific individuals in the officer corps and to factors which are personal to these officers. Samuel Decalo writes in the introduction to his book that "The purpose of this study is to shift the attention away from the discipline’s fixation upon the systematic weaknesses of African states and the organizational features of African armies as reasons for coups to the internal dynamics of African military hierarchies, their officer cliques, and corporate and personal ambitions".¹ And a little further on he adds, "... insufficient weight is placed on the personal motives of ambitious or discounted officers, ...".²

Decalo adopts a critical attitude to previous attempts to account for coups in Africa. He maintains that he can distinguish two schools of thought in the field of theory-building; one has looked for explanations in the structural weaknesses of society and the other has sought explanations in the organization of the military establishment. The reasons which these two schools suggest may indeed have played a part, but according to Decalo, the officers’ personal ambitions play a far more important role and should therefore stand in the centre of research on African coups. Then he points out some of the personal reasons which Soglo in Dahomey, Bokassa in the C.A.R. and Amin in Uganda, among others, may have had in seizing power in their respective countries.³

One problem with Decalo’s individualizing approach is that it hinders the search for more general explanations. Even if it can be convincingly demonstrated that Soglo seized power in Dahomey because he had been humiliated the day before by the civilian politicians, this tells us nothing about why Idi Amin overthrew Obote in Uganda. Nor does it tell us anything about how it is that these particular individuals in the military establishment can persuade colleagues to risk life and property on behalf of a single officer’s wounded honour or personal ambition. Finally, the individualistic approach does not say anything about why some by-passed, humiliated and ambitious officers do not revolt and seize power, honour and riches in their countries.

¹ S Decalo (1976) p 3.
² Ibid p 21.
³ Ibid pp 15 ff.
Decalo maintains that the difficulty with generalizing the causes of coups has meant that an increasing number of researchers are refocussing their attention on already established military regimes and are concentrating on descriptions and explanations of these regimes and their rule. This is also a very important field of research, but one cannot fully understand and account for the aspects of military rule if one does not also understand the motives behind the takeovers.4

If one is really to understand the motives behind a coup d’État, it is reasonable not only to look for the personal motives of the officer who instigates the coup, but perhaps above all to look for the collective motives which are strong enough to induce an entire group of officers to jeopardize their existence.

I have previously stated that the officer corps may have an official justification for a takeover and that this justification may differ from the true motives which the officers believe they have for seizing power. The official justification may, for instance, be linked to the civilian government’s economic failures, whereas the officers’ ”true” motives are perhaps to be found in their dissatisfaction with the annual military budget, which they consider inadequate. But one may take this a step further and this brings us to the actual instigator. According to Decalo, the instigator is often prompted by personal motives. He may then have his own motive, but in order to persuade the other officers to join him, he will most probably need a justification which the others can find acceptable. Thus, for example, we can imagine a case where an officer is afraid of a civil action which could reveal uncomfortable facts about him. He then turns to his fellow-officers and encourages them, using the low military budget as a pretext, to seize power in the country. The relationship may be described by a figure:

(A) MOTIVE (ex.: civil action) \[\text{JUSTIFICATION (ex.: budget)}\] \(\rightarrow\) (B) MOTIVE (budget) \[\text{JUSTIFICATION (ex.: econ. failure)}\] \(\rightarrow\) (C) MOTIVE (econ. failures)

In the figure (A) represents the instigating officer, (B) represents the officers involved, (C) represents the citizens.

("Motive" under (C) stands for the considerations which result in the new regime being accepted in one way or another. This motive may coincide with the motive from (B), but it may also be based, for instance, on respect for the military potential for violence.)

In order to reach an understanding of why the armed forces have seized power in a number of African states, it would appear to be useful to examine the officers’ motives for taking action and the justifications which they deem feasible, that is to say, the official reasons given for the takeovers. The personal motives of the instigating officer may very well be of interest, but if the officer has no justification which his colleagues can accept, his chances of staging a coup are extremely limited. It is also important that there is a justification which is more or less acceptable to the citizens. A coup can be executed even without such an official

justification, but the risks of the coup being met by some form of resistance diminish if the officers can claim that they have a legitimate right to intervene.

An outcome of the personalistic approach may be that researchers will neglect the structural weaknesses which exist in African societies and which are often cited in the justifications of the coups. Furthermore, attention may also be drawn away from the external influences and the impact the international system has on the various countries and on the likelihood of coups occurring. If, however, interest is centred on the officers involved, one remains open to the possibility that influences may have come from different directions, including individual officers and/or foreign interests.
PART II

Empirical Presentation and Typology

In the case of practically every military coup, the new rulers, in the immediate aftermath of the takeover, usually offer an explanation of why they considered it necessary to overthrow the previous regime and to assume political responsibility themselves. This first explanation, which in the present thesis is called the initial declaration (ID), need not necessarily be true, but it must be understandable and acceptable to the population and must therefore bear some relation to reality. Furthermore, the formulation of this declaration may be significant for the manner in which the population reacts to the change of power. If the new regime is to be able to function at all, it needs active support from at least a large section of the civilian administration. In addition to this, there is the fact that the initial declaration is made before the actual possession of power has the opportunity to influence the new rulers' ambitions and intentions. The justification in the initial declarations may therefore be presumed to say more about the actual causes of the coups than any later statements and declarations.

I have previously stated that both motives and justifications may be looked for in connection with coups d'état. Insofar as the actual motives of the instigator of a coup are concerned, it is, however, extremely difficult to find sources that are reliable, and thus one is obliged to turn instead to more or less credible, though unverifiable, suppositions. In "Afrikanska Militärkupper" (presented in the introduction), I have discussed a little what the likely motives for coups may have been and will therefore not review them in this context. Justifications for the coups by the armed forces, in contrast to motives, are recorded in the transcripts of the radio programmes in which they were given and may therefore be used as objects of various forms of comparative analysis. In the descriptions of the coups which I shall present in this section, I shall therefore keep mainly to the official justifications given in the initial declarations.
7. Various Justifications

In coups d'état, the coupmakers almost always explain why they consider it justified and necessary to overthrow the civilian rulers and to assume political responsibility. These justifications can differ very much and are sometimes presented in just a few short sentences, at other times in long speeches corresponding to several pages of solid text. In spite of this variety, one can recognize the same types of justifications in the various initial declarations and one can also reduce them to a limited number of recurrent issues. One justification may, for instance, concern the civilian leaders' use of politics for their own gain, the general issue being one of corruption. So as to recognize the different justifications and issues more easily, I have compiled them in a list with letters for the issues and numbers for the justifications. These symbols/figures are also used later in the descriptions of the coups.

**TABLE OF JUSTIFICATIONS**

**Justifications dealing with the politicians' misrule and incompetence**

A. *Misrule in general.*
   A 1) The politicians are incompetent.
   A 2) The politicians have not been capable of governing in the higher interest of the nation.

B. *political power struggles.*
   B 3) Politics has been marked by personal intrigues and disputes.
   B 4) The politicians are greedy for power.
   B 5) The politicians have involved themselves in internal power struggles.

C. *Lack of democracy*
   C 6) There has been a centralization of political power.
   C 7) Opposition has been banned/obstructed.
   C 8) There has been a lack of democracy
   C 9) The regime has been dictatorial.

D. *Lack of law and order.*
   D 10) The politicians' conduct has weakened law and order.
   D 11) The politicians' conduct has reduced public security.

E. *Lack of success in nation-building.*
   E 12) The politicians are guilty of tribalism.
   E 13) The politicians have aggravated (regional) cleavages.
   E 14) The policies have led to international isolation.
   E 15) The politicians have failed to unite the nation.
F. Corruption.
F 16) The politicians are corrupt.
F 17) The politicians have used politics for self-aggrandizement.

G. Economic failures.
G 18) The politicians have mismanaged the economy.
G 19) The policies have led to increased cost of living.
G 20) The politicians are guilty of misspending.
G 21) The politicians have not succeeded in raising the standard of living.

H. The government has acted unlawfully.
H 22) The politicians are guilty of unconstitutional acts.
H 23) The policies have been unjust.
H 24) The public has not accepted the civilian government.

Justifications dealing with the army and its relationship to the government

I. Coupmakers' diminished political influence.
I 25) The army's political influence has been limited.
I 27) The government has had difficulty in co-operating with the coupmakers.

J. Political interference in military affairs.
J 28) The politicians have tried to exercise political control over the army.
J 29) The autonomy of the army has been threatened.
J 30) Alternative military organizations have threatened military unity and efficiency.

K. Threat to army honour.
K 31) The government has brought dishonour upon the army.
K 32) Military rulers must be held accountable for their actions in order to rescue the honour of the army.

L. Inadequate military budget.
L 33) Army materiel requirements have been ignored.
L 34) Material needs of the personnel have been ignored.

M. The army's duty to guarantee order.
M 35) The army steps in to restore order during disturbances.
M 36) The duty of the army is to safeguard institutions, etc.
M 37) Politicians call upon the army to assume power.

Justification that the assumption of power is temporary

N. Temporary nature of takeover.
N 38) The takeover is of a temporary nature.

Besides the issues under which the above justifications have been listed, there are also a number of justifications of a more special nature. They only occur in isolated coups, but may nevertheless be mentioned here.

O. Other justifications.
O 39) The politicians have been involved in nepotism.
O 40) The politicians have not followed their political platform or have broken promises.
O 41) The army's glorious action (earlier) justifies the claim to power.
O 42) Army intervention is justified since it checks foreign infiltration.
O 43) Rulers appointed by the army have not followed army directives.
O 44) Other special justifications.
Most of the above issues recur in rather many of the initial declarations. As a rule, an initial declaration contains several separate justifications since the coupmakers would like to gain support from different sectors of society. The formulation of initial declarations also varies considerably from one coup to another. This variation is due, among other things, to the diversity of linguistic traditions in the countries concerned, to the different modes of expression of the coupmakers themselves, to the varying amount of time available for the formulation of the initial declaration or to the degree of importance attached to the initial declaration. If then an attempt is to be made to compare the various initial declarations, one should also try in some way to take into account the degree of importance accorded to each issue. However, since linguistic usage differs very much, one can really only apply a quantitative method and award points to the justifications on the basis of the space devoted to them in the initial declarations.

In the description of the coups in this section, I have attempted to award points to the different justifications. The justification which appears as the main argument in support of the takeover has been given two points. If this justification has taken up more space than a quarter of the initial declaration, it has been awarded three points and if it constitutes more than half of the text, it has been given four points. All other justifications receive one point. It should also be noted, however, that initial declarations in some instances are so generally formulated that it is not really possible to find a main argument.
8. Different Types of Coups

Naturally there is an endless number of possible ways of classifying military coups according to types. Depending wholly on the purpose of the typology, one may start out from such disparate perspectives as the age of the coup-makers, the size of the armies, the level of economic development of the countries, former colonial administration and so forth. Since my interest is centred principally on the political aspects of coups d'état, I shall construct a typology based on the stated political aims of the coup-makers.

In the political literature on coups d'état and military rule, there are already a number of typologies, but these are very frequently based upon already established military regimes and on the characteristics of their rule. The classification which I shall use below is based on the intentions stated by the coup-makers at the time of the takeover, that is, before they have been influenced by the actual possession of power. The classification is based upon the coup-makers’ own statements regarding the takeover, or on the actions of the new rulers during the very first days after the takeover. We are concerned here with a simple division into three groups.

Some coups obviously aim at extensive political change in a country. It may be an attempt to check a progressive and radical policy, as was the case in Ghana in 1966, or it may be to make an earlier policy more radical, as, for example, in Somalia or in the Sudan in 1969. These coups I quite simply call *political coups*.

A military coup may *in time* lead to a radically altered political course, but such a change has not always been of immediate interest at the time of the coup. There is a type of military coup in which the armed forces intervene in a political power struggle in support of one side or the other, or in which they create a third, extra-political alternative. An example of such an intervention is the 1958 coup in the Sudan, where the politicians had, through a number of coalitions, tried to form a working government, yet seemed unable to find the strong government which the country needed at the time. Another example is Sierra Leone, where in 1967 the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces intervened on behalf of one party directly after the general election and where the subsequent military coup resolved the political strife and dissolved the parties. This type of coup acts as a form of arbitration, as often as not a compulsory arbitration, between the various political interests struggling for power and may thus be called an *arbitrator coup*. Under certain circumstances, an arbitrator coup may also be a political coup.

The third type of coup covers those coups which, properly speaking, lack political ambition. There is no political struggle between different parties or factions and the takeover does not bring about any extensive political change. Such coups may have been inspired by a military interest in an isolated issue, or
by power struggles within a ruling military regime. The armed forces may also intervene when political tension in a country becomes so great that the civilian regime can no longer assert its authority. The 1966 coup in the Central African Republic is a case in point. There a rivalry existed between the gendarmerie and the Army over which of the two organizations should have the greatest influence. Another example is Togo 1963 when the Army intervened to satisfy specific demands concerning the recruitment of Togolese veteran soldiers who had been repatriated from France. The coups of 1975 in Nigeria and of 1978 in Ghana are examples of internal power struggles in the ruling military regime. This type of coup may very well have political characteristics, but nevertheless is called a politically limited coup.

Parallel to this classification, based on the actual purpose of the takeover, one may also classify the coups according to the nature of the change of power. In most cases, a military coup involves the seizure of power by the coup-makers, that is, they obtain power by force. The coup may then be described purely and simply as a takeover. But there are other types of changes of power which must be classified differently, even though they are generally called takeovers. These are: transfer of power, corrective intervention and "palace revolutions".

In the survey of coups I shall therefore, in addition to the above mentioned political typology, also classify the coups according to the nature of the change of power. By transfer of power I mean a military coup which results in the civilian rulers requesting the armed forces to assume power. This transference may very well be made under constraint, as when Colonel Bokassa toppled President David Dacko in the Central African Republic and compelled the president to write out his resignation together with the transfer of power, but even so, it still denotes an attempt to legitimize the claim to power. The transfer may also take place more or less voluntarily when the civilian rulers can no longer assert their authority in a situation of political unrest, as was the case in 1966 in Upper Volta when the trade unions called for a general strike and President Yameogo had no other option but to let Lieutenant-Colonel Lamizana take over political responsibility.

By corrective intervention I mean a change of power of extremely short duration and where from the very beginning it would seem to be quite clear that the military intervention is aimed at settling more or less clearly defined issues. The coup-makers may object to military rule and, as in Sierra Leone 1965, intervene only in order to dismiss the military government and to reinstate a civilian one. It may also be a question of a specific demand which is forced through by means of the coup, as was the case when the armed forces enforced their demands in Togo 1963 and then immediately handed power over to a new civilian leader. A corrective intervention may also involve an intervention in the midst of a political power struggle, as in Dahomey 1963 when General Soglo’s intervention did not lead to military rule.

A "palace revolution" is a special form of coup where the actual takeover does not, generally speaking, affect the society to any great extent, even though the effects may acquire a more general, political significance. A palace revolution involves a
change of power within the ruling, often military, oligarchy, a change which does not take place in accordance with any accepted rules of succession. This may be as in Ghana 1978 when General Acheampong was forced to step down after the other military leaders in the SMC had succeeded in luring away the General's personal bodyguard, or as in Nigeria 1975 when General Gowon was temporarily out of the country. It may also be as in Burundi 1966 when the power struggle between the King and the Prime Minister, Captain Micombero, ended in the Prime Minister assuming power himself on the strength of his position as Commander of the Army. In the case of Burundi, however, the takeover affected the society as a whole and it would thus be inappropriate to call it a palace revolution.
9. Military Coups in Sub-Saharan Africa

In addition to the above typological classification and characterization, the description of the coups will also include other facts which may be of value for a comparative study. In order to achieve a systematic description, I have used the same questions in the treatment of the changes of power. These questions are:

- Country and time of change of power?
- Instigator of coup. One, a few or many persons?
- What justifications have been given?
- Have the coupmakers referred to any ethical precepts in support of their intervention?
- Has there been any declaration of domestic policy?
- Has there been any declaration of foreign policy?
- Have the coupmakers spoken in a threatening manner in order to secure order and obedience?
- Can the military esprit de corps contribute to an understanding of the intervention?
- Was the coup preceded by social, economic or political unrest?
- Was there any armed conflict in connection with the takeover?
- Was there a civilian or military dominance in the new government or in the corresponding body established by the military?
- Can the change of power be described as corrective, transfer of power, takeover or palace revolution?
- Which type of coup is it? Political coup, arbitrator coup or politically limited coup?

Some of the questions in this list are of general interest, while others are in varying measure directly related to questions which can be raised in connection with the theories presented in part one of this thesis. The questions will be analysed in part three.

A Comparative Description of the Coups

**SUDAN,** November 17, 1958.¹

*Instigator:* Lieutenant-General Abboud (and Major-General Wahhab) (a few).

¹ See more in S Wiking "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 1 ff.
The greater part of the initial declaration (ID) is devoted to criticism of the politicians for their intrigues and power struggles (A1, 4 points). In one sentence it is said that the power struggle is due to self-aggrandizement on the part of the politicians (F 17).

Ethical precepts: The coupmakers refer to "...your loyal army...".

Domestic policy: "Our aim is the stability, prosperity, and welfare of this country and its people".

Foreign policy: Two sentences in the ID indicate a desire for better relations with the Arab countries, especially with Egypt.

There was no actual threat.

Esprit de corps: Not relevant.

Unrest: The country was beset by severe economic problems due to difficulties in selling cotton in 1957 and to the poor harvest in 1958. There were political disturbances in connection with the elections earlier the same year and with the forming of a government precisely at the time of the military coup.

The takeover was executed without armed conflict.

After the coup the real power lay with the "Supreme Council of the Armed Forces". The government formed consisted of seven officers and five civilians.

Type of change: Takeover.

Type of coup: "Arbitrator coup".

SUDAN, May 25, 1969.³

Instigator: Colonel Nemery (and Babaka Awadallah) (a few).

Justification:⁴ The people had not accepted the government (H 24, 3 points), the standard of living had not risen (G 21), power struggles (B 3), self-aggrandizement and corruption (F 17 and F 16), foreign (imperialistic) intervention (O 42), the politicians had violated the constitution (H 22), mismanaged the economy (G 18) and had created a high cost of living (G 19). In addition, the politicians had not resolved the problems in Southern Sudan (E 15) and they had betrayed the 1964 revolution (O 44).

Ethical precepts: "The Army men have vowed to God to sacrifice their blood...'. There were also separate statements outside of the ID addressed to the troops, in which their courage and honour were praised.⁵

Policies: There was no actual declaration of policy, neither domestic nor foreign, but Awadallah promised progressive economic reforms in a statement some hours after the ID. There were also promises of improved benefits for the armed forces.

Threats: One would "Strike with an iron fist..." any opposition, which would also "be punishable by death or up to 10 years' imprisonment".

Esprit de corps: Not relevant.

Unrest: Overt political unrest in connection with the collapse of the government on April 23, 1969.

Political elections were held in April 1968.

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² Ibid p 6 and Keesing's Contemporary Archives p 16593.
³ "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 12 ff.
⁴ Ibid pp 12 ff and BBC "Summary of World Broadcasts, Part 4" ME/3083/E2/1, (6) and 14–15.
⁵ BBC op.cit. ME/3083/E2/2 f
Some armed conflict occurred in connection with the coup.
A civilian government under Awadallah was formed after the coup, but the real power appears to have been with Nemery and the Council of the Revolution.

Type of change: Takeover.
Type of coup: Predominantly a political coup, but also an arbitrator coup.

Instigator: Major Bodjollé (et al.).

Justification: There was no actual ID, but instead there were several separate statements from different military leaders. Major Bodjollé declared that they had acted in the interests of the soldiers repatriated from France who had not been allowed to enlist in the Togolese Army (L 34, 2 points) and that they had acted against an unjust regime (H 23). The takeover was also said to be (and was) of a temporary nature (N 38).

There was no reference to ethical precepts.

Policies: The military leadership declared immediately that they intended a return to a civilian, democratic government. As for foreign policy, they expressed a desire for improved relations with Ghana and France, otherwise Togo would be non-aligned.

Threats: None.

Esprit de corps: The whole undertaking was carried out on behalf of colleagues who had been unfairly treated.

Unrest: There was no overt unrest before the coup. There was, however, a latent discontent over the economic restraints adopted by President Olympio and over the lack of political freedom. On the international level, relations with neighbouring Ghana were extremely tense before the coup. Presidential elections had been held in 1961, but the candidate for the joint opposition had not been allowed to stand.

Armed conflict occurred in connection with the coup, in which the President, among others, was killed. A civilian government was formed on January 16. The military then formally withdrew from politics. They did, however, dictate terms for the policy of the civilian government and made sure that the demands of the Army were met.

Type of change: Corrective intervention.
Type of coup: Politically limited coup.

Instigator: Lieutenant-Colonel Eyadema (one).

Justification: The most important justification concerned the politicians’ internal power struggles (B 5, 4 point), but it was also noted that it was the Army that had once entrusted them with their office (O 43). An amnesty was declared in the ID and it was also noted that military rule would not be permanent but would last only three months (N 38). The regime was also accused of adding to national disunity (E 15) and for mismanagement of the economy (G 18).

6 "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 19 ff.
7 Ibid pp 21 f and Keesing’s op.cit. pp 19249 ff.
8 "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 23 ff.
9 Ibid p 25 and BBC op.cit. ME/2365/B/10 f.
There was no reference to ethical precepts. There was no declaration of policy, neither domestic nor foreign, in the ID.

**Threats:** The public was urged to remain calm and it was stressed that all attempts to seek personal revenge would be punished.

**Esprit de corps:** Not relevant.

There was extensive political unrest a month before the coup. The Army intervened on the side of the government. There was, however, no open unrest at the time of the coup.

The coup did not occur in connection with political elections.

The coup was executed without armed opposition.

The new governing body was headed by an officer, but was otherwise dominated by civilian politicians, including representatives of the former opposition party, CUT (Comité de l’Unité Togolais), which had been formed by President Olympio (assassinated in 1963) and which had played an active part in the disturbances in November, 1966. The real power was held, however, by Colonel Eyadema.

**Type of change:** Transfer of power. Grunitzky had, in fact, no other choice but to hand over power when Eyadema requested it. Note, however, that the transfer is not stressed a great deal and is not mentioned as a justification in the ID.

**Type of coup:** Arbitrator coup. Eyadema intervened in the political power struggle between President Grunitzky and Vice-President Meatchi. This power struggle was also the precipitating factor in extensive disturbances a month earlier.

**DAHOMEY, October 28, 1963.**

**Instigator:** General Soglo (one).

**Justification:** General Soglo declared that the disturbances had forced him to seize power, "... in view of the gravity of the situation ..." (M 35,2 points) and he said that the takeover was temporary (N 38).

There appear to be no references to ethical precepts and no declaration of policy.

**Threats:** None. Instead, the General appealed for calm and urged the strikers to return to work.

**Esprit de corps:** Not relevant.

Immediately before the coup there was extensive social unrest including strikes and demonstrations. The reasons for the unrest were political, economic and social. The day before the coup, President Maga formed a coalition government with Apithy and Ahomadégbé. The coalition received the support of General Soglo, but the disturbances continued. On the evening of October 28 Maga handed in his resignation and Soglo assumed power and formed a new government, consisting of himself and the three above mentioned politicians. (This coalition collapsed almost immediately, however, and Maga was imprisoned for conspiracy...). Regional and ethnic conflict intensified the unrest enormously.

The takeover did not take place in connection with elections and it was executed without any armed conflicts.

Soglo and the three above mentioned politicians assumed all ministerial posts.

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10 "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 31 ff.
11 Ibid pp 34 f and Keesing's op.cit. p 19762.
in the new civil-military government. The true power seems, however, to have been in the hands of General Soglo.

Type of change: Corrective intervention. It was clear from the outset that Soglo did not intend to retain power. A "transfer of power" may also be relevant since Maga handed in his resignation.

Type of coup: Arbitrator coup. General Soglo intervened in the chronic power struggle between the three above mentioned politicians.

DAHOMEY, December 22, 1965.12

Instigator: General Soglo (one):

Justification:13 Soglo emphasized the political power struggle in particular (B 5, 4 points). Also that the politicians had failed to create any prosperity (G 21) and that the military had entrusted the politicians with the task of forming a government (O 43). Soglo declared that the takeover was temporary (N 38).

Ethical precepts: General Soglo spoke of "the duty of their brave army to solve the crisis".

Domestic policy: Only plans to rewrite the constitution are mentioned, but after only a few days a more comprehensive programme with clearly defined measures was presented. However, this plan action did not lead to any "extensive political change".

Foreign policy: Soglo promised that Dahomey would abide by all previous agreements.

All possible agitators were threatened with severe punishment.

Esprit de corps: Not relevant.

The takeover was preceded (a few weeks earlier) by widespread social unrest. The civilian government had collapsed a month earlier and a provisional government was formed under Congacou to create a new constitution and to prepare for general elections. The political and social unrest was bound up with the political power struggle and the attempts by the politicians to create new parties, as well as with an austerity programme, which included a 20 % "solidarity tax".

The takeover took place without armed conflict.

The new government consisted of an apolitical, technocratic civil-military conglomeration.

Type of change: Takeover.

Type of coup: Arbitrator coup.

DAHOMEY, December 17, 1967.14

Instigator: Major Kouandété et al. in "Jeune Cadre de l'Armée" (a few).

Justification:15 There had been a concentration of power around Soglo's family (C 6) and the Army's political influence had become limited since the Military Vigilance Committees did not function properly (I 25). Corruption was growing (F 16) and the cost of living had become high (G 19). The army was blamed for all of this (K 31, 2 points). It was also stated that the takeover was temporary (N 38).

Ethical precepts: "...it is the duty of us the young Army cadres...".

12 "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 35 ff.
13 Ibid p 37, BBC op.cit. ME/2045/B/5-6 and ME/2046/B/8.
14 "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 38 ff.
15 Ibid p 39 and BBC op.cit. ME/2650/B/4-5.
Domestic policy: To create a new constitution.
Foreign policy: To abide by all agreements made by the previous government.
Threats: Vandalism and sabotage would be punished without mercy.
Esprit de corps: The coup was not executed in the interests of any particular colleague, but to increase the influence of the officers in general and perhaps of the officers from Northern Dahomey in particular. The latter reason, however, is not related to esprit de corps.
Unrest: The coup was preceded by widespread social and economic discontent, which broke out shortly before the coup. There was every chance, however, of the problems being resolved following mediation the days before Kouandété’s intervention. There were no political elections at the time.

The coup was executed without armed conflict.
The new government was dominated almost completely by officers. Kouandété failed, however, to consolidate his position and was soon obliged to share the power with other high-ranking officers and to immediately initiate a return to civilian rule.

Type of change: Takeover.
Type of coup: Politically limited coup.

DAHOMEY, December 10, 1969.\textsuperscript{16}

Instigator: Lieutenant-Colonel Kouandété (one).

Justification:\textsuperscript{17} Dr. Zinsou’s regime (i.e. the regime which assumed political responsibility following Kouandété’s previous intervention) had created total insecurity (D 11) and had deliberately ignored the instructions given by the retiring military government (O 43, 2 points). Kouandété also justified his coup by saying that the takeover was of a temporary nature (N 38).

Ethical precepts: ”The Army has once again assumed its responsibilities ...”

No real domestic policy was presented, but Kouandété promised that the three former political leaders would be brought back.
The foreign policy would not be changed.
Threats: ”Order will be maintained at any cost...”

Esprit de corps: Probably not relevant.

There had been social and political unrest, particularly earlier. Several plots against Kouandété were ”uncovered” not long before the coup. From May 31 onward the Army was to break up any strikes and Kouandété had threatened to forcibly recruit all strikers into the Army so that they could perform work that was useful to society. Dahomey had chronic economic problems, though they were not particularly acute and the unrest was not overt at the time of the coup.

There were no elections at the time.
The takeover was executed without opposition.

Kouandété was unable to form his own government. The coup led to a military takeover, but Kouandété was compelled to share the power with other officers, who immediately began to prepare for a return to civilian rule.

Type of change: Takeover.
Type of coup: Politically limited coup.

\textsuperscript{16} ”Afrikanska militärkupper” pp 41 f.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid p 42 and BBC op.cit. ME/3253/ii.
DAHOMEY, October 26, 1972.  
Instigator: Major Kereku (et al.).

Justification: There had been a constant power struggle between the three political leaders (B 5, 2 points). Corruption, nepotism and regionalism were flourishing (F 16, O 39 and E 13) and national unity was threatened (E 15). There was no law and order (D 10), the politicians were incompetent (A 1) and they had mismanaged the economy (G 18). It was also noted that the Army had entrusted the politicians with their office and that they had not acted in accordance with the directives they had received (O 43).

Ethical precepts: "... the Dahomeyan Army, conscious of its duties to absolve itself from blame from God’s wrath...".

There was no declaration of policy in the ID, neither domestic nor foreign. Nor were there any threats. It is also doubtful whether esprit de corps motivated the coup in any way.

No acute unrest preceded the takeover. The coup did not take place in connections with elections, but there had been a change in the chairmanship of the political troika some months earlier.

The takeover took place without armed conflict.

The composition of the new government was completely military.

Type of change: Takeover.

Type of coup: Political coup. Major Kereku’s takeover brought about a radical change in Dahomeyan politics. For the first time, using Marxist terminology, the Government spoke of socialist solutions. Plans were soon introduced for a transition to "Dahomeyan Socialism", a form of socialism which was not dependent upon Soviet or Chinese communism, but was founded upon the historical and economic conditions of Dahomey.

CONGO (ZAIRE), November 25, 1965.  
Instigator: Lieutenant-General Mobutu (one).

Justification: Political power struggles (B 5, 2 points) and the fact that the conduct of the politicians had constituted a threat to public security (D 11). The Army’s loyal struggle for the good of the nation justified the claim to power (O 41).

Ethical precepts: "...love of the country and a sense of responsibility towards the Congolese nation..."

The ID was a document similar to a declaration of policy, but containing no concrete political objectives for the future. The foreign policy would be much the same as that of the previous regime.

Threats: Mobutu promised an amnesty, but declared at the same time that the rebels (Lumumba’s successors and supporters), "these murderers of the population", would not be included. Political activity was banned. Esprit de corps may have been of significance since a group of soldiers were dismissed shortly before the coup, accused of having "protected" Tshombe. There were also rumours circulating that Mulamba (Mobutu’s confidant, who

18 "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 43 ff.
19 Ibid p 44 and BBC op.cit. ME/4130/B/1.
20 "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 48 ff.
21 Ibid pp 53 f, BBC op.cit. ME/2022/B/4–5 and ME/2023/B/1.
after the coup was entrusted with the task of forming a new government) had been arrested.

The coup was preceded by extensive social and political unrest, including demonstrations and censorship of the press.

There were no elections at the time of the coup, but elections had been held in the middle of 1965 and the government changes did not please Mobutu.

The coup was executed without armed conflict.

The new government, which was presented on November 28, was led by an officer (Colonel Mulamba), but was otherwise composed of civilian ministers. Mobutu himself became President with extensive powers. He decided from the outset to remain in office for at least five years.

Type of change: Takeover.

Type of coup: Arbitrator coup.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR), January 1, 1966.22

Instigator: Colonel Bokassa (one).

Justification:23 There was no actual justification in the ID, with the possible exception of "...The hour of justice has struck..." (H 23). It was also said that the Dacko regime had "resigned" and in a letter of resignation, which was read out shortly after the ID, Dacko declared that "... I... have... transferred the power to the Army chief of staff, Col... Bokassa" (M 37). However, this letter was hardly written voluntarily.

Ethical precepts were not mentioned, nor was there any statement regarding domestic policy. With respect to foreign policy, Bokassa promised to uphold all previous agreements, a promise which was broken almost immediately regarding the People’s Republic of China.

No threats were made, but Bokassa appealed to those who had resisted to lay down their arms.

Esprit de corps: Doubtful whether it can have played a part. However, it is worth mentioning that David Dacko had tried to balance the Army against the gendarmerie by making them rivals. Quite soon after the coup, the head of the gendarmerie, Major Izamo, was removed.

No particular social unrest preceded the coup. The CAR’s economy was comparatively sound, but there was some discontent over taxation, in particular with regard to a 10 % cut in wages which had recently been adopted.

The coup was not carried out in connection with political elections.

The coup led to armed resistance from, among others, members of the gendarmerie in an attempt to defend the presidential palace.

The new government, which was presented on January 23, was dominated by civilian ministers (6 civilian - 4 military), three of whom were retained from the ousted regime. Bokassa became both President and Prime Minister and held practically all true power.

Type of change: Transfer of power. In this case it was a transfer of power under duress since President Dacko had to write the letter of resignation and to certify the transfer in the middle of the night.

Type of coup: Politically limited coup.

22 "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 58 ff.
23 Ibid pp 60 and BBC op.cit. ME/2051/B/6.
UPPER VOLTA, January 3, 1966.²⁴

Instigator: Lieutenant-Colonel Lamizana (one).

Justification:²⁵ Public safety had deteriorated (D 11) and the takeover was an attempt to avoid bloodshed and to safeguard democratic institutions (M 35 and M 36, 2 points). It was also declared that the takeover was temporary (N 38).

Ethical precepts: A couple of days after the coup Lamizana declared that "... the Army has a sacred duty of safeguarding the institutions of the country".

There was no declaration of policy, but it was promised that all agreements with other nations would continue to be valid.

The population was warned in comparatively threatening terms and was advised to remain calm.

Esprit de corps: Not relevant.

The takeover was preceded by widespread overt unrest with demonstrations and a call for a general strike, provoked, among other things, by the government wage reductions and austerity programmes. There was also a state of emergency at the time of the takeover. In connection with the disturbances, the Armed Forces were called in to disperse/stop the demonstrators. General elections were held three months before the takeover. In these elections President Yaméogo received 99% of the votes, but then there was only one approved ballot.

The takeover was effected without armed opposition.

The new government, which was presented on January 7, consisted of seven officers and five civilian ministers. Lamizana became President and Prime Minister and thus kept the real power for himself.

Type of change: Transfer of power. Yaméogo voluntarily handed over power to Lamizana, but at the same time it is clear that there was hardly any alternative. Lamizana himself said that the only other option would have been to allow the troops to open fire on the people, thereby risking thousands of lives.

Type of coup: Politically limited coup. Lamizana did not appear to have any political ambitions at the time of the takeover.

GHANA, February 24, 1966.²⁶

Instigator: General Ankrah (et al.).

Justification:²⁷ The greater part of the justifications focussed on the accusations that the economy had been mismanaged and that the cost of living had risen (G 18, 4 points, and G 19). It was also maintained that the centralization of power (C 6) had led to a deterioration in law and order (D 10).

There were no references to any particular ethical rules.

A programme with a number of economic goals can be found in the ID, even if there is no discussion of the means by which these goals are to be attained.

Foreign policy: Promises to abide by all agreements and commitments were given. But it was also stated that no external intervention would be tolerated.

Several direct threats were made in conjunction with the coup. These threats were mainly addressed to members of the CPP (Convention People's Party, the only party).

²⁴ "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 67 ff.
²⁵ Ibid pp 69 f and BBC op.cit. ME/2054/B/3.
²⁶ "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 91 ff.
²⁷ Ibid pp 94 f and BBC op.cit. ME/2098/B/1-2.
Esprit de corps may have been of significance since the coup involved the rehabilitation of both General Ankrah and General Otu, who had both been dismissed earlier by President Nkrumah.

The coup was not preceded by any particular overt unrest. There was, however, an apparent discontent over the effects of inflation.

There were no elections at the time of the coup.

The takeover was not entirely peaceful, but was followed by some armed conflicts, in which alternative military organizations created by Nkrumah attempted to defend the regime.

The new ruling authority, NLC (National Liberation Council) was predominantly military in composition, in which General Ankrah at first played a leading role.

Type of change: Takeover.

Type of coup: Political coup. From the ID one could already foresee that the new regime would deviate from the socialist oriented course that Nkrumah had set for the country. The CPP, previously the only party, was not only banned, but was also the object of direct persecution.


Instigator: Colonel Acheampong (one).

Justification: Dr. Busia had lowered the standard of living of the Army personnel (L 34), and had introduced political considerations into military affairs and in the system of promotion (J 28, 2 points). Busia was also accused of corruption (F 16), of personal economic gain (F 17), and of mismanaging the country’s economy (G 18). Moreover he was accused of having violated the constitution (H 22). Note: soon after the ID, the justifications began to focus almost solely upon the country’s economic difficulties.

There was no reference to any particular ethical rules.

Domestic policy: There were a number of concrete proposals in the ID. It was said, for instance, that priority would be given to agricultural development. There was, however, no specific programme. As for foreign policy, it was stated at once that relations with neighbouring countries would be improved. Four days after the coup there was a radical change in foreign policy when, amongst other things, Dr. Busia’s ”policy of dialogue” with South Africa was abandoned.

There were no threats in the ID.

Esprit de corps: As an organization, the Army had suffered from the interference of the Busia regime in military affairs (see justification J 28 above).

Unrest: The coup was preceded by a substantial devaluation and by economically-based discontent, which was not, however, openly manifested. There was also political unrest in connection with, amongst other things, the outlawing of the trade union organization, the deportation of foreign workers and the dismissal of many civil servants. All of this occurred within six months of the coup.

The coup did not take place in connection with elections and it was executed without armed conflict.

28 ”Afrikanska militärkupper” pp 99 ff.
29 Ibid pp 100 f and BBC op.cit. ME/3888/B/9–10.
The new ruling body, which was announced on January 29, consisted almost completely of officers.

Type of change: Takeover.

Type of coup: Political coup. The type of coup is not completely certain, but it appears from the conduct of the new regime during the first month of office that it was prepared to make quite radical changes to Dr. Busia’s economic policy. The currency was revalued by 42% and several international debts were renounced. There were also radical changes in the foreign policy.

GHANA, July 5, 1978.30
Instigator: General Akuffo (et al.)

Justification:31 There was no ID in direct connection with the takeover. Eventually, however, Akuffo, as the new chairman of the SMC (Supreme Military Council), explained why Acheampong had been forced to hand in his resignation. In this justification, stress was laid particularly on the fact that Acheampong had been guilty of centralization of power (C 6, 2 points) and that he had mismanaged the country’s economy (G 18). Akuffo also promised that there would be no halt in the transition to civilian government (N 38).

The new rulers did not refer to any ethical precepts. No political programme was announced in the immediate aftermath of the takeover, but in the speech Akuffo gave on July 10, some objectives were presented, particularly with respect to the economic policy. It was emphasized that there would be no change in the foreign policy.

There were no threats.

Esprit de corps: This may have been of significance in the coup. General Odartey-Wellington, said to be one of the instigators, had previously been forced out of the SMC (ruling body) by Acheampong.

There was some unrest, though not overt. Earlier in the same year there had been a referendum on how a return to civilian rule was to be effected. When the results were known, many of the leaders opposed to Acheampong were imprisoned (Acheampong had proposed that no political parties should be allowed to form). These prisoners were released after the takeover.32 The change of power was accomplished without armed conflict.

The structure of the government was not affected by the change of power.

Type of change: Palace revolution.

Type of coup: Politically limited coup.

GHANA, June 4, 1979.33
Instigator: Lieutenant Rawlings (et al.)

Justification:34 In particular, it was stressed that the purpose of the coup was to make a “house cleaning operation” before the civilian politicians took over (K 32, 3 points). It was also noted that the military leaders had taken advantage of their positions for personal economic gain (F 17) and that the cost of living for the

30 “Afrikanska militärkupper” pp 103 ff.
31 Ibid pp 104 f and BBC op.cit. ME/5862/B/3-7.
32 BBC op.cit. ME/5860/B/5.
33 “Afrikanska militärkupper” pp 105 ff.
34 Ibid p 106 and BBC op.cit. ME/6134/B/11-12.
people had risen astronomically (G 19). The takeover was also said to be of a temporary nature and that the return to civilian rule would proceed as planned (N 38).

There was no mention of ethical precepts and the coupmakers had no special programme. The coup was followed by tangible and severe threats and fairly soon after by executions.

Esprit de corps may have contributed to the fact that the coup was carried out in spite of difficulties. Some weeks earlier Lieutenant Rawlings had been imprisoned in connection with what was alleged to be an attempted insurrection. Esprit de corps may have encouraged his colleagues to launch the coup themselves.

There was no overt unrest before the change of power.

The coup took place just before political elections were to be held, but there was little or no connection between the two. In fact, Rawlings promised that the elections would be held as planned.

The change of power was not possible without considerable armed conflict. The reins of government were taken over by the AFRC (Armed Forces Revolutionary Council). On June 6 the AFRC appointed civilian ministers who formed a sort of government. The period of office was, however, clearly limited.

Type of change: Corrective intervention.
Type of coup: Politically limited coup.

BURUNDI, November 28, 1966.35
Instigator: Captain (Prime Minister) Micombero (one).
Justification:36 King Ntare V was accused of having listened too much to his father (I 26) and of having attempted to recruit mercenaries abroad who would "destroy the Burundi National Army" (J 30). The King was also accused of having misappropriated state funds (F 17). (Note: The ID is only a report in the source material). It is also clear that with the coup the monarchy was abolished and the republic was brought in.

The takeover was not linked to any ethical precepts, and the change of power involved no changes in the domestic or foreign policies. All possible agitators aiming at overthrowing the new regime were threatened with severe punishment.

Esprit de corps: Probably not relevant.

The coup was not preceded by any pronounced public unrest. Nor did it occur in connection with any political elections. The change of power was also accomplished without any armed conflict.

The new government, formed by Captain Micombero, was totally dominated by military personnel.

Type of change: Palace revolution. Micombero was already Prime Minister and already held in practice much of the political power. The purpose of the coup was essentially to depose the King and thus prevent him from meddling in politics.

Type of coup: Arbitrator coup. During the months which preceded the coup, the King and the Prime Minister had continually clashed because of the poorly defined division of power. The Army intervened in this conflict, acting in the interests of Micombero.

35 "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 111 ff.
36 Ibid p 116 and BBC op.cit. ME/2331/B/3 and Keesing's op.cit. p 21786.
BURUNDI, November 1, 1976. 37

Instigator: Lieutenant-Colonel Bagaza (et al.)

Justification 38 No ID was made on November 1, but on the following day two separate IDs were broadcast on the radio. The first of these was a brief summary of the justifications for the takeover, while the second was detailed and included examples of the fallen government’s deficiencies. In both cases, most stress was laid on Micombero’s centralization of power around himself (C 6, 2 points). It was also said that the politicians had been seeking personal gain (F 17), that there had been squandering (G 20), that Micombero had not governed in the higher interests of the country (A 2), that the government had violated the constitution (H 22) and that the party (UPRONA) had been neutralized (O 44).

Ethically, the coup was justified because “The Armed Forces therefore not only needed, but also had a duty, to act...”.

A new domestic policy was promised in the ID. In the days immediately following the takeover no distinct programme was set forth, but it was apparent from speeches and a number of ideological statements that a radical socialist programme could be expected. And in a government statement three weeks later it was stressed that their policies would be guided by socialist principles.

Foreign policy: It was announced that all previous commitments would be kept, that the guiding principles of the previous foreign policy would continue to apply.

There were no direct threats in the ID.

Esprit de corps: Probably not relevant.

In the beginning of the seventies social and political unrest had culminated in violent confrontations between the country’s two ethnic groups. However, there does not appear to have been any open unrest in connection with the 1976 coup. Chronic unrest and tension between ethnic groups had, however, always existed.

The coup was not connected with any elections, but UPRONA (the only party) was to have held its first congress in ten years just before the coup occurred. The coup appears to have been accomplished without any armed conflict.

The new government, though composed mainly of civilians, was totally subordinated to the military-dominated SRC (Supreme Revolutionary Council).

Type of change: Palace revolution. The coup was executed within the supreme command of the Army and the public did not find out immediately what had happened. When the change of power was announced later, it was in the form of a statement from the Army High Command.

Type of coup: Political coup. The statements from the first weeks after the change of power indicate that a radical change in policy was intended.

RWANDA, July 5, 1973. 39

Instigator: Major-General Habyalimana (one).

Justification: 40 The criticism was founded primarily on the claim that policies had encouraged regional cleavage (E 13, 4 points).

37 ”Afrikanska militärkupper” pp 117 ff.
38 Ibid pp 117 f, BBC op.cit. ME/5354/B/11–12 and ME/5355/B/12–15.
39 ”Afrikanska militärkupper” pp 123 ff.
40 Ibid pp 124 f and BBC op.cit. ME/4339/B/12–13.
Ethically, the coup was justified because "The National Guard, ..., can never permit the country to be carved up...".
There was no declaration of policy.

Foreign policy: Promises were given to abide by all agreements and alliances with foreign powers.
There were no direct threats in connection with the takeover.

Esprit de corps: Not relevant, though it should be noted that a reform, which had recently been implemented, brought all of the Armed Forces under the control of the Army and under General Habyalimana.
The coup was not immediately preceded by any unrest, but there had been serious confrontations between the two ethnic groups six months previously and relations with the neighbouring country, Burundi, were extremely tense just before the coup.
The coup did not occur in direct connection with any elections, but President Kayibanda was eventually to have run for a new term of office as President (which was, in fact, in violation of the constitution). The coup was accomplished without armed opposition.

Following the coup, military officers assumed supreme responsibility for the administration. The new government, which was eventually presented on August 1, consisted mainly of civilians, officers forming only 25%.

Type of change: Takeover.

Type of coup: Politically limited coup. According to his own statements, Habyalimana intervened because, among other things, his own political influence had declined.

SIERRA LEONE, March 23, 1967.41
Instigator: Major Blake (et al.)

Justification:42 The newly formed "National Reformation Council" (NRC) stated that the intervention was to prevent Brigadier Lansana from unconstitutionally forcing on the nation Sir Albert Margai as Prime Minister (H22, 2 points), and that the takeover only was temporary (N 38).
There were no references to ethical precepts.
No policy was presented and the NRC promised to abide by all foreign agreements.
No threats seem to have been made.

Esprit de corps may have been involved since the Commander of the Army, Brigadier Lansana, had previously acted in such a way as to annoy many officers, and the officer who was first appointed by the NRC to assume political responsibility was one of those who had suffered under Lansana.

Lansana’s political intervention some days before the coup had led to widespread political unrest in the country.
The coup took place immediately after political elections and in connection with the disturbances which broke out during the counting of votes.
The takeover appears to have been accomplished without any armed conflict.
The new ruling NRC was completely dominated by military and police personnel.

41 "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 128 ff.
42 Ibid pp 130 f and Keesing’s op. cit. pp 21949 f.
Type of change: Takeover.
Type of coup: Arbitrator coup.

SIERRA LEONE, April 18, 1968.43
Instigator: Sergeant Rogers (et al.)
Justification: There are no records of an ID in the BBC material, but even so it is evident that the main justification of the coup was that Brigadier Juxon-Smith had broken his promise to return power to civilian authorities (O 40, 2 points). The name of the newly formed governing body, "the Anti-Corruption Revolutionary Movement" (ACRM) indicates that the coup was also justified on the grounds of the corrupt behaviour of the military politicians (F 16). The new rulers promised a speedy return to civilian government (N 38), a promise which was subsequently fulfilled.

There is no record of a reference to ethical rules.
The only policy which was presented concerned a speedy return to civilian government. Other countries were advised against interfering in Sierra Leone's domestic affairs.

There is no record of threats against the Sierra Leone population.

Esprit de corps is hardly relevant since the coup would indicate the collapse of the military organization rather than a joint action in the interests of the officer corps.

There was some, though not directly open, social unrest immediately before the coup following Juxon-Smith's statement that the military was not prepared to hand power back to the civilians.

There was no connection between the coup and elections.

There was some armed conflict in connection with the coup and some people were said to have been killed or wounded.

A completely civilian government was formed only a week after the coup.

Type of change: Corrective intervention.
Type of coup: Politically limited coup.

Mali, November 19, 1968.45
Instigator: Lieutenant Traore and Captain Diakité (a few).

Justification: In a very brief ID it was stated that Keita's regime had been dictatorial (C 9) and undemocratic (C 8, 2 points). Free elections and a democratic government were promised (N 38). (Subsequently, a variety of economic justifications predominated, but in the ID only the above justifications were mentioned. Also, there was an evident military dissatisfaction with the People's Militia, its power and behaviour).

Ethically, the coup was justified because the Army was "completely devoted to the cause of the people".

The new governors did not announce any policy.
Foreign policy: All agreements were to be kept.

There were no direct threats against the population in the ID.

43 "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 132 f.
45 "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 149 ff.
46 Ibid p 151 f and BBC op.cit. ME/2931/B/9.
Esprit de corps: Discontent had arisen on account of the behaviour of the People’s Militia towards some Army officers.

The coup was preceded by some economically based unrest in connection with a devaluation of the currency and a price control on various goods. There was, however, no overt unrest.

The coup was not directly related to any political elections.

The takeover was accomplished in the face of some armed opposition and there were a number of arrests.

On November 23, the new ruling authority, CMLN (Comité Militaire de la Libération Nationale), set up a government with Captain Diakité as Prime Minister, but which otherwise consisted almost completely of civilian ministers. The CMLN retained the true power, however.

Type of change: Takeover.

Type of coup: Political coup. It was fairly soon evident that the new regime intended to reject the socialist course set by Modibo Keita. The takeover had, however, some characteristics of a “politically limited coup”. One of the likely reasons for the takeover had in fact to do with the relations between the Army and the People’s Militia.

SOMALIA, October 21, 1969.47

Instigator: General Barre (et al. ?).

Justification: 48 The politicians had misruled the country (A 2 , 2 points) and had broken the laws of the country and violated the constitution (H 22). It is apparent from the ID that the new regime intended to combat tribalism, of which the previous government was alleged to be guilty (E 12).

There is no reference to any particular ethical rules in the ID.

Domestic policy: The outline of a policy evidenced an intention to root out incompetence within the public sector and to combat tribalism.

Foreign policy: This would remain very much the same as before, but it was also noted that the new regime intended to actively support diverse liberation movements.

No direct threats were made in the ID, but in announcements on the radio the public was informed of comparatively severe restrictions on the freedom of movement and of a ban on the right to assemble.

Esprit de corps: Not relevant.

The coup was preceded by extensive and open social unrest and a state of emergency in connection with the assassination of President Sharmarker six days earlier. A new president was to have been appointed on the day of the coup. The election of president took place within the Parliament.

The takeover seems to have been accomplished without any real armed conflict.

The new government, which was presented on November 1, consisted almost exclusively of civilians, but it was subordinated to the revolutionary council, which had a solely military composition.

Type of change: Takeover.

Type of coup: Political coup. It was clear from the outset that the new regime intended to pursue a socialist policy.

47 ”Afrikanska militärkupper” pp 157 ff.
48 Ibid pp 160 f and BBC op.cit. ME/3210/B/1.
UGANDA, January 25, 1971. In an unusually exhaustive and detailed ID the following reasons for the coup were emphasized: Law and order had broken down (D 10) and public safety had deteriorated (D 11), the rights to discuss political and social issues were inadequate (C 7), there was widespread corruption amongst the top politicians and civil servants (F 16), there had been no political elections for eight years (C 8), the economic policy had led to the lowering rather than raising of the standard of living (G 21). Furthermore, it was said that the policies of the previous regime had isolated Uganda from the neighbouring countries (E 14), that the Army’s materiel requirements had been disregarded (L 33) and that alternative military organizations had threatened the military establishment (J 30), that politics had been marked by tribalism (E 12) and the politicians had used ethnic interests in an attempt to divide the Army and reduce its autonomy (J 29) and thereby gain control over it (J 28). Shortly after the ID Amin also declared that the takeover was only temporary (N 38). None of the justifications can be said to be of paramount importance.

There was no reference to particular ethical precepts.

There was no declaration of policy in connection with the ID.

Foreign policy: There was a promise to work for friendship with all countries.

Esprit de corps may have played a part due to the increasing number of politically motivated promotions.

Social unrest was a recurrent factor in Uganda though it was not especially evident at the time of the takeover.

General elections were being prepared at the time of the coup. There had been discussions and some unrest, though not overt, concerning the new electoral laws.

The military coup could not be accomplished without armed conflict. This continued for more than a week after the actual change of power.

The new government, which was presented on February 2, consisted almost totally of civilian elements. At the same time, however, it was obvious that Amin held the true power.

Type of change: Takeover.

Type of coup: Politically limited coup. It is true that Amin’s takeover meant that the socialist ambitions of the Obote regime were curtailed, but on the other hand the new political leadership lacked a definite policy.

NIGER, April 15, 1974.

Instigator: Lieutenant-Colonel Kountché (one).

Justification: In a brief ID it was said that politics had been permeated by injustice (H 23), corruption (F 17) and oligarchy (C 8). Shortly after the ID it was also announced that the politicians had been incapable of coping with the problems caused by the catastrophe (A 1).

49 "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 165 ff.
50 Ibid pp 172 ff and BBC op.cit. ME/3593/B/10-12.
51 "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 182 ff.
52 Ibid pp 185 ff and BBC op.cit. ME/4576/B/4.
Ethically, the coup was justified by the Army's decision "to assume its responsibilities...".

Domestic policy: Already on the first day it was announced that more would be done to bring relief to the catastrophe areas and that an effort would be made to provide young people with better jobs.

Foreign policy: All agreements would be kept "provided that they are in accordance with the interest and dignity of our people".

No particular threats were made in the ID.

Esprit de corps: Not relevant.

The coup was preceded on several occasions by open social unrest. Political unrest and "attempts to form parties" also preceded the coup.

The coup did not take place in connection with any political elections.

The takeover was not possible without armed conflict and between 20 - 100 persons were killed.

The new government, presented on April 17, was completely dominated by military officers.

Type of change: Takeover.

Type of coup: Political coup. The change of power led at once to an active sense of social responsibility with regard to the catastrophe areas. Kountché's regime also stressed quite quickly that the country's enormous supply of natural resources would not be exposed to unrestrained exploitation, but that trade with these raw materials would be directly linked to the process of development.

CHAD, April 13, 1975.53

Instigator: General Odingar (et al.)

Justification:54 It was declared in the ID that President Tombalbaye had not been able to appreciate the Army, but had instead humiliated it (K 31, 3 points). Moreover, the regime had mismanaged the country's economy (G 18) and had aggravated ethnic conflicts (tribalism) (E 12).

Ethical precepts were not mentioned.

Though there was no actual declaration of policy, promises to abide by all foreign agreements were given.

No particular threats were made in the ID.

Sympathies founded upon esprit de corps may have been partly influential since some officers had been arrested in the days before the coup. In addition, the former Army commander, General Felix Malloum, who later became leader of the new regime, had been sentenced to prison a couple of years earlier.

The coup was preceded by widespread social and economic unrest which broke out into minor disturbances on several occasions, including one shortly before the President's humiliating statements on the role of the Army. Banned political opposition was active in a campaign of guerrilla warfare.

The coup was not directly related to political elections.

The takeover resulted in open conflict between the Army and the President's security forces, whereby the President himself was wounded and died.

The governing military council that was formed after the takeover consisted

53 "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 191 ff.
54 Ibid pp 196 f and BBC op.cit. ME/4878/B/7–8.
chiefly of officers, even though General Malloum (chairman) was eventually to include civilian politicians.

*Type of change:* Takeover.
*Type of coup:* Politically limited coup.

**NIGERIA,** July 29, 1975. 

**Instigator:** General Muritala Muhammed (et al.)

**Justification:** The actual ID did not come until the day after the takeover. On July 29 it was very briefly announced that Gowon was no longer leader of the military regime. On July 30 the takeover was justified on the grounds that the Government had not been able to meet the legitimate expectations of the population despite Nigeria’s considerable human and material resources (G 21). Most stress was laid, however, on the fact that Gowon no longer consulted his advisers and had concentrated power around himself (G 6, 2 points). For these reasons Gowon was forced into retirement.

There was no reference to any special ethical precepts.

The domestic policy indicated in the ID deals mostly with a proposed examination of certain issues, including the important questions concerning the number of states and the possibility of a new capital.

**Foreign policy:** Promises to abide by all previous agreements were given.

No direct threats were made in the ID.

**Esprit de corps:** Not relevant.

The coup was preceded by fairly extensive unrest with strikes and demonstrations at the beginning of the year. The disturbances were related to economic discontent over wages and the rapid inflation, and political discontent over Gowon’s efforts to make military rule permanent. The change of power did not take place in connection with elections.

The actual change of power was accomplished *without any armed conflict* and Gowon himself let it be announced that he accepted the change and recognized the new regime.

The new government, which was presented on August 6, consisted of equal numbers of officers and civilian ministers. However, it was subordinated indefinitely to the military leadership.

*Type of change:* Palace revolution.

*Type of coup:* Political coup. It is somewhat doubtful as to how one should define this change of power, but bearing in mind that the new regime immediately evidenced a willingness to work for a return to civilian rule (which was clearly no longer the case with Gowon), it should be considered as a political coup.


**Instigator:** Lieutenant-Colonel Salek (one?).

**Justification:** The previous government was accused in the ID of corruption (F 16) and it was said that the Army acted in order to save the country from economic ruin (G 18) and division (E 13). (As the justifications are expressed in very

55 "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 74 ff.
56 Ibid pp 85 f and BBC op.cit. ME/4970/B/9–11.
57 "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 201 ff.
58 Ibid pp 203 f and BBC op.cit. ME/5862/B/10.
general terms, it is difficult to find one that is of upmost importance). It is also stated in the ID that an eventual objective was to create democratic institutions (N 38).

**Ethical precepts:** It was declared that the Armed Forces were "the ultimate owners of national legitimacy" and that the intervention resulted from "their belief in their responsibility".

There is no real outline of a policy in the ID. As far as foreign policy was concerned, there would be an attempt to improve relations with other favourably disposed nations.

The population was warned in vaguely threatening terms and urged to remain calm and to keep the peace.

*Esprit de corps* may have been of significance, though this is doubtful. Until only a few months before the takeover, Lieutenant-Colonel Salek had for a period of time been required to perform tasks other than those of Commander-in-Chief.

The coup was not preceded by any open unrest, but there was some discontent over the country's involvement in the war for the Spanish colony of Western Sahara. War efforts had had noticeable economic repercussions in the country.

The takeover was not directly related to any elections. It was accomplished without armed conflict.

The new government, which was presented the day after the change of power, consisted of equal numbers of military and civilian ministers.

**Type of change:** Takeover.

**Type of coup:** Politically limited coup. Despite the fact that the takeover was essentially related to a desire to end the war and that this issue was undoubtedly political, the intervention was not aiming at any radical change in Mauretania's internal affairs.

**LIBERIA,** April 12, 1980.\(^59\)

**Instigator:** Sergeant Doe (et al.)

**Justification:**\(^60\) There was no usual ID, but from interviews and statements it appeared that the takeover was justified on the grounds of the previous government's corrupt behaviour (F 16, 2 points) and economic mismanagement (G 18). It also soon became evident that there had been resentment over the apparent neglect of the material needs of the military personnel (L 34). Several politicians were also accused of violating the freedom and human rights of the Liberian people (D 10).

The coup-makers made no reference to any ethical rules, but Doe maintained that the soldiers "have no other alternative...".

A couple of days after the takeover a sort of policy was presented which primarily stressed the need to achieve just economic distribution of the country's resources. There were, however, no clearly defined measures. On the international level, the new regime intended to become more actively involved in the liberation of other African nations.

Relatively threatening statements were made during the first days.

*Esprit de corps* may have been significant. In connection with disturbances which preceded the coup, some members of the Armed Forces were arrested.

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59 "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 210 ff.
60 Ibid pp 213 ff, BBC op.cit. ME/6394/B/7 and ME/6396/B/10-11.
There was widespread social and political unrest which broke out a month before the coup and which was followed by repressive measures. Political elections were to have been held four months earlier, but had been postponed indefinitely.

The takeover was not possible without armed conflict.

The new government, formed immediately, was predominantly civilian. In the main, politicians from the former opposition were appointed. However the government was subject to the newly formed military People's Redemption Council (PRC).

Type of change: Takeover.

Type of coup: Arbitrator coup. The disturbances before the takeover were closely related to the repression of the outlawed opposition. The military intervened in support of this opposition.

Key to symbols: The figures in Table I indicate the occurrence of justifications in the IDs and their relative importance (2, 3 or 4 points are given to the most important justification, see above p. 74). In Table II the symbols signify the following:

Number: One, a few (few) or many (mny) persons have emerged as instigators responsible for the takeover.

Ethics: It is only shown whether ethical precepts have been cited or not.

Domestic policy: B denotes a "brief" outline, E stands for "exhaustive" and - indicates that no policy was presented in the ID.

Foreign policy: U stands for "unchanged", C for "changed" foreign policy and - indicates the absence of a statement in the ID.

Threats: Direct threats made in connection with the change of power in order to check resistance are indicated by the figure 2. Serious appeals for calm are indicated by the figure 1 and their absence by -.

Esprit de corps: If there is considered evidence that esprit de corps has been significant in a military intervention, this is indicated by the figure 2, little evidence is indicated by 1 and no evidence at all by -.

Unrest: The figure 3 denotes open unrest directly related to the coup. 2 indicates social unrest shortly before the coup. If the country is afflicted by chronic unrest which is not directly related to the intervention, this is marked by 1. - denotes the absence of unrest.

General elections: The figure 2 denotes that general elections have been held in very close connection to the coup. 1 indicates that elections have recently been held.

Armed conflict: Yes and No indicate whether there has been armed conflict or not.

Government: M indicates that the authority given governmental functions by the armed forces is predominantly military. C-M denotes a civil-military coalition and C denotes a civilian predominance. Note: The ruling authorities are not necessarily the actual political decision-makers. However, composition of the government is of interest as it sometimes reflects an attempt at legitimization in the eyes of the nation or of the world.

Type of change: This is indicated according to the types given above on pages 75–77. The following abbreviations have been used: C = corrective intervention, TP = transfer of power, T = takeover and PR = palace revolution.

Type of coup: The different types have the following abbreviations: P = political coup, A = arbitrator coup and PL = politically limited coup.

A symbol/figure followed by + denotes an increase in intensity, so that, for example, 2+ for unrest indicates that there was unrest shortly before the coup, but that it either died down immediately before the intervention, or that the unrest did not become manifest, or that it only affected relatively limited groups within the society. Similarly, a symbol/figure followed by - denotes a decrease in intensity. Uncertainty as to which symbol/figure is relevant is marked by ?. An asterisk indicates a point of particular interest. What is of interest emerges either from the following commentaries or from the descriptions above.
A table may be used to present the data in the above section in a more condensed form:

**Table 1.**

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**Special Notes**

**Dahomey -67.** The policy which was presented in the ID was primarily concerned with the new rulers' plans to write a new constitution in order to return power to the civilian politicians. Otherwise no policy was presented and the new government was to rule "one day at a time", that is, without any long-term plans or policies.

**Sierra Leone -68.** It was immediately apparent that the new rulers intended a speedy return to civilian rule and consequently neither the domestic nor the foreign policy came into question. Thus the absence of a policy was not a reflection of an inability to act on the part of the military.

**Somalia -69.** The presidential election took place within parliament and the candidate of the main party was a controversial figure. General elections had also been held earlier in the year under circumstances which had provoked a good deal of criticism.
Liberia. As there was no real ID, it is difficult to decide which statements on policy are to be considered. Something like a policy was presented a few days after the takeover. However, from the very beginning Sergeant Doe wanted to show that the new government was prepared to act, even though the decisions that were made mainly evidenced a bias in favour of members of the military establishment.

Commentary to the Tables
Table I shows the incidence of justifications cited in the IDs. In this table only the issues presented above on pages 72 f are given. The symbols/figures denote occurrence and the main justification, if any. Note, however, that the table does not show whether the new rulers changed their justification soon after the ID or whether they changed their main justification, as in Ghana 1966. There the ID was predominantly concerned with economic issues, only to give way completely to the question of democracy in the aftermath of the takeover. In like manner, the question of democracy was first stressed in the 1968 coup in Mali, but this was subsequently replaced by criticism of the economic policies of the ousted government.

The most common justification under "Other justifications" is O 43, which was also the main justification in the case of Dahomey 1969. This justification rests on the assumption that the civilian rulers who succeed military regimes are in some way responsible to the armed forces in questions of policy. The occurrence of this justification shows clearly that it is not necessary for the military to hold the reins of government in order to be able to dictate policy in a country.

Table II deals with questions which are not always as easily answered as those concerned with the occurrence of justifications in the IDs. This is also reflected in the greater number of plus and minus signs, question marks and asterisks in the table. Furthermore, it is sometimes difficult to determine the number of actors involved, as in Somalia 1969, where there was a 25-men strong revolutionary council from the very beginning, but where the only officer who came out into the open and was named was General Barre. Whenever there is any declaration of policy at all in the ID, its formulation is usually so vague that it does not really deserve to be called a "policy", and any changes in foreign policy are not normally announced until the new regime has secured its hold on the political power. An example of this is the C.A.R. 1966, where Bokassa promised an unchanged foreign policy, but where it was almost immediately known that a radical change in the relationship with the People's Republic of China could be expected. It can also be difficult to give a clear answer in the question of armed conflict. In Sierra Leone 1968 it was announced that a number of people had been killed and wounded. According to other sources, however, this was not in connection with the struggle for power, but was the outcome of an attempt by the citizens to exploit the situation and plunder Freetown.

However, before I proceed to a more systematic examination of the military coups and to an attempt to find explanations which embrace the variations, a number of comments on the above section ought to be made.

If one compares the very brief summaries of the military coups given above with the descriptions which I have given in the reference material "Afrikanska Militärkupper", one soon notices that the above cited justifications do not always agree with the justifications presented in the reference material. This is due to the fact that the above summaries solely give an account of the justifications which
appear in the IDs. The reference material also includes justifications which have appeared in other statements, while other less important justifications have been excluded. It is important, however, in a systematic comparison that the elements compared are treated equally. Only the justifications which have been most heavily stressed in the IDs appear in the above summary.

Another important distinction between the reference material and the summary lies in the selection of countries surveyed. Some changes of power found in the reference material have been excluded from the summary. These are changes which in themselves are interesting and which may be worth comparing with military coups, but which do not really constitute military coups d'état. The changes of power in question are those which took place in January and August, 1966 in Nigeria, in August 1968 in Congo|Brazzaville and in August 1979 in Equatorial Guinea. The 1974 change of power in Ethiopia is not considered either in the reference material or in the summary. In the case of the 1966 changes of power in Nigeria, both were more or less unsuccessful attempts at military intervention, which then led to a change of power in which the instigators of the revolt were not involved. General Ironsi was given the task of assuming political control after successfully quashing an attempted coup which had led to the disappearance or murder of several of the country's leading politicians. General Gowon was a member of the ruling military council and was chosen by the council as Ironsi's successor after Ironsi had been kidnapped and murdered by insurgent soldiers. In neither of these cases were the insurgents themselves represented, even though the outcome may in some measure have been welcomed by them. With regard to Congo Brazzaville, the change of power was the culmination of a prolonged struggle for power between the President and sectors of the Army. The change of power was precipitated by a mutiny and President Massemba-Débat was later compelled to successively relinquish power. The military takeover in Ethiopia was also a gradual process. Finally, I have chosen to omit the coup in Equatorial Guinea because of its special nature. The country is very small, consisting of two separate geographical regions and with a comparatively small population. Moreover, it has been so isolated that only limited information concerning the change of power is available.
Attempts by the Military to Explain Their Involvement in Politics

Part one of the thesis comprised an introductory discourse and a survey of various theories dealing with the question of why the armed forces, especially in Africa, have chosen to seize power from their political predecessors. That there is so much variation in these explanations shows at once that it is extremely difficult to find a single, all-embracing explanation of the phenomenon. In part two of the thesis I have presented the coups and the justifications the coupmakers themselves have cited in their initial declarations. In this concluding section I shall return to the theories of part one and compare some of them with the coupmakers' initial declarations. The disparities between the coupmakers' own explanations and the attempts by researchers to explain military intervention emerge from a comparative analysis of the theories in part one and the empirical data in part two. In some cases, outright differences between the theories and reality come to light.
I have already pointed out that a successful foreign intervention can be extremely difficult to verify. Not only is the intervening nation interested in keeping such an intervention secret, this desire is also shared in equal measure by the military interventionists. Direct evidence of foreign intervention can be a dangerous weapon in the hands of the opposition to a military regime. This fear of accusations that there has been foreign intervention is also reflected in the initial declarations, where the most common and almost always recurring concern is with the new regime's international relations.

Many of the African states are still comparatively fragile political constructions, highly dependent on the international system, often on the former "mother country" in particular. In order to be in a position to exploit the raw materials which pay the import and foreign debts, there is also often a dependence upon foreign enterprises and foreign investments and in order to maintain these relations, a degree of stability is necessary. Hence it is important for the new rulers to emphasize at once that the change of power does not entail any alteration in the country's relations to the outside world. In twenty-five of the twenty-nine examined coups there were immediate statements concerning foreign relations and in only four of these instances was there talk of some form of change in the foreign policy. In three of these cases the change involved an improvement of former relations.

In the Sudan 1958 there was talk of improved relations with the Arab countries and in Togo 1963 of better relations with neighbouring Ghana and with France. The initial declaration which was presented in Ghana 1972 spoke of better relations with the neighbouring countries and it was not until four days later that Colonel Acheampong declared that Ghana would depart from the conservative "policy of dialogue" which Dr. Busia had pursued towards South Africa. In Liberia 1980, however, it was clear almost from the outset that the new regime would alter its foreign policy and begin to work more actively for the still unliberated countries in Africa, a policy which was a decisive break with President Tolbert's far more conservative foreign policy. Sudan 1969 is in a way an exception to the rule that changes in foreign policy should not immediately be made public. It was apparent from a separate ID which the new Prime Minister, Awadallah, presented an hour or so after Colonel Nemery's ID that the new regime would turn away from the "imperialistic" states towards the socialistic Arab states. Thus it was the civilian ID which revealed the political change. In Nemery's ID there was only a promise that all foreigners and all foreign property would be protected.¹

¹ BBC op.cit. ME/3083/E2/8, 9 and 15.
The statements on foreign policy are evidently made with the purpose of reassuring other nations in an effort to preclude any form of sanction being introduced against the coup-makers. In those instances where no statement on foreign policy has been given in the ID, it is nevertheless evident from the stress laid, for example, upon the temporary nature of the military regime that there is no intention of abandoning the previously pursued policies.

It was obvious that general Soglo’s intervention in Dahomey 1963 was of a temporary and specific nature. He co-operated immediately with the former political leaders and soon returned power to the civilian politicians. When Soglo intervened again in 1965 and this time made clear that there would not be an immediate return to civilian rule, he also announced that the country’s foreign policy would remain the same. In Sierra Leone 1968 it was immediately quite clear that the military had no political ambitions whatsoever and within a week the civilian rulers were allowed to assume political control.

Should the new rulers forget to emphasize that the change of power does not entail any changes in the foreign policy or that the takeover is purely temporary, a statement on foreign policy may be made shortly after the coup.

When Major Kereku and his brother officers seized power in Dahomey 1972, the takeover was followed by a detailed ID which almost exclusively contained criticism of the civilian politicians. There was no statement on foreign policy in the ID. However, after its first meeting the new military government released a special communique in which it was stressed that all previous agreements and treaties would be abided by. In addition, the new government made special arrangements to meet and discuss with the diplomatic corps.

In the 1979 coup in Ghana Lieutenant Rawlings and his colleagues announced directly that the transition to civilian rule would proceed as planned. The new revolutionary council had no policy of its own apart from the “house-cleaning operation” within the Army, which had been cited as the reason for the takeover. When rumours that the coup was communist inspired began to spread a week after the takeover, it became at once necessary for the revolutionary council to declare that “there is no change” in the foreign policy.

It is apparent from the examples above that on two occasions only did the new regime announce that the change of power would also entail a change in the foreign policy. The political change in Liberia was revealed in one of many separate statements which were made in lieu of an ID and in the Sudan the foreign policy was not mentioned in the actual ID, but in the separate ID of the civilian prime minister. As a rule, however, any plans for a change in foreign policy should not appear in the ID.

The clearest example of a planned change in foreign policy which was omitted from the ID is found in the 1966 coup in the Central African Republic. Colonel Bokassa promised

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2 Ibid ME/4131/B/1.
3 Ibid ME/6139/B/6.
in a very brief ID to respect all agreements with other nations, but in a French radio interview the very same evening he admitted to having plans to expel all Chinese at short notice. There are other similar examples of how an unchanged foreign policy was promised in the ID, only for the promise to be broken soon afterwards. In Ghana 1966, for example, the coup was followed by deportations as in the C.A.R. A number of Chinese and Russian diplomats and experts were expelled from Ghana.

It is impossible to discern from the initial declarations the extent to which the coupmakers have inspired each other. Nevertheless, the large number of coups which occurred between Autumn 1965 and Autumn 1968 (eleven coups, as well as two abortive interventions in Nigeria, which still led to military rule) and especially at the turn year 1965-66 (five coups in four months, as well as two in Nigeria) indicate some form of ”contagion”. The formulation of the IDs and other statements by the officers involved cannot, however, explain how this ”contagion” spread. Only rarely do officers admit to having been inspired by anything other than concern for the good of their country.

An exception to this rule was Niger 1974 when Colonel Koutché admitted in a radio interview that he had been inspired by the actions of another. He also said that he was not averse to being compared to General de Gaulle. However, these statements were hardly controversial and did not draw much attention.

It is evident from the above that the new rulers in most cases of military intervention make some form of ”declaration of foreign policy” in connection with the ID. These declarations, usually quite similar, are placed at the end of the ID with promises that the previously pursued foreign policy is to be kept or at least that the new regime is to abide by all promises and pledges which the previous government has given. Often, however, these statements consist of two parts, one promising an unchanged policy, but the other warning other nations against interfering in the country’s domestic affairs. This type of warning has been made even by small states with limited military resources, warnings which then appear almost pathetic if taken as a threat of resistance to the international system. The threatening element of the warnings, however, is not the main purpose of the statement, but is rather a way of stressing that the change of power is of a purely domestic nature. This is also underscored by the fact that in almost all of the ten cases where warnings have been given, it has been particularly emphasized that it was a question of the country’s ”internal affairs”.

Warnings to other nations were made in connection with the takeovers in the Congo (Zaire)-65, Upper Volta-66, Ghana-66, Burundi-66, Togo-67, Sierra Leone-68, Uganda-71, Niger-74, Ghana-78, and Liberia-80. In Zaire, for example, Mobutu declared that ”No interference whatever in the internal affairs of the state will be tolerated”, in Ghana-

\[^4\] Ibid ME/2051/B/7. A decision on the deportation was taken on January the 6th, see ME/2057/B/4.
\[^5\] Ibid ME/2115/ii.
\[^6\] Ibid ME/4578/B/2.
66 it was said that ”... we shall not tolerate any interference from any country” and in Uganda -71 that ”We warn all foreign governments not to interfere in Uganda’s internal affairs”.

If one interprets the warnings literally, they usually constitute quite unnecessary remarks. It is not usual for other countries to attempt to alter the outcome of a military coup by force. However, the new regime, which has seized power in a country by force of arms, may be confronted by other forms of international resistance which may considerably hamper the chances of the regime to function internationally. An example of such difficulties is found in the 1966 military coup in Ghana.

Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana was toppled soon after he had left the country on a diplomatic journey. Thus when the coup was executed, Nkrumah was able to take refuge in Guinea Conakry and from there to lead the resistance against the new regime. When General Ankrah sent his diplomats to the O.A.U. conference in Addis Ababa a week after the coup, there was a hot debate as to who actually had the right to represent Ghana, the General’s envoys or Nkrumah’s representatives. The confrontation resulted in a temporary schism and Guinea, Tanzania and Mali left the meeting in protest against the recognition of Ankrah.

Similarly, Liberia also had difficulty in gaining international recognition following the 1980 coup, especially after the executions of some of the leading figures of the previous regime. Matthews, the foreign minister, was not allowed entry into Nigeria, for example, and when Liberia’s new leader, Sergeant Doe, came to the ECOWA conference in Lomé, Togo, at the end of May, the other delegates decided to exclude him.7

The rules of international law for the intercourse between nations is not always clearly defined. A general rule which usually applies is that a state and its government is recognized if it has genuine control of a territory. Once a state is recognized, this recognition is valid in principle until other nations state unequivocally that the said state or regime is not recognized. Whenever a country changes government after political elections, the new government is not expected to receive any special ”recognition”. Generally, the same applies if the change of power is a result of a military coup. Silence on the part of the other nations implies that the state and its government are still recognized.

However, military coups are unconstitutional changes of government and sometimes the constitutionally elected and lawful rulers may still claim to represent the country. In the above example, Nkrumah’s supporters asserted that they were the legitimate representatives of Ghana, and when Idi Amin seized power in Uganda, Obote, claimed in Dar es Salaam that he was still the country’s president. Hence it is important for a new military regime to receive explicit recognition and when the regime succeeds in gaining such recognition, it is often announced to the public as proof of international acceptance and of the regime’s legitimacy. In order to avoid a misunderstanding some states may grant an implicit recognition by making the particular point that they recognize states, and

7 ”Afrikanska militärkupper” p 216.
not governments, on principle. In this way, other states may also avoid the moral responsibility which a recognition of an unconstitutionally changed government entails.

In the 1958 coup in the Sudan the new regime was recognized by Egypt as early as the day after the coup. On November 19 and 20 it was also recognized by England, Jordan, Ethiopia, France, etc. In 1963 Togo received recognition after a week from, among others, Ghana, Dahomey and Senegal. In 1965, after Mobutu's coup in Zaire, Belgium hastened to point out that it recognized states, not regimes, and in the first two weeks after the coup several Western countries recognized Zaire openly. At the fall of Nkrumah in Ghana 1966, Nigeria, England and the U.S., as well as other Western countries, granted recognition after just over a week. In Uganda 1971 Amin announced that England, Ethiopia and Liberia had recognized the new regime in the beginning of February. On this occasion, however, the governments of Ethiopia and Liberia noted expressly that they had not granted recognition, but stated simply that they recognized states on principle, not governments. In the case of Uganda, however, according to Tanzanian radio, the U.S. government made it known that it intended to wait with its recognition until more African states had announced their recognition of the Amin regime.

On the whole, new rulers are very anxious to obtain favourable international reactions. If explicit recognition by other countries is not forthcoming, the coupmakers themselves may also approach other states and explain in favourable terms why they have seized power in their country. Such approaches are often made by summoning the diplomatic corps to a meeting and by more or less repeating to the foreign diplomats the contents of the ID. On such occasions it can be difficult for the diplomats to question the legitimacy of the new rulers to govern the country and it is not unusual for the polite statements of the diplomats to be broadcast over the radio as evidence of a sort of recognition. Sometimes the new regimes also send out special goodwill delegations with the purpose of securing some form of recognition and continued economic assistance or economic co-operation.

Obviously the new military rulers attach great importance to international recognition. Thus it can be of enormous value to the officers if they know in advance that the change of power is going to be accepted by a major power. However, such advance information constitutes a direct intervention in a country's internal affairs, which is why it is given in secrecy and why it is difficult to verify. Even so, it is remarkable that among those countries which after a coup have dared to warn against interference in their domestic affairs, there are a number where one might suspect, for one reason or another, that some form of advance information has been given.

When Mobutu seized power in the Congo (Zaire) 1965, he stressed that "No interference whatever ... will be tolerated". The day after the coup support came from Belgium and recognition from Western countries followed fairly quickly. In the weeks preceding the

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8 BBC op.cit. ME/3605/ii.
9 Ibid ME/3606/ii.
change of power, the Kasavubu regime had led a campaign against Belgium and there had been several anti-European demonstrations. Even if Mobutu had not expressly received tacit assurances of Belgian or West European support, he could still be quite certain of a positive reception. It was most likely that General Ankrah had the support of the American CIA when he overthrew Nkrumah in Ghana 1966 and he was able to declare in the ID that ”we shall not tolerate any interference from any foreign country”. According to certain sources, Idi Amin could similarly expect support from Great Britain when he ousted Obote in Uganda 1971. In the ID he was also able to warn foreign governments against interfering in Uganda’s internal affairs.

If a country has not received advance information of foreign recognition, threats may still be made if there is no alternative government which can claim the legitimate right to power.

In Upper Volta 1966 Colonel Lamizana was able to declare that ”I will not tolerate any interference in the internal affairs of the Republic”, since the change of power was a transfer of power and President Yaméogo had publicly given Lamizana the task of assuming political control in the country. The same situation applied in Togo 1967 when President Grunitzky handed over political responsibility to Lieutenant-Colonel Eyadema. In Sierra Leone 1968 the military did not require international recognition since the coup was made in order to bring about a return to civilian rule.

From what has been said above, it is evident that the military rulers attach great importance to how international opinion receives the news of the change of power. There is little other countries can do to make the military relinquish its claim to power once the coup has been executed, but even so, it is still likely that the international reaction may sometimes influence both the shaping of the military regime and its behaviour.

It was partly due to international opinion that the executions were stopped both in Ghana 1979 and Liberia 1980. In Uganda 1971 Great Britain officially recognized Idi Amin’s regime at the same time as Amin’s new civilian government swore its oath of office. That Amin appointed a civilian government may have been a concession to British demands. When Major Kouandété sized power in Dahomey 1967, he was compelled after only a few days to share power with Lieutenant-Colonel Alley and Major Sizogan. A contributive factor in this division of power may very well have been France’s cool reaction to the coup.

But for a military regime to be able to function at all, it is also necessary that at least some sections of the society accept the new rulers and are prepared to co-operate with the new regime.

10 J Stockwell op.cit.
11 ”Afrikanska militärkupper” pp 179 f.
Il. Societal Conditions

The table in part II (p. 99) shows that the majority of justifications are concerned with conditions within the society. Moreover, the table shows that this type of justification is cited in all military coups, even though the main justification may sometimes deal with issues involving the army or the relationship between the government and the military. This is in complete agreement with Eric Nordlinger’s statement (see part I p. 31) that the armed forces are reluctant to intervene against a regime which cannot be said to be faced by a crisis of legitimacy. Nordlinger explained a crisis of legitimacy in terms of three types of performance failures (failure to fulfil one’s duties), which correspond to justifications B, F, G, H and M in the table in part II. The first type of performance failure which the military usually cite in their condemnation of a civilian regime concerns unconstitutional or unlawful behaviour, particularly corruption. The justifications which I have presented under F deal with corruption and those under H are concerned with whether the government has been unjust or has acted unlawfully. Nordlinger’s second example of performance failure is concerned with economic failures with high prices and inflationary spirals and corresponding to this are the justifications under G, i.e. those which deal precisely with economic failures. Finally, Nordlinger spoke of the inability to cope with political opposition, including political disorder, and corresponding to these performance failures are justifications under B, concerning political power struggles, and M, which deal with the army’s duty of guaranteeing law and order in society. The table shows that in only three instances did the IDs not include any of these issues.

When Modibo Keita was deposed in Mali 1968, the change of power was announced to the public in a short slogan-like ID which criticized the Keita regime for its undemocratic conduct. But in a statement three days after the coup Lieutenant Traore stressed that one of the main reasons for the takeover was the previous regime’s economic failures. In 1969 the armed forces assumed political control for the fourth time in Dahomey. Two justifications for the takeover were given in the ID; firstly, that the civilian Zinsou government had been given the task of ruling by the Army and that it had failed to follow its directives, and secondly, that its misrule had led to increased disorder. The question of law and order had to do with the fact that Major Kouandété had been the target of several assassination attempts in 1969. Kouandété’s coup in December 1969 was not particularly successful and he was soon forced to surrender some of his power and prepare for a return to civilian rule. The third exception to Nordlinger’s thesis is the 1973 coup in Rwanda. There was in fact only a single justification for this military coup, which was the accusation that the policies of the civilian government had led to regional division. In seizing power in
Rwanda, Habyalimana deposed a very popular president. Kayibanda was regarded by many as the national hero who had freed the country’s Hutu majority from the total political and economic dominance of the minority group, the Tutsi. Hence the takeover was a delicate issue and the criticism of the previous regime had to be toned down as much as possible.

It is worth noting that the officers themselves almost never speak of the previous regime’s legitimacy. Certainly there are a few cases where the previous regime is claimed to be illegal or lacking in popular support, but the very term “legitimacy” is not used.

The exception to this rule is Mauretania, where the military did not accuse the previous regime of illegitimacy, but instead claimed its own legitimate right to power, “The armed forces, the ultimate owners of national legitimacy, out of their belief in their responsibility, have seized power – rather they have retrieved power from those who have wrested it from the people by deception and treason” (my italics), was the explanation of the newly-formed Military Committee for National Salvation.¹

Thus in almost all military coups the previous regime is accused of one or a number of the mistakes which, according to Nordlinger, lead to a crisis of legitimacy. In ten of the investigated coups, some of these justifications have been the most important justification. In four instances, political power struggles, or the ”inability to cope with political opposition”, have constituted the most important justification in the ID and in two cases, the army’s duty to guarantee order has been cited as the most important reason for the change of power. ”Economic failures with high prices and inflationary spirals” are found among the justifications concerning economic failures, which are by far the most common justification and which are raised in fifteen IDs. However, only on one occasion did economic failures constitute the most important justification. Finally, with regard to ”unconstitutional or unlawful behaviour, particularly corruption”, the table in part II shows that justifications claiming that the government has been unjust or unlawful have been the most important justification in two cases and accusations of corruption, which appeared thirteen times, have been most important on one occasion.

Nordlinger’s examples of performance failures include the ”inability to cope with political opposition”, but a crisis of legitimacy may also be the result of the inverse, namely the inability to allow political opposition. In eight coups the military have justified the takeovers in their IDs on the grounds of the undemocratic behaviour of the previous regime. In four of these instances, this justification has also been the most important one. Accusations that the government is undemocratic and lacking in public support are quite definitely a question of the regime’s legitimacy and should therefore be included in Nordlinger’s examples of performance failures.

¹ BBC op.cit. ME/5862/B/10.
Military Coups and Political or Social Unrest

The survey of initial declarations has clearly shown that the military almost always justify their claim to power on the grounds of, among other things, the previous regime’s illegitimacy, as defined by Eric Nordlinger. Most of the factors included in this definition are, however, only a part of typical and chronic problems afflicting underdeveloped countries. When expressed in vague terms and compared to the high hopes raised when the African states achieved independence, economic failures can be attributed to almost all African governments. The only directly “acute” justification in Nordlinger’s examples concern accusations that the government was unable to cope with disorder. Several of the other authors mentioned in part one also claimed a direct connection between disorder of different kinds and the opportunity for a military invention. Finer, Welch Jr. and Huntington name strikes and demonstrations as examples of disorder which encourage military intervention. However, the tables in part II show that only on three occasions (Dahomey -63, Upper Volta -66 and C.A.R. -66) have the coupmakers themselves directly cited disturbances in justification of the takeover and that there has only been open unrest in connection with a small number of coups.

In Dahomey 1963 there were strikes and massive demonstrations as a result of government plans for extensive wage reductions and reduced social benefits. The purpose of General Soglo’s intervention was to bring about a return to order and to reorganize the government. In the Congo (Zaire) 1965 there was tension throughout the country following several years of violent internal struggles, and towards the end of the year a struggle for power broke out between Kimba, Kasavubu and Tshombe. Shortly before the coup censorship was introduced and the criticism of Tshombe increased drastically. In addition, it was announced that plans by two Belgian civil servants to stage a coup had been uncovered, which resulted in widespread demonstrations against the West. The disturbances, however, were not focussed upon any single issue. In Upper Volta 1966 the military coup was a direct result of the extensive anti-government demonstrations and strikes, which broke out in response to the government’s austerity measures. In Sierra Leone 1967 Lansana’s intervention gave rise to demonstrations and riots and at least four people were killed when the police intervened. Lansana then held the political leaders under arrest until the final results of the general election had been announced. When the Army intervened against Lansana a couple of days later, Lansana’s actions were given as the reason for the intervention.2

In two of these cases, Dahomey 1963 and Upper Volta 1966, tension was included amongst the most important justifications. In the C.A.R. 1966 the deposed president’s resignation, which entrusted Bokassa with the task of assuming political control and which was probably written under duress, was made public. In this case, however, the transfer was made under pressure and there was really no question of disorder other than that caused by the intervention itself.

Judging from the material, it does appear as if the armed forces are fairly reluctant to intervene when there is overt disorder. In three of the four cases of open unrest

2 ”Afrikanska militärkupper” p 130.
presented above, the intervention of the armed forces could be accepted by the public as being directly related to the disturbances. In Upper Volta, for example, the demonstrators themselves asked the military to overthrow the government.

It is far more common for the armed forces to intervene after a period of social or political tension than in direct connection with disturbances. In thirteen of the investigated coups, the armed forces have intervened some time after disturbances and in six of these interventions, the most important justification in the ID was directly related to those factors which lay behind the disturbances. In a further five cases, the ID has included justifications citing the disorder, or such justifications have been added by the military shortly after the coup.

A government crisis in Dahomey 1965 arose in connection with the power struggle between the President and the Prime Minister. An interim government was appointed with the task of rewriting the constitution, but disturbances broke out when the politicians began to form new parties. When General Soglo seized power in December, the most important justification was made up of accusations that the politicians had only been concerned with a struggle for power. The 1967 coup in Togo was preceded by extensive demonstrations and political power struggles, disturbances which had, however, become fewer at the time of the coup. Power struggles were cited as the most important justification in Eyadema’s ID. At the time of Kouandété’s intervention in Dahomey 1967 there were extremely heated pay negotiations, which only a few days earlier had seemed impossible to resolve, but which at the moment of the coup seemed to be on the way to a peaceful solution. The ID included, as a sub-justification, the claim that the Soglo administration had mismanaged the economy. In Sierra Leone 1968 there had been a number of disturbances when Juxson-Smith made known his intention to retain military rule for a longer period than he had initially promised. The most important justification in the ID concerned Juxson-Smith’s broken promise. In Mali 1968 there were a number of economic-based disturbances due to currency fluctuations, inflation, devaluation and a return under French currency agreements. There was also discontent over the extensive price controls of the People’s Militia, whose actions also caused resentment amongst the officers. Traore’s most important justification was concerned with “the lack of democracy”, but shortly after the takeover the coup was primarily justified on economic and financial grounds. There was a certain amount of political tension in the Sudan 1969 when the ruling coalition failed to agree upon the division of political power among the various parties. Accusations regarding political power struggles were also included in the ID as a sub-justification. In Somalia 1969 there were disturbances resulting from the elections earlier in the year. Many candidates had complained in vain about the voting procedure and several politicians had been arrested. The political unrest in Somalia culminated in the murder of President Sharmarke a few days before the military takeover. Misrule in general was given as the most important justification, but as a sub-justification it was also said that the government had broken laws and had violated the constitution. General Habyalimana’s takeover in Rwanda 1973 was preceded by widespread, ethnic-based confrontations earlier in the year. However, the ID dealt mainly with regional problems. In Niger 1974 the military takeover had been preceded by several outbreaks of social and political unrest, by strikes and demonstrations. The difficulties experienced by the government in organizing relief following the lengthy drought in the Sahel region aroused a good deal of discontent. In the ID the government was accused of injustice, corruption, selfishness and oligarchy. The ID was so generally formulated that it could be
interpreted as support for the previous disturbances. Chad was hit in 1975 by chronic regional- and ethnic-based unrest. There had been some political opposition which had resulted, among other things, in General Malloum's arrest. There were disturbances at the prison in N'Djamena shortly before the coup, which were related to ethnic and regional conflicts. As a sub-justification it was claimed that President Tombalbaye's rule had aggravated the ethnic conflicts. Before the 1975 change of power in Nigeria General Gowon's public announcement that the transition to democracy would be postponed was followed by a number of strikes and demonstrations. There was also a degree of unrest based on economic discontent and dissatisfaction with wages within the public sector. Though the ID mainly stressed General Gowon's centralization of power (lack of democracy), the economic failures were also cited in justification of the takeover. In Ghana 1978 a referendum was held as to what form the coming civilian rule would take. The voting was followed by disturbances and the leaders opposing Acheampong's political solution were imprisoned. In the ID which came a few days after the change of power in July the most important justification involved accusations of a lack of democracy. Finally, the 1980 coup in Liberia was also preceded by extensive disturbances, mainly in connection with attempts by the banned opposition to make themselves heard. The lack of democracy was not stressed in the justifications which were raised after the coup. Instead, the most important justification concerned accusations of corruption.

The above examples show that in most cases where there has been social or political unrest, the military has also allowed the reasons for the unrest to be reflected in the justifications cited in the ID. At the same time it is important to note that there is no complete agreement between the justifications cited by the military and the demands and expectations of the people. In many cases, the causes of public discontent are only mentioned as sub-justifications in the ID, and even in those instances in which the most important justification coincides with the issue that gave rise to the public discontent, some differences may still exist. When, for example, the people in Nigeria 1975 and Ghana 1978 reacted because the process of democratization was too slow or was not going the way they wanted, lack of democracy was cited in the ID as the most important justification. In both of these cases, the rulers were accused by their military successors of power centralization, but the main criticism was the lack of cooperation within the former ruling military committee. In the coups in Dahomey 1965 and Togo 1967, too, public unrest and the issues raised in the IDs coincided even though there were some differences. In both of these cases, the disturbances stemmed from the fact that various groups were struggling for greater political influence and the military justifications centred upon "power struggles". The difference lies in the fact that the public supported the various political movements that they wanted to see represented and the military put an end to the influence of all groups, even those which had received support from one or another group during the disturbances.

A summary of the above indicates that when the armed forces intervene in direct connection with disturbances, the justifications for the takeover are based on the issues which gave rise to the unrest. One may also conclude that the armed forces usually refrain from political intervention until the disturbances have subsided. The issue which gave rise to the disturbances is then included in the
justifications, either as the most important justification or as a sub-justification. However, the justifications do not coincide completely with the demands made by the people and the actions of the army almost never resolve the issue in the manner suggested by the people at the time of the disturbances. By using the dispute to justify their intervention, the military can in this way obtain popular support, while as military rulers they do not need to co-operate with the "agitators" since the point at issue has been redefined.

Military Coups and Economic Mismanagement

Several of the authors presented in part one pointed out that a country's economic difficulties increase the likelihood of a military intervention. Nordlinger, for instance, argued that an economic decline could influence the military in two ways; firstly, since it leads to a crisis of legitimacy for the previous government and secondly, since the economic difficulties and the subsequent restraints aimed at improving the economy often affect the interests of the middle class and consequently those of the officer corps as well. An examination of the IDs also shows that the most common justification deals precisely with economic failures, a justification which is found in fifteen of the twenty-nine cases studied. If one adds to this the next most common justification (corruption), which is in some measure related to a failed economy, one finds that there are justifications dealing with some form of economic malaise in two thirds of the coups.

In part one there was also an argument based upon the fact that the armed forces sometimes seize power because they regard themselves as more capable of solving the social problems, a point of view which derives from the more modern and socially-oriented training which today's officers receive. However, the economic failures of the previous regime are almost never the most important justification of a takeover. Nor is "corruption" the most important justification on more than one occasion.

In Ghana 1966 the greater part of the ID was taken up by various economic justifications. The Nkrumah administration was accused of economic mismanagement and was held responsible for inflation and shortages. But shortly after the military had consolidated its position of power, the target of criticism became almost exclusively the undemocratic nature of the Nkrumah regime. Corruption was the most important justification in the separate statements made in connection with the 1980 coup in Liberia. The coup in Liberia was also followed by trials against the former politicians, trials in which the politicians were accused of corruption and where several were found guilty and were publicly executed.

The fact that the officers do not cite economic failure as the most important justification for their takeovers need not necessarily mean that they do not consider themselves capable of achieving better economic results than their predecessors. But choosing an issue as hard to handle as a country's economy in order to legitimize a takeover may prove to be a rather delicate matter. In fact, military rulers themselves often commit the same economic errors of which the
civilian politicians have been accused. In the six cases where the military coup was aimed at an already established military regime, the new rulers have in five of the cases criticized their predecessors for economic mismanagement. Moreover, these predecessors have themselves often seized power using economic mismanagement as a sub-justification.

Military interventions against established military regimes occurred in Dahomey 1967, Sierra Leone 1968, Nigeria 1975, Burundi 1976, Ghana 1978 and Ghana 1979. The only time economic failures were not included as a sub-justification in the ID was in the 1968 takeover in Sierra Leone, a takeover which differed from the others in that the military immediately returned power to civilian politicians.

If one compares the coups which took place during the seventies with the rash of military takeovers in the sixties, especially in the middle of the sixties, it becomes clear that economic factors have come to be a more important justification for military intervention in politics. In the sixteen takeovers which occurred during the sixties, ”economic failures” were cited as justifications on only five occasions. Of the twelve coups which were executed after the wave of coups in the sixties, all but two were justified with accusations of economic failures and in one of these two cases, the regime was accused of corruption, which may also be seen as a form of economic failure. This last case was Rwanda, where the criticism was played down because of President Kayibanda’s popularity (see above). Since a justification related to a certain issue implies some measure of commitment, one may interpret the greater frequency of ”economic failures” as a sign of the gradual politicization of military coups. This is also borne out by the fact that military rulers of the seventies are no longer as eager to claim that the change of power is of a temporary nature.

Military Coups and Class Conflicts

If it is true that the nature of military coups has become increasingly political, then it becomes necessary to inquire into the political preferences of the new rulers and to see if such preferences are detectable even in the IDs. The majority of writers treated in part one held the view that, as a rule, military intervention benefits the middle class, either in the form of a progressive intervention against a ruling upper class, or as a conservative obstruction to a popular political movement. Can one, however, detect class conflicts even in the IDs?

The tables in part two show that the officers do not usually express their own political ambitions in the IDs. As far as foreign policy is concerned, they are very eager, as has been seen above, to promise a more or less unchanged policy, but with regard to their plans for domestic policy, they present very brief programmes, if they say anything at all. Less than half of the initial declarations include anything which might be called a ”programme” and only four of these are somewhat more detailed.

When the army and the police overthrew Nkrumah in Ghana 1966, the coup was explained in an ID which was principally concerned with criticism of Nkrumah’s
economic policy. Though there was no real programme, it was nevertheless stated that the
main objective of the military regime would be to restructure the economy. "What we need
is a radical rethinking of our economic and financial policies". There were at the time,
however, no concrete plans for the reorganization of the economy, and not until a week
later were such plans presented. When the Army and the civilian opposition seized power
in the Sudan 1969, the takeover was very well planned and several separate statements
were made on the radio throughout the first day after the coup. In his statements
Awadallah disclosed plans to broaden economic and political participation. When
Colonel Acheampong seized power in Ghana 1972, although there was no real
programme in the ID, it did contain indications of a certain political course and it in fact
presented the new regime's first political decisions: to alter the payment system for cocoa,
to alter rural development plans, to reintroduce work brigades and state farms and to
change the law pertaining to aliens. 3

In the 1978 change of power in Ghana the new rulers also presented a sort of
programme. This programme was in itself quite comprehensive, but the change of power
occurred on such an internal level that Akuffo and his colleagues did not feel obliged to
present the new leadership and its policy in an ID until five days after the actual change of
power.

Considered as political manifestations, the programmes given in the examples
above are extremely limited, but as a rule, "programmes" are even more meagre.
Thus it is not possible on the basis of the IDs to make an analysis of which social
class the military identify with or in whose interests they intervene.

But even if no particular political objectives are expressed in the IDs, one may
still note that the choice of wording and the manner of expression are often aimed
at appealing to a wider public. In the aftermath of a takeover the military rulers
have often used a language which is radical and progressive so as to give the
appearance that the change of power is a revolution of the masses. Even when the
socialistic Kwame Nkrumah was overthrown in Ghana 1966, the newly formed
"National Liberation Council" spoke of Ghana's revolution and of the new
government as the "revolutionary government". The verbal revolution is,
however, seldom succeeded by a social revolution.

In a third of the examined coups, the new rulers have endeavoured to give the coup a
revolutionary appearance when the change of power is presented to the people in the ID.
In the Central African Republic 1966 Bokassa declared that "The bourgeoisie and the
privileged class have been abolished".4 In Ghana 1966 there were references to "the
revolutionary government"5 and in Burundi 1966 Micombero referred to the new
government as "this Revolutionary Council" and "the National Revolutionary
Government".6 In Dahomey 1967 Kouandété was to establish a "revolutionary military
committee"7 and the military regime in Sierra Leone 1968 was overthrown by "a new

3 BBC op.cit. ME/2098/B/1-2 and ME/3083/E2/1-19.
4 Ibid ME/2051/B/6.
5 Ibid ME/2098/B/2.
6 Ibid ME/2331/B/3-4.
7 Ibid ME/2650/B/5.
anti-corruption revolutionary movement". In Nemery's takeover in the Sudan 1969 the whole coup was repeatedly described as a revolution and as a continuation of the October Revolution of 1964. It was "The Military Revolutionary Council" which assumed power in Somalia 1969 and in Dahomey 1972 the ID was concluded with the salute: "Long live the Army! Long live the revolution! Long live Dahomey!" When the military seized power again in Ghana 1979, political responsibility was handed over to "an armed forces revolutionary council" and the ID ended with "Long live the revolution!" There was no real ID in Liberia 1980. But almost all the statements made by the new "People's Redemption Council of the Armed Forces" ended with "In the cause of the people, the struggle continues".

The military regimes resulting from the coups in the examples above have by no means followed the radical and revolutionary course outlined in the initial declarations. Instead, the leaders of the alleged revolutions have in many cases taken advantage of their newly acquired positions for their own ends. In the C.A.R. Bokassa, who "toppled" the bourgeoisie and the privileged classes, became Emperor with the state treasury as his own private piggy bank. In Ghana General Ankrah was eventually forced to resign, suspected of financial misconduct and Captain Micombeo's rule in Burundi scarcely led to the liberation of the Hutu people. Hence it is not possible to determine from the IDs the class interests of the military rebels. The radical jargon in the IDs must be seen instead as an attempt on the part of the coupmakers to seek wider and more general support for their actions.

Military Coups and Ethnic or Regional Conflict

As I have already noted in part one, the ethnic and regional conflicts in Africa are largely remnants from the time when the colonial boundaries were drawn. Ethnic groups which were by tradition incompatible were forced to live within the same national frontiers, whereas other large and homogeneous groups were split and ended up in two or more different countries. The ethnic conflicts were then aggravated by the colonial powers' policy of economic exploitation which developed the coastal regions at the expense of the interior. That the conflicts which arose in this way are still present and that they directly influence the political ambitions of the armed forces was the view of several of the authors treated in part one. Nor is there the slightest doubt that several of the regimes which came to power through military coups have taken advantage of their political position in order to favour their own region and ethnic group in one way or another.

Thus it is clear that the motives which provoke the military to act can have an ethnic or regional basis. But do they justify their actions on ethnic or regional grounds, that is, do they seek any form of support by citing in the ID the previous

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8 Ibid ME/2749/ii.
9 Ibid ME/3210/B/1.
10 Ibid ME/4130/B/3.
11 Ibid ME/6394/B/9.
government's lack of success in ethnic or regional issues? The data in the table in part two show that this type of justification has only been the **most important** justification on one single occasion, but that it has appeared in connection with eight coups (ethnic and regional questions have been included under E, which deals with nation-building).

In the coups in **Somalia 1969**, **Uganda 1971** and **Chad 1975** the coupmakers accused the previous regimes of having pursued a policy of "tribalism", but it was only in Uganda that there was an attempt to specify the criticism. Amin accused the Obote regime of having favoured Obote's own ethnic group, a justification which must have appealed to the Ganda people, whose privileged position had been undermined during Obote's rule. The military have in three cases blamed the politicians for exacerbating regional cleavage and in two cases for failing to unite the nation. Both types of accusations may very well be founded upon ethnic interests, but the military have chosen to give these problems a regional or nationalistic label. In **Togo 1967** there was antagonism between the north and the south, a cleavage which was related to the separate homeland areas of the different ethnic groups and Eyadema held Grunitzky responsible for the fact that the nation had not been united. In the **Sudan 1969** there was the traditional problem with the southern areas of the country, which both ethnically and politically were difficult to integrate into the national policy, and in the ID the civilian politicians' difficulties in solving this problem were cited even though, as it turned out later, the new regime had no solutions of their own to offer. In **Dahomey 1972** the military accused the politicians of having added to regional cleavage. The three traditional leaders, who were members of the presidential council, represented three separate regions of Dahomey and the antagonism that existed between them could not be neutralized in spite of the fact that they had been assigned the task of forming a coalition government. This antagonism was not only of an ethnic character since Ahomadégbé could also count on support from the union workers belonging to the southern parts of the country. In **Rwanda 1973** the justification of the coup was based solely on the accusations that government policies had led to regional cleavages. As has already been mentioned, the formulation of the ID in Rwanda was, however, unusually cautious since the ousted Kayibanda had been a popular leader. There was, however, some regional tension between the northern and southern parts of the country even if the most important conflicts in both Rwanda and neighbouring Burundi were those between the Hutu and the Tutsi. Finally, in **Mauretania 1978** the military also justified the intervention by saying that it would rescue national unity and that civilian rule would have led to division. This criticism was not specified further in the ID, but it is possible that it alluded to the state of war and the presence of the Moroccan armed forces. Moreover, among the Mauretian bedouins there were many who were openly sympathetic towards Western Sahara and the Polisario.

In Nigeria, where military changes of power were carried out following abortive military actions on two occasions in 1966, ethnic and regional conflicts broke out, resulting in open confrontations and the Biafran war. General Ironsi attempted to pursue a union

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12 "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 19 ff.
13 Ibid pp 1 ff.
14 Ibid pp 31 ff.
15 Ibid pp 111 ff and 123 ff.
16 Ibid pp 201 ff.
policy at the cost of regional self-government and General Gowon blamed the military insurrections on officers and men "from a certain region".17

It is clear from the examples that the officers have not particularly often referred specifically to ethnic or regional conflicts in order to justify their political interventions. Not even in those cases where there have been grounds for strong criticism of the civilian politicians' handling of ethnic or regional problems have they chosen to justify their interventions on the basis of these issues. If the problems are mentioned, then it is in sweeping and general terms and concrete examples are almost never given (with Uganda as an important exception). This may sometimes be due to the fact that the officers themselves share the same sympathies as the ousted politicians, but it is also likely that there is a conscious attempt to avoid issues which may lead to cleavage and confrontations. The lack of clearly expressed justifications based upon ethnic or regional questions may be seen as an attempt by the coupmakers to avoid open and perhaps violent opposition.

17 Ibid pp 78 ff.
The relationship between government and armed forces can vary a great deal without it having to lead to a military intervention in politics. In one country the government may have almost complete control over the military organization, and in another country it may be the military establishment which controls the government. However, it is not first and foremost the specific nature of the relationship in the individual case which leads to the involvement of the military in the political sphere. The risks of military intervention arise when there is a change in the relationship, or as I said in part one: a control system which has already been implemented can be effective in maintaining the system, whereas the actual implementation of a control can increase the likelihood of a coup.

Three types of government-military relationships were treated in part one and we shall now see how these are reflected in the initial declarations. The three types were: I) the politicians' attempt to achieve control by, amongst other things, political recruitment and indoctrination, II) para-military organizations as an alternative to the armed forces' monopoly of power, and III) the use of the armed forces for police action. The first two reflect attempts to control the military, while the third is a relationship of dependence.

**Control By the Politicians**

The table in part two indicates that the military do not often refer to questions concerning government-military relations. The justifications based on some form of criticism of the government's performance are far more common than those which deal with government-military relations. However, when it comes to justifying a coup on the basis of poor relations with the rulers, these justifications are often the most important.

The justifications that are related to government attempts to control the military establishment fall under I and J (concerning the reduced political influence of the coupmakers and political interference in military affairs) and are included in four initial declarations. J also covers the "establishment of alternative military organizations", which will be treated later.

When Captain Micombero deposed King Ntare V in Burundi 1966, one of the reasons given for the takeover was that the King had planned to dismiss Micombero's government. The accusations may very well have been true since the relationship between the King and the Government had drastically deteriorated in the months preceding the coup. But since the coup in Burundi was quite unique and Micombero's political position...
was remarkable, a comparison between this coup and the others in the question of control over the military establishment would not be proper. In Dahomey 1967 Major Kouandété overthrew General Soglo's government with the main justification that Soglo's rule had meant a threat to the honour of the Army. However, it was also stated in the ID that the General had begun to allow important questions involving areas of military responsibility to be decided within his inner family circle, thereby reducing the influence of the Army. In Uganda 1971 General Amin justified his takeover in an unusually long ID comprising almost every conceivable justification, including accusations that the politicians had attempted to exert political control over the Army and that the autonomy of the Army had been seriously threatened. Indeed, Obote had actively interfered with the structure of the Army so as to be in a better position to exercise control over it. A reorganization of the Army and the Air Force had restricted Amin's direct control over the Armed Forces. When Colonel Acheampong overthrew Dr. Busia's regime in Ghana 1972, the most important justification in the ID was that Busia had neutralized the Army. Acheampong pointed out how Busia had from the very beginning turned against the Army and police and had gained control over the Armed Forces by means of dismissals and transfers. By implementing severe financial cutbacks Busia had then succeeded in lowering the morals of the Army and the police to such an extent that the officers were no longer able to control their men and thus had no possibility of organizing a coup.

Thus it is rather unusual for the officers to justify a takeover by accusing the politicians of having attempted to exert undue control over the armed forces. In fact, of the four examples above it is only in the cases of Uganda and Ghana that one can say that the government had tried to gain control over the army through the use of political agents or politically inspired promotions. On the contrary, it is actually far more common for the military to act, or to justify its action, on the grounds that the politicians have not allowed themselves to be controlled by the military. The split between Micombero and King Ntare V in Burundi was in a way due to the fact that Micombero wanted to retain control over the government. But there are also other cases where the officers quite frankly state that the government was overthrown for not having followed army directives. Justification O 43, that "rulers appointed by the army have not followed army directives", appears in connection with four coups.

In Dahomey 1965 General Soglo's main justification for his takeover involved the continuous struggles for power between the three leading politicians. Soglo pointed out that the Army had earlier given the people of Dahomey a democratic constitution, and when the politicians could not live up to it, the General felt obliged to intervene in order to save the fruits of the "1963 Revolution". When Eyadema took over from President Grunitzky in Togo 1967, he declared that the civilian politicians had failed to fulfill the task of government given to them by the military four years earlier. The Grunitzky regime

1 BBC op.cit. ME/2331/B/3–4, Keesing's op.cit. p 21786 and "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 113 ff.
2 BBC op.cit. ME/2650/B/4–5 and "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 33 ff.
3 BBC op.cit. ME/3593/B/10–12 and "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 170 ff.
4 BBC op.cit. ME/2888/B/9–10 and "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 99 ff.
5 BBC op.cit. ME/2043/B/5–6.
was not explicitly accused of having violated the terms set by the military in the 1963 transfer of power, but the reference to the fact that the civilian politicians had been appointed by the military gave the impression that the 1967 military takeover was justifiable. After a more or less abortive coup in 1967, Major Kouandété staged a new coup in Dahomey 1969. In the subsequent ID the most important justification was that Dr. Zinsou’s government had ignored the directives which had been given when power was returned to the civilian politicians. When the military once again took over in Dahomey 1972, it was quite natural that Major Kereku criticized the political troika for not having followed the directives given in connection with the return to civilian rule in 1970.

The examples above show that the military is usually quite reluctant to justify a takeover by directly citing government attempts to exert control over the armed forces. With regard to the constitution, the army is, of course, normally subordinate to the political institutions and thus cannot really lay claim to complete autonomy. The cases cited above are all examples where for one reason or another the armed forces have come to play a leading role in the political development of the nation. Resentment of interference by the politicians, or of their reluctance to be subordinate to the military, may have been more natural and more easily accepted by the people in those countries where the military has come to be regarded as a political factor. The armed forces in Burundi were already involved in politics through Captain Micombero’s position as head of the government, in Dahomey the army featured more in politics than the various political parties, and only a month or so before the takeover in Togo, President Grunitzky had shown his heavy dependence on the army as guarantor for political calm. Before Dr. Busia came to power, Ghana had been governed by the military and in Uganda President Milton Obote had been directly dependent on the active support of the armed forces during the conflict with Buganda in the sixties.

What is more remarkable, in fact, is that in a number of cases government attempts to control the military establishment were not cited despite the fact that such attempts were clearly made. On at least two occasions an attempt by the government to gain control has most probably been one of the real motives behind the takeover, even though this has not been mentioned in the IDs. Hence this omission may well be seen as a kind of recognition of the civilian government’s legal right to exercise political control over the armed forces.

The clearest example of political control which is not mentioned in the ID is found in the 1966 coup in Ghana. Under the Nkrumah regime the society became increasingly politicized and this politicization also spread to the Armed Forces. Generals Ankrah and Otu, who were both active in the coup, were forced to resign in 1965 and political appointments and promotions took place both within the police force as well as the Armed Forces. None of this, however, is mentioned in the ID. The 1968 coup in Mali was also

6 Ibid ME/2365/B/10–11.
7 Ibid ME/3553/ii.
8 Ibid ME/4130/B/1–3.
9 ”Afrikanska militärkupper” pp 93 ff.
preceded by intensified political control, which again came to affect the Armed Forces. Raids by the People's Militia, which were primarily to check whether economic regulations were being obeyed, in turn affected the officers. Thus the political status of the Militia was also a form of political control over the military establishment, and even though the new regime subsequently reacted strongly against the People's Militia, the actions of the Militia were not included in the ID.10

The civilian politicians can therefore attempt to maintain the principle of civilian supremacy vis-à-vis the military by allowing political considerations to encroach upon the spheres of military recruitment and promotion. This form of political control can be risky, but it is only in those cases where the military has already become involved in politics that the politicians' attempts to exert control are cited in justification of a takeover. If the civilian politicians do not have political control over the armed forces, or if they consider this control inadequate, there are also other, more forceful ways of subjugating the military.

**Alternative Organizations**

If the civilian politicians succeed in establishing a strong, armed people's militia, their potentiality for resisting any military intervention increases considerably. At the same time, the military establishment is inclined to react strongly against this vote of censure which the establishment of such a para-military organization constitutes. If the military can therefore find a pretext for intervention before the alternative organization has grown too powerful, the risk of a military intervention is obvious.

There have been alternative armed state organizations in several countries at the time of military takeovers. In the C.A.R. 1966 President Dacko deliberately tried to balance the Army against the gendarmerie in order to reduce the risks of independent action. Ghana 1966 has already been mentioned in connection with para-military organizations. Moreover, it was not only the "Presidential Guard" in Ghana which threatened the Army's position. Nkrumah also had foreign guerrillas trained – from South Africa and the Portuguese possessions, for example – and it was expected that these would be prepared to support the Nkrumah administration if necessary. In Burundi 1966 Captain Micombero accused the King of having recruited a mercenary army. When the Army intervened against Prime Minister Margai in Sierra Leone 1967, though there was no para-military organization to take into account, the Prime Minister had agreed with Sekou Touré that the two neighbouring countries should help each other to subdue internal conflicts. This agreement could at the worst lead to a military intervention by Guinea. The situation in Mali 1968 has already been mentioned above. There is no doubt that the Army must have perceived the People's Militia as a direct threat to their own position, and one of the first measures taken by the new government was therefore to disarm the Militia. Mobido Keita's political control of the Army was apparently limited to highest-ranking officers and to a guarantee of loyalty from the Army Commander. In Uganda 1971 President Milton Obote had split the Armed Forces into two separate branches and had attempted through politically motivated recruitment and promotion to ensure the loyalty of the

10 Ibid pp 150 ff.
Army, though without having to be dependent upon it as he had been during the sixties. Obote also created an armed militia outside of the control of the Armed Forces and there were plans to introduce compulsory national service which would have meant that large groups of young people would receive military training without falling under the control of the Army, even though the main purpose of the service was not of a military nature. In the 1974 military takeover in Niger there were also alternative armed groups organized outside of the regular army. Apart from an armed gendarmerie there was both an armed militia and the President’s own bodyguard. The situation was completely different in Chad 1975 where Tombalbaye threatened to restructure the Army command altogether. In this case, it is not a question of creating a complementary alternative, but of an alternative to replace the old leadership.

Thus in all of the above examples some form of armed alternative organization (except in Chad) has existed and in some cases these have almost certainly been created more with the aim of counterbalancing the influence to the regular army than of providing a supplementary force for the defence of the nation. In a number of cases the alternative organizations have also attempted to prevent a military takeover.

Colonel Bokassa’s coup in the C.A.R. 1966 encountered opposition from the gendarmerie, which tried to defend the lawful president. The 1966 coup in Ghana met with armed opposition from the presidential bodyguard. In Uganda 1971 Obote’s position was defended by security forces and by units which had fallen outside of Amin’s direct control following the reorganization of the Army. The coupmakers in Niger 1974 ran up against opposition from the organizations which had been armed by the previous regime. In Congo Brazzaville 1968, where the military takeover was more gradual and cannot therefore be considered as a proper coup, the Armed Forces were faced with considerable resistance when they tried to disarm the party’s youth organization.

It is evident that alternative organizations were in existence at the time of a number of coups and that these organizations, judging from statements made outside of the ID, have not been accepted by the regular army. In most countries the army has no constitutional right to be the only organization to bear arms, and if para-military organizations are created for the purpose of defence or to safeguard the constitution, then they are in a sense inviolable. Hence the military have not referred to para-military organizations in more than two IDs. These were in Burundi, where the King was accused of attempts to recruit a foreign mercenary army, and in Uganda, where Obote was accused of having created a ”second army”, but where the main stress in this part of the justification lay in the accusation that the recruitment for the ”second army” had been ethnically biased.

**Police Action**

The reason why a civilian government creates armed organizations outside of the regular army may often be a desire to free the government from an unhealthy dependence upon the army. If a government’s policy, or sometimes lack of policy,
means that it is forced to rely on the army’s potential for violence in order to subdue angry mobs, this also means that the armed forces can bring about the downfall to the government merely by refusing to perform police action. It was in this manner that President Fulbert Youlou lost political power in the Congo Brazzaville in August 1963. The people, against whom the police action was directed, would accept a takeover whose justification was based upon the reluctance of the armed forces to act as policemen against their own people.

It appears, however, that the armed forces are quite reluctant to assume power at a time of acute social or political unrest (see chapter on conditions within the society above). When President Youlou was overthrown in the Congo, the army did not assume power. Instead, a new government was immediately formed under President Massemba-Débat. When the military has itself assumed control, there is not one instance where police action is cited in the ID in justification of the takeover. In three cases, however, it was stated that it is the army’s duty to guarantee order in the country or that the government had given the military the task of assuming responsibility and thus of ensuring order.

In Dahomey 1963 discussions concerning the economy and wage policies ended in a total confrontation between the government and the trade unions. President Maga made various attempts to resolve the conflicts, but without success, and the unions responded with a general strike. Military units and security forces were brought in against the demonstrators, but when no political solution seemed possible, General Soglo took over political control. The responsibility of the military to maintain law and order was cited as the most important justification for the intervention.\(^{11}\) In the C.A.R. 1966 Colonel Bokassa’s justification for his takeover was that the President had transferred power to him. The coup in the C.A.R. was not, however, preceded by any disturbances and Dacko’s resignation was almost certainly forced upon him.\(^{12}\) When Lieutenant-Colonel Lamizana seized power in Upper Volta 1966, the Army’s duty to ensure order in the country and to safeguard its institutions was practically the only reason given in justification of the change of power. Prior to the change of power there were nationwide demonstrations and a general strike, aimed, among other things, at the government’s economic policy. At first President Yameogo tried to get the Army to put down the disturbances, but when Lamizana refused, the President had no other choice but to transfer power to the military.\(^{13}\)

Of the three examples above it was only in Dahomey and in Upper Volta that the takeovers came as the result of political or social turbulence requiring police action on the part of the armed forces. Moreover, the military intervention in Dahomey was limited to a corrective intervention without any direct claim to power. Obviously the military is extremely unwilling to justify political intervention on the basis of the role it has played in connection with disturbances, and in many cases this attitude is understandable if one takes into account that the military may have already made itself unpopular at an earlier stage. If, for

\(^{11}\) Keesing’s op.cit. p 19762 and “Afrikanska militärkupper” pp 34 ff.

\(^{12}\) BBC op.cit. ME/2051/B/5–6 and “Afrikanska militärkupper” pp 59 ff.

\(^{13}\) BBC op.cit. ME/2054/B/3 and “Afrikanska militärkupper” pp 67 ff.
instance, Lieutenant-Colonel Eyadema had justified his 1967 takeover in Togo by claiming that it was not the army’s duty to act as President Grunitzky’s police force, then the people would have wondered why he had helped to quash a civilian insurrection only a month before.

Among the writers presented in part one there were those who maintained that there was a direct relation between military police action and military coups d’état. Finer and Nordlinger argued, for example, that the military dislike being forced to act as policemen and may consequently retaliate with a coup when the government has become dependent upon the army to ensure order in the country. Welch noted the fact that a dependence upon the army reflects a loss of prestige for the civilian government. However, the above examples have shown that the armed forces in Africa are unwilling to justify their takeovers on the grounds of police action and that they are frequently reluctant to stage a takeover at the same time as they have been called on to carry out such duties. The direct connection between military police action and military coups d’état does not therefore appear to apply to African politics of today.
Military Professionalism

As a professional body, the military has specific obligations and to fulfil these obligations, certain resources are necessary. In the first part of this book I pointed out that some writers believe that the incidence of coups d'état would not be so great if only the governments were willing to allocate the armies a wider budget. Both Claud Welch and Eric Nordlinger claimed that there was a connection between coups and defence budgets and Welch also pointed out that the African armies are amongst the smallest in the world (see above in part one). At the same time, however, it must be remembered that the African states are also amongst the poorest in the world and that it is not unusual for more than ten per cent of the budget of these developing countries to go to defence.¹ The fact also emerges that the soldiers themselves do not refer to the budget very often in justification of a coup. In four initial declarations there are economic-based justifications (L, concerning inadequate military budget), but only in two of these cases has the inadequate financial situation been seen as harmful to the army’s efficiency.

When the Armed Forces and the soldiers repatriated from France staged a mutiny-like coup against the Olympio regime in Togo 1963, the main justification was Olympio’s refusal to recruit the unemployed soldiers. Thus the justification was not linked to the question of the Army’s efficiency.² In Amin’s coup in Uganda 1971 the ID contained, among other things, a justification which dealt with the efficiency of the Army. The Obote regime was accused of having obstructed the administration of defence issues with a subsequent shortage of army equipment. The Government was also held responsible for the fact that the decision to recruit new soldiers had not been put into effect.³ In Ghana 1972 Busia’s regime was accused of having deprived the Army and police of their few privileges, which even Nkrumah had been able to offer them. This cut in benefits was also linked to the general morale of the Armed Forces and to their efficiency.⁴ In Liberia 1980, where instead of an ID a number of short statements were broadcast, it was immediately made clear that the officers responsible for the coup were particularly unhappy with the living standards of the enlisted men. The first decisions made by the new regime dealt with pay rises and improved living conditions for the personnel. The material deficiencies were not, however, linked to the efficiency of the Army.⁵

¹ S Decalo op.cit. pp 8 f.
² Keesing’s op.cit. 19249–19251 and ”Afrikanska militärkupper” pp 19 ff.
³ BBC op.cit. ME/3593/B/10–12 ”Afrikanska militärkupper” pp 170 ff.
⁴ BBC op.cit. ME/3888/B/10.
⁵ Ibid ME/6394/B/8–9.
That the officers who seize power in a country are unwilling to justify their takeover on the grounds of an inadequate budget does not necessarily mean that they would not like a more generous defence allocation. On the contrary, it is often the case that the new military regimes decide fairly quickly to increase the allocation. In Sudan 1969 such plans were already presented on the same day as the takeover and generally speaking, military decision-makers have proved themselves to be more generous than their civilian predecessors. However, the political situation in Africa is such, with the important exception of Southern Africa, that the majority of countries do not have to be afraid of aggression from neighbouring countries. Moreover, many of the states have defence agreements with the former colonial powers, agreements which reduce the need of large and powerful indigenous armies. Increased defence budgets thus become dubious "reforms", whether seen in comparison with the total state budgets or in relation to the real defence needs.

The armed forces, however, do not see their duty as being limited to the defence of the national boundaries. In chapter five of part one I discussed the professional soldier’s responsibility towards a client. Finer stated, for example, that responsibility to a client could be defined in such way that it becomes a responsibility toward the state, or nation, instead of toward the government in office at a given time. A study of the initial declarations also reveals that the officers themselves are often ready to justify their political interventions on the grounds of their duty, their loyalty or their responsibility towards the nation. Such normative arguments are presented in the table in part two under the heading "ethics", and the table shows that such arguments appear in almost 50% of the coups.

When General Abboud seized power in the Sudan 1958, he declared that it was "your loyal army" which had saved the nation from the politician’s misrule. In the Congo (Zaire) 1965 the Army was inspired by "love of the country and a sense of responsibility towards the Congolese nation." In Dahomey 1965 General Soglo declared that it was "the duty of their brave army to solve the crisis", and in Upper Volta 1966 Colonel Lamizana’s justification of the intervention was based upon the Army’s responsibility towards the country’s democratic and republican institutions. He also declared later that "the army has a sacred duty of safeguarding the institutions of the country". When Kouandété and his junior officers seized power in Dahomey 1967, the justification was that "it is the duty of us the young Army cadres...". A few hours after the very short ID in Mali 1968 had been read out, Lieutenant Traore’s newly formed liberation committee declared that the army had acted since it was "completely devoted to the cause of the people". In the Sudan 1969 one radio announcement was followed by another and on

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6 Keesing’s op. cit. p 16593 and "Afrikanska militärkupper" p 6.
7 BBC op. cit. ME/2023/B/1.
8 Ibid ME/2045/B/6.
9 Ibid ME/2054/B/3 and ME/2056/B/3.
10 Ibid ME/2650/B/5.
11 Ibid ME/2931/B/10.
several occasions the soldiers were praised for their heroic intervention. In the ID it was stated that ”That Army men have vowed to God to sacrifice their blood...”.12 When Kouandété reintervened in Dahomey 1969 he declared that ”The Army has once again assumed its responsibilities”.13 A couple of years later the Army intervened again in Dahomey. In 1972 Major Kereku declared that ”The Dahomean Army, conscious of its duties to absolve itself from blame and from God’s wrath”, had decided to assume power in the country.14 In Rwanda 1973 the justification for the army intervention was that ”The national Guard, your own sons, can never permit the country to be carved up...”,15 and in Niger 1974 the Army decided ”to assume its responsibilities...”.16 In a somewhat lengthier statement made a couple of hours after the ID in Burundi 1976, Colonel Bagaza declared that ”The Armed Forces therefore not only needed, but also had a duty, to act...”17 and in Mauretania 1978 the army was said to be ”The ultimate owners of national legitimacy” and that the intervention was a result ” of their belief in their responsibility”.18 Sergeant Samuel Doe’s justification of the army intervention in Liberia 1980 was that ”The enlisted men have no other alternative but to overthrow the Government”.19

Thus the officers who seize power in a country can justify their intervention by claiming that they have acted as professional soldiers. As experts they can demand more generous allocations, a demand which, as far as the African coups are concerned, has not been made so frequently in the IDs, and to justify the coup they can invoke the special ethics of the profession, that is, as in the examples above, to cite the army’s duty or its responsibility. But a professional group is also marked to a great extent by esprit de corps (see part one) so that the officers may also be motivated to take action if they feel that a colleague is being treated in an unjust fashion. As the country’s highest lawful authority, the government has naturally the right to make decisions in a number of questions concerning appointments, but there is the ever present risk of the army intervening if it perceives some form of injustice. Citing esprit de corps or loyalty to the corps in order to justify a takeover is not, however, acceptable and such justifications are not found in any of the surveyed IDs.

The material on which this thesis is based it not sufficient to establish without a shadow of a doubt on which occasions a coup is related to an officer being treated in such a way as to arouse the anger of his fellow officers. Even in those cases where some form of ”unjust” treatment has preceded the coup, it is difficult to determine how strong the connection is between this treatment and the military intervention. Other arguments have been used to justify the coups and these justifications, or other unrevealed motives, may have played a more important part than the actual violation of esprit de corps. It should be noted, however, that

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12 Ibid ME/3083/E2/15.
13 Ibid ME/3253/ii.
14 Ibid ME/4130/B/3.
15 Ibid ME/4339/B/12.
16 Ibid ME/4576/B/4.
17 Ibid ME/5355/B/14.
18 Ibid ME/5862/B/10.
19 Ibid ME/6394/B/7.
esprit de corps has been violated in one way or another in at least ten of the examined coups.

In Togo 1963 soldiers took action on behalf of their colleagues who had not been allowed by President Olympio to join the Togolese Army. Shortly before the coup in the Congo (Zaire) 1965 a number of soldiers who had attempted to protect Tshombe were arrested. In addition, against Lieutenant-General Mobutu’s recommendation, the Government threatened to repatriate the thousand or so mercenaries who had previously worked for Tshombe, but who were now collaborating with the Army in the hunt for rebels loyal to Lumumba. In Ghana 1966, as has already been mentioned, Generals Ankrah and Otu had been forced to retire from active service. There are also examples of politically motivated promotions which may have resulted in officers feeling that they have been passed over. In Sierra Leone 1967 the Army acted against its own Commander-in-Chief. Lieutenant-Colonel Genda, whom the coupmakers first wanted to have as leader of the new regime, had previously been passed over in connection with an appointment. Measures taken by the People’s Militia against officers and enlisted men of the Armed Forces in Mali 1968 were certainly regarded by many members of the profession as an attack on the corps. One of Idi Amin’s justifications for his intervention in Uganda 1971 was that promotions under Obote had been politically inspired. But the officers around Amin must also have known that their commander had been accused of malpractice and that his position was highly unstable. Politically motivated promotions and dismissals had also occurred in Ghana 1972. In Chad 1975 President Tombalbaye insulted the Army Command and also had officers arrested who, in his opinion, had behaved badly during the prison riots just a few days before the coup. In addition, Tombalbaye had previously sent to prison the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, General Malloum, who in the aftermath of the coup was chosen as leader of the new regime. When General Acheampong was forced to resign in Ghana 1978, his earlier reshuffling of the government, which led to General Odarty-Wellington being pushed into the background, may have been of significance. In Mauretania 1978 power was taken over by Lieutenant-Colonel Salek, the Army Commander. Salek had only recently been appointed Army Commander and it is possible that the officers, as members of the corps, considered it unjust that Salek had for some time been obliged to perform duties inferior to those of an army commander. When the N.C.O.’s and lower-ranking officers seized power in Ghana 1979, the real leader of the coup, Lieutenant Rawlings, had already been in custody for a couple of weeks. He had been arrested following the first, unsuccessful attempt to carry out the coup. Finally, esprit de corps may also have played a significant part in the army takeover in Liberia 1980. After having allowed a certain amount of opposition for a short time, the Government stepped in against the newly formed political parties and had many politicians arrested. During the wave of arrests a number of officers were also imprisoned and support for the coup may very well have been related to esprit de corps.  

In part one I presented Huntington’s explanation of a number of coups, which was that the military establishment lacks other effective means for influencing politics. Huntington compared military takeovers with, for example, the possibilities of the workers to use the threat of strike action, even a general strike, in order to enforce their demands. But there are examples of how group loyalty

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20 See each respective land in "Afrikanska militärkupper".
has inspired the army, or sections of the army, to act on behalf of a colleague, even though their actions may not have led to a military takeover. In Congo/Brazzaville the Government had the popular Marien Ngouabi demoted and transferred in June 1966. Troops loyal to Ngouabi gave vent to their anger and were for some days in control of the capital. When Ngouabi was rehabilitated, the soldiers returned to their barracks. In July 1968 President Massemba-Débat had Ngouabi rearrested and precisely as had happened two years before, loyal soldiers intervened on his behalf. This time the military intervention led to a gradual military takeover. During a month-long power struggle mainly between Massemba-Débat and Marien Ngouabi the military came to power.  

If group loyalty, created by an esprit de corps, is violated in any way by the government and the armed forces intervene and seize power, esprit de corps may sometimes have been the motive for the coup, even though the officers prefer to justify the takeover with other arguments. But esprit de corps can also constitute an excellent justification in the relationship between the instigating officers and other officers and enlisted men participating in the coup. The instigators may, however, be driven by motives other than those related to esprit de corps.

The Military Establishment

At the beginning of part one I presented a number of researchers and their views on the military as rulers. It was noted, among other things, that some researchers regard the military establishment as being superior to other organized groups in developing countries and that they thus look upon the military as suitable rulers for countries which are desperately in need of organized development. Obviously the officers, too, see themselves and their organization as superior to the overthrown political regime in those countries where the army has seized power. In the criticism of the ousted regime, based on accusations of mismanagement, power struggles, corruption, etc., lies the implied claim that the army is more qualified to rule and that it is unlikely to repeat the same mistakes made by the civilian regime (see above part three, conditions within the society). In the initial declarations, however, there are no explicit arguments in support of the superiority of the military establishment. But there are exceptions where coupmakers, though they do not argue in favour of their own organization, nevertheless assert the moral superiority of the army.

When Mobutu seized power in the Congo (Zaire) 1965 the ID included a comparison of the morality of the politicians vis-à-vis that of the Army; "Since the Congo's accession to independence the A.N.C. (Congo's national army, my note) has never ceased in disinterested efforts to work for the betterment of the Congolese people. The politicians, on the other hand, had involved themselves in a sterile battle for power..."  

21 "Afrikanska militärkupper" pp 141 ff.
22 BBC op.cit. ME/2022/B/4.
In general, however, there are no direct comparisons between civilian governments and the military establishment. The coup-makers tend instead to stress the temporary nature of the intervention and to point out that their goal is to prepare the way for civilian rule.

**Class Conflicts and Ethnic/Regional Strife Within the Military Establishment**

The ways in which the armed forces are affected by conflicts within the society and the part such conflicts play when coup-makers come to justify their political interventions have already been discussed. However, different sections of the officer corps, or different groups amongst the enlisted men, can identify with different economic classes and with different ethnic or regional groups. These internal conflicts may sometimes be common knowledge. Yet in not one initial declaration is there anything to suggest that such conflicts are to be found within the armed forces. On the contrary, there are usually attempts to give the appearance that the army is totally united and all conflicts are carefully covered up. There are, however, exceptions where the conflicts cannot be covered up and where they have had serious consequences on both the political as well as the individual level. Such conflicts have sometimes resulted in secret eliminations and purges, but there are also examples of military leaders openly discussing regional or ethnic conflicts within the military establishment. Lieutenant-Colonel Gowon’s observation that the disturbances in Nigeria in the beginning of 1966 had been inspired by officers and men from a certain region is an example of such an open discussion. But at the time of Gowon’s statement, the ethnic and regional relations within the Nigerian army were so conspicuously poor that it would have been pointless to cover up the truth.
14. Individual Perspectives

In Part one I presented Samuel Decalo and his view on African military coups. Decalo sought to explain military takeovers primarily in terms of the personal interests of the architects of the coups. In the initial declarations on which this research work is based there are, however, no justifications to be found which indicate personal motives. This is not to say that personal considerations were not involved, not that personal motives may not have been of crucial importance in starting the preparations for the coups. But personal motives are in themselves insufficient to explain how the army as a whole, or at least sections of it, can be persuaded to intervene in politics.

A psychological or personalistic approach may appear more appropriate in a study of military takeovers than in a study of other forms of political activity. Most military regimes are usually identified with the most prominent officers within the ruling junta and the regimes are also often called by the name of the most important officer. One speaks, for instance, of the Franco regime in Spain, of the Pinochet regime in Chile, of Amin’s regime in Uganda, of Gowon’s in Nigeria and of Mobutu’s in Zaire. But even if a regime is identified with the top officer, it does not necessarily mean that he personally instigated the coup or that he had anything at all to do with the actual takeover.

A clear example of a military coup in which the leader of the regime did not take part in the takeover is Sierra Leone 1967. The young officers who toppled their army commander and the constitutional government had no wish to assume political responsibility themselves, but sent instead for Lieutenant-Colonel Genda, who was at the time in the U.S.A. Later, however, they changed their minds and sent for Lieutenant-Colonel Juxon-Smith from London. Shortly afterwards the new regime came to be identified with Juxon-Smith. Nor can the events which led to Lieutenant-Colonel Gowon’s assumption of power in Nigeria 1966 be said to have resulted from Gowon’s actions. Gowon was a member of the military supreme command which under General Ironsi’s leadership governed Nigeria. When Ironsi was kidnapped and murdered, Gowon was chosen as leader by his fellow officers in the supreme command. Gowon’s appointment was not unopposed and the election led to confrontations among the officers. Nevertheless, Gowon was elected since it was hoped that his ethnic background would help to calm the anger of the enlisted men.¹

When one reads the initial declarations and statements made by the military during the first days after a coup, two tendencies are noticeable. In some instances

¹ See each respective land in ”Afrikanska militärkupper”. 
one person immediately emerges as leader of the new regime. Most of the authoritative statements are made by him and from the very outset he appears as the indisputable leader of the military regime. In other cases, statements made during the first days are marked by a collective spirit. All decrees and statements are signed by "the Revolutionary Council", "the Military Committee for National Salvation" or whatever the new rulers call themselves. The regime's leader is then presented as chairman of the new ruling body and any tendency of his becoming an absolute ruler appears only gradually. The table in part two shows that the trend has moved away from "personalistic" coups, which were more common in the sixties, toward coups carried out under a "collective" leadership. This observation applies only to the actual presentation of the coups and hence on the basis of this it is impossible to say anything about how the regimes subsequently developed.

Regardless of whether the new regime acquired an individual or a collective stamp, personal motives are never cited in justification of a military takeover. The actual takeover may be an obvious "one-man job", where the instigator himself declares that he has decided to assume power for reasons of a more general nature. It may also be a case of a coup where the military leaders immediately hand over all true power to an individual officer. Yet despite the personalistic nature of such coups, the change of power is justified with reasons affecting society as a whole, or at least a large number of people.

There are a number of examples where one officer emerges as the sole instigator of a coup. In Dahomey 1965 General Soglo declared in the ID that "we, Gen. Christophe Soglo, Chief of Staff of the Dahomean Armed Forces, considering...; Therefore decided in the higher interest of the nation... to assume power temporarily...". In Upper Volta 1966 Lieutenant-Colonel Lamizana declared that "I have decided to assume the functions of Head of State until further notice". The coup in Niger 1974 was also presented as the work of one man. "In my capacity as General Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, I have decided to proclaim the suspension of the Constitution...", Lieutenant-Colonel Seyni Kountie declared. Congo (Zaire) 1965 is an example of a coup where an officer is immediately chosen as the new ruler: "Lt-Gen. Mobutu assumes constitutional powers as chief of State", the ID said. In Uganda 1971, too, power was immediately handed over to a single person. The ID concluded with the following words: "Power is now handed over to our fellow soldier Maj-Gen. Idi Amin Dada...".

Common to all of these coups is the fact that the IDs also contain concrete examples of mismanagement by the civilian politicians.

In conclusion one may say that the officers themselves never cite personal motives in order to justify their coups, not even in those cases where the coups are in fact personal takeovers.

2 The way the new men in power have been presented, as individuals or as a collective, appears to a certain degree in "Afrikanska militärkupper".
3 BBC op.cit. ME/2045/B/5.
4 Ibid ME/2054/B/3.
5 Ibid ME/4576/B/4.
6 Ibid ME/2022/B/5.
7 Ibid ME/3593/B/12.
According to old East African custom, the king’s position is symbolized in certain external attributes. For the kings of Kiziba, the royal power and the king’s right to rule over his subjects were symbolized by the drum and the royal “stool”, on which nobody but the king was allowed to sit. According to tradition, there was once a king called Nyamugira, who had no heirs. But the king had a daughter who had secretly given birth to a son. When the son grew up, the mother sent him to the royal well to kill Nyamugira with a spear. Having done so, the boy ran directly to the palace and sat down on the royal stool. When the people who were chasing him saw him sitting on the royal stool, they were at a loss as to what they should do. The elders then held council and decided that the boy should rule now that the old king was dead.

Just as the king’s stool in the story was a symbol of royal power, modern societies, too, have their symbols of power. In staging a military coup, the new rulers assert their right to power by taking control of certain strategic places, such as the parliament building, the main post-office, the international airport and the radio station. But the symbols of power no longer have the same authority that they once had and perhaps nowadays the control of information, brought about by the seizure of the radio station, is the most important proof of true power. Just as the young boy in the story assumed power by sitting upon the king’s stool, the military of today use the initial declaration to show that they are in control of the radio and that they have thus assumed power. The initial declaration is the change of power.

I have presented above two ways in which to explain why the armed forces in Africa have been so ready to assume political power in their own countries. The first centres on research by political scientists, the second on initial declarations made by the military. The explanations are divided into five categories depending on which factors have been given explanatory value. The categories on which the chapters are based are:

1. Foreign interests and foreign influence,
2. conditions within the society,
3. government-military relations,
4. internal features of the military establishment and
5. interests of the individual officers.

The comparison between the two explanatory approaches reveals that the officers and the political scientists are by no means in agreement over how
military coups are to be explained. One reason for this is, of course, that the explanations given by the officers are not intended to be scientific reports, but are essentially aimed at legitimizing the takeovers.

With regard to the researchers' views concerning the involvement of foreign interests in coups d'état, it is clear that there is no single interpretation of the role played by such interests. Any intervention is kept secret and is thus difficult to investigate and difficult to verify. The researchers interpret the significance of the contact between the military and other countries differently. One theory holds that the officers identify with the societies in which they have received their training and that their political involvement evolves from the group identification which arises between the African officers and the officers from the country where the former were trained. Other researchers argue, however, that this kind of influence does not exist, claiming, moreover, that not even direct military aid involves any form of influence. It would appear, however, that there are cases of direct influence from one country to another, even though such an influence can seldom be proved. One such influence is when a major power gives the military the "go-ahead". Several researchers also agree that the chances of a coup being executed are greater if the coupmakers can be sure that the coup will be welcomed by the metropole.

For obvious reasons, the officers themselves will never justify a coup by saying that it is in the interests of a major power that the country's political leadership has been replaced. On the contrary, they almost always stress the fact that the coup will not in any way affect the country's foreign policy. The importance attached to foreign policy indicates that military regimes are extremely sensitive to international opinion during the initial stages. It is also evident from the statements made by the military that it is very important to them that the new regime is officially recognized by other nations. If the new rulers do not have good reason to expect recognition from the former mother country, or from any other major power, they are very cautious in the use of threats against the international system. In those cases where the coupmakers have made threats in order to deter a possible foreign intervention in connection with the change of power, there has also been evidence to suggest that the coupmakers have in one way or another received an advance promise of recognition, or that there has been no other alternative to the military government. As soon as the military regime has received recognition from another nation, this has immediately been made public. In addition, neutral statements that a certain nation is following the principle of recognizing states, not governments, have sometimes been presented as though they were statements of actual recognition.

It is evident that in some measure both the military statements and the researchers' theories agree on the importance of a major power welcoming the coup. It may seem trivial to say that the likelihood of a coup increases if the coupmakers can expect the coup to be greeted with satisfaction by a major power, but such a conclusion also imposes certain moral obligations on the major powers, which have sometimes, to say the least, shown themselves to be generous in the recognition of illegal regimes. The military statements tell us nothing,
however, about the extent to which the coups are due to some form of "contagion", in the sense that the coup-makers have been inspired by each other. Nor do the military statements say anything about whether the coup-makers have been inspired by some form of cultural group identification with the cultures or with the officer corps in the countries where the officers have received their training.

There seems to be a consensus among the researchers that the opportunity for a coup is favourable if the politicians have in some way failed in their duties. The failures of the politicians, which may be linked to what Eric Nordlinger has called "performance failures", may be summarized as three types of failures: 1) Unconstitutional or unlawful behaviour, particularly corruption, 2) economic failures with high prices and inflationary spirals and 3) inability to cope with political opposition, including political disorder. That the officers, too, regard these factors as conducive to a change of power is evidenced by the fact that they almost always accuse the previous regime of one of these failures.

If then a political regime has acted in such a way that it can be accused of having failed, there is not only a risk of a military intervention, but the failures may also lead to political or social unrest. A number of researchers hold that social unrest in the form of demonstrations and strikes, for example, increases the probability of the military seizing power. But some researchers, including Ted Gurr, maintain that coups are not always favoured by overt unrest. Indeed, a comparative study of the circumstances surrounding the coups in Africa shows that the coup-makers themselves are not in favour of open unrest at the time of a coup. On most occasions when there has been open disorder at the time of a military coup, the coups have not been carried out until the disturbances have died down. Furthermore, the officers very rarely justify a military coup on the grounds of social or political unrest.

If it cannot be claimed that a regime is faced by a legitimacy crisis resulting from at least one of the failures described by Eric Nordlinger, then the armed forces are reluctant to intervene. Here the researchers appear to agree that economic failures play a very important role. For the officers, too, economic problems are seen as acceptable justifications for takeovers. Such justifications are by far the most common in military coups. At the same time, however, economic justifications are almost never cited as the most important justification for a military takeover, not even when the coup has been preceded by widespread economic-based disturbances.

One aspect of a country's economy is concerned with the distribution of resources. The researchers have dealt with the question as to which economic class the officers identify with and in whose interest the change of power takes place. The majority maintains that the officers are part of the middle class and that the coups are carried out, among other thing, to augment the political and economic influence of the middle class. Then again, the military elite may belong to the ruling class, so that the military coup only means that a section of this class is replaced by another section from the same class. Common to most researchers, however, is the opinion that the armed forces act as a sort of break whenever the
lower classes begin to assert themselves, or, as Huntington puts it, that the military opens the door to the middle class and closes it on the lower classes. But there are some researchers, especially among the Soviet-Marxists, who argue that the military can under certain circumstances pave the way for a social revolution. The officers themselves usually provide no clear answer to the question as to which group is to benefit from their rule. Extremely few precise policy statements have been made in direct connection with the takeovers. Though the new rulers often use a terminology which suggests that the coups are of a radical and revolutionary nature, this verbal revolution is seldom followed by a social revolution. Evidently the officers would often like to give the appearance that they are representing the masses.

The economy is often linked to ethnic and/or regional interests. During the colonial era the different regions and ethnic groups of Africa did not have the same opportunities for developing a "modern" economy. The economic-based tensions which consequently arose aggravated already existing inter-group and inter-regional antagonisms. Among the writers presented in part one, there are those who maintain that the armed forces can remain above ethnic and regional conflicts, while others argue that the armed forces are just as prone to be drawn into ethnic/regional strife as the rest of society and that such conflicts can very well precipitate a military intervention in politics. Naturally enough, the officers themselves never say that a coup has been carried out in the interests of any particular group, neither ethnic nor regional, in the society, but the justifications given in the initial declarations show that the officers have sometimes found the civilian politicians to be guilty of a lack of objectivity in delicate ethnic or regional issues. At the same time, however, the officers are also very cautious in their criticism and the true nature of a conflict is seldom mentioned. Clearly the new leaders do not want their justifications to aggravate the existing conflicts, but wish to give the appearance, without tying themselves to any particular plan of action, that they themselves can remain above, and are even able to resolve, the ethnic/regional strife.

The relations between the government and the armed forces may sometimes become so strained that the officers decide to seize power. In part one I presented three examples of how this relationship can become strained and how this can lead to a military takeover. Some researchers have shown how the government can gain political control over the military establishment by tampering with the rules for recruitment and promotion and by political indoctrination. The interference which this type of control implies may provoke the officers and thus increase the likelihood of a coup before the control has a chance to become effective. Government-military relations may also be strained if the civilian rulers create alternative, para-military organizations. Extremely loyal para-military organizations are naturally a protection for the sitting government, but the actual formation of such organizations may easily provoke an intervention by the military, which likes to consider itself as the sole guardian of the nation. Finally, some researchers have also pointed out that the relationship between the government and the military may become strained if the government uses the
armed forces too often for police action, such as, for example, to crush demonstrations and strikes. The researchers do not agree, however, as to whether the reluctance of the armed forces to carry out such action is due to the fact that they do not regard the role of policeman as their real duty and that they are unwilling to use force against their fellow citizens, or whether the reluctance is related to the crisis of legitimacy which a government faces whenever the population turns to violence.

The three examples of how military-government relations can become strained affect the disposition of the military to intervene in different ways. Central to the discussion in part one was the notion that political control of the armed forces successively increases the inclination of the officers to intervene until a point is reached where the control becomes more or less effective. The risk of a coup decreases with the effectiveness of the control. The establishment of para-military organizations creates the immediate risk of a coup, which then decreases as the para-military organizations grow and become a tangible threat to any possible coup-makers. In part one, the relationship between the imposition of police action on the armed forces and their disposition to intervene was presented as being in direct correlation; the more often the armed forces are called upon to perform police action, the greater the risk of intervention.

To justify a coup, the officers themselves often prefer to make use of an issue which is related to problems within the society. But in those instances where justifications have been linked to government military relations, they have often been the most important ones.

As a rule the officers are fairly reluctant to justify a coup on the grounds that the politicians have been trying to exercise control over the military establishment. However, in those countries where the armed forces have already intervened in politics at an earlier stage, a further intervention may be justified on the grounds that the government did not follow military directives.

Para-military organizations are almost never mentioned in justification of a military takeover. However, such organizations did exist in many of the countries hit by military coups and were usually disarmed following the takeover. Obviously the armed forces have difficulty in accepting other armed organizations, while at the same time they have no constitutional basis on which to oppose such organizations.

As far as military police action is concerned, it can only be said that in Africa the military have never justified their takeovers on the grounds that they have been required to act as policemen. Furthermore, as has already been mentioned, the armed forces are unwilling to intervene directly in connection with disturbances, that is at a time when police action may be called for. On such occasions the justification for the coup is rather that it is the army's duty to guarantee law and order.

Part one also included some views on how internal factors can affect the disposition of the armed forces to intervene. The researchers have shown particular interest in the role played by "professionalism". The concept of "professionalism" is composed, however, of various elements, which affect the
possibility of a coup occurring in different ways. One opinion is that the professional officer with his specialist training reacts when he believes that the military budget allocation is insufficient for an army to function effectively. But the professional officer is also governed by a particular code of professional ethics. One ethical rule is founded on the supposition that a profession has a responsibility towards a client, and if this responsibility is defined as a responsibility towards the government in office, it will help to prevent coups. But according to the researchers, responsibility may also be felt towards the nation and from this point of view a coup can be defended on the grounds of national interest. A profession is also characterized by a certain measure of esprit de corps, which may lead to a military intervention if it is felt within the corps that a fellow officer has been wronged.

In the introductory chapter an account was given of some researchers' views on military rule. Not only the researchers, but also the officers themselves, may sometimes regard the military organization as superior to the civilian administration and thus better suited to governing a developing country. That is why the organizational form of the military has sometimes been used to explain a military takeover. However, within the military organization there may exist conflicts which limit its ability to govern, but which may still precipitate a takeover. These conflicts may be due to a generation gap between young officers with a modern training and older officers with a record of long service. Conflicts may also arise between officers and men coming from different regions or from different ethnic groups. Some authors maintain here that the modern army is above such conflicts and can thus act as a force towards national unity, whereas others claim that armies are just as prone to suffer from conflicts as the rest of society. In part one, however, I concluded that internal conflicts are more likely to lead to a weakening of the organization, to insurrection and mutinies rather than to a military intervention.

To some extent, the explanations which the officers themselves give for the part played by the military in political interventions differ from the explanations of the researchers. First of all, it is rather unusual for the officers to justify their takeover on the grounds that inadequate budget allocations are effecting the efficiency of the army, even though the new rulers may not be averse to subsequently raising the military budget. Nor do the officers justify their interventions on the grounds that their esprit de corps has been violated, not even when a colleague has clearly been treated in an unfair or insulting manner. On the other hand, professional ethics, when interpreted as a responsibility towards the nation, have quite often been used to justify a military intervention.

The officers themselves never raise the claim that the military organization is superior to the civilian administration. Though such a view is implicit in the criticism of the civilian politicians' performance, the coup-makers often express a desire for a speedy return to civilian rule. Also, the officers never admit to any conflicts within the armed forces when they are justifying a takeover. It has happened, however, that military leaders have on later occasions confessed that regional or ethnic tension may have influenced the army's decision to act.
Finally, there are other explanations based on the purely personal motives which the architect of a coup may have had. Samuel Decalo is one of those researchers who argue that research into military coups has concentrated far too much on structural questions. The reason why the military seize power in the African states is to be found instead in the personal, psychological or financial circumstances of the officer instigating the coup. This type of research may quite certainly offer many interesting explanations regarding individual motives, but at the same time the comparative study of African coups is hampered by such an approach. Furthermore, such an approach does not explain how the officers can win active support for a coup.

The officers themselves never justify a takeover on personal grounds. Conditions within the society, or other circumstances, can always be cited as the reason for the change of power, even though the underlying motive may be personal. Many of the coups are of a collective nature and there are also a number of examples where the leader of a military regime has not himself been involved in the actual takeover. Furthermore, the trend in Africa is moving away from coups with individual leaders towards takeovers on a collective basis.
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