



# Making Sense of Coups

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# Introduction

**O**n the evening of July 15th, 2016, the world watched in astonishment as army personnel from multiple units from across Turkey undertook a coup against the regime of Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The coup attempt beamed around the world as the coup plotters attempted to gain control over the country by deploying across the nation and closing important intersections of the country's infrastructure network. For the first time, a whole coup and all its twists and turns beamed across the world for all to see it play out, just like a Hollywood movie. But despite the initial element of surprise and rapid deployment, after a few hours, the coup plotters failed to overthrow the Erdogan regime, leading to the collapse of the coup.

25 years earlier, in 1991, in a last-ditch effort to save the Soviet Union from dissolution, a coalition of the top military and civilian leaders in the Soviet Union tried to seize power from Mikhail Gorbachev. The conspirators included every major official in the state apparatus except the premier himself. It included the defence minister, interior minister, KGB chief, the prime minister, the secretary of the central committee and the chief of the president's staff. Despite the overwhelming force the coup makers had at their disposal - including troops from the regular armed forces, the interior ministry, and the KGB—the coup attempt failed. The Communist party, the army and intelligence services that had so ably defended the Soviets against the Nazi invasion were dismantled and the USSR was no more.

Almost ten years earlier on New Year's Eve, 1981, a young retired flight lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings led a very different military coup, in Ghana. In this attempt, Rawlings and just a handful of men managed to take control of a military of 9,000 and a country of 11 million. Unlike the Soviet conspirators who commanded virtually the entire security apparatus and represented the entire state, Rawlings attacked with only ten men carrying small arms and broader alliances with mainly disgruntled enlisted men and student radicals. He staged his attack against a fairly elected, though highly unpopular, democratic regime at a time when Ghanaians were fed up with military intervention. His radio appeals for soldiers and civilians to join his 'holy war' and 'revolution' were met largely with indifference within the military and for the first time in Ghana, even produced opposition from civilians, who had greeted prior successful coups with public jubilation. Yet, despite all these seeming obstacles, Rawlings coup prevailed.

Why did the 1991 USSR and 2016 Turkey coup attempts fail whilst the 1981 Ghana coup attempt succeeded? In fact, why do 51% of all coups succeed and 49% fail? Despite extensive literature on civil-military relations in general and coups in particular the question of the determinants of coups has been almost largely ignored. As a result, many assumptions regarding the prerequisite ingredients for a successful coup attempt have crept into coup discourse which has blurred the necessary ingredients for a successful coup.

Why is it important to understand coups? Why should the da'wah carrier be concerned with coups?

There are many reasons for this.

Although not every coup attempt is of critical importance domestically or internationally, the cumulative impact of coup attempts on the politics of the latter half of the twentieth century has been undeniable. A number of coup attempts have been pivotal in history. At stake in the 1991 Soviet coup attempt was nothing less than the survival of the Soviet Union, a superpower that covered more territory than any other country in the world and which had a nuclear arsenal twice as large as its nearest competitor. Because this coup failed the USSR was dismembered and the communist party dismantled bringing the Cold War to its conclusion. Similarly, the success of Portugal's 1974 Carnation Revolution led to the independence of the large Lusophone colonies. If the July 1944 coup attempt against Hitler had succeeded the war in Europe would have likely ended very differently. In these and other cases, the trajectory of global power was determined by the outcome of a single coup attempt.

Even when a coup attempt doesn't cast a large shadow internationally, it can have a substantial impact on the lives of those who live within the affected country. Some of the most cruel and venal dictators in the world have taken power via a coup, such as Indonesia's President Suharto, who killed up to one million Indonesians in the first year of his rule and is estimated to have embezzled between \$15 billion and \$35 billion during his time in office.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Saddam Hussein and Idi Amin were able to retain power (and murder vast numbers of their citizens) because the coup attempts that brought them to power succeeded and numerous subsequent coup attempts against them failed.

Therefore, the da'wah carrier, who is working for change, will have to tackle those who want to maintain the status quo and those who stand against real change. The da'wah carrier will have to deal with those who possess power (*Nussra*) i.e. those who possess the physical capability to remove the ruler(s), who in the Muslim world like much of the world are the armed forces. For the da'wah

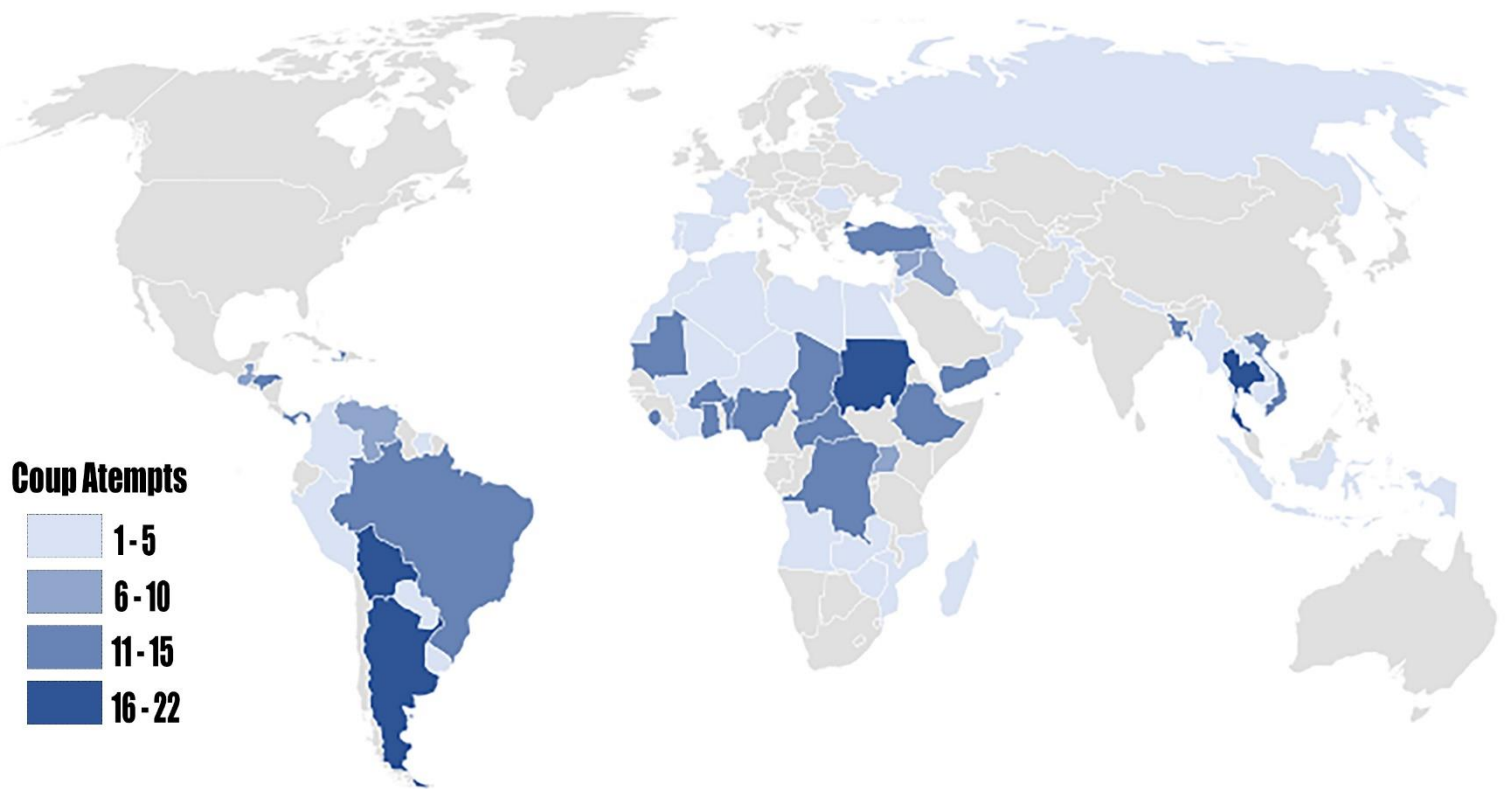
carrier, the methodology for change includes the stage of taking power and overcoming the obstacles that stand in the way of real change. As a result, making sense of coups, which is the most common form of irregular leadership change, is essential for working for real change in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

I have relied mainly on an original dataset of coup attempts around the world between 1945 and 2005, by Professor Naunial Singh, professor of international security studies at the Air War College, Alabama, USA. He conducted an empirical evaluation of all 471 coup attempts over this 60 year period drawing on numerous interviews with retired military personnel and over 300 hours of interviews specifically with coup participants in Ghana.

This booklet is the opinions of the author.

Adnan Khan  
16 Safar 1439 Hijri  
5<sup>th</sup> November 2017 CE

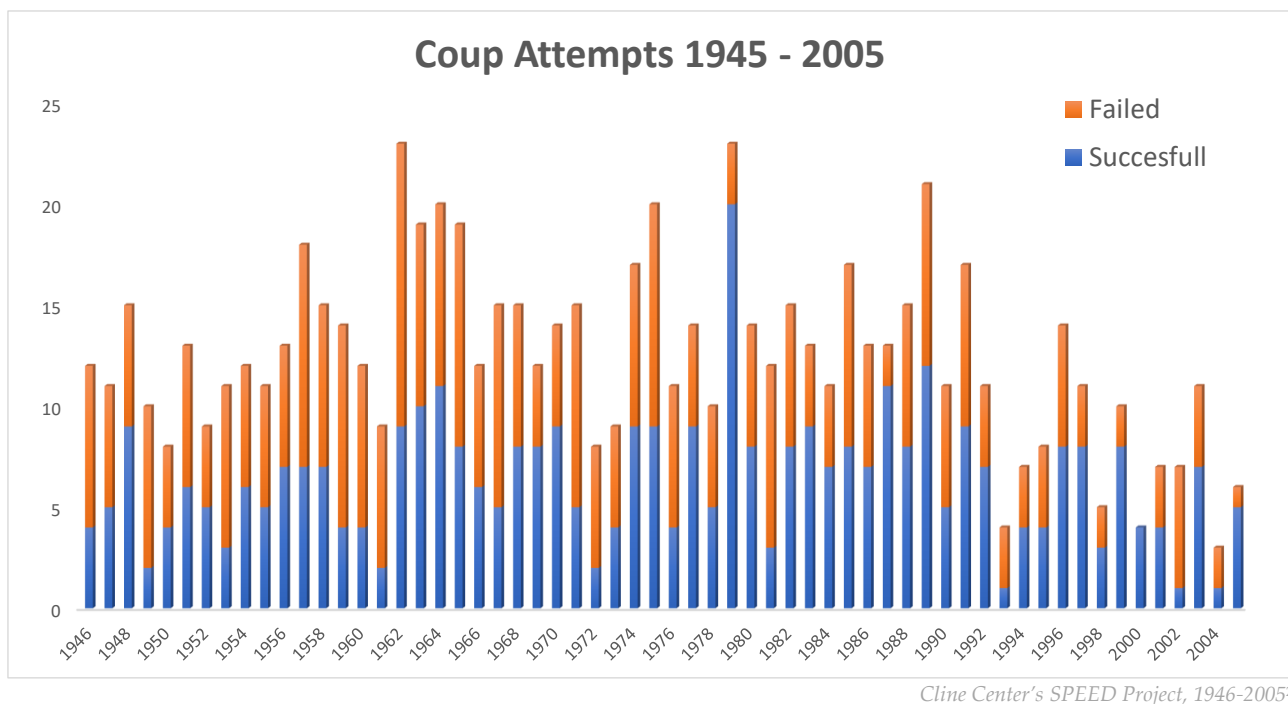
# Coup Attempts - 1950 - 2000



## Coups: The Raw Facts

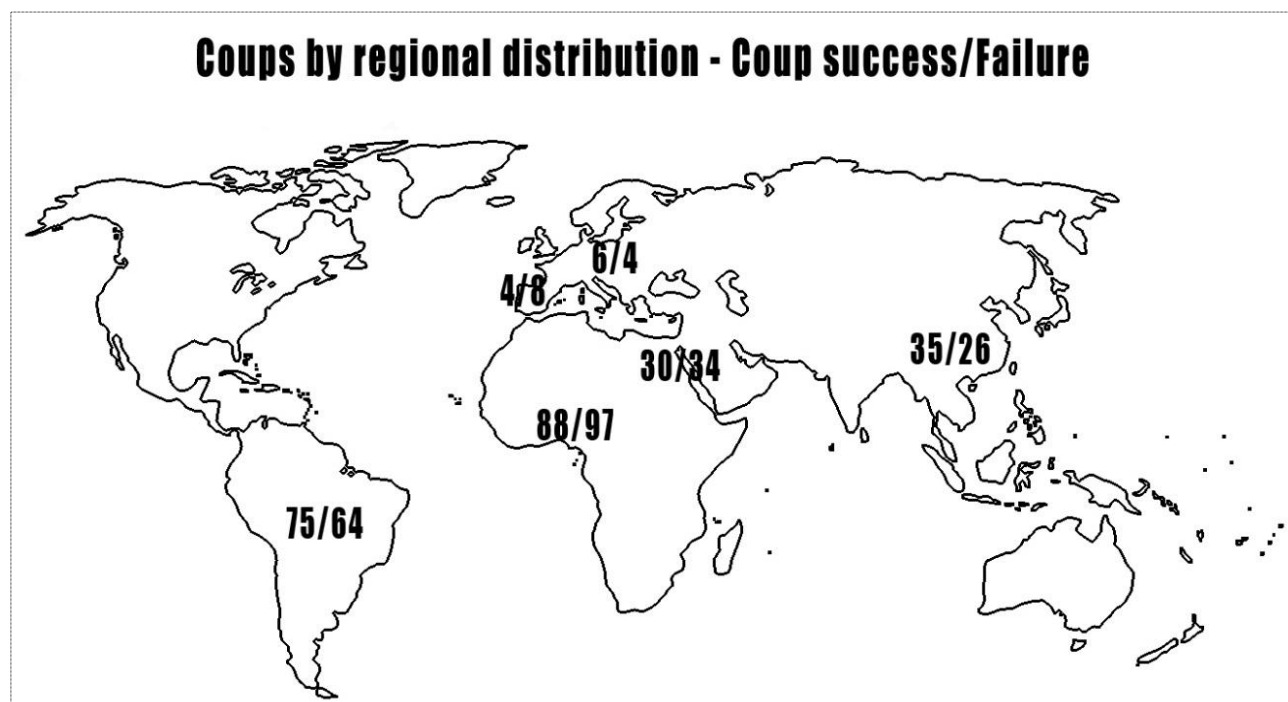
**A**nalysing the coups attempts since World War 2 (WW2) reveal a number of interesting insights into coups. Since WW2, the majority of countries in the world experienced at least one coup attempt. Between 1945 and 2005, 471 coup attempts took place in independent countries with populations of over 100,000, of which 238 succeeded and 233 of which failed. Naturally coups vary in their distribution from 100% failure in countries such as Zimbabwe, Zambia and Kenya to 100% success in Pakistan, Cuba, Columbia and Mali. With the success and failure rate evenly distributed those who undertook coups and those who may be planning to undertake them have an almost 50/50 chance of overthrowing the sitting government. The six decades after WW2 saw an average of 9 coup attempts each year, ranging from as low as 3 attempts in 1998 and as high as 23 in 1962 and 1979. Between 1950 and 2012 there was not a single year without a coup attempt somewhere in the world.

The frequency of coup attempts show that coups are the most common method of regime change and irregular leadership removal in the world. Coups are responsible for nearly 75% of democratic failures. Military coups are not restricted to democracies. Since 1946, all monarchies that have ended have been ousted by their own armed forces and coups are also the most common form of irregular leadership change in dictatorships. During 1950-2000 66% of dictators were removed by coups. In spite of the popular image of dictators being brought down by mass demonstrations, this is the exception rather than the rule as coups are more than six times more likely to end a dictatorship than a popular uprising.



Successful military coups are also the primary source of regime change in general. When any regime subtype fails - whether a parliamentary democracy, Presidential democracy, mixed democracy, or civilian dictatorship - it is most likely to be succeeded by a military regime. Generally speaking, all military regimes are the result of successful coups but not all successful coups lead to military regimes.

On a regional basis, 80% of countries in sub-Saharan Africa, 76% of countries of North Africa and the Middle East, 67% of countries in Latin America and 50% of countries in Asia had at least one coup attempt since WW2. The countries with the highest number of coup attempts since WW2 are Bolivia – 22, Argentina – 18, Thailand 18 and Sudan - 16.





The global balance of power changed after WW2. The Soviet Union and America replaced Britain and France as the world's superpowers. Whilst WW2 was devastating, much of the architecture Britain and to a lesser extent France created after WW1 remained intact. The monarchy Britain funded and supported in Egypt remained in power after WW2. Similarly, the Hashemites remained in power in British created Jordan and Iraq. The French maintained its colonies after the war in Algeria, Mali, Niger and Chad. With the US on the rise it viewed Europe's control North Africa and the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa as an arena of competition. Husni al-Za'ims coup in Syria on April 11<sup>th</sup> 1949 was the first of what were to be many American interventions in the Middle East.<sup>3</sup> Declassified records and statements by former CIA agents confirmed the coup was sponsored by the US CIA. The CIA's continued support to several subsequent military coups in Syria throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Similarly, the rise of the Soviet Union and the subsequent Cold War was another driving factor of coups. The dominance of the US by the 1990's, across the world and the removal of the French and British created architecture alongside the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 has seen a fall in the number of coups attempts.

### Why do Coups Take Place?

A lot of research has been conducted into the reasons and factors that lead to coups. The determinants of coups have attracted much attention from academics as well as politicians and thinkers in order to tackle the factors that cause them. The existing research on the causes of coups has produced a very wide spectrum of hypotheses based on the following factors:

- **Economic** – poverty, low GDP, lack of modernisation
- **Political** – lack of democracy and military governments
- **Social** – ethnic strife, diversity and minorities
- **Military** - factors such as large armed forces as percentage of the population or large defence spending as percentage of GDP.

In analysing all these hypotheses Naunihal Singh's evaluation through a pooled time-series logic model concluded there is little support for the conventional wisdom on coups. The hypotheses derived from other research do poorly at predicting the occurrence of coups. Singh asserts those factors correlated with coup attempts explain little of the variance observed and therefore do a poor job of predicting when and where coup attempts will occur. Of the 21 hypotheses Singh analysed only three found robust support, namely that countries that are poor, with past successful coups and are neither democratic nor undemocratic are more likely to have coups.

In conclusion all coups have a nearly 50:50 chance of success. If officers are looking to make systemic change, then history is on their side. If the coup attempt is in Sub Saharan Africa or the Middle East then your chance of success are even higher. If the coup takes place in a country rigged with poverty with a previous history of coup attempts then the chance of success are even higher.



### **CASE STUDY: Why have there been so few coups in the West**

Since the end of World War Two the west – Western Europe and North America has enjoyed relatively stable politics (compared to Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa) despite the Cold War and the subsequent fall of Communism in the 1990s. As the west colonised the world, they have played a central role in the instability in much of the world by supporting and backing coups as well as dictators. Colonising the world has meant a lot of wealth for the west and their armies supporting colonial aims abroad. Of those coups that have taken place in the west, two were related to the Soviet Union's establishment of the Iron Curtain (Romania 1946 and Czechoslovakia 1948), one was an assertion of Communist power against pro-democracy agitators (Poland 1980), two were an attempted assertion of one Communist faction against two a rival Communist faction (Bulgaria 1965 and Soviet Union 1991), and two were related to an ongoing colonial war (France in 1958 and 1961). Several of the coups and coup attempts were in NATO member countries: France 1958 and 1961; Greece 1967, 1973 and 1975; and Turkey in 1960, 1971, 1980, 1997, and 2016.

In the West, the institutions of civilian government are stronger and more established. The judiciary is independent, and checks and balances exist within the political framework to ensure that no one faction can gain absolute power. More importantly, the citizens believe in the system. While many may disagree against their political opponents, very few would argue for a complete overthrow of the system by forceful means.

Generations of military officers, especially in the US have been imbued with the notion of respect for the Chain of Command with the elected civilian leadership at the top of that Chain of Command. The institutional honour of the military which goes back hundreds of years would make it very difficult for soldiers to obey the command to conduct a coup even by a popular general. As the west has virtually no history of coups, this itself acts as an impediment to future coups.



# Coup Dynamics

Every military coup attempt is primarily a struggle for power within the armed forces that, if successful, grants the victor control over the state. A coup organised by sergeants for example, is not a coup by 'the armed forces' but a coup by the lowest tier of the armed forces, whose success would threaten everybody above them in the military hierarchy, as well as remove the sitting government from power. The same applies at each level of the military hierarchy, as a successful coup attempt would place the challenger in a position of power over his peers and subordinates. There is a fierce power struggle involved even when officers at the apex of the command structure mount a coup attempt, as such attempts can be rejected by subordinate officers and end in failure. No coup attempt is guaranteed to succeed, no matter what the circumstances and therefore any group of challengers must proceed first by establishing control over the rest of the armed forces.

For these reasons the key to understanding the outcomes from a coup is understanding the dynamics of coups; whether a coup succeeds or fails rests almost entirely upon what happens within the military once the coup attempt begins. Because usually challengers constitute only a small group within the military, so as to avoid detection, the reaction of the rest of the military to the coup attempt is critical to its eventual fate.

## Coup Theories

There are two theories that explain why coups take place and their dynamics. These theories claim that coups are like battles and elections. The 'coups as battles' theory claims that coups are like miniature invasions of a country by its own armed forces and the outcome is determined by tactical dominance. Therefore, the challenger wins when they are stronger than the sitting government and is able to establish control over key military targets. As the penalty for being on the losing side includes exile, prison or execution this theory contends military actors have strong incentives to use violent force when it provides tactical benefits. This theory emphasizes the tactical dimension, viewing a coup as a short battle fought by the armed forces for control over their country. Therefore, the entire coup attempt should look like a skirmish between two forces at war and made more intense by the fact that no side should hold its forces back. If coup attempts are viewed as battles then the goal of the challenger is to establish military dominance. Accordingly, the primary targets during any coup attempt should have tactical importance.

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The 'coup as election' theory explains the success or failure of a coup not as battles but as elections, viewing each coup as a referendum within the military. The theory envisions coups as referendums on the continued rule of the sitting government or ruler. The incumbent would survive the challenge if it had more support than the challengers and will fail if they do not. Therefore a popular government should be able to survive a perfectly executed assault, but an unpopular government should crumble. This theory focuses less on tactics and more on the ability of coup plotters to communicate and persuade others. Public broadcasts are used to sway the public and the military and civilians are given importance in this theory in order to influence coup plotters and the wider military.

The problem with these theories is they do not explain many coups where dictators were hugely unpopular but still survived coups against them. These theories do not explain how armies that possessed overwhelming power failed in their coup attempts. There are also numerous examples over the last 6 decades that show even the most unpopular dictators were able to survive coup attempts against them. Both of these theories, though able to provide an explanation for the outcome of some coups, fail to explain the dynamics and outcome of most coups. The problem with these theories is they are built upon descriptions of military behaviour as being the same during a coup as it would during peace time, rather than viewing them at odds with each other.

Ghana suffered from 10 coups from 1966-1983. In extensive interviews conducted with coup plotters from the country the officers' description of their behaviour presents a very different depiction of the coup attempts than is generally found in either scholarly or journalistic accounts.<sup>4</sup> The officers discussed the performance of the government, the motives of the coup makers and the legitimacy of the coup attempt, which given the political circumstances at the time were the usual factors invoked by most political scientists who have examined the phenomenon of coups. Surprisingly, they then went on to explain that none of these factors had played a role in their choice of which side to back

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at the start of the coup attempt. In fact, they believed that it would have been selfish to let their personal political beliefs guide their response. As officers, their first responsibility was to their men and they felt it was wrong to use their troops, possibly endangering their lives, to support the side they preferred if it was likely to lose. Equally unexpected from military men, they were emphatic about avoiding ‘unnecessary violence.’ Although they were willing to fight to the last man to defend the country against an external invasion, they did not want to engage in suicidal bloodshed that might damage the military and the country and possibly spiral into civil war. As a result, they explained, they had cast their support, to the side they believed everyone else would back as well as the side that would win rather than the one they might have wanted to win. And until they knew which side that was - the government or the challengers - they had chosen to sit on the fence, gathering information and trying not to make the situation worse.

## **Coordination**

The strategic dynamic described by these officers is what game theorists call a ‘coordination game.’ In a coordination game, everyone has an incentive to do what others are doing and therefore everyone’s choices are based on his or her beliefs about the likely actions of others. The outcome of the game is determined when these beliefs converge among the actors. If you change the players’ expectations you change their behaviour as well.

A key way to create or change expectations is via communication. For communication to shape expectations the information conveyed not only has to become known to all parties, but also has to be known to be known by all parties. That is, it has to create not just knowledge but “common knowledge.”

Because the generation of common knowledge can lead to collective action, having control over the means of creating such knowledge is very important for those who hold power or those who hope to pry it from them. Overthrowing a dictatorship is a coordination game, one in which political actors want to join protests if others are participating and want to stay at home, if others stay at home. For this reason, dictatorships prize outward shows of conformity, especially on ritualized public occasions, because such displays strengthen the expectations that keep the system working. Conversely, they heavily regulate public gatherings and mass media because these can be used to create expectations that could undermine the regime. A single radio broadcast is likely to be far more damaging than a banned video smuggled hand to hand; one public speech to a group is more of a danger than private conversations with an equivalent number of individuals.

When applied to coups, this understanding of the dynamics of coordination games provides insights into how to make and foil coups. For challengers, the key is to use common knowledge to shape expectations in a way favourable to the coups success. They want to convince military personnel that the success of the coup has the support of almost everybody in the institution and thus is essentially a fact or fait accompli. In addition, they want to make clear that any possible resistance



is minor, doomed to fail, and irresponsible, since it would risk an escalating spiral of violence if persisted. This can be called making a fact.

Making a fact is done by seizing the main radio or broadcasting facilities and making a broadcast to the other actors. Conversely, to foil the coup the sitting government needs to do the opposite, either hold onto broadcasting facilities in the first place or displace the challenger from them and then make a government broadcast to create expectations of the continued survival of the government and the failure of the challengers.

The coup plotters from Ghana were emphatic that controlling the radio and state media station is almost always necessary for coup success and that without it the coup will usually be doomed to failure.<sup>5</sup> The dynamics of coordination shapes not only initial expectations but also behaviour throughout the entire coup attempt in a variety of ways. For example, while challengers use force in many coup attempts, it is fruitful only when it results (directly or indirectly) in the creation of expectations favourable to their success. Force is typically used to take control of the media station or to capture prominent symbolic targets in the capital in order to lend credence to the claims made in the broadcast.

### CASE STUDY: The Power of Expectations

In a coordination game, expectations are powerful because they can become self-fulfilling. A good example of this is a bank run, modelled by a coordination game. In a situation where the bank lacks an external guarantor, depositors leave their money in the bank (and earn interest on it) when they think others will also do so, and they will join in a bank run if they think others are withdrawing their money. When people believe a bank will fail they will pull their money out and the bank will fail. What is more, even when they believe other depositors they will withdraw their deposits, leading to the expectations of these depositors to come true, whether they were accurate originally or not. What this means is that no matter what the level of deposits in the bank, it is the depositor's beliefs and about the bank's possible failure that determines the eventual outcome.

All coup makers face essentially the same challenges but the resources available for coup makers differ depending on their position within the military. These differences in the organizational position of the challengers within the armed forces hierarchy and the resources flowing from them translate into correspondingly varied tactics, dynamics and likelihood of success. Based on this, four issues are needed for a coup to succeed based on coordination being the central dynamic for the coup attempt.

1. **Controlling public information** – The winning side needs to have some way to create expectations favourable to its success and therefore have some way to generate common knowledge. The method for this for the past 6 decades has been via mass media broadcast. The objective here is not just to make a broadcast but to monopolise public information for the duration of the coup. The more broadcasting entities, the more complex controlling public information becomes. In this case, the challengers will attempt to control the most important broadcasting facility and then either shut the others down or force them to repeat their message. The key audience for broadcasts during a coup attempt are really other military actors, not the public. What matters is that the broadcast becomes public or common

knowledge within the military, not that it be heard by the public. Later broadcasts, made after the coup attempt is over, are intended for the masses. A good example of the power of the radio station to make a fact is the 1969 Libyan coup, in which a twenty-seven-year-old Captain Gaddafi and a small number of other low-ranking officers with only a few revolvers and a mere forty-eight rounds of ammunition took over the radio station and one other target and managed to bloodlessly overthrow King Idriss. (This coup is analysed in Chapter 6)

2. **Using Broadcasts to make a fact** –The content of broadcasts helps make the coup a success. The content of the coup should convey a credible but exaggerated sense of strength of the challengers relative to the loyalists. The challengers will try to make a fact by claiming that their victory is a certainty, they have broad support within the armed forces and any resistance is futile and on its last legs. This is the part of the broadcast that matters, not the justification offered for the coup. It is also important to keep in mind that this is very different behaviour from what one would expect if coups were like battles or elections. If coups were like battles, the content of the broadcast would be irrelevant, if they were like elections, an effective broadcast would tell supporters that victory is at hand but that the participation of each and every supporter is necessary to achieve it. Whichever side has control over the tools for creating common knowledge will issue a broadcast in the service of making a fact. If the broadcast is made by the challengers, they will claim that their victory is inevitable and that resistance is both futile and dangerous. To do this, they will almost always overstate their strength and tactical position, but in a way that is plausible. An example of the importance of the content of a broadcast comes from Admiral Gruber's failed coup attempt against President Perez of Venezuela in November 1992. According to both battle and election theories, this coup attempt should have succeeded. The challengers had a good deal of military strength at their disposal and an internal survey revealed that the members of the military were deeply dissatisfied. The coup makers failed to effectively make a fact because of a logistical mix-up caused by a garbled tape being broadcast on television. Watchers would have been able to tell only that a coup attempt was in progress but not who was involved nor how strong the challengers were. The only information that could be gleaned was that the coup attempt was undertaken by allies of Colonel Hugo Chavez, who was imprisoned awaiting trial for his coup attempt in February of that year. Since Chavez, while popular, had failed in the February attempt, the challengers did not convey that they were strong and their victory was inevitable. Later that morning, President Perez appeared on television to assure the populace that everything was fine, and a few hours later Admiral Gruber surrendered.<sup>6</sup>
3. **Shaping Expectations by Capturing Symbolic Targets** – Challengers can reinforce the message of their broadcast by capturing symbolic targets, such as the parliament building. These locations are valuable as they are in prominent sites and represent state power and so their seizure becomes common knowledge if enough army personnel come to know of it. Capturing symbolic sites allows the challengers to signal their strength in a public and costly fashion which shapes expectations. Capturing symbolic targets is more of an indirect way to shape expectations than making a broadcast and is usually a tactic used by officers who lack credibility or those who are not from the top of the army. Capturing symbolic locations shows tactical strength and this can be translated into expectations. Hugo Chavez's February 1992 coup attempt in Venezuela failed when it was blocked from taking over broadcast facilities and symbolic targets in the capital, leading other conspirators to withdraw their support. Within six hours Chavez realised that the coup attempt was hopeless and as part of

his surrender, made a brief broadcast asking for coup supporters in provincial centres to surrender without a fight.

4. **Rank** – The final determinant of a coup is organizational, the rank level the challengers occupy within the armed forces. Coup makers from the top, middle and bottom of the military possess very different resources with which to make a fact, leading to three distinct trajectories with three different likelihoods of success. Rank defines all aspects of life within the military; this encourages horizontal ties whilst restricting vertical ones. For this reason, conspiracies always develop among men of similar rank as it's the easiest to meet men of similar rank and develop trust. From the first days of military training both soldiers and officers are taught that strength comes from coherent coordinated action and that undisciplined behaviour during conflict is dangerous. As a result, the instinct to coordinate and avoid chaos is firmly rooted in strong habitual behaviour. This reinforces the structural pressures by coup plotters as they are restricted by their rank and can potentially be stopped by soldiers from other ranks.

#### **CASE STUDY: Surviving a Coup Attempt**

To foil a coup attempt, an incumbent government needs to hold on to the country's broadcasting facilities or displace the challengers from them and then make a government broadcast to create expectations of the continued survival of the government and the failure of the challengers. Coup plotters from Ghana have been emphatic that controlling the radio station is almost always necessary for a coup's success and that without it the coup will usually be doomed to failure. The purpose of maintaining the broadcasting facilities is to enable the government to convince members of the military to oppose the coup and to convince the general public of the coup's lack of legitimacy. For that reason, what matters is not that the broadcasts reach the public at large but instead that the information in the broadcast is "public," within the military, that is, that the content of the broadcast become common knowledge for members of the armed forces. If the sitting government archives this, it will show the wider military the coup is not succeeding and this will usually lead to the wider military to not side with the coup plotters. The incumbent government needs to show it remains in control and keeping the broadcasting facilities and broadcasting this fact almost always leads to the failure of the coup. The July 2016 coup attempt in Turkey saw the sitting president and his government broadcast they were still in control, as the coup plotters failed to control the country's broadcasting facilities. When Erdogan went on TV from his phone camera this showed the country's ruler was still in power. (The July 2016 coup in Turkey is analysed in chapter 5)

#### **Casualties & Violence**

Seizing symbolic targets as well as coups themselves usually involve the use of force. All coup plotters are likely to encounter opposition in their coup attempt and this is why we would expect to witness violence and casualties in many coups. However, analysing the coups since WW2 and in interviews with many plotters they make a deliberate effort to limit the risk of casualties during a coup and this is such a high priority that plotters are willing to accept tactical costs for doing so. Whilst nearly 80 people were killed in Chile's 1973 coup against Salvador Allende, this appears to be the exception rather than the norm. As coordination is essential to a coup an 'inter-military' battle would lead to the unleashing of violence, which will only invite others to respond in kind leading to a possible civil war. Despite the very real possibility of capital punishment of a coup failure,

plotters tend to surrender rather than to fight to the last man or use scorched earth tactics. In the failed Soviet Union coup in 1991, Interior Minister Boris Pugo committed suicide along with his wife rather than face trial. But he never ordered his troops, despite possessing the ability to do so, to mount a bloody last-ditch stand.<sup>7</sup>

This shows the norms governing behaviour during a coup attempt differ from those to be applied when a foreign invasion is in progress when the national armed forces would be willing to fight to the last man. During a coup attempt, this would entail killing one's fellow officers, men with whom one may have trained and who may even live within the same military complex. Even when opponents are strangers or feel enmity toward each other, they are still constrained by a common concern for the corporate welfare of the military institution.

### **The Role of Civilians in Coups**

Civilians are involved in many coup conspiracies from the initial conspiracy to the post-coup government. But civilians, whether elites or at the mass level, when looking at the coups since WW2, have played at most a secondary role in coup plots. The coups as election theory prioritises the role of civilians in coup plots but in assessing coups from WW2 civilians are only involved to the point they can shape the perception military actors have about each other and they almost always play no role in making a coup a success.

Most of the time civilian mobilisation is not a factor during coups as they are over in a few hours and it is difficult for civilians to organise so quickly in a short period of time, unless they have structures in place such as student movements or unions. But experience has shown even if there is mass civilian mobilisation to halt a coup people power alone cannot stop a resolute army. Large numbers of civilians can be routed so long as the military remains united and splits do not develop. Authoritarian governments have shown on many occasions that they can easily clear very large numbers of protestors. The Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989 saw the Chinese army move over a million protestors from the streets of Beijing. Despite the large numbers, casualties were a few hundred to a few thousand. In Iran in 2009 the electoral result saw the masses swell to well in excess of 100,000, yet the sitting government was able to dispel them without even needing the regular army, just the Basij paramilitary. This shows that civilian governments are prepared to pull the trigger against civilian mobilisation. Nevertheless, there are some occasions where civilians can affect the trajectory and outcome of a coup, despite this being the exception rather than the norm.

- The first is when an elite civilian has a level of influence that can shape expectations of a whole society. Spanish King, King Juan Carlos in 1981 went on television in military uniform and stated he opposed the coup. The coup plotters initially said the King supported their coup, but the broadcast was effective in undermining the coup plotters strength. Before the Kings broadcast most officers sat on the fence waiting to see which way the coup would go, but after his broadcast the soldiers who were sitting on the fence, took the side of the government and the coup failed as



*King Juan Carlos sent out a message the coup would not be tolerated*



most officers surrendered. Despite being a civilian the King was able to act in a way that undermined the coup, but most civilians are unable to act in such a way.

- Mass mobilisation can block a coup attempt if civilians join a faction of the army with the expectation there will be a split within the army. This is what happened in the Soviet Union coup in 1991 when the Army had been ordered to fire on civilians. The junta wrongly believed that the military had already begun to defect to the opposition and would refuse to fire, if ordered to on civilian protestors.
- Civilians are also useful when the army openly backs them in a revolution or uprising against the sitting government. This is what happened in the Soviet republics in 1989 and in Egypt and Tunisia during the Arab spring and against the Shah in 1979. The army and Iran's secret service SAVAK played a key role in maintaining the Shah's rule. US President Jimmy Carter, in his memoirs, confirmed that General Robert Huyser had been sent with the mission: *"Huyser was of the opinion that the [Iran] army had made sufficient plans to protect its equipment and facilities and that it would not come onto the streets. He had dissuaded some of its leaders from the idea of attempting a coup."*<sup>8</sup> In this way the Iranian army effectively supported the call of the masses for the removal of the Shah. Similarly, during the Arab Spring the Egyptian army as well as Tunisian army sided with the demands of the masses and in the case of Egypt removed Hosni Mubarak themselves. In these cases and others, the regime had difficulty in handling the crowds. This was clearly seen publicly and created the perception of divisions within the military of firing upon civilians.

## Foreign Interference

Foreign involvement in coup attempts is a common occurrence whether it was during the Cold War or what took place in the Middle East and Africa between Europe and the US. But the degree of interference and involvement of a foreign nation on its own does not guarantee the success of a coup. Coup plotters are still required to go through the process of coordinating, making a fact and broadcasting intent. A foreign nation can build the capabilities of officers and navigate them through the process; in many cases foreign nations' intelligence agencies can pay or force the sitting army to stand down against a mounting coup. In many cases coup conspirators backed by a foreign entity can work in the opposite direction where other elements of the army foil the plot due to its foreign origins. A coup backed by a foreign entity on its own does not guarantee success and depending on the level of involvement conspirators face the same challenges and obstacles as any other coup.

*"A coup backed by a foreign entity on its own does not guarantee success and depending on the level of involvement conspirators face the same challenges and obstacles as any other coup"*

Kermit Roosevelt who headed America's Near East Operations from 1950 became almost legendary in orchestrating coups, especially Operation Ajax that overthrew Muhammed Mosaddegh of Iran in 1953. He along with other intelligence operatives have written widely on bringing the Three Officers to power in 1952 in Egypt who overthrew the monarchy. Miles Copeland the CIA operative, published classified information in his memoirs in 1989, *The Game Player*, about the CIA supported coup d'état that ousted King Farooq. Copeland outlined the numerous meetings that took place between him and Gamal Abdul Nasser confirming the CIA station operatives stayed in very close contact with the members of the Free Officers right up

to the coup. US armed forces personnel as well as intelligence officers themselves were not part of the coup and needed the officers in question to conduct and coordinate the coup.

Foreign powers support generals, officers and even officers from the bottom of the army, but are still dependent upon army officers successfully coordinating coup plots and ensuing other factions within the army do not oppose it.

### **CASE STUDY: Americas Hand in the Mali Coup, March 2012**

Mali's borders were created in 1960 from the division of colonial French West Africa. The French maintained links with the political class as they created them. Mali is one of the world's poorest countries. Its economy is based on agriculture, particularly cotton, livestock and gold mining.

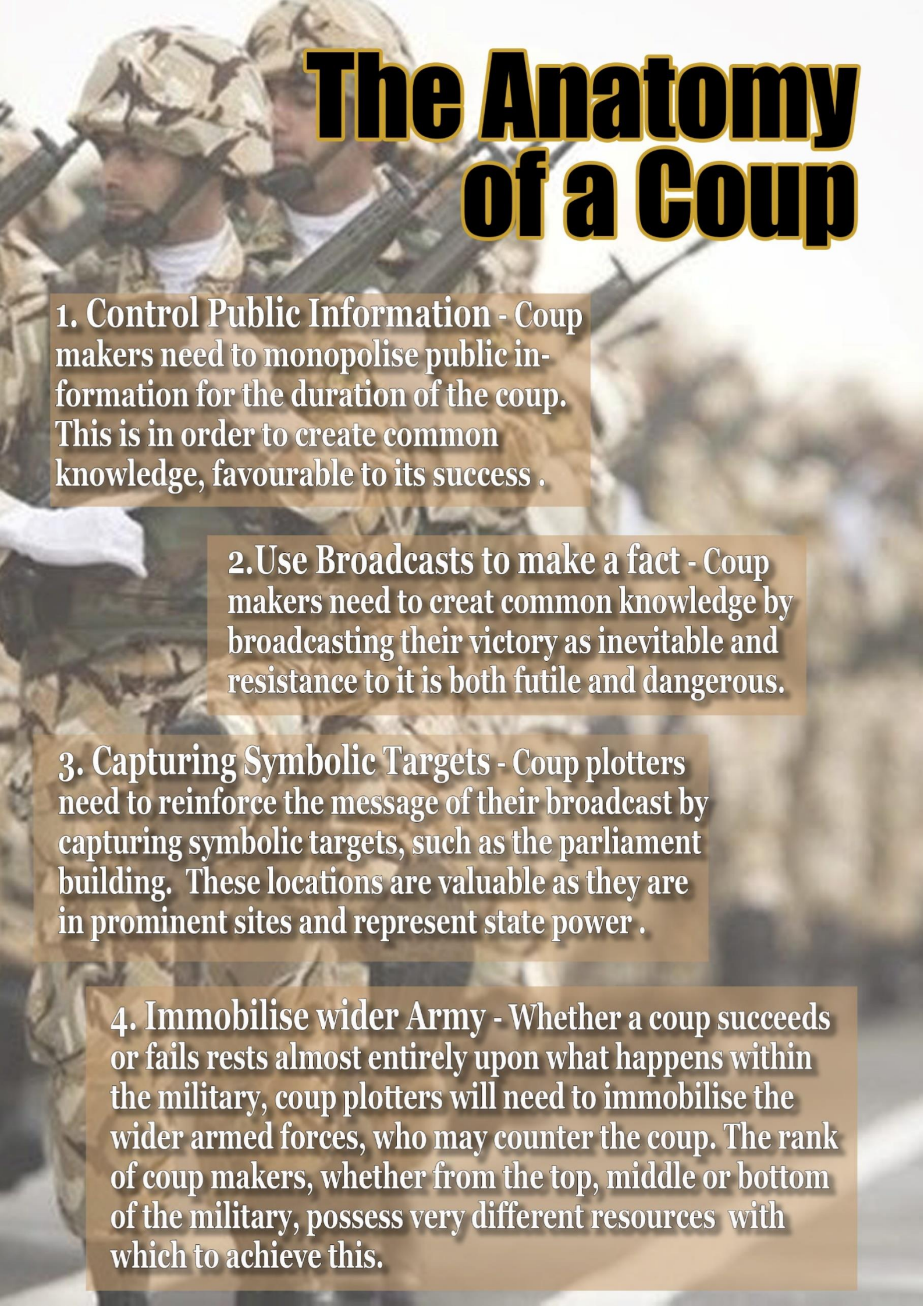
President Amadou Toumani Toure was elected in 2002 and re-elected in 2007, his second term was coming to an end when elections were due to take place on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2012. Under the Mali's constitution the president cannot seek re-election for a third term. Toure did not express any intention to seek re-election, but despite this, junior officers from the bottom of the army moved to overthrow him on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2012, a month before the elections.

The Coup leader, Captain Ahmadou Haya Sanogo clarified in interviews after his coup that it was undertaken due to the corrupt regime and that he had no intention to remain in power and would hand power over to a democratically elected government. Despite the fact an election was due in a months' time, he moved to overthrow the government. The French and British governments came out and condemned the coup whilst the US didn't condemn the coup but called for calm and the halting of violence. France suspended political, military and economic cooperation and aid with Mali after the coup. The US on the other hand continued with assistance to the tune of \$137 million annually.

The US had only in the last year begun working with Mali, it signed agreements to train Malian armed forces to fight terrorism as well as conduct training in order to deal with terrorist attacks. The US selected officers who would train in the US. Informed US sources confirmed: *"the coup leader Captain Amadou (Ahmadou) Haya Sanogo was selected from among the elite officers by the US embassy to receive anti-terrorist training in the United States. Sanogo travelled several times to the US on special missions."*<sup>9</sup>

This US supported coup and training was not to last. Despite the coup being a success from a US perspective, as a result of the coup carried out by junior officers against their senior officers, security in the country fell apart and the whole North of Mali was taken over by the Tuaregs and a number of Islamic groups in the region. The Tuaregs eventually lost out to the Ansar Deen faction. The junior officers who undertook the coup failed to halt the expansion of the Ansar Deen southwards and capitulated in the face of this onslaught. As soon as 2013 started, French military forces intervened in Operation Serval and started pounding targets in Mali backed by air support. By July 2013 French forces had defeated the forces looking to become independent and elections took place which saw the French political elite retake power. The French had reversed American attempts to change the political architecture in Mali. Despite US support for the coup, it failed to hold this in place. This shows the mere support from an international player is not enough in itself for a successful coup.





# The Anatomy of a Coup

1. Control Public Information - Coup makers need to monopolise public information for the duration of the coup. This is in order to create common knowledge, favourable to its success .

2. Use Broadcasts to make a fact - Coup makers need to create common knowledge by broadcasting their victory as inevitable and resistance to it is both futile and dangerous.

3. Capturing Symbolic Targets - Coup plotters need to reinforce the message of their broadcast by capturing symbolic targets, such as the parliament building. These locations are valuable as they are in prominent sites and represent state power .

4. Immobilise wider Army - Whether a coup succeeds or fails rests almost entirely upon what happens within the military, coup plotters will need to immobilise the wider armed forces, who may counter the coup. The rank of coup makers, whether from the top, middle or bottom of the military, possess very different resources with which to achieve this.



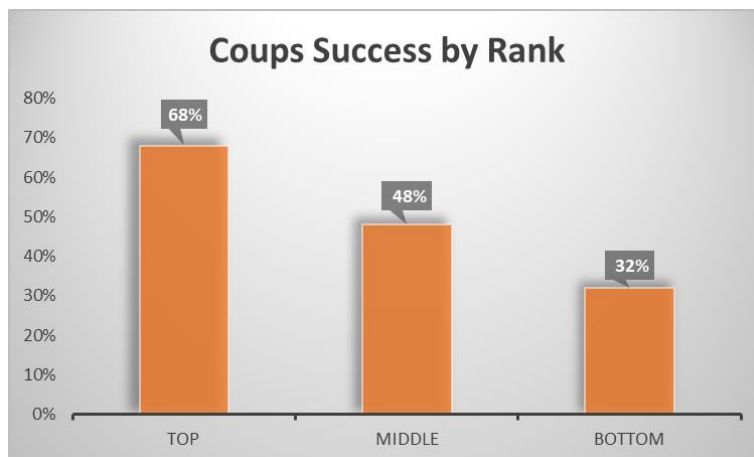


*President Morsi and then-Defence Minister el-Sissi attending a news conference in Cairo on May 2013*

# Coups from the Top of the Military

The rank of coup plotters weighs heavily on the dynamics of a coup and its outcome. The rank the challengers occupy within the armed forces place numerous restrictions on making a coup a success but also provide differing opportunities. These next three sections analyse how rank shapes all aspects of coups and applies this understanding to coup attempts that have taken place.

Coups from the top ranks of the armed forces are distinctive in that conspirators at that level have the greatest amount of "soft power." Because of their position at the apex of the military, senior officers have prerogatives that enable them to gather information about what is happening within the armed forces to preferentially disseminate information favourable to their point of view and most important to shape the expectations of military actors even before coup attempt begins. This grants challengers at the top the ability to





make a fact in ways not available to members of the military in the middle or bottom ranks and therefore coups from the top succeed 68% of the time, far more than any other kind of coup attempt.

Officers from the top of the military are Generals, Lieutenant generals, Major generals and Brigadiers. The objective of these generals is to ensure that the mid-level officers, who actually command fighting units, believe that the success of the coup is inevitable, thus guaranteeing their support and making self-fulfilling beliefs around their victory. Coups from the top are generally over quickly with relatively little chaos and bloodshed.

Challengers at the top have many advantages that come into play even before the coup attempt begins. Senior officers are also better able to assess the obstacles they may face while mounting a coup. Because of their position, they have access to military preferences, tactical readiness and beliefs of other key officers. This provides cover for behaviour that might be considered suspicious in lower-ranking officers. Such strategic information is valuable because it allows the challengers to anticipate and address potential problems before the coup attempt begins. However, although such information is helpful, it is not necessary for success, as even those opposed to a coup will be willing to support it if they believe that everybody else will do so as they will.

Officers from the top of the army have a much easier time avoiding detection because they can meet in groups to discuss matters of national policy as part of their professional duties. This provides cover for behaviour that might be considered suspicious in lower-ranking officers. In addition, because senior officers are likely to know each other well, their conspiracy builds on existing bonds of trust and they can avoid the risks inherent in bringing a stranger into a plot.

Senior officers can use their bureaucratic prerogatives to lay considerable groundwork for a coup before they strike. They can begin to shape expectations ahead of time by telling officers that government policies are highly unpopular within the armed forces or that the military is riddled with coup plots, priming officers in key commands to believe that the coup will succeed, that victory is certain and that resisting the coup attempt is futile. These advantages give coups from the top a good deal of initial credibility. Generals are seen by other members of the military as being better informed about the likelihood that a coup will succeed and better able to make sure that conditions are right when they do move.

The major disadvantage Generals have is they only have indirect command over fighting units, generals have no forces of their own, they rely on mid-level officers to execute the orders they give. During coup attempts senior officers cannot rely on the unconditional obedience of their subordinates, because initiating a coup often reduces their moral authority and they can punish disobedience only if the coup succeeds. A dramatic example of this was the Ethiopian coup attempt in May 1989. General Bulto was in charge of the Ethiopian 2<sup>nd</sup> army, so he had nearly half of the entire army under his control. He joined forces with other senior officers to mount a coup against the ruling junta. Despite being a war hero he was opposed both within and outside his command and the coup failed. Therefore, generals like all other coup makers must try to make a fact and convince other members of the military that

*“.....Generals like all other coup makers must try to make a fact and convince other members of the military that their victory is inevitable and resistance is futile. If this works correctly, it creates self-fulfilling expectations in favour of the success of the coup, leading the challengers to victory quickly and bloodlessly”*

their victory is inevitable and resistance is futile. If this works correctly, it creates self-fulfilling expectations in favour of the success of the coup, leading the challengers to victory quickly and bloodlessly.

### **CASE STUDY: The Army and Obedience**

Although the military operates on principles of hierarchical command, it is wrong to assume that generals have the unconditional obedience of all those technically subordinate to them. This point has been repeatedly made by former generals and can be seen with a simple thought experiment. Imagine that every order given by an officer was automatically obeyed by those under his command. In that case, we should only see coup attempts coming from the very top of the military hierarchy, and each of these attempts would be virtually guaranteed to succeed as they would never encounter any resistance from within the armed forces. Yet this is obviously not the case.

Coups from the top of the military can follow various models. But three different strategies have constantly been used to make a fact, namely:

- coup attempts that take place during a meeting
- coup attempts by proclamation
- coup attempts that use force

In all three of these scenarios however, senior officers must grapple with a common constraint that that hard power is controlled not by officers at the top but by officers in the middle of the military.

**Coups During a Meeting** - Officers from the top of the military have a highly effective tactic available to them that is usually off limits to challengers at other levels: the ability to stage a coup during a meeting. Senior military officers have the ability to call a meeting of key unit commanders and then use that meeting to create self-fulfilling beliefs about the overthrow of the government. Such meetings are powerful because they create public information quickly and effectively in a stage-managed environment, allowing the challengers to most effectively make a fact around their success. Officers from the top of the military can manufacture consensus in support of their coup attempt. This usually involves telling those present that there is widespread unhappiness toward the incumbent within the military and then a carefully managed vote is taken, one in which the options are carefully managed to tilt the playing field in favour of the coup. Officers will join what they believe is a bandwagon against the incumbent, irrespective of their preferences and in doing so will make real the claim that there is widespread support for the coup. An example of this strategy was the overthrow of President Arosemena of Ecuador in 1963, in which the service commanders met and called a meeting of all officers who could reach the capital by the next morning. Once assembled, the senior officers present denounced the president's drunkenness, argued that his actions increased the communist threat to the country and warned that inaction would lead to an imminent coup by lower-ranking officers. None of the hundreds of officer's present stood up to defend the president or oppose the creation of a military government. This meeting was followed by messages to the military bases, an announcement to the nation and the overthrow of President Arosemena.<sup>10</sup>

**Coups by Proclamation** - When it is not possible for senior officers to convene a meeting of military commanders, the next best option is to stage a coup by simply declaring one in the name of the whole armed forces and issuing a public statement that the ruler is being removed by the military for the sake of the nation. The key to this strategy is by publicly claiming the military as a whole is unified behind the coup attempt, thus creating self-fulfilling expectations of its victory. Coups by proclamation do leave the military open to be challenged by challengers who can seize a means of public information and make a counter-claim. Opposing a coup by proclamation is easier in countries with a liberalized domestic media and easy access to international media, since there are more news outlets and it is harder for the challengers to monopolize public information. The most famous example of resistance to a coup attempt by proclamation involves the 1991 Soviet Union coup, which will be analysed later in this section.

**Coups by Force** - Coups that use meetings or proclamations as their key tactics use soft power to make a fact. These tactics are low in both bloodshed and confusion and when successful lead to quick coordination. Sometimes, however, generals mount coup attempts that involve the use of hard power. The use of force by senior officers however is a sign of weakness, not strength. It indicates that the challenger's claim of having the support of the armed forces would not be credible on its own. In such cases, challengers have reasons to expect there might be credible opposition to the coup attempt, and therefore this sort of coup attempt has the potential to be bloodier than other coups from the top. This method of coup making is usually utilised by senior officers from a nation's air force or navy because their claims to be acting on behalf of the entire armed forces are not as credible without the participation of the army commander, and thus their use of hard power is designed to compensate for their weaknesses in soft power. In June 1955, senior officers in the Argentine navy launched a coup attempt against Juan Peron, sending naval air units to attack the presidential residence during a national holiday, massacring the president's gathered supporters but leaving Peron himself unscathed. Despite the strong antipathy to Peron within the military at the time, the attack attracted no support from the army and was defeated several hours later.<sup>11</sup> When generals mount coup attempts that involve the use of hard power they move forces to take control of broadcasting facilities and symbolic sites and thereby make a fact with deeds as well as words. This was the model followed by the Chilean military during their overthrow of Salvador Allende in September 1973: the military seized some radio stations by force and destroyed others to prevent them from being used by loyalists.<sup>12</sup>

This chapter discussed coups from the top, those by generals. Nearly half of all coup attempts in the world come from the top of the hierarchy. What follows is a selection of coups, examining their dynamics which illuminates both the advantages possessed by senior officers and the limitations associated with their position.





*Boris Yeltsin outside 'White House' the Russian parliament building declaring the coup junta illegal, 19th August 1991*

# Soviet Union Coup, 1991

The 1991 Soviet coup attempt was arguably the most important coup attempt of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was one of the world's two superpowers, geographically larger by far than any other country and in possession of the biggest nuclear arsenal in the world. At stake in this coup attempt was not just control over one of the most powerful political entities in the world but the very survival of the Soviet Union. Yet the outcome of this coup is puzzling. That this coup attempt, undertaken by a coalition that included every major senior military and political figure in the country short of its target, Soviet Union President Mikhail Gorbachev, did not succeed is hard to understand.

## Conspiracy

The 1991 coup attempt emerged from multiple grievances against Mikhail Gorbachev held by members of the Soviet national security organizations. In the two decades before Gorbachev came to power and began enacting his liberalizing policies, the institutional interests of the military had prospered. The armed forces had been provided with ample resources, granted a great deal of control over their own affairs and enjoyed a good deal of prestige because of their victory in World War 2 and their important role in Cold War politics. However, Gorbachev had had to transfer significant resources from military to civilian use to implement his economic reforms. To accomplish this he asserted control over defence policy, a policy arena traditionally left to the military to diminish Soviet military commitments. Gorbachev's government reduced the army by 500,000 soldiers, cut arms spending by almost a third, and began to convert the defence industry into civilian production.



The political changes that accompanied Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost* posed a further challenge to the military. *Glasnost*, or openness, led to public scrutiny of the military for the first time. The press was intensely critical, blaming the military for the USSR's ignominious failure in Afghanistan and for the bloated military industrial complex. The result was a decline both in morale within the military and in respect for the military in society. Another source of grievance was the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, which followed *glasnost*, and the abrupt way in which it ended. Not only did the withdrawal of troops from the countries of Eastern Europe weaken the USSR's strategic position, but it also meant that twenty entire divisions had to be repatriated in a short time span, which was very disruptive.

The country's chief intelligence arm, the KGB, shared the military's sense of disquiet over the end of the Warsaw Pact. In addition to believing it a bad policy decision they were also upset that the collapse had exposed some members of the intelligence services in former member nations of the pact, some of whom were arrested and tried. One of the strongest causes of grievance for members of the state security organs was the increase in ethno-nationalism that had arisen within the Soviet Union. Regional movements directly challenged the authority of the military; many of them opposed the draft and even constituted their own regional armed bodies. The armed forces were used repeatedly to intervene within the republics, notably in Tbilisi in 1989, Baku in 1990, and Vilnius in 1991. In each of these cases the resulting bloodshed had been blamed on the military rather than the government, further harming the military's reputation while Gorbachev managed to keep his hands clean.

What most worried those within the security organizations, however, was what they saw as the impending dissolution of the Soviet Union as a political entity, and of the Soviet military with it. Gorbachev had negotiated a new Union Treaty with a number of the republics, giving them sovereign status. Under this agreement power would devolve to the republics themselves and Soviet institutions such as the KGB would cease to have any authority within them. Those at the top of the security apparatus saw this as an obvious threat to the territorial integrity of the union, although they had tolerated domestic reform and the end of Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe. Dissolution of the union, according to those who hatched the coup was the final straw. It was their job to protect the Soviet Union, and they would not sit back and watch it being dismantled.

Because the conspirators included almost all of the members of the current government except Gorbachev, they expected to prevail without any trouble. The conspirators' assumed Gorbachev would cooperate and popular opposition would be muted. This was not an unreasonable assumption; the Soviet Union had a history of extra-constitutional leadership changes that had gone smoothly. The amount of force represented by the coup makers was overwhelming. As Defence Minister Dmitry

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Yavoz said, *"You understand ... KGB troops, the KGB itself, the Army—all together. Who could resist them?"*<sup>13</sup>

## Coup

The conspiracy to stage a coup began in the spring of 1991. The original conspirators included key members of the Soviet state, including the head of the KGB, the defence minister, the prime minister, the secretary of the Central Committee, and the chief of the president's staff. When conservative attempts to block the Union Treaty at the Central Committee plenum and the Supreme Soviet failed, those in power became more alarmed, and the plot expanded to include the chairman of the Supreme Soviet, the minister of the interior, two deputy ministers of defence, and six others.<sup>14</sup>

On August 5<sup>th</sup> 1991, the day after Gorbachev left for his annual vacation in the Crimea, the conspiracy went into full swing. That day, the plotters met at a KGB safe house in Moscow. They had approximately two weeks in which to plan and execute their takeover before Gorbachev was due to return on August 20<sup>th</sup> 1991. The plan of action the conspirators decided upon was to confront Gorbachev and ask him to either declare martial law or resign. If Gorbachev did neither, the vice president would declare that Gorbachev was sick and take over in Gorbachev's place. The plotters also agreed on the need to implement martial law nationwide as soon as they took over and to arrest important pro-democracy and nationalist figures. They continued to work on the coup, convening for a final time on August 17<sup>th</sup> 1991.

The coup began on Sunday, August 18<sup>th</sup> 1991. That afternoon, five of the conspirators flew to Gorbachev's dacha in the Crimea and demanded that Gorbachev either declare a state of emergency or resign. When he did neither, they took away his nuclear briefcase and put him under house arrest.

Gorbachev's refusal to cooperate came as a surprise to many of the junta members, which led to bickering among them, as some became suspicious that the others might try to back out and avoid responsibility for what they had done.

At 4:00 am the next morning, Monday 19<sup>th</sup> August 1991, the junta declared martial law. At 6:30 am, the junta issued a press release stating that Gorbachev had been relieved of his duties "due to the condition of his health" and that Vice President Gennadi Yanayev was now in charge. The junta called itself the State Committee on the State of Emergency, or GKChP, its Russian acronym.

The same morning, KGB commandos also surrounded Boris Yeltsin's vacation home near Moscow, but Yeltsin was not immediately arrested as planned. Yeltsin made a dash to the 'White House' the Russian parliament building where he issued a public statement declaring the junta illegal and asking for popular support. Around noon, Yeltsin climbed atop a tank to make his famous speech denouncing the junta. This image, which became one of the defining images of the coup, was captured by a CNN cameraman and beamed around the world, including within the Soviet Union, thus



*Boris Yeltsin condemning the Coup, August 19th 1991*

bypassing domestic censorship. Several thousand-people rallied to the White House in response to Yeltsin's plea, including 250 deputies of the Russian parliament. The White House became a centre of opposition to the junta and was fortified with barricades and a defensive perimeter. Yeltsin and other coup opponents took up residence in the building. At this point a full 24 hours had passed since the coup began.



*Coup plotters press conference*

On Monday night, August 19<sup>th</sup> 1991, the junta held its first press conference. A number of sectors of civil society opposed the coup attempt, most notably the local media. Afraid that the coup would mean the end of the media freedom that had come with glasnost, journalists were openly hostile in their questioning at the press conference. Even journalists at the major state-run television station took a stand, deliberately presenting their live coverage of the junta's first press conference in such a way that made the junta leader look weak,

drunk, or scared. Their coverage also dwelled on the defiant stance toward the junta taken by reporters at the press conference. During the 9.00pm news, journalists at the main state-run television station showed images of the crowds that were gathering around the White House, read negative reactions of foreign leaders to the coup attempt and even went so far as to air footage of Yeltsin calling the junta illegal. This resistance by the media was to prove critical to the junta's downfall, as it showed the junta had lost control over the content of public broadcasts and was having its claims to power undermined.

The soldiers who had been stationed around the White House acted neutrally. They had no orders to suppress the protestors and took pains to let the civilians around them know that they were not about to open fire. Soldiers and protestors mingled, with protestors climbing on tanks and trying to convince soldiers that the junta was in the wrong. Six tank crews even defected, stationing their tanks with the turrets pointing out, away from the White House. These tanks served mainly a propaganda purpose since their guns were not loaded and the soldiers in the tanks did not even have ammunition in their side arms.

Late on Monday August 19<sup>th</sup> 1991, a battalion of airborne troops arrived at the White House seemingly in support of Yeltsin and his supporters and was let inside the barricades. These troops did not defect and chose to withdraw the next morning. The troops were there because Boris Yeltsin was on friendly terms with General Grachev, commander of the Soviet Army's airborne infantry forces, and had asked him for assistance. In turn, General Grachev had asked his deputy, General Lebed, to send a battalion of airborne forces to the White House. The forces were not told to support Yeltsin but were given only the ambiguous mission of guarding and defending the White House. Although the troops did spend the night near the White House, they were not transferred to Yeltsin's control, were not told against whom they were defending the White House (in fact, no attack was planned for that night), did not take sides, and were withdrawn by General Grachev the next morning. Grachev, who would later admit to straddling the fence in the coup,<sup>15</sup> as he was unwilling to openly back Yeltsin at the time and blamed his subordinate General Lebed for the mysterious troop movements.



The junta members were surprised by the extent and speed of Yeltsin's opposition. Miscalculating his resolve, they tried to negotiate with him. By the end of Monday, having wasted a day and the opportunity to dislodge him when he was weakest, they finally understood that Yeltsin was not going to budge easily. Even with the presence of airborne troops and the crowds the coup opponents inside the white house spent the night waiting for an attack and being relieved when morning came without one.

On Tuesday night, well over two days from the beginning of the coup the anti-coup protestors increased their activity level. The atmosphere outside the White House was tense but festive as crowds continued to gather. Prominent speakers addressed the crowd, including the famous cellist Mstislav Rostropovich who was coincidentally in Moscow for a conference. To show their pro-western leanings, all day long people bought take-out food from Pizza Hut and McDonald's to feed the defenders holed up in the White House. Inside the White House, Yeltsin and others were on the phone constantly speaking with the media, foreign leaders, and contacts within the Soviet state, trying both to get across their argument against the junta and to find out what was going on elsewhere.



*Mstislav Rostropovich, Aug 21st 1991*



For their part, military officers who had joined the anti-coup forces were similarly calling every officer they knew, trying to get intelligence on what was happening, trying to convince them that the coup was a bad idea, and telling them that many units were joining the resistance. They waged a campaign of psychological warfare against the coup makers, planting false stories in the media about the defection of key junta members and top generals in the armed forces. Efforts to strengthen the defence of the White House continued, including placement of armed groups on the roof to foil helicopter landings. Yeltsin also reached out to the military in his speeches, warning that the junta was leading the armed forces into bloodshed and civil war.

Instead of waging an information or propaganda battle of their own, the junta spent the day finally planning an attack on the White House. The planning was laborious; the attack would employ forces from the regular military, the KGB and the MVD. An attack was set for Wednesday August 21<sup>st</sup> at 3.00am, the troops were ordered into position.



By this point, some opposition to the proposed attack had developed within the military. General Grachev and General Shaposhnikov, the head of the Soviet Air Force had privately voiced disagreement with the plan, and now General Grachev leaked news of the planned assault to Yeltsin and General Shaposhnikov obstructed logistical support to cause delays in the arrival of troops for the assault. As a result of these delays and of additional shirking by mid-level commanders, not all of the units designated for the attack had arrived at the prescribed location at the 1.00am appointed time.

For reasons that are still a matter of debate, the junta never gave the final order for the assault. According to the prosecutor general, the defence minister, Marshall Yazov, suspended the attack at 2.00am. Afterwards, a number of soldiers would step forward to claim credit for having stopped the attack, but there are good reasons to be sceptical of such claims.<sup>16</sup>

On the morning of Wednesday August 21<sup>st</sup> 1991 it was clear to all that the coup attempt had collapsed. Troops had begun to leave the city at dawn, following Defence Minister Yazov's orders. The USSR vice president and several junta members surprised Yeltsin by flying to meet with Gorbachev. Yeltsin responded by sending Aleksandr Rutskoi, the Russian Republic's vice president and a supporting delegation after them. Once there, Rutskoi arranged for the arrest of the junta members and then returned to Moscow with the captives and a liberated Gorbachev. The coup attempt that had once seemed guaranteed of success had collapsed in disarray.

## **Analysis**

The coup attempt failed because the conspirators were over overconfident and failed to use the resources at their disposal. This left room for Boris Yeltsin and his allies in the media to hijack the content of public broadcasts and create self-fulfilling expectations that the junta was not in control. Yeltsin's faction understood what the junta did not: that during a coup attempt nominal control over the armed forces is not sufficient by itself to take over a country. Those who opposed it proved far better at manipulating information and expectations than the junta did. Pro-democracy forces, most significantly those in the Soviet media (even the state-run media) kept up a steady drum beat of stories designed to make the junta seem far weaker than it was and Yeltsin far stronger than he was. They flooded the airwaves with false claims that particular military leaders did not support the coup or had even gone over to Yeltsin's side. These repeated assertions that the junta was not in control of the military became widely believed and they shaped expectations.

The junta had overwhelming force on its side and yet lost without firing a shot. Contrary to popular opinion, the military largely followed the junta's orders during the coup attempt and never defected en masse in support of Yeltsin, not even at the very end. While the coup makers had overwhelming military superiority, they did not use this to make a fact and therefore the opposition was able to use the media to create the mistaken but widespread impression that the junta was weak, military units were defecting to Yeltsin, and an attack on the White House might lead to a split within the armed forces and maybe even to fratricide.

At no point did Boris Yeltsin have the forces necessary to mount a competent military defence of his position. The Junta possessed the forces to storm the Russian White House building successfully if they were willing to spill blood. Yeltsin himself later agreed that the White House would not have held against an assault.<sup>17</sup> Any of the three units tasked with removing Yeltsin—MVD, KGB, or Airborne troops had the capacity to take over the White House had they been resolved to do so.

Further proof of the junta's capacity to easily overwhelm the defenders was provided by an incident two years later, in October 1993, when positions were reversed and Yeltsin, using an attack plan very similar to the one drawn up by the junta to dislodge him in 1991, ordered an assault on parliamentarians who had blockaded themselves in the White House. On that occasion tanks firing at the White House broke the defence of the barricaded parliament very quickly.



*Tanks of the Russian Army loyal to President Boris Yeltsin, outside the parliament, with smoke rising from the building where after being hit by shells during the government troops' assault against the anti-Yeltsin rebels. October 4th 1993.*

Although Yeltsin had more civilians supporting him in 1991 than the rebellious parliamentarians had in 1993, these additional civilians would hardly have made a difference to the tactical bottom line as long as the military was willing to use force against them.

Although the final assault on the White House was called off, there was no opposition among military players to the coup during the planning of the White House attack. According to one commentator, at a meeting of military commanders and KGB officials to put together an attack plan, no one openly dissented: *"Grachev himself later testified that he thought the operation a dubious idea' but said 'I kept my opinion to myself.'"*<sup>18</sup> This account is confirmed by an eyewitness: *"Not one of [the meeting] participants refused to perform the task assigned to him"*<sup>19</sup>

Despite the junta's formal control of the state apparatus, no aspect of their plans failed more dismally than their efforts to control the news media. Yeltsin, on the other hand, was able to dominate the airwaves, because members of the fourth estate were implacable opponents of the junta. The coup opponents' message permeated not only the foreign and independent media but also the state media as well.

Although the junta promulgated a strict media policy, they made the mistake of allowing foreign journalists to remain in the country. As a result, CNN, the BBC, and the VOA/Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (among others) were all able to broadcast from within the White House for the duration of the entire coup attempt. Two Russian journalists working for Radio Liberty arrived in Moscow early on the morning of August 19<sup>th</sup> 1991 and began broadcasting from Munich using a telephone connection via Prague.<sup>20</sup> The BBC managed something quite similar, with their reporter broadcasting continuously for fear that his international telephone connection would go dead if he stopped talking. By noon on August 20<sup>th</sup> 1991, four different radio stations were broadcasting live from within the White House.

Foreign journalists broadcast more than just the voices of the opposition to the coup; they transmitted iconic images as well. CNN carried Yeltsin's famous speech from atop a tank and also received and aired footage from Russian television journalists that the local journalists were not

allowed to air themselves. The junta took greater measures to restrict domestic independent media. In their second official declaration, they banned all but the nine official newspapers from publishing. The junta also sent soldiers to surround several Moscow and Leningrad-based independent radio stations and interrupt their broadcasts.

The junta lost effective control over most of the media and it proved inept at using the broadcasts it did make to favourably shape expectations within the military. This was a reflection of how poorly they understood the task in front of them. They thought they were involved in a largely civilian policy dispute, one in which they would have Gorbachev's support, and they had no idea what would actually be involved in taking effective power. Having come up through the Soviet system, the conspirators confused nominal command with actual authority, not understanding that obedience during a coup attempt is contingent and that they had to convince military actors that the coup had widespread military support. As a result, the junta missed successive opportunities to make a fact in their broadcasts. For example, senior military commanders found out about the coup only half an hour before the rest of the nation did, when Defense Minister Yazov addressed the Military Collegium.<sup>21</sup> Yazov told them little at this time, mainly that martial law had been declared, that the Union Treaty was creating problems and would not be signed, and that the Soviet constitution justified the junta's actions.

The junta compounded its poor management of military expectations during the first press conference, which did not include KGB chief Kryuchkov, Defence Minister Dmitry Yazov, or Soviet Prime Minister Valentine Pavlov, leading to rumours that they had resigned and that the Junta no longer had the support of the KGB or the military.

The Soviet coup attempt of 1991 showcases both the advantages and disadvantages of launching a coup from the top of the military. This is true even though this coup failed, while most coups from the top will succeed, in this case the failure was due to the challengers' inability to adequately use the prerogatives of their position to make a fact.

Since this coup originated at the very apex of the military hierarchy, military actors were generally cooperative with the junta, especially at the beginning, when they had a strong presumption of success. The junta was able to convene the Military Collegium and issue orders without having to fight for access or worry about getting locked up, something that wouldn't have been true for conspirators from the middle or bottom of the hierarchy. The junta's orders were accepted and largely followed; even commanders who opposed the coup did not openly disagree. These strengths shaped the initial successes of the junta, their ability to assume control over the state apparatus and to cover the streets of Moscow with tanks and soldiers. The conspirators' main weakness was also intrinsic to their position: they lacked direct command over any troops, and so they were unable to enforce their will at critical junctures when officers began to drag their feet or refuse to carry out orders. This was compounded by the fact that the junta included relatively few members of the military hierarchy below its apex, and so they did not even have the allegiance of some of the service commanders.

Despite appearances, the coup leaders started out with a weak hand, because they did not lay the groundwork for the coup within the military, trusting instead that obedience would be automatic. They compounded this error at several points early on by missing opportunities to make a fact within the military: neither the address to the Military Collegium nor the junta's first press conference was designed to create public belief in unanimous support for the coup within the

various security agencies. In fact, they created an impression of military disunity, which freed the head of the air force to speak disapprovingly about the coup, albeit anonymously.

The coup leaders then lost further ground as the coup attempt dragged on without resolution, each day undermining further their claim to being in control. The White House became the hub of anti-junta activity, increasingly fortified with tanks, barricades, armed supporters, and unarmed civilian volunteers. That this added little to the defence of the White House from a tactical standpoint was irrelevant; what mattered was the appearance of impregnability and the coup opposition's visibility in a key symbolic location. Most important, the challengers lost the battle for the airwaves; the message that the junta was weak was broadcast by state-owned, independent, and foreign media.

Without clear expectations to provide a focal point for coordination, many members of the military began to sit on the fence, unwilling to commit themselves to either side. Rather than act to save the system, they waited and watched, seeking to join the winning side. Perhaps the most overt example of this behaviour is that of General Grachev, who afterwards admitted having *"tried to tack between the army leadership and the Russian government."*<sup>22</sup>

In the end, the critical decision to stop the attack came from the junta, which backed down rather than give the final order to proceed. They were afraid it might cause a fight among different security forces, possibly leading even to a civil war.

Coups can succeed only if the coup makers were able to make a fact and would fail if they did not. Soviet officers coordinated among themselves and went out of their way to ensure low casualties. Information and expectations were central to the dynamics of the coup attempt and the rank of the coup makers shaped their ability to make a fact. Even within the Soviet military, one of the most professional in the world, the top level could not assume that their orders would be unquestioningly carried out by their subordinates. This shows that contingency of command is a structural obstacle for all coups from the top, not just those in poor, young countries.

Nonetheless, the presence of civilians in the junta and in the opposition did not change the essential dynamics of the coup nor shift its focus from the military. While Yeltsin was a prominent civilian, he executed the same strategy as a coup maker from the top of the military. Like a general, he had no troops of his own, but he could use information and expectations to manipulate key unit commanders within the military. To actually execute this propaganda strategy, however, Yeltsin relied on the small number of military men working with him. They were the ones who made the claims that the White House was well defended or that various units had defected. Although most of these claims were false, they were more credible for being made by military personnel.

The presence of large numbers of civilians surrounding Yeltsin had an effect and that the junta was not eager to kill large numbers of civilians if it could be avoided, but the presence of civilians did not stop the junta from planning an attack on the White House, nor did it bring about the end of the coup. Instead, the masses were important only in conjunction with the public claim that military units were unwilling to attack them. Although this was not true, it strengthened expectations within the military that the country was on the verge of civil war.

Lastly, this coup was unusual in that it took place in one of the world's largest countries. The coup was contested not just in Moscow but in Leningrad and the republics as well. This was different



from many other coups where there is little action outside of the capital during coup attempts. Yet, even in the Soviet Union, it was events in Moscow that proved pivotal in the end.

In conclusion, the junta proved completely incapable of countering the propaganda against it and showed little understanding of how important it was. Without adequate refutation, these stories picked up steam until they were believed inside the Junta itself. Fearing that an attack on Yeltsin might trigger a civil war, the Junta ultimately cancelled their scheduled assault at the last minute and the coup attempt collapsed. Repeated public assertions that the junta was not in control had become a self-fulfilling reality



*General Pervez Musharraf addresses the nation on state television, after his army's coup, October 17, 1999*

# General Pervez Musharraf's Coup, Pakistan, 1999

Nawaz Sharif had appointed Pervez Musharraf as Chief of Army Staff (COAS) in October 1998 and quickly came to regret the decision. He regarded his army chief with distaste. The origin of the antagonism, which was mutual, lay in Kashmir. In the spring of 1999 Musharraf gave the final order for Pakistani troops to cross the line of control that separates the Indian and Pakistani armies in Kashmir. The soldiers, posing as locals, climbed up the snowy passes that led to one of Kashmir's most strategic locations: Kargil. Having caught the Indians off guard, the Pakistani troops made significant territorial gains. Tactically, the operation was a success. Politically, it was a disaster. As India cried foul, Sharif found himself in the midst of a major international crisis. And while General Musharraf had sent the troops in, Prime Minister Sharif was left with the task of getting them out. Sharif's decision to withdraw seemed incomprehensible and humiliating. As the man who had defied world opinion and tested Pakistan's nuclear bomb, Sharif had been acclaimed as a national hero. As the man who pulled out from Kargil, he was denounced as a coward.

Sharif's sense of resentment was acute. General Musharraf, he complained, had marched his men to the top of the hill without considering how he would get them down again. The generals, though, were also unhappy. By deciding to pull out of Kargil without negotiating any Indian concessions in return, they argued, Sharif had squandered a militarily advantageous position and caused a crisis of confidence within the Pakistan army. After the Kargil withdrawal Musharraf faced a surge of discontent within the army. As he toured a series of garrisons he repeatedly faced the same question:

*'If Kargil was a victory then why did we pull back?'* Musharraf told his men that it was the prime minister's fault and that the army had had no choice but to obey his order. It was a disingenuous response. Musharraf had been fully consulted on the withdrawal order and had raised no serious objection to it.<sup>23</sup>

In 1993 Sharif's first government had been forced out of office in part because the military high command lost confidence in him. He was determined to avoid a repeat performance. Indeed, from the moment he took over as prime minister again in 1997, Sharif had devoted himself to making his political position impregnable. He began by tackling the press. Newspaper editors were bullied into submission. The government distributed bribes to its media allies and ordered tax investigations into those editors who continued to print critical articles. Parliament, too, was emasculated. Sharif forced through a constitutional amendment that required all members of the National Assembly to vote according to party lines. The judiciary posed a more formidable challenge. In 1997 the Supreme Court summoned Sharif to appear before it in a contempt of court case. Twice he submitted to the court's will. On the third occasion his patience ran out. A mob of his supporters, led by some cabinet members and close advisers, ransacked the Supreme Court, disrupting proceedings and smashing furniture. The terrified judges caved in and the contempt of court case was dropped.

Sharif also made efforts to tame the military. On 6<sup>th</sup> October 1998, General Musharraf's widely respected predecessor General Jehangir Karamat, despairing of the sustained corruption and incompetence of the Sharif administration, had voiced the frustration felt by countless officers. In a speech to Lahore Naval College, he called for the establishment of a National Security Council that would give the military a formal role in the political decision-making process: 'A National Security Council', he said, 'or similar committee at the apex would institutionalise decision-making.' Sharif responded ruthlessly: within two days Karamat was forced to resign and General Musharraf appointed chief of army staff in his place.

Musharraf was not Sharif's first choice. He had wanted to appoint another family friend, the ambitious Lt. General Khwaja Ziauddin. Ziauddin, however, had risen through the Engineer's Corps and, by tradition, the army chief had to have an infantry or armoured background. Advised that any breach of this tradition would be unacceptable to the army, Sharif opted for Musharraf instead. But he also took care to ensure that should another opportunity arise in the future, Ziauddin would be better placed to take over. The prime minister appointed him as director general of the ISI. Normally such a decision would have been taken in consultation with the army chief but, much to General Musharraf's annoyance, Sharif pushed Ziauddin's promotion through just hours after Musharraf himself was appointed. Even though Sharif did not consider Musharraf to be an ideal choice, the prime minister initially felt comfortable with him.

After Kargil, the relationship between the prime minister and army chief was severely damaged and, by early September 1999, General Headquarters (GHQ) was buzzing with rumours that Sharif would sack Musharraf. It was clear that a crisis was imminent. Recalling at the time, the former navy chief Admiral (Retd) Fasih Bokhari said: *"The two men could not work together and both were preparing to take some action. I could see that there were now two centres of power on a collision course."*<sup>24</sup>

As he considered the possibility of mounting a coup, Musharraf realised he would not be able to move without the support of all his corps commanders. He called them together in mid-September 1999 and raised the question of Sharif's competence. Although there was wide agreement that Sharif was not performing well, the generals decided that the army could not move without clear



justification. But if Sharif tried to sack Musharraf, the corps commanders agreed, they would act: to lose two army chiefs in the space of a year would be unacceptable. With this qualified backing Musharraf went back to Sharif and said he wanted to be given the full chairmanship of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (at the time he was only acting chairman) and to demonstrate his seriousness he put the 111 Brigade on standby. It was an unmistakable signal. 111 Brigade had been used for carrying out every previous coup in Pakistan. Three hundred troops, with a squadron of tanks, were posted at the army's GHQ in Rawalpindi, just 10 miles from Islamabad. The troops were outside the normal chain of command and answerable only to General Musharraf himself.

Sharif's fears were confirmed by one of his few allies in the army leadership, the corps commander from the Baloch capital Quetta, General Tariq Pervez. The two men knew each other well: the general's cousin, Raja Nadir Pervez, was Sharif's communications minister. A few days after the corps commander's meeting, General Tariq Pervez in a meeting with Sharif warned him that if he moved against Musharraf, the army would strike.

As soon as the army chief heard that General Tariq Pervez had been meeting Sharif he relieved him of his duties. (On 13<sup>th</sup> October, one day after the coup, Musharraf went one stage further and had the general arrested. The charge sheet said he 'had divulged sensitive information to certain outside quarters which posed a threat to the interests of the Pakistan Armed Forces). Musharraf also made a second significant personnel change. Another corps commander, General Saleem Hyder, known to have close links with Sharif, was demoted to the post of master general of ordnance.

Sharif was furious that his few allies in the military were being sacked and demoted. The prime minister knew that Musharraf was due to be out of Pakistan in October to attend the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of Sri Lanka's army. The army chief was due to return on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1999; since he would be airborne for four hours, Sharif calculated, the army would be caught off-balance and left unsure how to react to his sacking. By the time Musharraf touched down, his removal would be a fait accompli and a new army chief would have taken his place. Sharif was relying on the element of surprise. On 10<sup>th</sup> October 1999 Sharif arranged a flight to Abu Dhabi ostensibly for a meeting with Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Nahyan. He took a very limited group consisting of his son Hussain Nawaz, his speechwriter Nazir Naji and the man he wanted to succeed Musharraf, the ISI chief General Ziauddin. Sharif spent the entire flight talking to Ziauddin: the final plot was being hatched.

### CASE STUDY: The 111<sup>th</sup> Brigade

The 111th Infantry Brigade is an infantry brigade of the Pakistan Army notable for its frequent involvement and fast response in military coups since Pakistan's creation. The main task of the brigade is to provide security and protocol duties to incoming dignitaries. In addition, the brigade is responsible for the security of the President and the Prime Minister of Pakistan. The brigade comprises five Infantry battalions drawn from all the regiments, including two Artillery batteries, one Air Defense battery, one paratrooper battalion, and one armored squadron. The brigade also includes two special services SSG companies and a section of well-trained snipers.

The Brigade is the most well-known Army brigade in Pakistani social, public and political circles. Since its creation, the 111th Brigade has been frequently used to overtake and topple civilian governments. The brigade's first involvement in toppling a government was when General Ayub Khan dismissed the government of Pakistani President Major General (retired) Iskander Mirza.

On July 4, 1977, General Zia-ul-Haq conducted a coup against the government of then-Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

The 111th Brigade is also responsible for security of the prime minister's and president's house which makes it much easier for the army high command to execute coups against elected PMs. The brigade was also used by General Pervez Musharraf in thwarting the Sharif regime.

The brigade's last participation was in Operation Silence, in which the heads of government ordered military police, the Pakistan Army Rangers, and the 111th Brigade to surround carry out the Lal masjid massacre. In 2010, the 111th Brigade was charged with control of Islamabad Capital Territory and provided the tight security to the both Chinese Premier and Pakistan's Prime minister.

### Coup

On the 12<sup>th</sup> October 1999, the fateful day, Sharif left Islamabad at 10:00am to make a routine political speech in the town of Shujaabad, near Multan. Before leaving, Sharif gave instructions that he wanted his defence secretary, Lt. General (Retd) Iftikhar Ali Khan, to meet him on his return. He also scheduled an appointment with President Rafiq Tarar for that afternoon, giving instructions that the meeting should not be reflected in his official programme for the day. The prime minister took a small group with him: Hussain Nawaz, Nazir Naji and the chairman of Pakistan Television (PTV), Pervez Rashid. When the plane landed in Multan, Sharif told Nazir Naji that he should remain on board for a discussion with his son and Pervez Rashid. All the crew were told to leave the plane and Sharif then informed PTV chief Pervez Rashid of his plan to remove General Musharraf and wanted it announced on television that evening.

Two hours later the prime minister's plane was heading back towards Islamabad and when he touched down at the military airbase at Chaklala his defence secretary, as arranged, was there to meet him. As the two men were driven to the prime minister's residence, Sharif declared his hand. The sacking of Lt. General Tariq Pervez, he said, *'has started creating the impression that there is a gap between the government and the army which is not good for the security of Pakistan . . . I have decided to appoint a new army chief.'*<sup>25</sup> The defence secretary was shocked: he could guess the army's likely reaction. He suggested that the prime minister might want to discuss the issue with Musharraf but Sharif was adamant. 'The time for this discussion,' he said, 'is over.'<sup>26</sup>

As the draft of the official notification was being completed on the appointment of the new army chief, General Musharraf had already completed his official programme in Sri Lanka and was preparing to board flight PK 805 which would take him back to Karachi, along with 197 other passengers and crew, including the pilot, Captain Sarwat Hussain. Because the army chief was on board there were extra security checks and the plane took off forty minutes late at 4.00 pm. At the very moment Musharraf's plane was climbing into the sky, the man who expected to replace him was reaching the prime minister's residence. By the time Sharif met him at 4.20 pm, the draft of the official notification was complete, it stated: *"It has been decided to retire General Pervez Musharraf, Acting Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee and Chief of the Army Staff with immediate effect. Lt. Gen. Ziauddin has been appointed as the Chief of Army Staff with immediate effect and promoted to the rank of General"* By 4.30 pm, Sharif had signed the document. The deed was done, or so Sharif believed.

With the formalities completed Sharif told Pakistan Television (PTV) to broadcast the news of Musharraf's sacking. It did so on the 5.00 pm bulletin. PTV was also told to take pictures of Ziauddin receiving his badges of rank. Ziauddin was now the de jure army chief, but he knew that to become the de facto leader as well he would have to move fast. Rather than waste time by driving back to the ISI headquarters, he stayed in the prime minister's residence and started making phone calls from there. He thought two men, the chief of general staff Lt. General Aziz Khan and the commander of the 10th corps Lt. General Mehmood Ahmed, were likely to offer him the stiffest resistance. Both were Musharraf loyalists who, within army circles, had been outspoken in their criticism of Sharif. Ziauddin decided to remove both of them. He called an old engineering corps friend, the quartermaster general Lt. General Akram, and offered him the job of chief of the general staff. Excited by his promotion, Akram said he would come straight round to the prime minister's house. Ziauddin then called the man who had recently been removed by Musharraf, General Saleem Hyder. Hyder was playing golf and was not immediately available. Eventually the two men spoke and Hyder was offered General Mehmood's job: 10th corps commander. Having sorted out the two key posts, Ziauddin called round other corps commanders. Most were non-committal. They were in an awkward position: they did not want to repudiate the new army chief but were also aware that Musharraf loyalists might resist him. While Ziauddin was trying to shore up his new position, the two men best placed to stop him, Lt. Generals Aziz and Mehmood, were playing tennis.

They realised that there was a problem when both their mobile phones started ringing on the side of the court. The man who called them was the Peshawar-based Lt. General Syed uz Zafar. As the longest-standing corps commander, he was serving as the acting chief of army staff in Musharraf's absence. Consequently, Ziauddin had called him to tell him about his own elevation and Musharraf's sacking. But rather than simply accept Ziauddin's statement as a fait accompli General Syed uz Zafar called Aziz and Mehmood in Rawalpindi.

### **Lieutenants Make their Move**

At some point after around 5.00 pm, 12<sup>th</sup> October 1999, Lt. Generals Aziz and Mehmood were told what was happening and they put into action what was agreed at the corps commanders meeting 6 weeks earlier - they could not permit a change of army chief.

The two generals despatched Major Nisar of the Punjab Regiment, together with fifteen armed men, to the PTV building in Islamabad. He was ordered to block any further announcement about Musharraf's sacking. As the major set off, Aziz called a meeting of all available corps commanders



and other senior officers at army headquarters in Rawalpindi. Some already knew what was up: they had received the telephone calls from Ziauddin.

Within minutes, the infamous 111 Brigade was ordered to do its job. Unaware of the growing crisis, PTV continued to put out the news of Ziauddin's appointment. The station's managers first became aware of a problem when Major Nisar and his men rushed past the guards on the gate and stormed into the control room. The major ordered the PTV staff to block the news of Musharraf's dismissal. Faced with fifteen armed men and a screaming major, the staff complied.

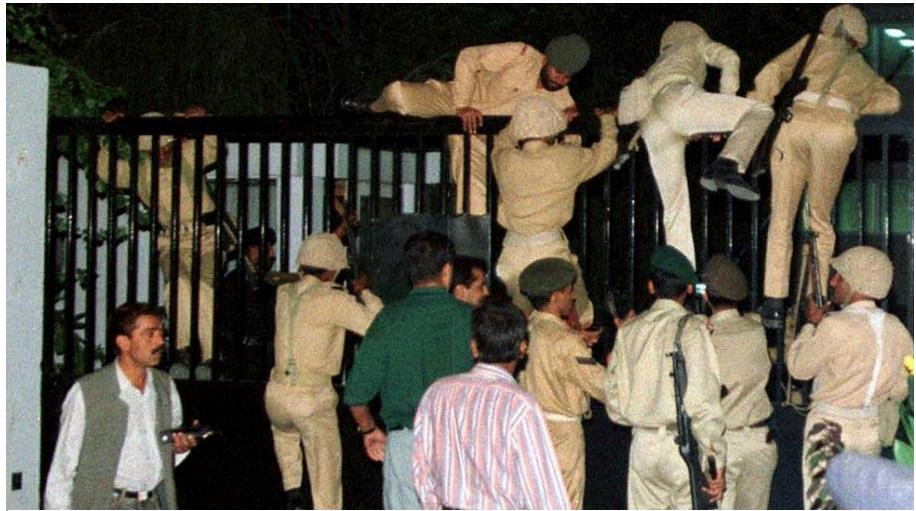
Nawaz Sharif was expecting to hear Musharraf's removal in the 6.00 pm news bulletin, but when it came on, he was dismayed that there was no mention of Musharraf's sacking. He told his military secretary, Brigadier Javed Iqbal, to go straight to the TV headquarters and find out what was going on. At this point, merely over one hour into the coup attempt Sharif realised something was wrong and was now convinced that he had to prevent General Musharraf's plane from landing. The new Chief appointed by Sharif, General Ziauddin agreed. He advised Sharif that if Musharraf were kept out of the country the army would have to accept his removal. The prime minister picked up the phone and made a desperate attempt to save his administration.

Sharif spoke to Aminullah Choudhry, the Karachi-based director general of the Civil Aviation Authority. Sharif told Choudhry that flight PK 805 should not be allowed to land in Pakistan. Choudhry learnt that PK 805 was due to land within an hour, he ordered the closure of Karachi Airport and minutes later, the runway lights were switched off and three fire engines were parked on the landing strip – one at each end and a third in the middle. Choudhry also ordered the closure of PK 805's alternate destination, a small rural airport in Nawabshah, 200 miles east of Karachi.

Sharif's military secretary, Brigadier Javed Iqbal took the Punjabi Elite Police with him, who were also Shahbaz Sharif's personal bodyguards. On arrival at the PTV headquarters he found Major Nisar with his fifteen men. 'Disarm yourself immediately!' the brigadier yelled. Major Nisar refused. The brigadier then drew a pistol and pointed it at Nisar's chest. The Punjabi Elite Police and the Punjabi Regiment were moments away from a shoot-out. Nisar blinked first. He handed his gun to the brigadier and told his men to lay down their weapons. Within minutes the major and his men were locked in a room with an armed guard at the door. The jubilant military secretary ordered the Elite Police to shoot anyone who offered resistance and headed back to report his success to the prime minister. (Later, Brigadier Iqbal was to rue his actions. On 13<sup>th</sup> October he was arrested and charged with drawing a pistol on a fellow officer).

With the TV station back under civilian control, the news about Musharraf's retirement was rebroadcast at the end of the 6.00 pm bulletin. Encouraged by this turn of events, Sharif renewed his efforts to keep Musharraf out of the country. He called a long-time political ally, the chairman of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), Shahid Abbasi, and repeated his order that PK 805 should not land in Pakistan but be sent to Muscat or anywhere else in the Middle East. He did not give a reason but having just seen the news bulletin, Abbasi wasn't in much doubt about the prime minister's motivation.

Back at PTV headquarters, Major Nisar and his men were still being held under armed guard. When army officers at GHQ saw the news of Musharraf's sacking being replayed at the end of the 6.00pm news bulletin, they realised something had gone wrong. A second army unit was despatched to PTV broadcasting building. At 6.45pm another major, this



111 Brigade storm the state television station in Islamabad

time with five armed soldiers, asked the guards at the gate if they could enter the building. With the Punjabi Elite Police breathing down their necks, the guards refused to let the major through. Half an hour later – just over just over two hours from the beginning of the coup attempt, the major returned with a truckload of troops. He was refused entry, but this time he would not be denied. With a flick of his wrist the major ordered his men to clamber over the PTV gate. Journalists who had gathered at PTV filmed the pictures that within hours were leading news bulletins all over the world. The Elite Police, realising they were outnumbered and outgunned, offered no resistance; some even put their weapons on the ground and sat on them. By 7.15 pm – just over two hours after the beginning of the coup attempt, the national broadcaster PTV was off-air.

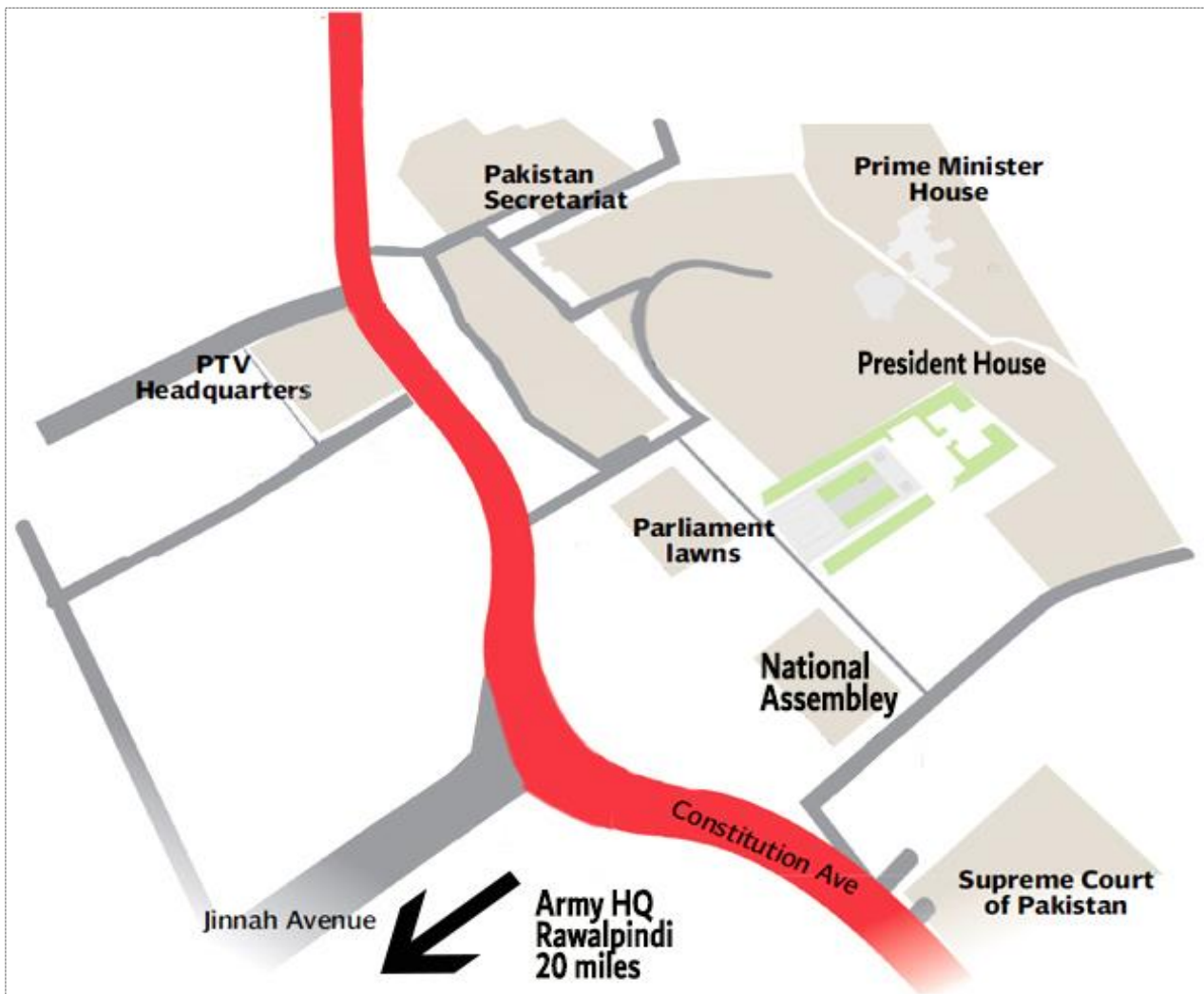
The first soldiers to reach the prime minister's residence arrived at around 6.30pm. Having secured the gatehouse, a major took fifteen men over the extensive lawns and headed for the building's main entrance. As the porch came into view, the major saw General Ziauddin on the steps with six plain clothed ISI officers. The major ordered the ISI men to lay down their weapons. They refused and General Ziauddin tried to persuade the major to back down. 'Sir', he threatened Ziauddin, 'it would take me just one second.' Ziauddin, recognising that resistance was futile, told his men to lay down their weapons. Once inside the Prime Minister's residence, the soldiers soon found all the key figures of Sharif's administration. The prime minister realising that he was about to be ousted had gone to his private quarters to shred some documents. That done, he gathered with his brother Shahbaz and his son Hussain Nawaz to await their fate. General Ziauddin, his new chief of staff Lt. General Akram and other Sharif allies were also there. With the residence secured, Lt. General Mehmood himself arrived and confronted Nawaz. *"I was praying and hoping," the general said, 'that it wouldn't come to this.'"*<sup>27</sup>

Whilst developments on the ground were reaching a conclusion, the same could not be said for the events in the air. Aminullah Choudhry was still trying to implement the prime minister's order to prevent the plane from landing in Pakistan. As the recordings from the air traffic control tower reveal, Choudhry's staff knew that there could be a disaster. 'If it crashes, then?' asked one. 'We cannot take the blame if it crashes,' responded another. To add to their woes, the air traffic controllers now had the military coming on the line. GHQ in Rawalpindi had already ordered troops in Karachi to take over the airport so that Musharraf could land. After an eventful few hours Musharraf's plane eventually landed at Karachi Airport at 7.47pm, 2 hours 47 minutes from the beginning of the coup attempt. The flight log showed that 1,200 kilograms of fuel were left. That would last around five minutes if the plane was climbing and between ten to fifteen minutes if it was cruising.

By 8.00 pm, 3 hours from when the coup began, Sharif and his key colleagues were in the army's hands, as were the airports, PTV stations and the telephone exchanges. The army had also reached the Ministers' Colony in Islamabad (a house in the colony is a perk of ministerial office). The army's action in Islamabad was replicated throughout the country. The military detained all Sharif's key supporters in Lahore, Peshawar and Karachi. To ensure no one left the country, the army blocked all international flight departures and troops tried to seal Pakistan's notoriously porous border with Afghanistan.

At 10.15pm – 5 hours after the coup began, PTV came back on air to announce the dismissal of Nawaz Sharif's government. Thousands of people, supporting the army action, had gathered outside the TV building. General Musharraf, PTV said, would address the nation shortly. He did so the next day at just over 10 hours from when the coup began, at 2.50am.

Musharraf's statement said: "I was in Sri Lanka on an official visit. On my way back the PIA commercial flight was not allowed to land at Karachi but was ordered to be diverted to anywhere outside Pakistan. Despite acute shortages of fuel, imperilling the lives of all the passengers, thanks be to Allah, this evil design was thwarted through speedy army action . . . My dear countrymen, having briefly explained the background, I wish to inform you that the armed forces have moved in as a last resort to prevent any further destabilisation."<sup>28</sup> Another period of military rule had begun.



Coup Map

## Analysis

This coup from the top of the military utilised a highly effective tactic that is only available to those at the top and off-limits to other levels, the ability to stage a coup from a meeting. Whilst those at the top of the military have many meetings senior officers have the ability to call a meeting of key unit commanders and use the meeting to create self-fulfilling beliefs about the overthrow of the government. The meeting Musharraf called in mid-September 1999 where he raised the question of Sharif's competence laid the eventual groundwork for the coup. Although there was wide agreement that Sharif was not performing well, the generals decided that the army could not move without clear justification. But if Sharif tried to sack Musharraf, the corps commanders agreed, then they would act. Even if there were corps commanders who disagreed with the coup, both private or publicly, the fact that all 12 corps commanders saw the unanimous position of all others meant a fact was already made amongst the top of the military.

Using a broadcast to make a fact and controlling public information was where the coup was lost and won. The fact the Prime Minister himself relied upon the national broadcaster rather than his own position to inform the military of a change in its leadership proves the importance of making a broadcast in order to make a fact. Nawaz Sharif believed through his connections he could control the content of broadcasts and the wider military would accept this when they saw it was already done and a new chief – General Ziauddin has was in place. The Lieutenant Generals were able to wrestle the broadcasting facilities from the civilian government after the 6:00pm news bulletin announced Musharraf's removal. This alongside the 5:00pm bulletin was the only broadcast of Musharraf's removal, but within an hour the military's control of the PTV broadcasting facility, with troops clamouring over its gates was beamed around the world and countered the government's claim of being in control. At this point the infamous 111 Brigade was in full swing and only another faction within the army could have stopped the coup.

Sharif and Brigadier Javed Iqbal, Sharif's military secretary failed to challenge or counter Musharraf loyalists. Despite their links within the army they were unable to make a fact. In fact, General Ziauddin himself knew the corps commanders were loyal to Musharraf and will probably not accept his removal. The meeting of corps commanders 6 weeks prior had ensured the army would move against any personnel changes at the top of the military.

This coup was a success as the Lieutenant Generals made full use of the resources at their disposal and made a fact by seizing the broadcasting facility, early on in the coup. General Ziauddin and Sharif incorrectly believed the military would accept Musharraf's removal if he failed to make it back to Pakistan. What took place with flight PK 805 and Karachi Airport merely added to the drama, the real events were from 5.00pm – 7.30pm, October 11<sup>th</sup> 1999, when the military, led by two Lieutenant Generals, without their General, removed the government. When Musharraf's plane landed at around 8.00pm, the coup was already over.





*Field Marshal Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi on 3rd July 2013, announcing his coup on state TV*

# General Sisi's Coup, Egypt, July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2013

Ever since the Free Officers coup back in 1953 the army has dominated the politics of the country. Whilst the army moved away from direct rule in the era of Anwar Sadat it's still maintained its position of the real power within the country.

This political architecture was challenged in 2011 with the eruption of the Arab Spring. After days of protest Hosni Mubarak, the long-term dictator was struggling to hold onto power. Eventually the army removed the 82-year-old Mubarak, who wanted to have his son appointed as his successor. With the world and the region looking at what would take place in Egypt the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), long kept out of power by the army, emerged victorious in a landslide victory in parliamentary elections, taking half of the seats. Eventually the Brotherhoods Freedom and Justice Party head Muhammed Morsi emerged victorious in the presidential elections.

## Conspiracy

For the Egyptian army having outsiders run the government was unacceptable to them. The MB could not be trusted, it was the army that handpicked the ruling party, leader and even the opposition. The army was forced to accept the new status quo as numerous US officials made statements of this new era and for wider Egypt society to accept the results of the elections.

Throughout the rule of Muhammed Morsi, the domestic political scene was never stable and was worsened by the confusion brought about by the Morsi government over decision-making. Morsi constantly retracted his decisions under pressure. Morsi's rule was characterised with anarchy and

this instability continued throughout his year in office, which led to the emergence of a growing opposition which challenged his rule.

At every juncture the Egyptian military ensured its interests were never harmed and did everything to maintain the status quo. The military formed a coalition of convenience with the MB for much of 2011 and 2012 to manage the post-Mubarak landscape and hold revolutionary aspirations and unfettered popular mobilisations in check. It piggy-backed the opposition against the MB government as Morsi was challenged at every juncture of his year-long rule. It successfully co-opted the movement against Morsi and along with the security establishment, ensured this movement only grew against the emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood.

### **CASE STUDY: The Politics of Egypt's Military**

The Egyptian Army took power in July 1952 in a US backed coup to oust the British puppet King Farooq. The Free Officers Movement, a group of largely junior military officers, established a new political system which turned the military into the most organized and important institution in the country. In 1956 Gamal Abdul Nasser took on the role of president of Egypt. Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal, which led to war with Britain, France, and Israel and in the process made Nasser a national hero which enhanced his stature in the wider Arab world. The loss to Israel in the six day war of 1967 led to a decision by the military leadership to move away from actual day-to-day governance, leaving this in the hands of a civilian leadership, whilst keeping foreign policy, defence and the national budget firmly under its control. To date, promotions to senior ranks are only made after heavy screening for political and Islamic leanings.

Today, the Egyptian military is the largest in Africa and the Middle East, and the 10th largest army in the world. The National Services Projects Organization and the Egyptian Organization for Industrial Development dominate the Egyptian economy through a variety of joint ventures with both domestic and international manufacturing firms for the army. The military is involved in the industrial and service sectors, including weapons, electronics, consumer products, infrastructure development, agribusinesses, aviation, tourism and security. Similarly the majority of Egypt's regional governors are retired army officers. Many of the big civilian institutions and public sector corporations are run by former generals. The country's three main land-developing authorities (agricultural, urban and tourism) are headed by former military officers. The army is heavily involved in the national economy; according to some estimates as much as 40% of the Egyptian economy is controlled by the military and they would for obvious reasons want to maintain such a position.<sup>29</sup>

The Egyptian military has played a central role in protecting US interests in the region. Ever since the military coup in 1952, the US has showered the Egyptian military with aid in excess of \$30 billion. This US aid is in effect bribe money to maintain the regional balance, which Egypt's military leaders have been more than happy to implement. Egypt's current chief, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, is an alumnus of the US Army War College in Pennsylvania, while the head of Egypt's air force, Reda Mahmoud Hafez Mohamed, did a tour in the United States as a liaison officer. More than 500 Egyptian military officers train at American military graduate schools every year. There's even a special guest house in northwest Washington, D.C., where visiting Egyptian military officials stay when in the American capital. The peace treaty with Israel, signed in 1979 under US sponsorship, is the foundation of the regional balance of power. It ended the state of war with Israel, and designated the Sinai as a demilitarized buffer zone between the two countries, effectively eliminating the threat of nation-to-nation war, and thus strengthening Israel.

The military's role in Egypt has ensured no other rival institution could ever develop. As a result, most of the institutions of state are either corrupt or dripping in cronyism. With the economy disproportionality in the hands of a few, a career in the military is the only certain way to make ends meet in such a dysfunctional economy.

## **Coup**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2013 Field Marshal Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi went on Television and threatened the Morsi government that it had 48-hours to “meet the demands of the people” or it will step in to restore order. This was after more than 1 million demonstrators against Morsi gathered in Tahrir Square and outside the presidential palace, while other demonstrations were held in the cities of Alexandria, Port Said and Suez. This broadcast was carried by the international media and all the key channels broadcasting in Egypt.

Immediately after this announcement six ministers resigned, including the foreign minister, which weakened Morsi considerably. In a late-night television address on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2013 Morsi hit back. He declared that he would “defend the legitimacy of his elected office with his life.” He added that “there is no substitute for legitimacy” as he vowed not to resign. Morsi accused supporters of Hosni Mubarak of exploiting the wave of protests to topple the government and fight democracy.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2013 tanks and army personnel moved to the president’s palace and at 5.30pm the security detail for Muhmmmed Morsi stepped aside as the republican guard arrested Morsi and took him to an undisclosed location. The army had acted upon its ultimatum and without a bullet being fired, the president had been overthrown.

Immediately after this, Field Marshal Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi went on television and stated that the military as a whole had decided to remove the incumbent and has done so for the benefit of the nation. He stood on a broad stage, flanked by Egypt’s top Muslim and Christian clerics as well as a wide spectrum of political leaders who endorsed the takeover.

## **Analysis**

This coup’s execution, which was from the top of the army followed the tried and tested formula, with a general on television stating that the military as a whole has decided to remove the incumbent and has done so for the benefit of the nation. The announcement, showed the army with control over the broadcasting facilities.

In this coup example, popular protest and military action coincided to remove the ruler; it is common to see military actors maintain that they are merely the instrument of the popular will. Such claims are made by all erstwhile coup makers and should really be understood simply as rhetoric designed to legitimise their actions.

The only way for Morsi to have countered the coup was to show he was in control and that Sisi was just one rogue army officer. This could have been done by arresting him, having loyal military officers remove him, or some military officers publicly disagreeing with Sisi or showing support for Morsi. In fact, any action that showed Morsi was in control and Sisi was not would have been sufficient at this point.

The announcement by Sisi showed the coup plotters had control over the broadcasting facilities of the country and were in complete control. This coup from the top created expectations by broadcasting intent, it was broadcast as a coup coordinated by the whole military and this led to a bloodless and rapid coup success.

## **CASE STUDY: The Muslim Brotherhood Era**

The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) swept to power under the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), winning the parliamentary elections in early 2012 and then subsequently winning the presidential run-off. Hoping the usher in a new era, on the anniversary of its rule the political career of both Morsi and the MB was brought to an abrupt end. The MB struggled to solve the myriad of problems that faced Egypt, while simultaneously battling thugs in the street, a seditious opposition, corruption in the judiciary, and a state that was in shambles at many levels.

The MB-dominated government inherited an economy which was already on the verge of collapse. The lack of a clear economic roadmap made the economic situation worse. The problem with the Egyptian economy is that an elite few are in control of it. When large parts of the economy were privatized, the country's assets went right into the hands of Mubarak's friends. These business tycoons still maintain control over the Egyptian economy, something Morsi never attempted to change. This maldistribution led to a situation where 40% of Egyptian population live below the poverty line. These big business elites moved much of their wealth out of the country when Mubarak fell, leading to a big fall of the Egyptian pound, drastically raising the cost of imports. Since Egypt is reliant upon agricultural and energy imports, this created a massive trade imbalance and lead to MB's decision to turn to the IMF. As inflation spiralled out of control and unemployment rose many took to the streets in protest.

Morsi failed to placate much of the opposition, who took every opportunity to undermine his rule. The secular opposition, Mubarak-era officials, and the business elite never accepted the MB electoral victory. Their key demand has always was that Morsi must step down. The MB had to contend with persistent insurrection since coming to power, and Morsi attempted to deal with this by sacking the prosecutor general Abdel-Maguid Mahmoud and assigning himself powers over the legislative and executive branches as well as immunity from the courts. This backfired, leading to mass riots and stand-off in the streets of Cairo. Morsi failed to integrate the opposition, divide them, or weaken them. As a result, opposition figures carried out regular, often violent, demonstrations to undermine Morsi's rule, bringing the country to a standstill.

The Morsi regime was plagued with indecisiveness and the inability to deal with pressing problems as it lacked a grand vision. After an 80 year struggle against tyranny, MB's rise to power made it patently clear that the MB had no clear policy positions. Since its electoral victory, the MB went to great lengths to demonstrate its moderation to the West. Indeed in its rush to placate so-called international opinion, they abandoned all commitment to Islamic governance. When it came to applying Islamic principles they cited constitutional barriers and the need to keep minorities onside. When it came to applying Islamic economics, they cited the need to avoid scaring international investors and tourists. When it came to applying the Islamic foreign policy, they cited the need to show a moderate image and to appease the West. Slogans such as 'Islam is the solution,' were very quickly replaced with a call for a civil state. Morsi immediately sent a communiqué confirming Egypt's commitment to peaceful ties with Israel. The initial calls for Islam were completely removed from Morsi's statements as he settled into power.

The MB showed they lacked political awareness by entering a political process which was established by Gamal Abdul Nasser and which the army maintains. The army's interference in the running of the country and disproportionate influence weakens the President. The army, since the ouster of Mubarak, has allowed the day-to-day running of the country in the hands of the government, but has kept foreign policy firmly within its own hands. The minister of defence is always the head of the army in Egypt. Any policy, such as the defence budget that could affect the army's position were always overruled. As a result, the MB was forced to toe the army's line, giving up whatever plans it had on its own agenda. Rather than attempting to challenge the political system in Egypt with the mandate it received in the elections, the MB abandoned whatever it stood for.

Despite compromising on everything the MB stood for, this was never enough for the secular elements, who wished to emerge victorious from the demonstrations. Despite over 80 years touting 'Islam is the solution,' when the opportunity presented itself the MB failed to meet the challenge governance posed. As a result, despite winning the elections, they were always on the backfoot defending their rule. The demonstrations against their rule grew in scope as the MB failed to placate the opposition, eventually bringing the country to



a standstill, which was when the army moved in. The irony of the turmoil in Egypt is: despite the MB never implementing Islam to appease the West and the secularists, on the anniversary of their rule they were thrown out of government.



*Protestors celebrating the coup failure in Turkey, July 2016*

# Coups from the Middle of the Military

Coups from the middle of the military are those organized and mounted by Majors, Lieutenant Colonels and Colonels, who are in direct command of fighting units such as Battalions, Regiments and Brigades. The fundamental difference between officers from the top and those from the middle is the resources officers in the middle of the army have with which to shape expectations.

Unlike coup makers from the top, challengers from the middle have little of the soft power that comes from being in a top leadership position. What officers in the middle have instead is hard power because they are in command of the actual fighting units in the military. Coups from the middle are those with the greatest amount of firepower at their disposal. The challengers from the middle seize symbolic targets in highly symbolic locations and make broadcasts proclaiming broad support for the coup and warning defenders that their loss is an inevitability. This is a more indirect way to manipulate beliefs and depends on the ability to seize and retain control over the targets that serve to demonstrate their credibility. As a result, the success rate for coups from the middle is 48%, as compared to coups from the top, which succeed 68% of the time.

When officers from the middle of the military undertake a coup, they deploy their units to capture and hold important targets, like the broadcasting facility, the parliament building and other symbols of state authority. Once the challengers gain access to radio and television they make a broadcast proclaiming broad support for the coup, warning any loyalists that resistance is futile. They therefore use their hard power to make a fact; they want to convince both uncommitted officers and the regime's defenders that the military has coordinated or will soon coordinate in support of the coup. By dominating the air waves and holding on to both broadcasting facilities and other symbolic targets, they signal that they will prevail if the worst happens and if an inter-military conflict develops. The capture of symbolic targets is to show the rest of the military that the coup plotters are in control.

When conspirators begin plotting a coup attempt, their primary concern is with avoiding detection. This can be difficult because military intelligence services especially those in coup-prone countries, tend to be highly vigilant in their internal surveillance. Empirically speaking, conspiracies therefore, evolve, where members of the military already trust each other, such as among members of the same training cohort or officers who have served together. Practical matters of trust and opportunity are more paramount than creating a coalition with the optimal amount of firepower. It is always risky to approach an officer who is not a close confidant or friend to discuss treason. Even if the officer approached doesn't report the conversation, there is always the possibility that he is already suspected of potential disloyalty and is being monitored by military intelligence. Alternatively, especially when the conspirators are young they may opt to wait until their members are transferred into positions of power. This latter strategy has its own risks, since it requires keeping a coalition together over a long time while still avoiding discovery.

*“Not all officers are equally valuable in a coup attempt. Infantry and armoured units are more useful than engineering or support regiments. It is best to have at least some allies stationed near the capital, optimally those guarding key locations such as the broadcasting facility or statehouse”*

Not all officers are equally valuable in a coup attempt. Infantry and armoured units are more useful than engineering or support regiments. It is best to have at least some allies stationed near the capital, optimally those guarding key locations such as the broadcasting facility or statehouse.

Coups from the middle are generally launched either late at night or in the early hours of the morning. They will want to make sure they seize a broadcasting facility early. Once the challengers have captured a broadcast facility, they will make a public announcement claiming that their victory is a certainty and that they have the support of the whole armed forces. To increase the likelihood of success the broadcast will be made by a powerful member of the armed forces, such as the commander of one of the major units of the capital.

The coup plotters will attempt to move both speedily and stealthily because the coup is most vulnerable at the newborn stage, before they have started to shape the expectations of other military actors. For this reason, they want to make sure to seize a broadcasting facility early, pursuing other objectives only as necessary. If possible, they will also try to disable military and civilian communications, perhaps by capturing the headquarters of the signals regiment, capturing the operations room of the army or by cutting the wires that are used for internal communications. Any of these actions is risky since it can reveal that a coup is under way.

A coup attempt from the middle is easiest to stop just as it starts, before the challengers have made a broadcast. They are at their weakest at this stage, as they have not yet begun to shape expectations and have the support of only one another. If defenders cannot stop the coup attempt in its newborn stage, their best strategy is to hold their ground and make it difficult for the challengers to make a fact by contesting control of public information and symbolic locations. This is easier when there are multiple major broadcasting facilities and the government is able to control one of them. Each side will counter the claims of the other and if the broadcasts are equally credible, uncommitted forces will sit on the fence, looking for additional information before they choose a side or waiting for developments that might convince them to back one side or the other.

During this jockeying period, both domestic and international civilian actors are likely to try to influence events. Most coups are over too quickly for civilians to react, but even when a coup attempt slows down, civilians have an impact only to the extent to which they can influence expectations within the military about military behaviour.

The incumbent can foil a coup from the middle of the military by regaining control over the broadcasting facilities and making a counter-broadcast or by removing them from the airwaves and undercutting the plotters claim to be in charge. If the incumbent government can make a fact of its own, demonstrating control of public information and symbolic sites in the capital early in the process, it can halt and even reverse the momentum of the coup attempt.

With coups from the top and middle of the military, the goal of the conspirators is to manipulate the coordination of mid-level officers who control the bulk of the fire power in the armed forces. As Majors, Lieutenant Colonels and Colonels directly manage these fighting units they will need to capture symbolic targets in order to show the rest of the military hierarchy they have conducted a successful coup. This is something officers at the top do not necessarily need to do as they have soft power to deal with this. As a result coups from the middle are more complex due to the resources not available to officers compared to coup that come from the top of the military. But the availability of fighting units means coups from the middle have at their disposal firepower which allows them to takeover symbolic sites and make a fact.





*Suspected Turkey coup leaders, centre - Akin Ozturk, former four-star general of the Turkish Air Force who is considered to have orchestrated the coup*

# Turkey Coup, July 15<sup>th</sup> 2016

*Much of the details of the July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016 coup continue to trickle out and all the pieces continue to move. The coup plotters are being prosecuted, their testimonies and the state indictment on the coup attempt is used to understand the dynamics of the coup. The Erdogan government has given its side of what took place and this needs to be taken with caution as the government is using this to push its own agenda.*

Turkey witnessed the bloodiest coup attempt in its history on July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

## Conspiracy

Erdogan worked to alter the balance of power in Turkey by curtailing the jurisdiction of the Supreme Military Council (YAS) to interfere in government. He altered the composition of this council to include civilian members in addition to the army men. The Supreme Military Council comprised the Chief of Staff, select members of the Council of Ministers and the President of the Republic – who is also the Commander-in-chief. The annual gathering presents to the president approval of promotions, appointments, extension of tenures and discharge of military personnel for disciplinary issues.

Erdogan successfully weakened the secular elements within the army and placed those loyal to him in senior positions. But recent events such as the air force unilaterally shooting down a Russian fighter jet in Syria in November 2015, showed elements remained within the army who were not on the same page as Erdogan.

The Supreme Military Council annual meeting usually takes place in August of every year. In the meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2015, among those whose jobs were terminated at the meeting, Akin Ozturk, the chief of the Air Force was removed from his position. He subsequently led the coup attempt on July 16th, 2016.

Whilst Erdogan subsequent to the coup has laid the blame squarely on Fethullah Gulen and his supporters in the army, in an interview on CNN Türk after the failed coup, General Ilker Basbug, former Chief of the General Staff of Turkey, highlighted, besides the Gulenists, there could have been others who were not happy with Erdogan's rule involved in the coup attempt. Whilst Gulenists have had an established presence in the military the majority of them have been commissioned since the AKP came to power in 2002 and thus are concentrated in the lower ranks. The Kemalist officers' confessions that they played an active role, supports the claim that this was not likely a Gulenist affair.

The conspirators first met in Ankara in a villa rented by a consultancy company linked to cleric Fethullah Gulen, just days after the general election of November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015. The AKP won a landslide victory and this was the first time the prospect of a coup was considered by the conspirators. No specific coup date was agreed. The plotters got wind of the Supreme Military Council's preparations for a major purge due in August 2016. Erdogan had been using Gulen to get



*Akin Ozturk, former Turkish Air Force commander*

rid of dissenters and those he didn't trust. The prospects of the mass purge compelled the conspirators to undertake the coup before the August Supreme Military Council meeting. The formal accusation against the conspirators included a handwritten note from General Mehmet Partigoc, a key name associated with the coup, to his wife and daughters in which he wrote: *"My dear wife, I love you more than anything. But if I had not taken part in this uprising, they would have imprisoned me for the rest of my life. Forgive me."*<sup>30</sup>

From the trial of the figures accused of planning the coup attempt we know former Air Force Commander Akin Ozturk was the coup leader; Brigadier Mehmet Partigoc, in charge of personnel at the Turkish General Staff and Major General Mehmet Disli (brother of the AKP's Deputy Chairman Şaban Dişli) who was in charge of strategic transformation at the military headquarters were the key conspirators who planned with 38 other officers to form the so-called "Peace at Home Council."

The primary aims were to arrest President Erdogan, top members of his government and the parliament, but also most of the top military commanders and establish control over the Turkish capital, Ankara, plus at least the most important positions in Istanbul, the country's largest city. Their strategy appears to have been the capture and taking hostage of Chief of General Staff General Hulusi Akar from the General Staff headquarters in Ankara as well as Erdogan himself and using the Akinci Air Base, northwest of Ankara, the country's 4th Main Jet Base as a central base to sign a pre-prepared statement and then broadcast this. As the conspirators were extremely small in number this was the least resource intensive way to make the coup a success.

## Coup

The coup attempt involved unit commanders from across Turkey – including Erdal Öztürk, general of the Third Army in Istanbul and Adem Huduti, who led the Second Army based at the opposite end of the country. Parts of the tank divisions were involved and parts of the air force. But most of the land forces did not turn out and other wings of the air force stayed loyal to Erdoğan. There were also civilians involved in the conspiracy, many who had retired from the army. The coup was carried out by a faction of the army and did not involve the army leadership. The coup involved a mixture of soldiers from the middle and bottom of the army, therefore this was a coup attempt from the middle of the army. The indictment against the conspirators said 8,651 military personnel, including 1,676 privates and 1,214 cadets, took part in the coup attempt. This corresponds to 1.5% of the total personnel strength of the Turkish army. The indictment also stated that 7% of the militaries planes (35, including 24 combat planes) and 8% of its helicopters (37, including 8 attack helicopters) joined the coup. In tanks and armored vehicles, the overall participation was 2.7%, of which 246 were armored vehicles and 74 were tanks. In the navy, only 1% (3 vessels) participated.

The coup leaders planned to move in the first week of August 2016 in the middle of the night when people would be asleep and the streets would be empty. But in the week before the eventual coup on 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2016 during the military espionage hearings in Izmir, six serving officers were detained, including an admiral and two generals. Four of the detained officers were consequently arrested. With the indictments, the Turkish judiciary was gearing up to target over 1,000 serving officers in the Turkish military prior to the Supreme Council meeting. When the coup conspirators learned of this intention, they were compelled to move up the date and July 16<sup>th</sup> 2016 was chosen.

At around 2.00pm July 15<sup>th</sup>, 13 hours before the coup was to begin, the National Intelligence Service (MIT) learned initially from radio and telephone intercepts of military personnel, who were already on their radar, of very unusual movements and activity, suggesting officers were gearing up for



*Intelligence chief Hakan Fidan (left) and the head of the Turkish military, General Hulusi Akar (right)*

major military action. According to witness testimony in the trial of the coup plotters a helicopter pilot major – who was supposed to help capture the head of the national intelligence, came to MIT headquarters around 2:45 pm on July 15<sup>th</sup> and reported the coup was coming. MIT intelligence chief, Hakan Fidan informed Chief of General Staff General Hulusi Akar of this at 5.00pm and met with officials at the chief of general staff headquarters and they moved to bar military units from leaving their barracks and closed off Turkish air space at 6.00 pm. From the indictment, it appears that neither Fidan nor Chief of General Staff expected such an organized uprising. Fidan highlighted he received intelligence on a near daily basis of coup plots, none of which ever materialized.

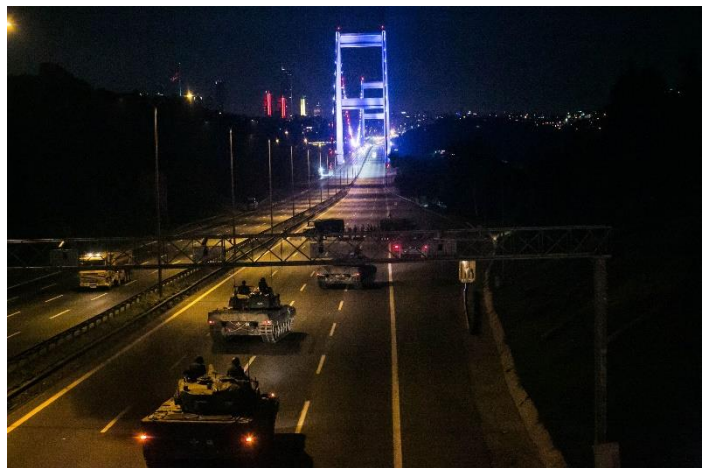


## Zero Hour

By 7.00pm, 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2016 the conspirators realized, with the closing of Turkish airspace, their coup was exposed. Once again they were forced to move forward their coup by 9 hours at very short notice. At 7.30pm several groups of Special Forces deployed with the help of helicopters and moved out to arrest various top political leaders and military commanders. They immediately took over the military headquarters in Ankara and apprehended the chiefs of the army. Hostages were taken including the Turkish Chief of the General Staff Hulusi Akar. The plotters invited Salih Zeki Çolak, the commander of the Turkish Land Forces to the military headquarters. When he arrived, he was immediately apprehended. Abidin Ünal, head of the Turkish Air Force, who had been attending a wedding in Istanbul, was abducted by soldiers who descended from a helicopter. The conspirators then took General Hulusi Akar to Akinci Air Base for him to sign off on a pre-prepared statement. But Akar refused for two hours to sign the order commanding all units to join the coup action and to go on TV to tell the nation that the army with its entire chain of command had taken over. This delayed the conspirator's coup considerably. After strangling him using a belt in the process, he still refused to sign. At around 9.30pm, over 5 hours before the planned time and over two hours into the coup attempt the conspirators sent out an order signed by a brigadier general and launched a coordinated operation in several cities to overthrow the government.

In Ankara tanks were positioned at critical intersections and several helicopter gunships began patrolling the sky. Clashes took place between junta forces and military and police units loyal to the government. Turkish fighter jets carried out low altitude flights in both Ankara and Istanbul and then dropped bombs on their own parliament building, as well as attacking the National Intelligence Organization building. The plotters also attacked the Special Forces headquarters and police air force headquarters in Gölbaşı, just outside of Ankara. The attacks left 42 people dead. During this process Brigadier General Semih Terzi was killed by a junior officer, which now meant the conspirators chain of command was broken and could no longer be controlled from a single center.

In Istanbul, the coup plotters moved to take over symbolic targets. Istanbul's Bosphorus Bridge and Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge were both closed by soldiers and cordoned-off by tanks whilst Istanbul's Atatürk Airport was taken over by a tank division. Soldiers opened fire on Turkish teenagers storming their barricades on the bridge. The military entered the Justice and Development Party's offices in Istanbul and asked people to leave and took over central Istanbul's Taksim Square, a highly symbolic location.



*Turkish military enter Fatih Sultan mehmet bridge*

Erdogan was on holiday at the resort town of Marmaris and around 25 commandos were tasked with seizing him. As the coup had been brought forward, this was not communicated to the commandos who began their operation at the later, rather than the earlier time. When the commandos in their three Sikorsky helicopters landed in Marmaris, clashes broke out with members of the president's security team and local police. But Erdogan's security detail had already spirited



him to safety before the commandos arrived. Erdogan took the one hour and 15-minute journey to Dalaman Airport and the jet took off at 10.40pm.

By 11.00pm the Turkish media began reporting the closure by soldiers and tanks of the two bridges in Istanbul that link Asia to Europe. Turkish air space was declared closed and military planes were in the sky. By this point the international media began beaming images of the closed bridges and the world as well as the Turkish public saw a military coup was in progress. After over three hours into the coup no broadcast had been made by the plotters and the Turkish media and satellite channels were showing live images of the coup. At this point neither the wider army nor the Turkish public knew who the plotters were. The conspirators had dealt with potential challengers, taken over symbolic sites, fighter jets were flying in the skies and now the conspirators needed to broadcast that they were in control and that the rest of the army should bandwagon behind them. At this point a senior EU source monitoring the situation said: *"It looks like a relatively well orchestrated coup by a significant body of the military, not just a few colonels. They've got control of the airports and are expecting control over the TV station imminently. They control several strategic points in Istanbul. Given the scale of the operation, it is difficult to imagine they will stop short of prevailing."*<sup>31</sup>

It is here where things started to go wrong for the coup plotters.

### **The Government Fight-Back**

At just after 11.00pm the Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim, beat the coup plotters to it. He appeared on a number of TV networks as tanks were rolling through Ankara toward his office, he said: *"There was an illegal act by a group within the military that was acting out of the chain of military command. Our people should know that we will not allow any activity that would harm democracy."*<sup>32</sup>

It wasn't until 12:15am, July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016 – well over four hours after the coup attempt began that the plotters made a broadcast. Soldiers had taken over the buildings of the state broadcaster, the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), in Ankara. The plotters, pointing their guns at the anchor, Tijen Karaş, the newsreader, forced her to read out a statement prepared by them. Turkey was now led by the 'Peace at Home Council' who would "ensure the safety of the population." The statement read in part: *"Turkish Armed Forces have completely taken over the administration of the country to reinstate constitutional order, human rights and freedoms, the rule of law and general security that was damaged. All international agreements are still valid. We hope that all of our good relationships with all countries will continue."* The plotters said they had *"done so to preserve democratic order, and that the rule of law must remain a priority."* The statement also ordered temporary martial rule and claimed a new constitution would be prepared "as soon as possible," TRT was then taken off air. None of the coup plotters or their leaders actually appeared on TV.

Soon after this broadcast General Umit Dunder, the commander of the first army in Istanbul and the commander of special forces, Major General Zekai Aksakalli — who could not be persuaded to join the coup appeared at a press conference that was broadcast live on TV, where they declared the coup illegitimate. He said the attempt was out of the army's chain of command and that top commanders were being held hostage by the plotters. He said the army did not support the coup and the perpetrators represented a very small faction that were on the verge of being brought under control. Their statements were severe blows to the plotters as it showed the military did not support the coup plotters.



*Amidst the coup, Erdogan gave an interview to the press via FaceTime*

Everything was then undermined at 12.37am, when Erdogan managed to make a live televised statement via his phone opposing the coup. Blocked from state television, he called the private television network, CNN Turk, using Facetime on his iPhone and exhorted the Turkish public to take to the streets to oppose the coup. He said the coup attempt was being conducted by a “minority within the military” with links to Fethullah Gulen and warned that the plotters would “pay the highest price at

the end.”

This showed the coup plotters were not in control and after seeing Erdogan’s message people began taking to the streets in larger numbers, answering the call of the president and the religious affairs Diyanet Ministry, which called on the imams of Turkey’s mosques to take to their minarets to declare “God is great.” Erdogan’s supporters responded by taking to the streets, attacking army troops, forcing them to capitulate and in the process retook Ataturk Airport in Istanbul.

At 3.00am on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2016, 7 hours after the coup began, Erdoğan’s plane landed in Istanbul, with the president clearly determined to assert that the coup had been repelled and he remained in charge. In a live TV address after his arrival at Istanbul’s Ataturk Airport, where he was welcomed by large crowds, Erdoğan said the uprising was an act of “treason” and that those responsible would pay a “...heavy price. Those who stain the military’s reputation must leave. The process has started today and it will continue just as we fight other terrorist groups.” With the leader of Turkey clearly free and still in charge, the coup that was just 3 hours ago moving with rapid speed had now collapsed.



*Erdogan surrounded by supporters at Istanbul's Ataturk airport*

## Analysis

Coups from the middle usually begin by a small faction with most of the military sitting on the sidelines choosing the side that they think will win. The coup plotters need to create the expectation they are in control and will succeed. In this case the coup plotters made use of their strength, which was their hard power and this was on display with the tanks, aircraft and in their ability to use brute force. A huge show of force was to demonstrate that the weight of the military was behind the coup.

However, the coup plotters failed to establish the perception that they were fully in control as the hours went by and hence failed to win the overwhelming bulk of the military to their side. Interestingly the coup plotters didn't put up scorched-earth military resistance. Around 300 people were killed but still not nearly the number there could have been had the tanks and troops throughout Istanbul and Ankara engaged in full-scale conflict. The coup supporters didn't try to fight till their last breath. These groups were willing to surrender even if they might be tried for treason afterwards.

The coup attempt also failed because the plotters failed to secure control of the media and thus shape the narrative. Successful coups require that the mass media be controlled by the plotters. This allows even small rebel contingents to portray themselves as fully in control and their victory as inevitable. Consequently, they convince the public, along with neutral and even loyalist soldiers, to defect to them, or at least not to resist. The rebels failed to properly broadcast their message effectively across the media that they controlled. They failed to capture Turksat, Turkey's main cable and satellite communications company and failed to gain control of the country's television and mobile phone networks. This allowed Erdoğan to make his Facetime call, and to speak on television. Once the public broadcast was made by the plotters, no one was better off as they did not know who the plotters were. A public statement by one or more high-level public officials would have shown that there was elite support. When the plotters failed, the coup was doomed.

The plotters inability to neutralize Erdoğan and other high-ranking government officials, either by killing or detaining them came to haunt the coup attempt. A unit of Special Forces was sent via helicopters to kill or capture the president, but missed because he had been evacuated by his security detail earlier. Once Erdoğan landed at Atatürk International Airport, the coup was doomed. Military sources revealed rebel F-16s targeted Erdoğan's presidential jet en route to Istanbul, but they did not fire.

The conspirators were led by a former air force general and made use of numerous fixed wing and rotary aircraft to show their strength. Taking control of the air force was the most successful aspect of the coup. Within hours and despite the fact that Turkish airspace was closed rebels F-16s repeatedly flew very low over the Turkish capital, sometimes breaking the sound barrier in a show of force. In between such low-altitude overflights, they topped up their fuel tanks from at least two Boeing KC-135R Stratotankers, which launched from Incirlik Air Base. This is why loyalist forces surrounded Incirlik Air Base on July 16th, as the crews of several KC-135R tankers from 101 Filo regiment played a prominent role in the coup.

The coup lacked tactical coordination and the plotters were then unable to adapt to the changing landscape causing chaos in the plotters ranks. When Turkey's National Intelligence Organization (MIT) head Hakan Fidan discovered the coup plot and the plotters were forced to execute the coup six hours ahead of schedule. The highest-ranking staff officers opposed the coup and publicly

ordered all personnel to return to their barracks. Acting outside the military chain of command, the rebels lacked the coordination and resources to achieve their goals. The conscripted soldiers that the rebels mobilized were uninformed of the true purpose of their mission, and became demoralized. Many surrendered rather than shoot demonstrators.

The failure to capture Erdogan himself, proved the coup plotters were not in control, this showed the rest of the army, who would have been sitting on the sidelines monitoring which side would prevail that the coup plotters were unlikely to succeed. Once Erdogan came on TV and countered the claims of the coup conspirators, even if his supporters did not come out onto the streets, the coup was doomed.

### **CASE STUDY: Turkey Civil-Military Relations**

When the Turkish republic was established in 1923 Mustafa Kemal purged all the Islamic elements from within the armed forces and made his loyalists the vanguards of secularism. After his death, the army along with other secular elements within the civil service, judiciary and media saw it as their responsibility to protect secularism. The military especially perceived itself as the guardian of secularism. When Secularism or the army's influence was threatened they undertook a coup. Indeed, it assumed power for several periods. It took power in 1960, 1971 and 1980. The army executed the elected prime minister, Adnan Menderes, in 1961, it also removed Necmettin Erbakan, in 1997.

When Recip Tayyip Erdogan with his AKP party swept to power in 2002 with a landslide victory he was emboldened to weaken the army's role in the country. Subsequent electoral success also emboldened Erdogan to weaken the army's hold on the country. This was especially when the US in a 'Shared Vision Document' signed between the Turkish and American government by Abdullah Gul and Condoleezza Rice in 2006 showed Erdogan had the support of the US. Erdogan and his supporters have never denied the US support they received, citing that US support towards the AKP has been the only way to keep the ultra-Kemalist establishment at distance within the Turkish political arena. Abdullah Gul was elected as the President despite the army's opposition. Although the role is ceremonial, the army always had a hand in choosing the president as Mustafa Kemal was the president in the past.

In 2007 the Ergenekon conspiracy to overthrow the government by force was used by Erdogan to retire and imprison senior generals. Whilst the Sledgehammer conspiracy in 2010 was used to implicate serving senior military officers along with retired officers. This was extremely significant as for the first time in Turkey's history, army officers were being prosecuted and this showed the army's hold on the country had been considerably weakened where a coup was virtually impossible.





*The Four French Generals who tried to overthrow President Charles de Gaulle*

# The Last Coup in France, 1961

The Algiers putsch of 1961 was the last coup attempt to take place in France, it was organised in French Algeria by retired French army generals in opposition to Charles De Gaulle's decision to withdraw from the north African territory, which was widely unpopular among the officer corps, who felt it was a betrayal of both the military and the nation.

From 1848 until independence, the whole Mediterranean region of Algeria was administered as an integral part of France. One of France's longest-held overseas territories, Algeria became a destination for hundreds of thousands of French settlers, known as *colons* and later, as *pieds-noirs*. The French settlers were at the top of Algerian society and the Muslim at the bottom, despite the Muslims being in the majority. The French settlers wanted nothing at all to ruin the hegemony they had in Algeria. They had prevented any major reform that would have given the Muslim population any rights and had objected to all talk of giving equal rights to them, even through democratic means. In the 1947 municipal election, there was a very clear case of rigging in favour of the settlers and preventing a perfectly legal democratic party to enter their assembly.

Gradually, dissatisfaction among the Muslim population with its lack of political and economic status fueled calls for greater political autonomy from France. Tensions between the two population groups came to a head in 1954, when the first violent events of what was to become the Algerian War began. As the war dragged on many of the French settlers believed the sitting government in Paris was planning talks with the principle liberation movement in Algeria – National Liberation Front (*Front de Libération Nationale (FLN)*). On May 13<sup>th</sup> 1958, the French settlers took over the French Algerian government and turned towards the army stationed in Algeria when they believed the government in Paris would abandon them.

For the French army in Algeria it was a painful reminder of what they had experienced in Indochina just 4 years earlier in which, in their own words, they had been abandoned by the politicians back home. When the French army properly entered the Algerian War, it did so with a vengeance. It would not let Algeria, a place that was considered to be as French as Dunkirk itself, be abandoned because of the politicians back in metropolitan France. They were not going to allow their comrades to die in vain and they would do anything to keep Algerian French. When there was talk of the sitting government negotiating with the FLN, for the army this was the final straw.

Thrust into power in French Algeria by the French settlers who had taken over the government there the army leadership demanded Charles de Gaulle to take power in France, who they expected to be the sort of person not to give up Algeria. When this initially didn't materialize, plans were drawn up and threats were given to France that if things didn't move faster the Army in Algeria would take care of things i.e. a military intervention in mainland France. To show how serious they were, they invaded and occupied Corsica on May 24<sup>th</sup> 1958, which was 100 miles from Monaco. With the government in Paris fearing an imminent coup De Gaulle finally agreed to form a government on May 30<sup>th</sup> 1958.





With De Gaulle in power, he demanded dictatorial powers for a limited time and then went on to put forward a new constitution. This constitution was then put to the public and it led to a landslide victory in favor of a new constitution. 79.25% voted yes. Charles de Gaulle, the leader of the French resistance during WW2, a French legend by that point was back in power on December 21<sup>st</sup> 1958 as its first president.

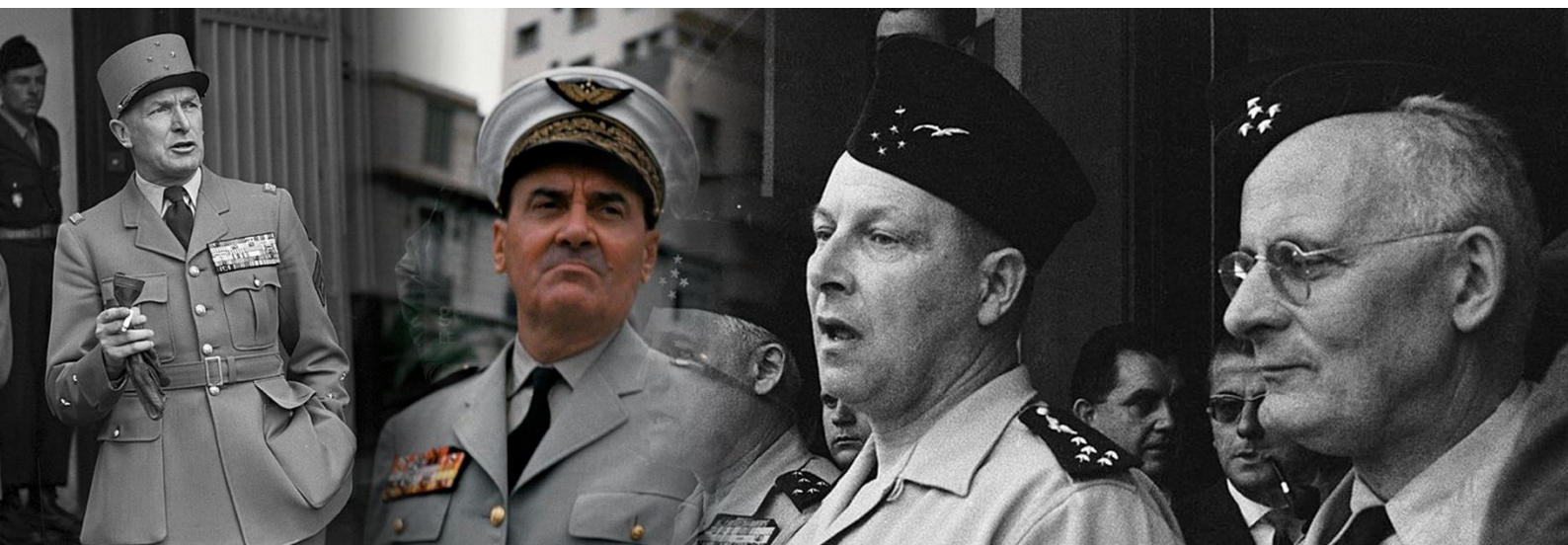
## Conspiracy

The army assumed De Gaulle would not betray Algeria. Although the French military campaigns under de Gaulle greatly weakened the FLN militarily, with most prominent FLN leaders killed or arrested and terror attacks effectively stopped, the brutality of the methods employed by the French forces failed to win hearts and minds in Algeria, alienated support in metropolitan France and discredited French prestige abroad. But as the war dragged on nearly 500,000 soldiers were fighting in Algeria with very few remaining at home in mainland France.

After nearly seven years of war in Algeria, with no end in sight, De Gaulle held a referendum on 8<sup>th</sup> January 1961 in metropolitan France, with French voters overwhelmingly voting for granting Algeria independence. Following the outcome of the referendum, Michel Debré's government started secret negotiations with the various Algerian movements. De Gaulle had not come to power with a clear picture of the Algerian endgame, he however came to believe that the full integration of the Muslim population into France was unsustainable in the long-run.

On 25<sup>th</sup> January 1961, Colonel Antoine Argoud visited Premier Debré and threatened him with a coup directed by a "colonels' junta," The French Army was in no way going to let the French Algerian départements created in 1848 after the 1830 conquest become independent.

The conspiracy was organized by four retired French generals in opposition to De Gaulle's decision to withdraw from Algeria, the generals were:



**Raoul Salan**  
former commander-in-chief in  
French Algeria

**Edmond Jouhaud**  
former Inspector General of the  
French Air Force

**Maurice Challe**  
former commander-in-chief in French  
Algeria

**André Zeller**  
former Chief of staff of the  
French Ground Army

Maurice Challe criticised what he saw as the government's treason and lies towards French Algeria and stated that: *"the command reserves its right to extend its actions to Metropolitan France and to reconstitute a constitutional and republican order seriously compromised by a government whose illegality is blatant in the eyes of the nation."* The retired generals planned to carry out their coup with the help of Colonels Antoine Argoud, Jean Gardes and the civilians Joseph Ortiz and Jean-Jacques Susini who would go on to form the OAS terrorist group, they were to take control of Algiers, the capital of Algeria at the time. This coup in reality was really a coup from the Middle of the army, which included retired generals.

The conspirator's strategy was, in the midst of the Algerian war, to assert control of French Algeria's major cities such as Algiers, the capital, Oran and Constantine. The conspirators believed the threat of seizing Paris itself would force the government to capitulate. The metropolitan operation, if it was needed was to be led by Colonel Antoine Argoud, with French paratroopers descending on strategic airfields.

## Coup

The coup began on the night of Friday 21<sup>st</sup> April 1961 with the 1st Foreign Parachute Regiment (le REP), composed of a thousand men and headed by Héli de Saint Marc taking control of all of Algiers' strategic points in three hours and arresting several generals still loyal to the French government. Together they comprised the elite units of the airborne divisions of the French Army. Nearly 500,000 French military personnel – mostly conscripts – were stationed in Algeria to take part in the campaign launched in 1957 to "pacify" the territory in light of growing unrest. The conspirators took over the legal, civil government in Algeria, as well as all the radio stations and newspapers in the colony. They met very little resistance as at first many soldiers remained unsure of which side to support and no one wanted a civil war in the midst of a war already in Algeria. In addition, as the coup leaders took over the government and communications in Algeria, they announced that they would destroy any attempted resistance against them. At this point it was unclear both to the government in France and to the citizens and soldiers in Algeria how much support the coup had.

Algiers' population was awakened on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1961 at 7.00 am to a message read on the radio: *"The army has seized control of Algeria and of the Sahara."* The three rebel generals, Challe, Jouhaud and Zeller, had the government's general delegate, Jean Morin arrested, as well as the National Minister of Public Transport, Robert Buron, who was visiting Algeria and several civil and military authorities. General Jacques Faure and six other officers and several civilians were simultaneously arrested in Paris. At 5.00pm, during the Ministers' Council, Charles de Gaulle proclaimed a state of emergency in Algeria.

With French Algeria under control by the conspirators, they needed to project the coup across the Mediterranean into mainland, metropolitan France. This is where the problems began for the coup conspirators. The conspirators at this point controlled the more powerful military, but de Gaulle had the elite units in mainland France. The conspirators had made a fact of their control of French Algeria, but it was clear, despite the fear, they did not have mainland France under their authority and needed to project this. This made Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> 1961, judgment day for the coup.



But on Sunday evening, President de Gaulle broadcast a speech to all of France calling on citizens and soldiers to resist the coup by “all means.” At 8.00pm, President de Gaulle appeared in his 1940s vintage military uniform on television, he said: *“An insurrectionary power has established itself in Algeria by a military pronunciamiento... This power has an appearance: a quartet of retired generals. It has a reality: a group of officers, partisan, ambitious and fanatical. This group and this quartet possess an expedient and limited knowledge of things. But they only see and understand the Nation and the world distorted by their delirium. Their enterprise leads directly towards a national disaster ... I forbid any*



*Frenchman, and first of all any soldier, to execute a single one of their orders ... In the face of the misfortune which hangs over the country and the threat to the Republic, having taken advice from the Constitutional Council, the Prime Minister, the president of the Senate, the president of the National Assembly, I have decided to invoke article 16 of the Constitution [on the state of emergency and full special powers given to the head of state in case of a crisis]. Starting from this day, I will take, directly if the need arises, the measures which seem to me demanded by circumstances ... Frenchwomen, Frenchmen! Help me”*

Due to the popularity of the recent invention of the transistor radio, de Gaulle's call was heard by conscript soldiers, who refused en-masse to follow their orders for a coup in Paris. De Gaulle refused to abandon the planned independence of Algeria or to step down, arguing that the decision to grant independence had been approved by the French populace in a referendum just three months earlier. His direct televised appeal to French citizens was countering the coup plotters.

Later that evening French Prime Minister Michel Debré echoed de Gaulle's request and announced the possibility of an air invasion from Algeria. He shut down all airports and urged citizens to rush to the airfields if they heard the sirens announcing an invasion. Prime Minister Debré issued more specific instructions to the populace and started to organize a Gaullist militia. The unions and most of the political parties rallied against the coup and hundreds of people went to the airfields and prepared vehicles to block the runways.

In Algeria, soldiers and other citizens had heard de Gaulle's speech for resistance through transistor radios. People began to duplicate the speech in leaflets and distribute them throughout the colony.

Over the weekend political parties and trade unions in France held mass meetings and announced a one-hour protest general strike for Monday April 24<sup>th</sup> 1961 in order to demonstrate their power of resistance if the coup did move to France. While 10 million workers in France took part in the one-hour symbolic general strike on Monday afternoon, soldiers and civil servants in Algeria were also resisting the coup. Pilots in the military took more than half of the transport and fighter planes out of Algeria so they could not be used for an invasion of France. Other pilots feigned mechanical failures in planes so they could not be flown. While many generals did not openly support either the rebel forces or the French government, most loyal conscripts simply remained in their barracks throughout the attempted coup, disobeying orders from the conspirators.

In France, the government set up guards at public buildings and arrested right-wing supporters, the groups that would have been most likely to favour the coup. The government also began a blockade of supplies being shipped into Algeria. On the night of the 24<sup>th</sup>, the government determined that troops who had been stationed in West Germany would remain loyal to France. The next morning the government ordered these troops to return to the country in order to defend against the possible coup.

As the people's resistance to the coup continued to grow on Tuesday April 25<sup>th</sup>, the police force in Algeria, which had originally supported the rebels, switched its loyalty back to the civilian government. Although de Gaulle broadcast another speech that evening calling for loyal troops to fire on the rebel troops, none did.

The coup conspirators lacked transport to mainland France by either air or sea as soldiers who opposed the coup had removed aircraft and ammunition that could have been used by the conspirators. The conspirators, 3 days into their coup plot faced the prospect of mass civilian opposition should they arrive in France. Although they still controlled the more powerful military than their adversaries, they had no support from either elite or mass civilian organizations and were a minority within the overall armed forces. Faced with limited support in Algeria and even less in mainland France on the night of Tuesday April 25<sup>th</sup> 1961 the few military units which had followed the generals progressively surrendered.

On the night of April 25<sup>th</sup> the four generals that had led the coup fled from Algeria and the rebel troops withdrew from their occupation of Algiers. The coup had failed.

## **Analysis**

This coup attempt developed out of right-wing extremist French settlers who were hell bent on maintaining the Algerian colony irrespective of the costs. Even when public opinion and a referendum went against them extremist French settlers founded the Organisation de l'Armée Secrète (OAS) with the former military commander in Algeria, General Raoul Salan who was one of the four generals who led the coup against de Gaulle. Even after the failure of the organisation to halt the Independence of Algeria they carried out several bomb attacks in mainland France and attempted to assassinate President de Gaulle on several occasions. Salan was captured in Algiers in 1962 and imprisoned from 1962-1968.

Though the coup was led by retired generals it was practically carried out by officers from the middle of the military. They quickly captured key cities and towns in Algeria and made a broadcast to the rest of the army and people of their position and strength in order to make a fact. Coups from the middle of the army have the advantage of actually commanding fighting units and this was put to use by the coup plotters to show they were in control and rapidly moving to overthrow the sitting government.

But the problem was the sitting government was over 1000 km away in Paris. As the days ticked by the generals in Algeria became isolated, as an increasing number of people, both military and civilian declared their opposition to the coup. It is difficult to successfully mount a coup attempt when the challengers are outside the capital and as a result we see this attempted rarely. It is very difficult to make a fact from outside the capital: the challengers will not be able to quickly gain a monopoly

over public information or control of the symbolic sites in the capital making it harder to claim that they have already established control. An attack based in a regional centre gives the sitting government more time to formulate a response, making other units less willing to bandwagon behind the challenger. If units based outside the capital want to successfully mount a coup, they will need to either move quickly enough to strike the capital before their actions are noticed or have an ally within the capital working in concert with them. This is where the 1961 Putsch failed; they lacked the resources, support and fire power to project their coup into the capital city across the Mediterranean. The odds were stacked against them and made worse when most of the 500,000 soldiers stationed in Algeria sat on the fence and then eventually began removing the equipment that would have allowed the plotters to make a run on Paris itself.

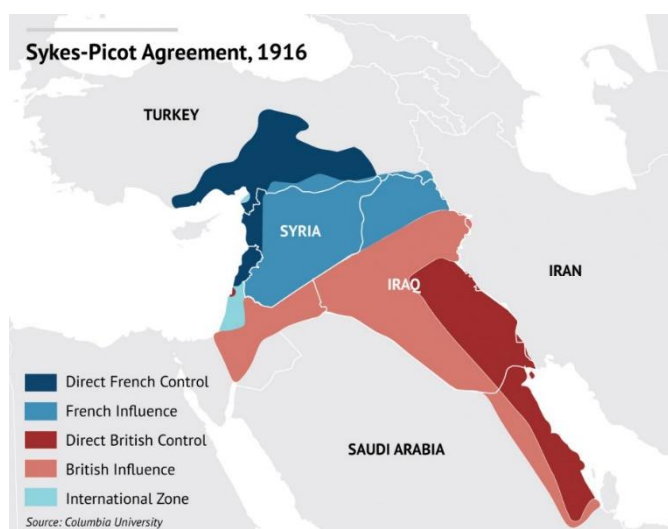
The coup had the support of the most powerful units in the French Armed Forces, but they were substantially hindered by the fact that they were in Algeria, not Paris. This gave the government the time to make counter-broadcasts that successfully turned the tide. The challengers were defeated before they could even reach Europe. Similar to the Soviet coup the civilian actions affected the perception of soldiers regarding their fellow soldiers and if they would support the coup plotters. They sat on the fence and eventually sided with de Gaulle, when the mass demonstrations showed the coup plotters had lost control.



*Leaders of the 14 July 1958 coup in Iraq, Abd as-Salam Arif (back row, second from left), Abd al-Karim Qasim (back row, third from left)*

# Iraq Coup, 1958

It was Britain who drew some lines in the desert and made this the border for a new country, which was to be called Iraq. The Iraq Britain created had never existed in history and was as artificial as its brother next door, Jordan. Both countries were literally brothers as Britain had created a country for Abdullah, the son of Sharif Hussein who served Britain during the Arab revolt. Britain created another country for his other son, Faisal, Iraq. Under King Faisal, Britain in reality maintained real power in the newly created country through its three military bases – Ar-Rashid in Baghdad, Al-Habbaniyya, north of Baghdad and Ash-Shiaiba near Basra. The British ambassador in Baghdad had the final word in governing Iraq throughout Hashemite rule. King Faisal I died suddenly in 1933 aged 48, while having a health check in Switzerland. His son Ghazi (1933-1939) was something of a playboy and more antipathetic to the continuing British influence and sympathetic to the strong nationalism of Nazi Germany. A lover of fast cars, he died in April 1939 at the wheel of his Buick in a mysterious car accident that many believe was engineered by British intelligence due to the Ghazi's hatred for





Britain and close ties to the Nazis. According to the order of succession to the throne, his young son, Faisal II should have become a king, but Britain appointed his uncle, Abdullah as a prince regent.

Although Britain granted Iraq nominal independence in 1932, it was independence in name only. The country was ruled by a British-installed monarchy and continued to be occupied by British military bases. After World War 2 uprisings against British rule and their Iraqi collaborators like Nuri as-Said intensified. To fortify their domination, the British promoted the development of a class of big landowners in Iraq, who exported grain, dates and other products. The peasants, who constituted the majority of the population, were treated as serfs—bound to the land and living in poverty. In the 1950s, life expectancy in Iraq was 28-30 years. Illiteracy was more than 80% for men and 90% for women. According to a 1952 World Bank report, the average yearly income for all Iraqis was \$82. For peasants, it was \$21.<sup>33</sup> Underlying Iraq's extreme poverty was this simple fact: oil-rich Iraq owned none of its own oil.

Neocolonial and landlord rule was maintained by a ruthless secret police and military regime that tortured, murdered and imprisoned countless thousands of Iraqis. The resistance was so strong that Iraq was placed under martial law 11 times between 1935 and 1954, for a total of nine years and four months.

## **Conspiracy**

The Iraqi military had remained aloof from politics in the early post-WW2 years due to the presence of the British military mission. But discontent began brewing in the early 1950's. From the early 1950's anti-regime army officers organized themselves in several independent groups. They were many secret groups in the military with many followers of Nasser of Egypt. There were also nationalists who felt humiliated by what had happened to the Arab world in 1948 with the creation of the Zionist entity and poor support from the Iraqi government. Most junior officers were from a middle-class background, so they had little in common with their older pro-regime superiors and shared many of the views of the young participants in anti-regime demonstrations. These officers opposed the pro-West policies of the monarchical regime and the influence of a small number of wealthy families and landowners.

The first revolutionary cell in the officer corps was organized in 1952 by Major Rifat al-Hajj Sirri, a hero of the 1948 Palestine war. By 1954 his activities had spawned a number of small cells, independent of one another and lacking any central organization. But in 1956 news of the secret organization reached higher military authorities. Lt. General Rafiq Arif, Chief of the General Staff moved Sirri and his other plotters to posts where they would be restricted in conspiring against the regime. His action did break up the movement but only temporarily by dispersing its leaders.

But by December 1956 these dispersed officers formed a Supreme Committee of the Free Officers that consisted of 10 officers all of whom were army or air force officers of the rank of major and above. This committee functioned as the executive and planning arm of the Free Officers but there was little cohesion of aims and policy among its members. There was considerable disagreement on the timing and tactics of the coup though all agreed to overthrow of the regime. It was understood that the central organization would function as a revolutionary command council (RCC) on the Egyptian model.

At this stage, the Supreme Committee did not include the two men who were eventually to emerge as the prime movers of the group, Abdulkarim Qasim and Abdul Salam Arif, both of whom were stationed in Jordan. Qasim and Arif were members of another group of Free Officers. The Supreme Committee decided that the most important consideration in planning a coup was to ensure that the commanders of the main military units were either part of their organization or sympathetic to their aims. This led the committee to approach Abdulkarim Qasim who had formed a loosely organized group of likeminded colleagues. In 1957 he was invited to join the Supreme Committee, becoming its chairman partly because of his seniority. Abdulkarim Qasim, 43 years old at the time, in turn introduced the younger, 36-year-old Staff Colonel Abdul Salam Arif. As a result, in the spring of 1957 the two groups merged. Abdulsalam Arif became the link with the grouping of younger dissident officers, originally recruited by Rifat al-Hājj Sirri, the founder of the Free Officer's movement.

The Free Officers proceeded to plan the coup that would carry them to power. Several coups were planned before 14<sup>th</sup> July 1958, but they did not take place either because the circumstances were not right or because officers were hesitant. The larger and more widespread the organization became, the greater the chance of discovery. Consequently, the timetable for action was based upon the assumption that the Free Officers would have to act before the end of 1958. A major problem facing the conspirators before the coup was that, for security reasons, few army units were issued with live ammunition.

But then the Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Said presented the Free Officers with the perfect pretext to acquire ammunition and to move on Iraq's capital, Baghdad. An unexpected revolt in Lebanon against the regime of President Kamil Shaman, resulted in fear in Baghdad and Amman that the revolt might spread to Jordan. Alarmed by the growing crisis in Lebanon Nuri al-Said and the Iraqi government decided, at the request of King Hussein of Jordan to send units of the Iraqi army to Jordan to reinforce Iraq's partner in the Arab Union should the need arise and to be on hand in the event of any escalation of the fighting in Lebanon. The Iraqi Prime Minister for the first time allowed a unit of the Iraqi army to move around Baghdad with its ammunition trucks. This is the first time such a thing had happened for decades in Iraq.

## **Coup**

The Free Officers realised that Zero Day was at hand and the date for the coup was chosen to coincide with the overland transfer to units to Jordan. The Operational Department of the General Staff sent orders to the Twentieth Infantry Brigade of the Third Division stationed at Bacquba to move on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1958. The twentieth Infantry Brigade, two of whose three battalions were commanded by Free Officers, Abdul Salam Arif and Abdal Latif ad-Darraji. However, the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July was unsuitable as the King, the Crown Prince and the Prime Minister were out of the country and had to return shortly before their scheduled departure for the Baghdad Pact session in Istanbul on 14<sup>th</sup> July 1958.

The coup when it finally took place on 14<sup>th</sup> July 1958 and was really the work of two men, Abdal-Karim Qasim and Abdul Salam Arif and a handful of strategically placed followers. A close working relationship between the two men developed in Jordan in 1956, when Arif was head of a battalion under Qasim's command. Qasim disclosed his revolutionary aims to Arif, who had impressed him by his boldness and courage. When they returned to Baghdad Qasim brought Arif into the Free Officers Supreme Committee. The actual planning for the coup took place almost entirely between

them, with the exclusion of the rest of the Free Officers in Jalawla' camp near Bacquba some 90 miles North-East of Baghdad, where both men were stationed in 1958.

The Twentieth Brigade of the Third Division stationed at Jalawla' camp, under the command of Staff Brigadier Ahmad Haqqi Muhammad Ali, in which Abdul Salam Arif headed a battalion, received its marching orders for the night of 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> July 1958. It was to skirt the centre of Baghdad by the north and to proceed to Jordan along the Falluja-Ramadi highway. Ammunition for possible operations was to be issued to the brigade at Abu Ghraib camp west of the capital. Since the Twentieth Brigade was not to pass through the city, it was not considered necessary to alert the Baghdad garrison, including the Royal Guards Brigade, for the same reason the Minister of the Interior, responsible for the police and security forces was also not informed of the intended movement.

This was when Arif and Qasim, the latter in charge of the Nineteenth Brigade, decided to act. While Qasim stayed at the Jalawla camp with the Nineteenth Infantry Brigade, Arif, who was one of the three battalion commanders of the Twentieth Brigade that was leaving camp at Jalawla' for Jordan late in the evening of 13<sup>th</sup> July. Qasim was to remain with his brigade in the camp as a backup force in case resistance was encountered and move slowly to the Baghdad later on. By a series of manoeuvres, Arif was able to neutralize opposition to the coup within the Twentieth Brigade. With the cooperation of Colonel Abdal Latif ad-Darraj, who was the commander of the First Battalion, and a Free Officer, Abdul Salam Arif managed to take control of the whole Brigade and directed it to march on Baghdad.

In the early hours of 14<sup>th</sup> July 1958 the First Battalion occupied the Eastern bank of the Tigris on which the greater part of Baghdad was situated. The headquarters of the Mobile Police Force; al-Washshash army camp, next to ar-Rihab Palace - where the infantry and artillery schools, the main weapon and ammunition stores and the Armoured Corps headquarters were situated – as well as the Baghdad airport, all were quickly captured. With the assistance of the Free Officers from the Baghdad

garrison, the Ministry of Defence compound (which also housed the General Staff), the General Post Office, and other nerve centres were quickly seized. The Ar-Rashid camp on the South-Eastern



edge of the city and the adjacent military airfield, were also easily occupied. Lt.-General Rafiq Arif, whose living quarters were at the camp, was arrested in his bed. However, it was on the western bank of the Tigris that the main targets of the conspirators lay and Abdul Salam Arif reserved them for his battalion.

The coup plotters occupied all the strategic buildings in and around Baghdad. This allowed Abdul Salam Arif, in the early hours of 14<sup>th</sup> June 1958, occupying the broadcasting station that became his headquarters. All that remained of the coup were three individuals - the King, the Crown Prince and the Prime Minister.

One detachment of the Third Battalion was dispatched to ar-Rihab Palace to deal with the King and the Crown Prince. The force surrounded the Royal Palace and opened fire, which was returned by the palace guards. The besieged party at the palace was able to remain in telephone communication with the outside world for several hours, but the Crown Prince, partly because of a failure of will and partly to save his life and that of the King, ordered no resistance and after a brief bombardment, the Royal Guard at the palace surrendered. This sealed a grisly fate for Crown prince, the King and that of the royal family.

At about 8:00am, when King Faisal II, Crown Prince Abdullah, Princess Hiyam (Abdullah's wife), Princess Nafeesa (Abdullah's mother), Princess Abadiya (Faisal's aunt), other members of the Iraqi Royal Family and several servants emerged from the building a young captain, who was not a member of the Free Officers' group, opened fire. Others joined in, and in a confusion of shots within minutes they had all been shot dead in the palace courtyard bringing an end to the Hashemite dynasty in Iraq.

The detachment that went to Nuri al-Said's house was less successful. Al-Said had been awakened by the sound of shooting and had managed to escape undetected from the river side of his house in a motor launch. His escape put the success of the coup in some doubt, as it raised the possibilities of intervention by the old regime's allies. Although al-Said managed to escape, he was captured the following day and shot in the street.

The coup of 14<sup>th</sup> July 1958 was carried out and consolidated by a diverse collection of groups and individuals. But the Free Officers played the decisive role seizing key points in the capital and preparing for a counter-attack that never came. Early in the morning of 14<sup>th</sup> July 1958 citizens of Iraq awoke to the strains of martial music on the radio. At 6.30am Abdul Salam Arif read out a proclamation, giving the public the first word of the coup. The proclamation said: *"Noble People of Iraq, trusting God and with the aid of the loyal sons of the people and the national armed forces, we have undertaken to liberate the beloved homeland from the corrupt crew that imperialism installed... We have taken an oath to sacrifice our blood and everything we hold dear for your sake. Rest assured that we will continue to work on your behalf. Power shall be entrusted to a government emanating from you and inspired by you. This can only be realized by the creation of a people's republic, which will uphold complete Iraqi unity, tie itself in bonds of fraternity with Arab and Muslim states, act in keeping with the principles of the UN and the resolutions of the Bandung Conference, and honour all pledges and treaties in conformity with the interests of the homeland. Accordingly, the national government shall henceforth be called the Republic of Iraq."*

Outside Baghdad the takeover was accomplished soon after the Twentieth Brigade left the camp at Jalawla, detachments from the Nineteenth Brigade on the orders of Abdal-Karim Qasim occupied the nearby headquarters of the Third Division at Bacquba and arrested its commander Major



General Gazl ad-Dagistani. At dawn, the Nineteenth Brigade set out for the capital, in the wake of the Twentieth. At around noon on 14<sup>th</sup> July, Qasim arrived in Baghdad with his forces and set up his headquarters in the Ministry of Defence. As resistance was minimal and virtually non-existent within the army the coup was successfully over in around three hours.

## Analysis

The 1958 coup attempt by the Free Officers was a plot that involved a number of officers from the middle of the Iraqi military. It was closer to a revolution than merely being a coup as Free Officers prepared a programme they were going to implement after their coup. But both Abdul Salam Arif and Abd al-Karim Qasim were able to take over the Free Officers movement and keep much of the details of the coup in terms of the exact date and time a secret from other officers.

This coup attempt from the middle of the military followed the classic model by officers from the middle of the military. The Twentieth Brigade of the Third Division was led by a Free Officer and Abdul Salam Arif headed a battalion himself. The Nineteenth Brigade was led by Abd al-Karim Qasim himself and this provided the Free Officers with significant hard power with which to make a fact. But despite the hard power they still needed to execute the coup plot.

This opportunity was provided to them when the very units the Free Officers headed were to be deployed to Jordan and would need to pass close to Baghdad. In the middle of the night Arif seized the opportunity under the guise of normal (though unusual) military movements and deployment. This element of surprise probably took the brigade by surprise but more importantly gave the coup plotters the opportunity to conduct the coup.

Unlike the French putsch which failed to get to the capital city, in this coup the plotters whole strategy focused on taking over Baghdad under the cover of darkness. This was achieved by neutralising all the military bases in and around Baghdad that could threaten their conspiracy. These were quickly ceased through arresting their responsible soldiers.

This meant when Colonel Arif broadcasted the coup to the Iraqi public on the morning of June 14<sup>th</sup> 1958 he made a fact which showed the rest of the army that it should bandwagon to the Free Officers side. The plotters had already killed the Hashemite royal family and the Prime Minister, so all possible opposition had been neutralised.

The 1958 coup didn't change the landscape of Iraq in the end.

Differences soon emerged between Qasim and Arif; Qasim got closer to the Ba'athists, whilst Arif grew close to Nasser and preferred Iraq joining Egypt and Syria in the United Arab Republic. These tensions led to Qasim removing Arif from government, he was arrested and put on trial. Qasim increasingly worked with the communists in Iraq during the last years of his government, which strengthened their position in Iraq and caused great concern to both the US and Britain in the midst of the Cold war. Multiple coup attempts took place against Qasim, but they all failed. On the 8<sup>th</sup> February 1963 the Ba'athists and nationalists united around Colonel Abdul Salam Arif and undertook a bloody violent coup that led to the killing of Qasim and the torture of the communists in Iraq.

### CASE STUDY: The Anglo-American Struggle in Iraq

After WW2 the US emerged on the international scene and had its eyes on the Middle East's oil. Britain was already forced to concede to the US the oil of Saudi Arabia and many of Iran's large oil fields. Britain naturally did not want to give up the last remaining oil bonanza in the Middle East in Iraq. What unravelled was an intense Anglo-American struggle over Iraq with numerous coups and counter coups.

The July 1958 coup against the monarchy effectively cut Britain from the country's leadership. This naturally served US interests as it weakened Britain. Egypt's Gamal Abdul Nasser immediately welcomed the military that led the coup. Britain tried to reverse its loss in Iraq by landing its forces in Jordan, but events had moved beyond its control. The Soviet Union mobilised its forces along its border with Turkey and warned Britain of the consequences if it invaded Iraq. This escalation was too much for Britain and thus a new republican system emerged in Iraq and the country Britain created got out of the British grip after Iraq withdrew from the Baghdad pact. Iraq also dropped the pound sterling as a currency. By 1961, a new Iraqi law reclaimed most of the concessions that were previously given to foreign oil companies, much to the anger of both the US and Britain.

Ali Saleh Sa'adi, the then secretary of Ba'ath party said after the 1963 coup: *"We came to power on an American train."*<sup>34</sup> King Hussein of Jordan said in an interview with Mohammad Haikal, the editor of Al-Ahram newspaper at the time: *"I know for a fact that what happened in Iraq on 8th February was supported by American intelligence ... Many meetings were held between the Ba'ath Party and American intelligence - the most critical ones in Kuwait. Did you know that on 8th February, the day of the coup in Baghdad, there was a secret radio broadcast directed toward Iraq that relayed to those carrying out the coup the names and addresses of Communists there so that they could be seized and executed."*<sup>35</sup>

The problem with the 1963 coup was that it was mixed with officers, individuals and groups with mixed loyalties to both the US and Britain, so instability was going to last unless one faction was able to take complete power, over the other.

The Ba'athists were led by Ali Saleh Sa'di, Mahdi Ammash and Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr who were both close to Britain whilst the nationalists were led by Abdul Salam Aarif, Tahir Yahya and others, who were supported by Nasser and the US. Disputes began almost immediately over government powers. As a result, Abdul Salam Aarif removed the Ba'athists from the authority and simultaneously strengthened his grip on power. But in April 1966, Abdul Salam Aarif died in a plane crash and was replaced by his brother Abdul Rahman Aarif as president of Iraq. But he was a weak leader and was unable to unite his brother's forces around himself and keep the Ba'athists at bay. Events finally settled in Britain's favour in July 1968 when the Ba'athists led by the General al-Bakr and his deputy Saddam Hussein undertook a bloodless coup. The Ba'ath party regime of 1968 was immediately welcomed by Britain when the ambassador in Baghdad wrote: *'The new regime may look to the United Kingdom for military training and equipment and we should lose no time in appointing a defence attache.'*<sup>36</sup> The regime's new Defence Minister, General Tikriti, was invited to the Farnborough Air Show and was told by the ambassador that *'it seemed to me we now had an opportunity to restore Anglo-Iraqi relations to something of their former intimacy.'* In reply, General Tikriti said that during the Ba'athist regime of 1963 he had greatly appreciated the cooperative attitude of *'Her Majesty's Government.'*<sup>37</sup>



*The Free Officers, Nasser (centre), Anwar Sadat (behind, right) General Muhammad Naguib (right, seated). The Egyptian Free Officers took on an almost legendary position amongst officers throughout the Middle East, with many modelling themselves on the Free Officers of Egypt*

# Coups from the Bottom of the Military

Coups from the bottom of the military hierarchy are those which encompass coup attempts organized by enlisted men, non-commissioned officers or junior officers up to the rank of captain. These can be considered mutinies with objectives that go beyond better pay and working conditions to explicitly aim at overthrowing the government. This type of coup attempt is the least likely to succeed as the challengers are substantially hampered by their low position: they have neither the hard power of colonels nor the soft power of generals, yet they face the greatest obstacles to their success. Unsurprisingly, only 32% of coup attempts from the bottom are successful in comparison to 68% of those from the top and 48%, of those from the middle.

Mutineers are handicapped at each step of their attempt to seize power, starting with their limited ability to conspire. Open discussions of politics in the barracks is against the norms of most militaries and it is not possible for large numbers of soldiers or junior officers to meet for explicitly political purposes without attracting attention. To get around this such officers will sound each other out

privately, in small groups, or during social events such as birthdays, weddings, or christenings where peers might legitimately gather.

On a tactical level, mutineers resemble a coup from the middle more than a coup from the top because mutineers have some hard power as they are the ones who actually transport troops, fire guns and manoeuvre tanks during assaults, but they have almost no soft power. The ability of mutineers to wield military force, will however, be weaker than that of coup makers from the middle.

Although lieutenants can command platoons - 25-50 men, and captains can command companies (roughly 75-200 men), these are integrated into larger structures then being autonomous units that can function independently. As a result, challengers may lack access to transport, be unable to unlock armouries and have a hard time deploying specialised weaponry. Even when the challengers are able to get the weapons and transport they need, ad hoc groups of enlisted men are likely to be weaker than a similarly sized and armed organised unit. The strength of an armed group is not in its size necessarily or quantity of fire arms but in the coordinated action of the military members. Therefore, the more disorganised the mutiny, the weaker it will be militarily, because it will lack the force multiplier associated with synchronized and practiced action.

Unlike general's, sergeants have little initial credibility, a proclamation made by a bunch of junior officers will not be sufficient in and of itself to make a coup, nor can they order large troop movements or issue ultimatums. As a result mutinies are likely to face active and powerful opposition because they threaten all those higher in rank. For this reason, all officers of higher rank have a strong incentive to resist a mutiny, including using relatively harsh measures to combat such a fundamental challenge to both their privileges and the organizational integrity of the armed forces.

Due to this a mutiny will be the bloodiest and most chaotic type of coup attempt. Since these challengers are the most likely to be opposed it is far less likely that coup attempts from the bottom will occur without a single shot being fired. The tactics involved in a successful mutiny usually take more time than coups at higher levels. Coups led by low-ranking members of the military involve many actors. It can take a while for the coup to spread for soldiers to come off the fence for higher-ranking officers to be convinced. Sergeants usually cannot take over a country in a couple of hours the way generals can.

To succeed, a coup from the bottom of the military needs to make facts at multiple levels, as they must convince both their peers and their superiors to bandwagon in favour of the coup. As in all coup attempts, control over the broadcasting facilities is vital. But, in addition to the symbolic political targets favoured by coups from the middle, coups from the bottom need to visibly signal their strength within military barracks, to convince those enlisted men who may not be aware of what is happening at other sites. This they do by capturing symbols of military authority as well as of civil authority.

In addition to directly manipulating expectations by trying to control public information, challengers also use strategies that engage the risk aversion of military players. Mutineers want to convince the defenders of the status quo that if they do not stop resisting the coup attempt they will be swept away by an unstoppable torrent of rage coming from the oppressed and exploited at the bottom of the military, endangering not only their own safety but also the integrity of the institution.



Similar to a revolution, each coup attempt from the bottom of the military requires the support of many participants to succeed and therefore the uncertainty for each actor about whether a sufficient number of others will join in is quite great. Both of these issues are easier for coup makers to address in small militaries, which may be why mutinies are more common there.

The fact that enlisted men will hesitate before joining a mutiny, out of concern with its viability, creates additional opportunities for loyalists to foil the coup. As with coups at all levels, if opponents can contest public information and symbolic targets, especially if they can deny the challengers access to public information, they can reverse the momentum of the coup attempt.

This concern about the viability of a mutiny is a real obstacle for challengers. Sometimes challengers from the bottom will choose to hide their rank in the hope they will be mistaken for a higher-ranking opposition faction. This is what Muammar Gaddafi (then only a junior officer) did when he overthrew King Idriss of Libya, he announced the coup attempt in the name of the entire armed forces, keeping his identity secret until after the coup had succeeded, (Gaddafi's 1969 coup is analysed as a case study later in this chapter).

Coups from the bottom are the least likely to succeed because mutineers have the fewest organizational resources with which to make a fact and they face the greatest number of obstacles. Coups from the bottom are more chaotic and relatively bloodier, despite efforts made by both sides to reduce bloodshed. While they can capture and hold targets by force they have to work against a system that is designed to prevent the bottom of the hierarchy from operating autonomously. As a result, mutineers will always be more disorganized and tactically weaker than challengers from the middle would be.



# Egyptian Coup, 1952

The Suez Canal, built in partnership with the French was completed in 1869. Its construction led to enormous debt to European banks. By the 1880s Egypt was unable to repay its debts and as a result the British Empire, its largest lender, used this as an excuse to occupy Egypt for the next half century. Under British control Egypt was turned into a massive cotton plantation where Egyptian cotton travelled thousands of miles to the mills in Britain, before returning to Egypt as cheap cotton clothes. In the imperial supply chain, Egypt's place was fixed as a producer of raw materials and a consumer of finished goods.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> February 1942, in the midst of WW2, a squadron of British tanks surrounded the Abdin Palace in Cairo where King Farouq was conferring with his ministers after receiving an ultimatum from the British ambassador telling him he must appoint a Wafdist government or face the consequences. Britain suspected the monarchy was sympathetic to the advancing German army and wanted to secure their rear as tanks swept through the desert towards El Alamein. At around 9.00pm the British Ambassador accompanied by the General in charge of British forces in Egypt with a handful of soldiers stormed their way through the palace gates. The royal guards looked on helplessly as the ambassador barged into the King's study and informed King Farouq it would be abdication or a government of Britain's choosing. After a moment of hesitation, the King agreed.

## Conspiracy

The humiliation of the King at the hands of the British just confirmed to Egyptian nationalists how bad things were, especially those within the army. The King was enamored with a glamorous royal lifestyle, despite the mass poverty across Egypt. The King owned thousands of acres of land, dozens of palaces and hundreds of cars and would often travel to Europe for grand shopping sprees, earning the ire of many of his subjects.

The nationalist movement saw the King as a puppet of the British, despite the stormy relationship. Throughout the 1940s demonstrations, strikes and attacks on foreign enterprises grew bigger and bigger as Egyptian society grew restless. The creation of Israel and the loss of Palestine led to the army to coalesce around a small group of mutineers who came to be known as the Free Officers. The Egyptian government had weakened the attack against the Zionist entity when Nakrashi Pasha, the Prime Minister did not use existing military units but sent an army of volunteers that had only been organised a few months earlier.

Gamal Abdul Nasser and Abd-al-Hakim Amer as well as other comrades who formed the Free Officers volunteered as soon as the fighting broke out in Palestine. When they arrived, they found everything was in chaos. Nasser discovered that no provisions had been made for hot meals for his troops and he was then given money to find hot food. Zionist troops were supplied with Czech arms, Egyptian soldiers struggled with ancient and unreliable grenades. Muhammed Naguib, who would go on to become the first president of Egypt found many of the same problems when he volunteered to take part in the battle to reverse the Zionist gains in Palestine. He was forced to leave field guns behind after reaching Egypt's railhead because no transport had been provided for them.

The failure in Palestine led Nasser and other officers to officially form the Free Officers. Although the Free Officers existed before 1948, it was a loose group of soldiers and nationalists who believed Egypt was being driven into the ground by the monarchy, which was a British puppet. The small group originally met in Nasser's living room and set out to recruit likeminded officers. In late 1949 the Free Officers issued a leaflet which discussed the defective weapons in the war for Palestine. By 1950 the original founders of the Free Officers became the Command Committee.

In January 1952 in retaliation for an attack on a British base at Tel al-Kabir a police station at Ismailiyya was besieged by British forces leading to the deaths of 46 policemen. The following day known as 'Black Saturday,' thousands spilled onto the streets of Cairo in protest by striking policemen. King Farouk changed the government three times with the events of Black Saturday in order to contain protests and demands for change.

### CASE STUDY: The US and Nasser

The US emerged the world superpower after WW2 and was working to reduce British influence and remove it from the region. The CIA worked on a project in 1951 known in the CIA as “The Muslim Billy Graham,” Miles Copeland, the CIA operative published classified information in his memoirs in 1989 titled “The Game Player: Confessions of the CIA’s Original Political Operative,” about how the CIA supported the coup that ousted the British puppet King Farouk. Copeland, who activated the project, explained that the CIA needed a charismatic leader who would be able to divert the growing anti-American hostility that was building up in the area. Copeland recalls that in the first secret meeting he had with Free Army Officers one of whom was Major Abdel Moneim Ra’ouf (a member of Gamal Abdel Nasser’s inner circle). In March 1952, four months before the coup that ousted King Farouk, Kermit Roosevelt head of the CIA Near East Operations and Nasser began a series of meetings that led to the coup. After much discussion, it was agreed that no support from the Islamic groups was required and that the army would take control and gain the support of the urban populace. It was also agreed that future relations between the US and Egypt would publicly eschew phrases such as “re-establishing democratic processes” but privately there would be an understanding that the pre-conditions for democratic government did not exist. Both the CIA and Nasser were in agreement on Israel, for Nasser’s talk of war with Israel was irrelevant. Much more of a priority was British occupation of the Suez Canal Zone. Nasser’s enemy was Britain. The US would assist Nasser by not opposing the coup. Right up to the day of the coup 23 July 1952, the CIA station operatives stayed in very close contact with the members of the Free Officers.

### Coup

The Free Officers were all from the bottom of the army, under 35 years old and all from lower echelons of Egyptian society. Despite their opposition to the monarchy and the presence of Britain they lacked credibility. Major General Muhammed Naguib who was a hero of the war in Palestine, was won by the Free Officers sometime between when he resigned (which was refused) in protest of what took place in Palestine and in 1951 and when Hussein Serri Amer, widely thought to be corrupt, was made head of the Coast Guard.

By mid-July 1952 the King was looking to crush the opposition within the army by dissolving an officer’s club on 16<sup>th</sup> July 1952 and threatening to place dissenters under arrest. Sensing a purge would be taking place imminently the Command Committee of the Free Officers decided August 2<sup>nd</sup> 1952 would be the date of the coup. But events led to this being changed. On 19<sup>th</sup> July 1952 Major General Muhammed Naguib heard from one of the cabinet ministers that the government had a list of the leaders of the Free Officers and was planning to arrest them. At the same time, it was leaked that a new cabinet was being formed with the Free Officers enemy Hussain Sirri Amer as Minister of War.

The Free Officers plans were brought forward to the night of 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1952. The final meeting took place at Khaled Mohi-al-Dins house in the afternoon of 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1952 where the zero hour plans were agreed. However, late in the evening the coup plot reached the Palace. An emergency meeting was conducted of army commanders, with the exception of Major General Muhammed Naguib at the army headquarters. Moving the coup forward encountered the problem that the officer in charge of signals, Anwar Sadat, had been in Sinai and only returned to Cairo the night of the 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1952, and then promptly went to the movies with his family.<sup>38</sup>

Nasser and another officer made their way to arrest the commanders at the military headquarters near the Qubba Bridge in Cairo. They gathered their forces and were on route when the commanders



meeting was finished and some of them had departed the headquarters. Upon arrival at the headquarters another battalion was approaching and suspicious of Nasser and Amer placed them under arrest. But the battalion leader was Yusuf Saddiq, another Free Officer who moved his troops early from the suburbs of Cairo. The battalion took over the army headquarters building and arrested the chief of staff. King Farouk recounted in his memoirs: *"A group of not more than 30-40 malcontent officers ... were to walk casually into army headquarters one by one, and overpower the duty officers."*<sup>39</sup>

Khalid Mohial-Din was hailed by one senior officer who tried to walk through his unit to get to his barracks. *"Please give me a car to make to the corps, because there is a mutiny!"* He smiled and said: *"Sorry we are the mutiny."*<sup>40</sup> By 6.00am, air force units loyal to the Free Officers took-off from airfields around Cairo and flew over and through central Cairo. The Free Officers took over all the barracks in Cairo via officers who were part of the Free Officers. The King who was in Alexandria lost control of the capital in just a few hours

On 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1952, at 7:30am Cairo time, Anwar Sadat, from Egypt's Broadcast House read communiqué number one in the name of General Muhammad Naguib and the Free Officers Movement. It stated the justification for the coup or the "Blessed Movement." It prompted scenes of celebration in the streets by cheering crowds. In just a few hours a handful of junior officers had taken over the army.

On 24<sup>th</sup> July 1952, the consolidated Free Officer-led army, prepared for a military advance on Alexandria, where the king was in residence. Upon their arrival in the city the officers announced a curfew that all people and vehicles on the streets of Alexandria would be fired upon. The troops in Alexandria were under the control of the Free Officers, something Sadat's broadcast had achieved. The King was expelled on the evening of 26<sup>th</sup> July 1952. He was accompanied by his family and 204 pieces of luggage and sailed into the sunset on his luxury yacht, the Mahrussa.

## Analysis

This coup example illustrates clearly the challenges plotters from the bottom of the army face in making their coup a success. Being from the bottom of the army they were limited in how large their conspiracy could be as they did not mix, due to rank with officers higher up the chain of command. This meant their coup attempt could be stopped by other elements of the army in its tracks. At every step of the way the Free Officers plot was leaked and they were forced to move forward the date of the coup.

Although the conspirators did have a General in its ranks, this coup was still a coup from the bottom as he was used as a figurehead and the coup did not have any of the mechanics from the top of the army. The conspirators possessed no soft power to make a fact and rather than making a broadcast first, they made sure they neutralised, in a matter of hours those higher than them in rank that could halt the coup.

Like all coups the plotters worked to neutralise the army that was present in the Capital Cairo. These units were really the only one that could have halted the coup as a result the plans of the Free Officers was to arrest the commanders of all the barracks present in Cairo, this would neutralise all possible coordinated response. When fighter jets flew over the skies of Cairo this showed the military in Cairo that the coup has already succeed and was over.

Those from the bottom of the army have little initial credibility, a proclamation made by some junior officers may well mean it would fail in its tracks. This is why the Free Officers made the broadcast of the coup in the name of a Major General, rather than the Free Officers, who even those within the army would not have known. To add to their credibility symbolic targets were captured in the Cairo and military jets were deployed in the capital, which showed other army personnel that this was a coup involving many soldiers (which it did not) and they were in control (although this could have been challenged). Coups from the bottom have to make multiple facts and this coup did this very effectively.

Once Cairo was under control a broadcast was made to the rest of the army in the country. Although the content of Sadat's message appeared for the public at large it was to show the army that the coup was over and the whole army should now bandwagon towards the new army leadership. This message isolated the King immediately, any response he could have made through loyal army officers evaporated as outlying garrisons quickly contacted the army headquarters giving their support to the coup. Rafah and Al-Arish on the border with the Gaza Strip gave its support soon after Sadat's broadcast as well as by Suez. The broadcast by Sadat made a fact that quickly led the rest of the army to join the coup plotters and this allowed for the overthrow of the King who had lost all support.



*Captain Gaddafi with his fellow conspirators of the Free Officers' Movement*

# Libyan Coup, 1969

The map of modern Libya was not fully drawn until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The land was fought over by the Ottomans, Italians and the British. It had comprised three ancient provinces - Cyrenaica in the east, Tripolitania in the west and Fezzan in the south. The desert Ottoman province of Cyrenaica was where the Algerian Muhammad ibn Ali Senussi founded his Sufi Muslim religious order in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The First World War saw the Senussi leader join with the Ottomans in its battle with the British and Italians. In 1915 the Senussi were decisively defeated in battle at Mersa Matruh, whereupon Ali Senussi gave up control to his cousin Sayyid Mohammed Idris, later to be known as King Idris 1. Idris promptly made peace with Britain. In 1922 in the face of Mussolini's aim of reconquering Libya the Tripolitarians offered to recognise Idris as Amir of all Libya. However, Idris went into exile shortly after in Egypt. The defeat of Italy in the second World War saw Britain bring back the exiled Sayyid Idris. In World War II, King Idris and the Senussis formed an alliance with the British in their North African campaign to try and end Italian occupation. This helped the British defeat Italy and Germany in Africa in 1943. In 1949, the British were instrumental in enabling Idris to



announce the independent Emirate of Cyrenaica and when he was also elected Emir of Tripolitania, he had begun the process of Libyan unification along federal lines.

In the early 1950s, his country desperately needed investment and Idris did deals with Britain and the US. Libya joined the Arab League in 1953 and signed a twenty-year treaty of friendship and alliance with Britain. In return for military facilities Britain promised to give Libya £1 million a year in economic aid, more than \$2 million in budgetary aid over five years and arms supplies. In September 1954 an agreement was signed with the US worth \$42 million in aid over ten years in exchange for the US being allowed to keep its airbase at Wheelus outside Tripoli.

In spite of King Idris's relationship with Britain and the USA, King Idris's government was in a mess and under threat, a secret 1960 US National Security Council Report, entitled: "US policy towards Libya" showed: *"There is little loyalty to him [the King] among the younger urban elements who do not have significant political power now, but who will have such power in the future. Although there are no political parties in Libya there are a number of loose political factions and interest groups and pan-Arab nationalism has considerable appeal, particularly to the younger urban elements. The report went on to say: "Although the British would be reluctant to intervene with force in Libya to maintain a regime favourable to their interests, they would probably do so if it seemed the only way to preserve their position."*<sup>41</sup>

## **Conspiracy**

Libya began to prosper economically once oil was discovered in 1959 and the profits began to be generated in the early 1960s. Idris used the oil money to strengthen family and tribal alliances that would support the monarchy, rather than using it to build up the economic or political apparatus of the state. Idris showed no real interest in ruling the three provinces as a unified political community and his regime had little support outside Cyrenaica. It had been weakened by endemic corruption and cronyism and growing Arab nationalist sentiment following the 1967 Arab-Israeli War.

In April 1963 King Idris abolished Libya's federal system. Both the provincial legislative assemblies and the provincial judicial systems were abolished. Doing so allowed him to concentrate economic and administrative planning at a centralized national level and all taxes and oil revenues were directed straight to the central government. As part of this reform, the "United Kingdom of Libya" was renamed the "Kingdom of Libya." This reform was not popular among many of Libya's provinces, which saw their power curtailed. According to the historian Dirk Vandewalle, this change was *"the single most critical political act during the monarchy's tenure in office."*<sup>42</sup> The reform handed far greater political power to Idris than he had held previously. The social and political tensions in Libya only got worse under the King. Ostentatious wealth side-by-side with poverty, trade union and political aspirations with no useful outlet, the tensions sustained by a residual Italian colonial presence, the collapse of the monarchies in Egypt and Iraq, the constant nationalist resentment sustained by the presence of European and American bases on Libyan land – all these combined to threaten the political structure.

## **Muammar Gaddafi**

Gaddafi began his political activities while still at secondary school in the late 1950's. He gathered around him Abdul Salam Jalloud, Hussein Sharif, Ibrahim Ibjad and Mohammed Khalil. Influenced and inspired by the speeches of Gamal Abdul Nasser, in October 1961 he organised a demonstration to protest against Syria's decision to break its agreement of unity with Egypt. This brought him to



the attention of the local authorities. Twenty students were arrested and Gaddafi was hauled up before the head of the town's ruling family, Seif al Nasser Mohammed. Gaddafi was expelled from school.

The authorities showed compassion. Seif al Nasser Mohammed found Gaddafi a place at another school in Misurata. However, because Gaddafi was 19 and too old to enroll at a secondary school an official in the municipal department in Sabha gave him a false birth certificate. At the secondary school Gaddafi's group began to grow. According to Gaddafi he had thousands of supporters at this stage. It is said that he and his colleagues were disciplined and hard working and had tapped into the sea of discontent that existed under King Idris. In spite of being known by the police and the Libyan security services, in 1963 Gaddafi enrolled in the Royal Libyan Military Academy in Benghazi. Gaddafi's plan was to join the army and subvert it.

Gaddafi, despite being a Captain and thus at the bottom of the army, set about founding a revolutionary cell within the army. His Free Officers collected information on other staff, about stocks of arms and other matters; the first meeting of his Free Officers' Movement was held in 1964. Gaddafi later commented on Egyptian television: *"we were faced with many difficulties; we had to meet during vacations and often late at night... sometimes we had to travel hundreds of miles and put up with long sessions in atrocious weather. We would often sleep in the open . . . all members of the committee had to buy private cars and to put them at the disposal of the Movement."*<sup>43</sup> Gaddafi's industry and application paid dividends.

Gaddafi was able to win a place on a four-month training course in Britain in 1966. He went first to Beaconsfield to study English, and then to the Royal Armoured Corps headquarters in Bovington, Dorset, to learn about signals, driving maintenance, and gunnery on armoured vehicles. At Beaconsfield, Gaddafi benefited from the British signal corps training that was to stand him in such good stead: the British instructors had been happy to tell him that the control of communications is a direct channel to power. As soon as he returned to Libya he used radio and a simple cryptosystem (of his own creation) to keep in touch with the various ('first' and 'second') cells, in a two-level hierarchy, that he had established. The plans had been laid over many years. Gaddafi, with some helpful training by British technicians and officers, was the best-placed revolutionary leader to take advantage of the increased political instability in the country.

## Coup

In early January 1969 Gaddafi sent a four-line 'first alert' to his fellow conspirators, urging them to check the control of soldiers, transport, arms and ammunition. Once they confirmed that this task had been done, Gaddafi set 12<sup>th</sup> March as the day for the coup against the monarchy. However, it transpired that the Egyptian singer Oum Kalthoum — able to improvise ballads about Palestine, Nasser and the Arab heroes — had scheduled a concert in Benghazi for that very night. Moreover the concert was intended as a benefit for al-Fatah, the Palestinian guerrilla group: it would be very bad form to interrupt such proceedings. And many of the regime's senior figures would be at the performance, making it much more difficult to arrest them without raising a general alarm.

Therefore Gaddafi decided to call off the coup for that night, and he visited his parents in Sirte instead. On his way back to the Gar Yunis camp at midnight, he and his two friends had a car crash: a tyre burst, the car overturned and was badly damaged. He then decided that the new day for the coup would be 24<sup>th</sup> March 1969, but alarm spread amongst the plotters when it seemed the army

was being alerted. Armoured units were brought together in the central barracks at Bab al Aziziya, and trucks from some Tripoli units were concentrated in a camp near Benghazi. Other units had their ammunition recalled while military intelligence officers kept watch at barracks and ammunition stores. Gaddafi himself later observed: *"They were taking counteraction as though they knew about our plans. That was a bad time for us."*<sup>44</sup>

Some of the Free Officers contacted Gaddafi, urging him to come to Tripoli at once. He was still resolved to take power on the night of 24<sup>th</sup> March 1969 but on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1969 King Idris was flown from Tripoli to Tobruk, near to the protection of the British forces. The plan was again cancelled, with June 5<sup>th</sup> 1969 the next proposed date. However, another Colonel, Colonel Shelhi, with his brother was planning a coup of his own and sensed that plans were afoot of Gaddafi's and managed to arrange for some of the Free Officers to be transferred to new posts and abroad for training. King Idris, having spent part of the summer in Greece where he delivered his abdication message, then journeyed to Turkey for medical treatment; he announced on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1969 that he had made a firm resolution to step down. Gaddafi, knowing that the Shelhi brothers intended to act no later than 4<sup>th</sup> September 1969, realised that he could no longer delay his coup. He set 1<sup>st</sup> September 1969 as the date for the coup. A batch of young officers was due to be posted to Britain on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, and the Free Officers knew that the postings would seriously erode their committed manpower. And there was a further reason why the Gaddafi's coup had to take place on 1<sup>st</sup> September: the plot was about to be exposed inside the army, and if Gaddafi did not act he would probably lose his chance forever. Power would fall into fresh military hands, and all his years of careful planning would have been in vain.

The date of 1<sup>st</sup> September 1969 was finalised in a series of meetings that took place over the previous week in Gaddafi's Signals Office at the Gar Yunis camp, just outside Benghazi. The coup, named "Operation Jerusalem," required that specified military and governmental installations in Benghazi and Tripoli be taken over simultaneously. The Free Officers were not ideally distributed, from Gaddafi's point of view, in Tripoli and Benghazi but he concluded nonetheless that the coup had to take place on the specified date. In any case he remained aware that some of his officer colleagues were scheduled to depart for Britain for training in connection with Libya's purchase of the Thunderbird and Rapier missile systems. Gaddafi sent Lieutenant Omar al-Meheshi to Tripoli to tell the fellow conspirators that Operation Jerusalem would proceed as planned; Gaddafi himself was to handle the Benghazi end of the operation. The plan had been refined over many months despite, or because of, the many delays and interruptions to the schedule.

An uprising in Gar Yunis Barracks would be followed by an advance of a motorised column on Benghazi whose task was to seize the radio stations, the police station and the post office, as well as senior military and government officials. Members of the royal family and the clutch of advisors around the throne were a key priority; it was useful that King Idris was still in Turkey. The Free Officers in Tripoli – Khweildi Hamidi, Abdul Munim al-Houni, Abu Bakr Yunis Jaber and Abdel Salem Jalloud – would capture the Crown Prince, with troops from the Tarhouna Barracks moving to the town centre in armoured cars to capture the key installations. A key task would also be to incapacitate the Cyrenaica Defence Force (CYDEF), an important defence ring around the monarchy.

At 2.30am on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1969 the coup finally began when King Idris was out of the country. Driving military vehicles into the cities of Tripoli and Benghazi, 70 young army officers from the bottom of the Libyan army surrounded the royal palace and other key government buildings, cutting communications and arresting top officials, including the crown prince. They occupied

airports, police depots, radio stations and government offices in Tripoli and Benghazi. Gaddafi took control of the Berka barracks in Benghazi and with a small number of other low-ranking officers with only a few revolvers and forty-eight rounds of ammunition took over the radio station, while Omar Meheisha occupied Tripoli barracks and Jalloud seized the city's anti-aircraft batteries. The capture of the Kings Palace and government buildings resulted in other army units quickly rallying in support of the coup. The king's personal guard put up only token resistance, and within two hours the essentially bloodless coup had come to a conclusion. The Chief of Staff, Abdul Aziz Shelhi, frustrated in his own ambitions, was found by mid-morning after spending the night in a swimming pool.

Considering the scale of the social and political upheaval there was little bloodshed. In one of the most important battles of the night, the CYDEF unit in Gurnada suffered one fatality and fifteen wounded. Gaddafi arrived at the Benghazi radio station at 6.00am, martial music was playing on the radio from Tripoli, Libya had effectively changed hands.

At 6.30am Gaddafi went on the air anonymously to deliver 'Communiqué One,' partly adlibbed and partly based on hurriedly scribbled notes, he made the announcement in the name of the whole army, despite not having the support of anyone higher than him in rank: *"People of Libya. In response to your own will, fulfilling your most heartfelt wishes, answering your incessant demands for change and regeneration and your longing to strive towards these ends, listening to your incitement to rebel, your armed forces have undertaken the over throw of the reactionary and corrupt regime, the stench of which has sickened and horrified us all. At a single blow your gallant army has toppled these idols and has destroyed their images. By a single stroke it has lightened the long dark night in which the Turkish domination was followed first by Italian rule, then by this reactionary and decadent regime, which was no more than a hotbed of extortion, faction, treachery and treason."*<sup>45</sup>

It was not until 8<sup>th</sup> September, when Gaddafi promoted himself to Colonel and commander-in-chief of the armed forces, that it became clear who the main coup leader was. Until that time public statements had been made by Colonel Saad al-Din Bushwairib, a temporary figurehead leader of the new regime. It would be another four months before the other eleven members of the Revolutionary Command Council were announced.

## Analysis

This coup example highlights the challenges conspirators face from the bottom of the army. The fact that this coup succeeded at all is remarkable, considering the small number of officers involved. Although mutineers are handicapped at each step of their attempt to seize power, starting with their limited ability to conspire. In the case of Gaddafi, he was able to openly do this, with both the monarchy and the large British military presence in Libya.

Gaddafi understood that making an effective broadcast was central to the coups success. With his background in signals, he was able to use this to mobilise his conspirators and coordinate in a way that led to the rapid arrest of potential loyalists. When he made his first broadcast, all the facilities were under their control, so no counter broadcast could be made, but interestingly in the first radio address, a few hours after the coup it was still not clear who the leader of the coup was. Unlike general's, sergeants have little initial credibility, a proclamation made by a group of junior officers will not be sufficient in and of itself to make a coup. Gaddafi announced the coup attempt in the name of the entire armed forces, keeping his identity secret until after the coup had succeeded. This

is the Achilles heel with a coup from the bottom, that an unknown soldier making an announcement would expose them of not having the support of senior officers and the rest of the army and would threaten the success of the coup.

Gaddafi used a broadcast to make a fact and hid his hand behind the coup, until well after the coup. This coup like the others shows that coordination is about broadcasting one's intent in order to make a fact. Soldiers from the bottom of the army have to make fact at multiple levels in order to succeed; this is why coups from the bottom only succeed 32% of the time.

### **CASE STUDY- Was Britain Behind Gaddafi's Coup?**

In December 1951 Libya became independent under a hereditary monarchy. Libya joined the Arab League in 1953 and then signed a twenty-year treaty of friendship and alliance with Britain. In return for military facilities Britain promised to give Libya £1 million a year in economic aid, more than \$2 million in budgetary aid over five years and arms supplies. In spite of King Idris's relationship with Britain and the USA, both governments were anxious about Idris's standing in Libya. The British backed King was losing his grip, Britain needed a new face to hold onto power if its interests were to be preserved. The new face would have to be capable of appealing to the new mood sweeping through the Arab world, that of Nasserism and Arab nationalism. Was Gaddafi the man for the job?

The Libyan army was small, about 5000 men, and the officers were trained by the British. According to a British non-commissioned officer quoted by David Blundy & Andrew Lycett in their biography on Gaddafi, Gaddafi was protected at the academy by the Libyan commander in chief. The strange thing is that the British military advisers were well aware that Gaddafi was planning some form of subversion. The British adviser's role was to keep an eye on the Libyan army and they made regular reports to the British embassy. Another officer Colonel Ted Lough is reported as saying that as early as 1965 he believed the conditions in Libya were ripe for revolution and his main suspect was Gaddafi. Lough made a series of reports on Gaddafi to the British intelligence in Libya, the commercial attaché at the British embassy in Tripoli. Five years before Gaddafi was to make his coup he was on file with the British government as a key suspect.

According to various reports Libya after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war was ripe for a coup. In 1969 it is reported that at least three different groups were preparing to make a coup. Former Libyan Prime Minister Bakoush who resigned in 1968 said that he heard about Gaddafi's coup attempt two months before it took place. At the time he was the Libyan ambassador in Paris. He maintains that he went to the American embassy and talked to the CIA station chief. He also claims that he went to see King Idris in Turkey and told him of the plan. Idris refused to go back to Libya. In fact the King had already decided that he would resign. On holiday in Greece and Turkey, Idris called the head of the Libyan parliament and the head of the upper house to Greece and handed them his letter of abdication.

According to Sir Peter Wakefield then counselor and consul-general at the British embassy in Benghazi, the British government also knew of the King's intention to abdicate! The choice facing Britain was either to accept an orderly transfer of power, with the successor given King Idris's seal of approval, or a staged coup that would be seen as having no link with the previous government. Given that the King was unpopular, it made sense therefore to break with this association.

Accordingly, with the King on holiday plans were laid for the coup. The coup place on 1 September 1969 and by all accounts was something of a farce. The first foreigner to know about the coup was Peter Wakefield who just happened to bump into a group of men wearing fatigues and carrying guns at 5:00 am near the seafront. Thus London was the first to know of the change in government. Britain took no action to support Idris. The British Foreign Secretary at the time, Michael Stewart claimed that the Foreign Office was concerned about the instability of King Idris's regime, but had no knowledge of a coup. This runs contrary to the reports given by military personnel, such as Colonel Lough.



Four months after the coup a group of army officers, led by Colonels Adam Hawaz and Musa Ahmed, attempted to take power away from Gadaffi. There is strong evidence which suggests that Gadaffi was tipped off about the coup attempt by Western intelligence agencies. John Cooley in his book *Libyan Sandstorm*, points the finger at the CIA. A second attempt in June of 1970 was also uncovered.

A third attempt planned for March 1971 is described by Patrick Seale and Maureen McConville in the “Hilton Assignment”. They relate how an attempt by Omar al Shehli, former counsellor to King Idris exiled in Geneva, tried to hire a British security firm headed by a retired British army colonel, David Stirling, to make a coup against Gadaffi. According to Seale and McConville, Stirling was warned by the British secret service to drop the coup attempt, which he did. At the same time Stirling’s associate James Kent was approached by Major al Houni, one of Gadaffi’s closest colleagues in the Revolutionary Command Council, to assassinate Omar al Shehli.

These incidents demonstrate there was a Western, and in particular British veto on any attempt to topple Gadaffi.



*Blaise Compaoré, Thomas Sankara and Jerry Rawlings, in their successful 1983 Coup*

# Ghana Coup, May 1979

The coup attempt of May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1979, was the first of Ghana's several coups to come from the bottom of the military hierarchy. Although the 1978 coup from the top had promised change, those at the bottom of the hierarchy felt that the situation within the military had not got any better.

## Conspiracy

The target of the coup attempt was the Supreme Military Council 11 (SMCII) military junta, Ghana's third consecutive military government since the end of democratic rule in 1972. The SMCII had come to power a little less than a year earlier, capitalizing on the feeling within the officer corps that military rule had been corrosive to the institution. After a series of half-steps, the SMCII announced that it would hand over power to an elected multi-party democracy by July 1979. On New Year's Day 1979, the ban on political parties was lifted and 29 political parties were formed, six of which survived the campaign in the spring, as Ghana prepared to hold its first democratic elections in a decade.

The government was also unpopular because it had inherited an economy that was in extremely bad shape. Inflation had climbed to the record high of 116% in the year before the junta took power and remained quite high afterwards. The currency was significantly overvalued, economic growth was negative and the government had very little revenue. Most consumer goods were imported and in short supply, largely impossible to obtain outside the black market.

Not only was the economy collapsing; it was doing so at a time when Ghana's main commodity exports—cocoa, gold, and timber were fetching record-high prices on the global market. To the average citizen, this appeared to be clear evidence of corruption and malfeasance at the very top. Because citizens thought corruption was the cause of the economic slowdown, government austerity measures proved wildly unpopular. Unable to obtain outside assistance, the government devalued the currency by 58% in the summer of 1978. In November 1978, when strike activity was at its most intense, 30,000 Ghanaians were on strike, including utility workers, who turned off the electricity and civil servants, who brought the bureaucracy to a standstill.

As it had with the democracy movement, the junta first tried and failed to crush the union by force. They declared a state of emergency on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 1978 allowing anybody to be detained without charge or trial and declaring strikes illegal. When this failed to solve the problem, the junta was forced to the negotiating table. It abandoned many austerity measures and cancelled the state of emergency after two months, bringing an end to the general strike. Industrial unrest continued after this point, albeit on a smaller scale.

By May 1979, the junta had lost legitimacy among civilians and was resented by the military rank and file. That said, nobody anticipated a coup attempt. With the first round of elections in a decade scheduled for June 1979, there was no appetite among civilians for anything that might derail the scheduled transition from military rule. Senior members of the military did not believe a challenge was likely either. Officers were generally happier with the junta than enlisted men and so were largely focused on managing the upcoming transition. Although officers knew that the conditions of enlisted men were bad, they did not understand how deep the resentment held by soldiers was. As a result, everybody was surprised when Ghana's first attempted mutiny began.

### **CASE STUDY: Ghana's History of Coups**

Ghana, from 1966 – 1983 suffered from six successful coup attempts and four failed ones. These coups were against multi-party democracies, one-party states, and military governments. Ghana has also been unique in that multiple coup attempts from the top, middle, and bottom of the military hierarchy took place. Ghana has always attracted considerable scholarly interest because of its historical role as the first independent country in sub-Saharan Africa. Independence from Britain in 1957 was marked with a six-day official celebration with a large number of international dignitaries in attendance, a rarity for Africa in that era. As journalist Martin Meredith said, *"No other African state was launched with so much promise for the future. Ghana embarked on independence as one of the richest tropical countries in the world, with an efficient civil service, an impartial judiciary and a prosperous middle class. Its parliament was well established, with able politicians in both government and opposition."*<sup>46</sup>

Ghana's first prime minister was Kwame Nkrumah, leader of Ghana's independence movement. At a time when there were only 8,000 black high school graduates in all of sub-Saharan Africa, Nkrumah had two master's degrees from the University of Pennsylvania. He also had already served as prime minister for six years as part of an unusual experiment in self-rule whereby the British government allowed a democratically elected legislature and a period of tutelary democracy.

Nkrumah was ambitious, a devoted pan-Africanist who saw himself not just as the leader of Ghana but also as the future president of a United States of Africa. Despite his ties to the West, he was a socialist who set about using the country's wealth to transform and bring the benefits of modernity to the nation. Reaching out to the Eastern Bloc he attempted to industrialize the country and to diversify the economy from its dependence on cocoa exports. He built schools, clinics, roads, and a new port. He also made sure the country acquired the trappings of modernity, such as a national airline (at a time when there were few if any black pilots flying in

the world), a major hydroelectric dam, and a military (with navy and air force) large enough to allow Ghana to participate on the world stage.

But Ghana's early promise soon turned to disappointment. By 1964, it had become a one-party dictatorship, in which Nkrumah was declared president for life and opposition members were imprisoned without trial. The government's development schemes bore little to no economic fruit: the new industries failed, agricultural policy was a disaster, government owned corporations were inefficient at best, corruption among senior government officials was rife, and when the world price of cocoa slumped, the country became increasingly indebted. Nkrumah moved closer to the Soviet bloc, causing even greater alarm in the West.

There was also increasing tension between Nkrumah and the armed forces, who objected to his direct interference in what they saw as military affairs, his efforts to politicize the military and the creation of a separate praetorian guard. After years of tension and several aborted plots, in 1966 members of the police and military launched a coup from the middle of the army and overthrew Nkrumah while he was out of the country, en route to an attempt to negotiate peace in the Vietnam War.

For the next 15 years Ghana lurched between civilian and military rule. Three of the civilian governments and three of the military governments were terminated by a successful coup. All of these governments had to deal with the same challenges as had Nkrumah. The split between Nkrumah's socialists and centre-right politicians with ties to business and traditional authorities continued to structure civilian politics and even had an impact on military rule. Every head of state since Nkrumah had to grapple with the challenges posed by an economy overly reliant on a few export commodities whose prices fluctuated wildly. Tensions between ethnic groups also played an important role in the country's politics, although the competition between Ashanti and Ewe ethnic groups coloured so much of Ghana's history but did not emerge as a significant cleavage until the early 1970s. As elsewhere, urban-rural divisions and intergenerational divisions also affected Ghana's regular politics. All these factors led to 15 years of coups and counter coups in Ghana.

## Coup

In 1979, according to one scholar, *"the armed forces were pregnant with dissent"* and military intelligence was having trouble containing all potential challenges. Although multiple conspiracies were being hatched, the conspiracy that acted first was small and poorly organized, led by a young air force officer, flight-lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings. Unusually for an officer, even one of junior rank, Rawlings frequently fraternized with enlisted men and was generally popular among them. Chatting with soldiers about their lives, Rawlings would gradually introduce political topics, such as military corruption and its impact on the country, then move from general dissatisfaction with the state of the military and the country to an argument that something needed to change. Ideology was not Rawlings' strong suit, but that made his argument more appealing to his audience.

Rawlings was able to recruit a small number of enlisted men who met on a farm on the outskirts of the air force station in the capital. Rawlings assured them they were part of a larger group and he was connected to others in the army who felt the same way. The conspirators' original plan was to gain control of a jet fighter, which Rawlings would then pilot, but they were unable to get the cooperation of the soldiers in charge of arming the jets and were unsure about how next to proceed. Nonetheless they decided to strike anyway, confident that they would soon be joined by large numbers of unhappy enlisted men.

The coup began on the night of May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1979 at 8.00pm, Rawlings met with four other conspirators and the challenge for Rawlings was to mount a coup attempt with no forces under his command and very few enlisted men in his conspiracy. The challenges were twofold:



- Obtaining firepower, and
- Convincing others to join his cause

Since guns and ammunition were tightly controlled, the conspirators were entirely unarmed at the start of the mutiny. The first step of their plan, therefore, was to use guile, theft, and coercion to obtain weapons and armoured cars. This was a laborious process that took all night. First, they stole two boxes of ammunition, and then waited until 2.00am for a senior guard at the air force armoury to fall asleep, after which sympathetic guards were able to steal ten rifles and ten submachine guns for them. After this, they stole a car (because they lacked any form of transport of their own) and after some elaborate trickery, were able to commandeer two armoured cars and their crews, even though the men operating the armoured cars were not willing participants and had to be directed at gunpoint.

Next, the mutineers attempted to take control of the armoured regiment. Rawlings knew many members of this unit and likely believed they would be sympathetic to his cause. Success at this step would have brought all of the armored cars in the military into the mutiny, making them a formidable force. Members of the armored unit were not eager to join the mutiny, however. When Rawlings arrived in an armored car and told a member of the regiment to sound the alarm so all soldiers would assemble, presumably so he could address them as a group, the soldier claimed that the siren was broken. Rawlings then sent his right-hand man, Newton Gatsiko, back to the air force station to retrieve the siren there.

While Rawlings was able to obtain a siren, he did not get a chance to sound it because he was interrupted by the unit commander, Major Abubakar Sulemana. Major Sulemana had driven to the unit in his personal car, dressed only in a pair of shorts and a sleeveless t-shirt, to find out why the official duty vehicle that Rawlings had seized earlier in the night had not arrived at his house. Although Sulemana had no idea that a mutiny was under way, he noticed that an armored car was not at its assigned location and was beginning to ask the driver why when Rawlings (hitherto unnoticed) suddenly interjected himself into the interrogation from the armored car, grandly informing Major Sulemana that he had taken control of the unit and was placing him under arrest.

Major Sulemana responded by quickly driving away. To his surprise, Rawlings, whom he considered a friend, opened fire at his escaping vehicle. Sulemana drove back to his house to retrieve a side arm, with Rawlings in pursuit. The major beat a hasty retreat by diving out a window at the back of his house, spraining his ankle, then climbed over a fence into a neighbouring farm. As he did, he heard the sound of gunfire, although the gunner had intentionally fired high and over the house to avoid casualties. Sulemana limped back to his unit, where he organized a counterattack.

Seizing the initiative, Sulemana sounded the unit's alarm (which appears to have been working after all) to assemble his men, distributing arms and ammunition so they could defend the unit from further attack. He left his subordinates in charge while he returned home to quickly bathe and put on his uniform. As he was about to return, the mutineers attacked the unit but were repulsed. Gunfire was exchanged and a few rebels captured. Sulemana informed the army commander over the telephone that he was not going to wait for a third attack by Rawlings but was moving on the air force station. He organized his men into two troops, supported by four armored cars, and sent his captains to secure the rebels' location.

Over the course of the mutiny, the rebels had captured a number of serving and retired officers and now had at least ten officers held hostage (along with an unknown number of women and children from their families) at the air force base. While the hostage taking had started accidentally, it now provided the mutineers with protection.

While Rawlings was lecturing his hostages, forces from the regiment arrived and surrounded the air force base. There were clashes between the two forces until Major Salemana arrived, still hoping his friendship with Rawlings would allow him to resolve the incident peacefully, he approached the mutineers on foot, using a walking stick and accompanied by only two officers. He informed Rawlings he was under arrest and that it was up to him whether he wanted to come dead or alive. One of the hostages, a retired officer who had been involved in the very first coup in the country, advised Rawlings that if he surrendered he might live to fight another day. Rawlings agreed to surrender peacefully, and his men put down their arms.

## **Analysis**

This coup attempt illuminates two different aspects of coups from the bottom: the difficulties inherent in trying to successfully mount a mutiny and the importance of shaping beliefs and expectations even when the incumbent is highly unpopular and there would appear to be a strong demand for a coup. This coup demonstrates the theory that coups are like elections does a poor job of predicting both the outcome and the dynamics of the May 1979 coup attempt. If preferences are the most important factor, then Rawlings should have attracted a large number of enlisted men to his cause and succeeded easily. Instead, nobody joined the original conspirators, and the attempt was defeated easily.

That Rawlings failed is unsurprising, given that this was a coup from the bottom, there had been no prior similar attempts in the country, and Rawlings never captured the radio station or any other instrument of public information to make a broadcast. Once again the challengers were unwilling to cause substantial casualties, even though this cost them significant tactical advantage.

With no history of prior successful mutinies in Ghana, initial expectations within the military were stacked against the rebels. Once the coup was under way, the challengers failed to change these expectations by making a public broadcast or capturing symbolic targets. As a result, the mutiny did not attract new members, not even among men who were actively plotting to overthrow the incumbent. The failure of the mutiny to grow surprised the rebels, who had believed that the enlisted men constituted a dry tinderbox of resentment that would go up in flames with just a small spark. However, enlisted men thought the mutiny would fail, believed that other enlisted men felt the same way, and acted accordingly. Instead of being greeted eagerly by the rank and file, the mutineers encountered obstructionism. They had to use coercion to gain control of their two armored cars and to direct the soldiers inside at gunpoint. Similarly, upon arrival at the armored regiment, Rawlings was told, apparently falsely, that the unit's alarm was broken. The unwillingness of soldiers to join, based on their scepticism that the mutiny could succeed, was a rational response to the coup attempt from the bottom. The penalty for supporting a failed mutiny would be high, and each soldier felt that the coup could succeed only if it had widespread participation, something that it would appear was not forthcoming.

Consistent with other coups both sides acted to reduce bloodshed, even if this created tactical disadvantage. The rebel's decision not to open fire at the armored regiment, either upon entry or

when exiting, was costly. If they had killed the unit's officers, loyalists would have had a hard time organizing a response to the mutiny. Even when shots were fired, such as at Major Sulemana's house, the gunner intentionally shot high, over the roof of the house. On the loyalist side, Major Sulemana arrived to negotiate at the air base unarmed and on foot, exposing himself to harm in order to de-escalate tensions. The mutineers responded by surrendering rather than fighting to the last man, even though they knew they might be executed.

The dynamics and outcome of the coup attempt were clearly shaped by the fact that it was a mutiny. Unlike during a coup from the middle, the conspirators faced serious logistical difficulties. They had to steal and coerce to get the bare minimum of guns, ammunition, and transportation to start their coup, which caused delay and created numerous points at which their challenge might have been stopped, even purely by chance.

Rawlings two and a half years later struck again on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1981. He used almost the same strategy as he had used in his first unsuccessful coup attempt on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1979. Although on this occasion he captured the radio station and declared a revolution. As a result, Rawlings was able to create expectations favourable to his coup, something he failed to do in 1979, when the broadcasting facility was not even captured and no proclamation was made.



# Social Media & Coups

Coordination is most fundamentally a matter of information and expectations. The critical role played by mass media in many coup attempts naturally raises the question of whether the widespread use of the internet and social media like Facebook and Twitter that have been credited with playing important roles in political upheavals such as the Arab Spring will impact coups.

In a coup attempt, the goal of the challenger is to entirely dominate public information. That means gaining control over the major broadcast channel and shutting down all others or forcing them to repeat the same message. The broadcast becomes common knowledge when it gains such widespread distribution that everybody not only has heard or seen it but can assume that everybody else has and that everybody knows that everybody else has. Even though new information technologies the Internet and social media have proven to be important resources for civilian political dissidents, they will not fundamentally transform the way coups are conducted. So while the manipulation of information and expectations is central to coup making, we are unlikely to see the place of mass media broadcasts replaced by tweets any time soon.

Social media are very different from radio and television. They do not create common knowledge in a short time frame and therefore cannot alone make a fact. A coup that exclusively used social media to disseminate information, one in which the challengers announced their coup attempt by sending a tweet from the official government Twitter handle and posting the news on the official national Facebook page would struggle to

*“Social media are very different from radio and television. They do not create common knowledge in a short time frame and therefore cannot alone make a fact. A coup that exclusively used social media to disseminate information, one in which the challengers announced their coup attempt by sending a tweet from the official government Twitter handle and posting the news on the official national Facebook page would struggle to make a fact”*



make a fact. As unlike the morning news, it is unlikely that large numbers of people would at the same time see the twitter and Facebook announcement that the incumbent has been overthrown and such messages definitely would not reach the level of universality necessary to generate common knowledge and therefore would not endanger coordination. In many ways social media are best understood as variants of small scale traditional print media, much like a small newspaper printed out of a basement.

A radio or television broadcast is credible in part because it is costly: it requires having or seizing control over a broadcasting facility and usually involves a broadcast by an identifiable individual who could be thrown into jail if the coup attempt failed. An announcement on a government webpage or government twitter handle could easily be the work of hacker and therefore is too cheap a gesture to have much effect.

In addition, given that social media are designed to increase the number of voices speaking at once, the only way to attain dominance over social media would be to shut them down, so that the coup announcement was the only message appearing on social media in the country. Even then, the government could use traditional broadcast media to broadcast a counterclaim, one that would become common knowledge and therefore could push military actors to coordinate around the government.

However, this use of social media does not lend itself well to coup making. Membership in a coup conspiracy is not just an act of dissent; it is an act of treason. These conspiracies are not public, and membership is by invitation only. A coup attempt cannot be organized over Facebook, using the real names or even traceable pseudonyms of those involved, because it is a secret and dangerous affair. Not even mutinous conspiracies would fare well on social media, even though a mutiny is the closest type of coup to a revolution. Soldiers are already forbidden from discussing politics in the mess hall, so soldiers who joined a Facebook page devoted to airing grievances over pay would find themselves facing disciplinary proceedings very quickly.

The other major use of social media has been to publicize dissident activity, bringing it to the attention of the world press. This is the primary way that Twitter has been used during protests; it informs the world media of events rather than being a mobilization tool within the country. But a successful coup does not require the sympathy of the international public. Coups are over quickly, and there is a substantial lag between when tweets on protests begin to appear and when the international media notices the story. It took weeks before the US media paid any attention to tweets about protests in Tunisia. In short, coups and revolutions differ enough in their key tactical elements that the aspects of social media that have been quite helpful to dissidents are unlikely to be of much help to coup makers.

Any discussion on the effects of new communication technologies during a coup attempt assumes that domestic phone networks and the internet remain functional during the coup attempt. In many coup attempts, the challengers disable domestic and international service. In the future this could include domestic mobile phone networks and internet services, especially with increasing nations creating 'kill switches' that allow the government to disable these networks in times of national emergency. For these reasons then coup makers are unable to replace mass media with social media in the conduct of a coup. Until social media attains the penetration and universality of the traditional broadcast media, it cannot create common knowledge and therefore cannot be used to make a fact during a coup.



# Islamic Revival & Coups

This booklet is about coups generally, but it is important this discussion is analysed in the context of Islamic revival. Professor David Fromkin, expert on Economic History at the University of Chicago summed up the situation after WW1: *"Massive amounts of the wealth of the old Ottoman Empire were now claimed by the victors. But one must remember that the Islamic empire had tried for centuries to conquer Christian Europe and the power brokers deciding the fate of those defeated people were naturally determined that these countries should never be able to organize and threaten Western interests again. With centuries of mercantilist experience, Britain and France created small, unstable states whose rulers needed their support to stay in power. The development and trade of these states were controlled and they were meant never again to be a threat to the West. These external powers then made contracts with their puppets to buy Arab resources cheaply, making the feudal elite enormously wealthy while leaving most citizens in poverty."*<sup>47</sup>

Throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century European nations competed with each other in conquering territories, enslaving the host population and stripping the conquered people of their mineral resources. In November 1917 when the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia, Lenin's communists discovered amongst the documents of the czarist foreign ministry a secret document that outlined plans to carve up the Ottoman Empire after the war (WW1) and the distribution of its constituent parts to the victorious allies. The details were worked out in February 1916 before the beginning of the war. The Sykes-Picot Agreement was a secret understanding between the governments of Britain and France defining their respective spheres of post-World War I influence and control in the Middle East. The region was carved up and given boundaries, dividing the people in the region who had lived as one nation for over 1000 years. Historian Mehran Kamrava outlined the geopolitics at the time, *"It is here that geo-political boundaries clash violently with demographic realities, constructing a number of societal*

*problems, many of which have not been resolved to this day. In some cases this was due to historical ignorance, but in others it was a deliberate choice to weaken the occupied people. France divided Lebanon and Syria against religious demographics in this very fashion to guard against anti-French resistance rallied under Sunni Muslim solidarity. The British created Transjordan from the western portion of Palestine and gave it an entirely separate government under the Hashemites. The national boundaries created during this time visibly outline those still seen today, and are the source of much conflict due to mistakes made in their drawing.”<sup>48</sup>*

During the colonial era most of the colonial nations made use of elements from the conquered territories to deal with the day-to-day running of colonies. In the post WW2 era although many of the conquered territories were given so called independence, an architecture that was nurtured over a generation was left in place ensuring the colonised nations remain linked to their masters. To maintain superiority, control and influence over the region, the West placed corrupt leaders into positions of power and supported the overthrow of those that were not seen as favourable. This has also served to keep the host populations at bay, in return for militarisation, power and personal wealth for the elite. The struggle to control access to important resources such as oil has even led to competition between the West. The links between the British and the house of Saud are no secret, it was the British Empire that brought the Saud family into power and provided them with the arms and technical help to dismember from the Khilafah. Similarly, the US brought Gamal Abdul Nasser to power overthrowing the pro-British King Farook, during the same period in Operation Ajax both Britain and the US collaborated in bringing the Shah to power over-throwing the democratically elected Mohammed Mossadeq. In Iraq Miles Copeland, a veteran CIA operative, through a number of his publications exposed the coups the US initiated which include bringing the Baath party to power in Iraq.

Today the Muslim rulers, western support for them, the artificial nation states and western influence over the pillars of power in the Muslim lands is to ensure real change never materialises. This is why the west has had no problem working and supporting despots, monarchies and dictators as they all maintain the status quo and ensure real change does not take place. This is why any group or people working for real change will need to have a strategy of removing this obstacle as it will act as a rock, in the way of real change ever taking place. In 1924 when the Khilafah was dismembered hundreds of groups were established in the subsequent two decades to reunify the Muslim world, deal with the entrenched colonialism and once again implement Islam in light of the collapse of Islamic rule. Groups emerged to take on colonialism through resistance (*jihad*) whilst others worked on individual reform due to the laxity in practicing Islam. There are potentially thousands of groups that could be assessed in light of the context of Islamic revival, but this section will review some of the key groups and movements, which are representative of the category of groups based on their understanding of revival, their methodology, what is change and how to actualise it. Revival in this context is preparing the ummah for Islamic governance, removing the obstacles that stand in its way and establishing an Islamic polity.

### **The Muslim Brotherhood**

The Muslim Brotherhood was established by Hasan al Bannain 1928 and sought to reconstruct an Islamic society due to the absence of the Islamic state. This was to be achieved through reforming the individual, followed by the family, society and state, ending with the establishing of the Khilafah. Though the re-establishment of Khilafah was stated as the group's ultimate goal, it played a minor role in the public discourse of al-Banna.

Al-Banna viewed working against the established politics as not necessary as it remained under occupation due to colonialism. But according to his *ijtihad* the root of the problem the Muslims faced was the moral decline of society. His group emerged during a series of failed initiatives that sought to elect a Khalefah. For al-Banna Islamic revival was not in just the mere reconstitution of a Khalefah but the necessity of a universal Islamic political system within the emerging nation state framework.

The Muslim Brotherhood was not born out of design but more due to the zeal of a group of youth touched by the charismatic al-Banna who was attempting to reconnect Islam with wider society. The Brotherhood's development was carried by the ideas of its leaders as they developed, rather than any collectively agreed political programme. The public call of the Brotherhood as it evolved was based upon independence from the colonialists in the homeland and once achieved the establishment of the Khilafah in this homeland. But regardless of these aims, al-Banna was individualistic in his approach, focusing mainly on personal and social reform rather than political programmes or any schemes for revolution.

Al-Banna viewed the Egyptian political system, despite being a monarchy in his day as essentially Islamic, with the problem laying in the implementation rather than in the principles. This is why he viewed attacking the regime as incorrect as it was essentially Islamic. This non-confrontational approach effectively maintained the status quo, rather than challenged it. Al-Banna believed the regime was unable to implement Islam due to being occupied by the colonialists.

As the 1940's were coming to an end widespread political unrest in Egypt with regular acts of violence being directed against the British were taking place. This period saw the relationship between the Brotherhood and the government develop into open confrontation, ending with the ordered dissolution of the group by the Egyptian prime minister, due to the belief they were preparing a revolution. The prime minister was assassinated on December 28<sup>th</sup> 1948 by a young member of the Brotherhood acting independently. By this stage the situation of the Brotherhood had spiralled beyond al-Banna's control. On 12<sup>th</sup> February 1949, al-Banna was shot dead, most likely in retaliation, though the culprits were never identified. This was a big blow to the Brotherhood as al-Banna was a charismatic leader, who would be difficult to replace.

The revolution that saw the overthrow of the monarchy by the Free Officers movement in 1952 had some support from within the Brotherhood, several of its members had ties with the officers who undertook the coup as they fought together in the war for Palestine in 1948. But once in power Nasser arrested Brotherhood members and their treatment has been well documented. It was in this context that the only other personality comparable to Hassan al-Banna emerged. Sayyid Qutb joined the movement in the early 1950's, having graduated from the same university as al-Banna, he was however not a product of the Brotherhood's culture when he joined them.

The Muslim Brotherhood with Qutb faced a new reality. Al-Banna's *ijtihad* (legal reasoning) held that foreign occupation was the major issue and didn't allow societal reform. The government was a victim of the circumstances, but according to Qutb, Egypt has been liberated from colonialism, there was nothing preventing the full implementation of Islam. It was these ideas that led Qutb along with many other Brotherhood members to spend significant periods of their lives in prison, facing brutal treatment. Qutb produced his seminal works in prison – the first being a complete exegesis of the Qur'an and the second 'milestones,' which is attributed to Nasser's decision to have him sentenced to death in 1966. Qutb however stuck largely to al-Banna's method of individual reform,



but recognised the situation had changed in that Egypt was no longer colonised, but was independent.

After Qutb, the Muslim Brotherhood reconciled itself by working within the status quo, considering Egyptian politics as essentially Islamic. They therefore did not have a problem entering the Egyptian parliament in 1987 and voted to keep Hosni Mubarak in power. By 2001 the Khilafah ceased to officially be the stated goal of the group. When the Arab spring revolutions began, the Brotherhood refused to support them initially, though they were quick to engage with the regime in negotiations when invited to do so. The Muhhamed Morsi government saw the Brotherhood reach the seat of power after nearly 80 years of work. But once in power the brotherhood turned against all of their stated positions, including 'Islam is the solution,' whilst the Egyptian people wanted radical change, the Brotherhood government spoke of gradualism, when Islamic economics was discussed, the Brotherhood spoke of not scaring foreign investors, when Islamic foreign policy was discussed, the Brotherhood spoke of maintaining a moderate image. Contrary to the radical change al-Banna envisaged, today's brotherhood resembles the party politics declared *haraam* (unlawful) by al-Banna.

Any revolution or coup against the agents maintaining the status quo never formed part of the Brotherhood's policies as it recognised the legitimacy of successive Egyptian governments. Its focus on individual reform meant the status quo has remained in place and despite working for 80 years to bring change, it was the Egyptian people, not the Brotherhood who initiated the Arab Spring. Details of the Brotherhood's Khilafah, its policies etc are hard to come by as this is an ideal, an end goal, with individual reform being the immediate goal. In this context, a coup to overthrow the government does not form part of the Muslim Brotherhoods strategy to bring real change.

Numerous groups have since emerged who have focused on individual reform to revive the Ummah. For them change begins from the individual, until it encompasses the whole of Muslim society. Critical mass is achieved when enough people in society are reformed which leads to change overall. In this context, the existing system would become untenable not requiring a coup. This understanding of revival has no place for coups and doesn't recognise the artificial barriers standing in the way for real change.

### **Hizb ut Tahrir**

Sheikh Taquideen an-Nabhani established Hizb ut Tahrir in 1952 in the midst of the *Nakba* (catastrophe) and creation of the Zionist entity over Palestine. The goals of the group, as developed by an-Nabhani, went completely against the grain of political debate at the time as Arab nationalism and socialism were considered the only serious solutions for the region by the people. An-Nabhani, after the establishment of the Hizb applied for the formal recognition as a political party to the Jordanian government. Its goals were very clear and remain to this day – the resumption of the Islamic way of life, though the establishment of the Khilafah upon the methodology of the Prophethood that implements Islam and conveys its intellectual leadership to the world. The application was promptly rejected as it refused to acknowledge heredity rule and rejected Arab nationalism. The clampdown on the party was swift and became normal practice with the regimes across in the Middle East.

Hizb utTahrir identifies the decline of the Muslims as intellectual, and saw the situation after 1924 as a result of the decline that had engulfed the Ummah. Reversing this decline, required revival, which was meticulously outlined by Nabhani in two detailed publications – *Mefahim Hizb ut-tahrir*

(Concepts of Hizb ut tahrir) and *At-Takattul-Hizb* (Party Structure). The personality of individuals for Nabhani was of no concern, unlike many of the other groups that worked for revival.

For the Hizb, society in the Muslim lands needed to be prepared for the establishment of the Khilafah – a clear goal of the Hizb, and then revived, which was viewed as intellectual elevation in the long term. Muslim society needed to be infused with the ideology and when this was widespread and public opinion was created based upon public awareness the stage of taking rule would then be targeted. Despite the Hizb's growth in the first two decades of its establishment, it faced harsh crackdown by the regimes, which witnessed many members spending long periods in prison and being tortured. The Hizb saw their method to achieve their goals in three stages, the first with the Hizb's establishment, the second is interacting with society, preparing it for the ideology and the third stage of actually taking power and implementing Islam. Individual reform played no part in the Hizb's goals, the decline was societal wide and the reversal of this would reform the individual. Based on the example of the prophet (ﷺ) the Hizb saw the work for revival as political and ideological, it saw no role for violence and material actions in imitation of the Prophet (ﷺ).

Hizb ut Tahrir entered the interaction stage in 1960 and the issue of how to reach power practically was not clearly defined in the party culture. An-Nabhani had always stated that the party would take power through the people, without specifying how this would be done. In an answer to a question about this in the mid-1950's Nabhani explained that when society had accepted the party and its ideas i.e. when public opinion was built upon general awareness, the party would then study the reality and decide the most appropriate actions to undertake. So Nabhani at the time viewed taking power as a style rather than a method issue. But the combination of the members being chased by the authorities throughout the Middle East as well as the rigidity of the ummah to the party's call led to a review of the method by returning to the Seerah and resulted in the adoption of the concept *Nusra* (material support). This meant specifically seeking help from the people of power directly rather than through the people generally. Therefore in 1961, an instruction was issued to the Wilaya's to seek support from those who could establish the Khilafah, whether they were rulers themselves or their backers. The party was in talks with Abdul Salam Arif the military leader of Iraq who came to power via a military coup in 1963, but he died in a plane crash in mysterious circumstances in 1966. By 1965 another rethink took place, as the party had not succeeded in getting the masses to revolt or engage in a revolution to bring the regimes down. It had also not been able to influence the rulers to bend to the Hizb's goals. In a leaflet titled the 'Caesarean Section,' it stated: *"In beginning of 1965 it studied the situation of the society and the situation of the people and the situation of the area as a whole and as a land which is under the influence of the kafir states and it then came to the understanding that the birth of the state was difficult, and the waiting for the birth was increasing the hardship, so it saw that a caesarean section was compulsory for the birth of the state."* What this meant is artificial barriers had been put in place of the Hizb taking power, despite mass support from the Ummah, this was the imperialists and their agent rulers. So, the state would not be naturally born via the people but a caesarean section was needed for her birth, which at the time was the regular occurrence of military coups.

Hizb ut Tahrir had been offered power in Jordan in 1953 when the young king took power after the assassination of his grandfather, in 1957 when there was a coup against King Hussein, in 1961 when the United Arab Republic (UAR) separated and in 1963, but these offers were rejected as an-Nabhani believed Jordan had not embraced the Hizb's vision and goals. An-Nabhani was not concerned with taking power per se, but with establishing Islam as a basis for rule.

The closest attempt of taking power took place in Jordan in 1968. This took place after the 1967 Six Day war with the Zionist entity, the chain of events which an-Nabhani had predicted and once the war was over led to a huge increase in credibility for the party in the military. Hizb ut Tahrir did not consider Jordan a viable place to establish the Khilafah, due mainly to its geography and artificial nature, but when offered the chance to undertake a coup by eager officers the party believed it had enough support among the public and military in the wider region

In Jordan, the party won a number of officers from the middle of the military, who were led by Colonel Atallah Ghasib and first Lieutenant Abdul Hadi Faleh, who led an armoured division. The coup was set for the 25<sup>th</sup> December 1968 where the head of the army would be arrested and all airports closed, before forcing the chief of staff to sign a statement in the name of the Hizb announcing the establishment of the Khilafah. But the first Lieutenant had a last-minute change of heart and surrendered himself to the King, leading to the collapse of the coup. A year later the Hizb won another Major, who was on the verge of undertaking a coup but the plot was foiled.

The Hizb views the absence of the Khilafah and its establishment as the key to the revival of the Muslims. Its work is to build the ummah ideologically to prepare for the states establishment. Critical mass is achieved when public opinion for Islamic rule is built on public awareness. With this support is sought from those who have power to actualise the change. In the current age, this would be the armies in the Muslim lands moving to remove the sitting government and secure the Islamic polity that would be implemented.

### **The Jihadist Movement**

The modern Jihadist movement at its core has the liberation of occupied land, the reform or removal of despotic regimes, independence from foreign interference and control over regional resources as its goal. Its distant goal is the Khilafah, and this has overtime been reduced to an aspiration, rather than an objective and is used for motivational purposes rather than a political goal.

There is a widely held narrative that jihadists are crazy people who employ violence for the sake of violence. This is false. While there are unquestionably many psychotic individuals within the movement, taken as a whole, jihadists' use of violence is 'rational' in the sense that largely it's only considered to be a means to an end and not the end itself, much like foreign policy. It is also worth remembering that terrorism is not associated with just one group of people; it is a tactic that has been employed by a wide array of actors. There is no single creed, ethnicity, political persuasion or nationality with a monopoly on terrorism. Jihadists employ terrorism as they do insurgency, as one of many tools they use to try to achieve their objectives.

The private writings of jihadist leaders as well as the actions taken by jihadist in the field demonstrate their intent to achieve their aims. The jihadists' plan has vaguely been to first establish an emirate that they can rule under their interpretation of Islam and then use that state as a launching pad for further conquests, creating a larger empire. Many jihadist ideologues believe that the Khilafah should be a transnational entity that includes all Muslim lands, stretching from Spain (Al-Andalus) in the west to the Philippines in the east. The Khilafah would then be extended globally.

But the jihadist movement is not monolithic and there are varying degrees of ideological difference, including goals and objectives, between some of the various actors and groups. For example, some jihadists are far more nationalistic in philosophy and less transnational. They are focused on the

overthrow of the regime in their country and the establishment of an emirate under Shari'ah. They are not concerned about using that emirate as a launching pad for the re-establishment of a wider Khillafah. This nationalist vs. transnationalist tension was readily apparent in Somalia between the various factions of al Shabaab. Some jihadists also believe that there cannot be one global Khilafah due to differences among Muslims and instead seek to establish a series of smaller states that would span the same territory. There are a number of jihadist actors and groups and many of them hold to different doctrines and operational tenets. For example, some groups tend to be more nationalistic in nature, such as the Afghan Taliban, while others are more transnational, such as the al Qaeda core. And there is a range of groups with beliefs that fall between these two extremes. Even al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the jihadist franchise group most closely aligned with the al Qaeda core, has conducted terrorist attacks against local and regional targets in addition to transnational targets.

The modern Jihadist movement has its birth mainly in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan from 1979-1989. Thousands of Muslims received training at camps in Pakistan following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and thousands more received training at camps in Afghanistan between the Soviet withdrawal and the US invasion in 2001. While nobody, including the groups employing the fighters, has accurate numbers, it is believed that at least 20,000 foreign fighters cycled through Afghanistan between 1979 and 2001, although it is unlikely that there were more than 3,000 to 4,000 in the theatre at a given time. Al Qaeda emerged from among these fighters, and the subsequent al Qaeda leadership, Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri and Nasir al-Wahayshi, had their roots in the occupation Afghanistan by the Soviet Union. The Jihad in Afghanistan took Jihadists from fringe phenomenon to a major force in the Muslim world. It served to produce foot soldiers, leadership and organization. Abdullah Yusuf Azzam provided propaganda for the Afghan cause. After the war veteran jihadists returned to their home countries and dispersed to other sites of conflicts involving Muslim populations such as Algeria, Bosnia and Chechnya.

The Jihadist movement does not view the problems facing the Muslim world as political or cultural, but where individual reform is needed, like the Muslim Brotherhood. The problem standing in the way of Muslim revival as physical colonialism manifested in the physical presence of non-Muslim troops in the Muslim lands, with the permission of local regimes. These themes came to characterise Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda. The establishment of US bases across Saudi Arabia and the Gulf in the first Gulf war, the perceived physical occupation of the Middle East overrode any cultural or political dimensions attached to the decline of the Ummah in the mind of bin Laden. Following the defeat of the Soviets in Afghanistan there was a belief that the Muslims had the capacity to successfully resist foreign encroachment if they focused their efforts and were sufficiently motivated to do so, with the imagery of the Khilafah intended to unite and motivate geographically disparate forces in a global jihadi struggle. Therefore, decline of the masses was not the issue, but the decline in the ruling classes was the primary problem facing the Muslim world. According to many jihadists, especially al-Qaeda the complicity of the regimes in western colonisation made them infidels and rebellion becomes permissible against them.

No details of an Islamic polity have ever been detailed by jihadists. This is probably because the immediate aim is to deal with the despotic regimes and the physical colonisation by the West. Jihadists use insurgent and terrorist attacks to achieve their goals against targets perceived to be *Kafir* (disbelieving) or those who support them. Approaching soldiers to overthrow the despotic regimes is out of the question as they are soldiers for infidel regimes making them infidels too.



## Conclusion

There are many groups in the Muslim world and beyond working to change the situation of the Ummah. Many have not been highlighted in this section, but the groups analysed represent important strands of thinking within the Ummah.

The groups outlined recognised the Muslim Ummah had declined and outlined programmes to reverse this, whilst they all identified decline they all deferred on what exactly revival was and how to achieve it. The Muslim Brotherhood identified individual reform as the method for revival. Its founder viewed the regimes in the Muslim world, especially Egypt as legitimate, with the colonialists as the problem. As time passed the Muslim Brotherhood have largely moved away from this and today they continue with their individual reform programme but selectively work with regimes across the Muslim world. A good example of this is in Jordan, where the Brotherhood took the side of the monarchy, each time public demonstrations during the Arab Spring threatened to topple the regime. The Muslim Brotherhood's methodology has largely now been reduced to improvising with the political status quo as they go along. The Muslim Brotherhood's year-long rule in Egypt under Muhammed Morsi is telling in that its Islamic agenda appears to have become redundant.

Hizb ut Tahrir have adopted the intellectual elevation of the Muslim Ummah as revival, this is to be achieved through building public opinion based on a public awareness of Islam. The establishment of the Khilafah who implements Islamic legislation and policies is viewed as the method to achieve ultimate revival. This has been hizbut Tahrir's reason for existence since 1952, and will in all likelihood continue so, despite the torture, oppression and claims against the group. The Muslim rulers are agents for the West in that they maintain the western inspired political architecture that the Hizb is attempting to change in order to revive the Ummah. The Hizb attempted to bring change through the people, but then realised on its own this was not sufficient as the rulers, their systems and support from the West always foiled real change. This is where the Hizb saw the role of coups, as a means to overthrow the architecture standing in the way of real change. The coup itself is viewed as one action amongst many, over 90% of the Hizb's work continues to be building public opinion and preparing the ummah for revival, the rulers and the West's backing for them is an obstacle that stands in the way. Whilst the Hizb has directly requested rule from numerous rulers it views the rulers as an obstacle on the whole and sees them not like the Brotherhood do, but as agents of the status quo, that must be removed.

The Jihadi movement, despite not being a unified movement view the problem through the perspective of western colonisation that must be expelled. The rulers who help and their armies are considered apostates as they have aided the disbelievers. The end goal of the Khilafah is now so opaque that it exists merely as a motivation, but practically no policies or literature has ever been developed. Even the ISIS state, which no one in the Ummah accepts as legitimate has left much to be desired. The Jihadi movement is today a resistance movement against colonialism that conducts guerrilla tactics against occupied Muslim lands. Revival remains largely undefined as the immediate aim is to expel the colonialists.

Islamic revival when pursued naturally causes a clash between the concepts needed to for change and the status quo. The status quo is maintained by an architecture which was devised in the West and this will have to be removed for revival to take place, something not all those working for revival have identified.

# Conclusions

Coup attempts are best understood as resembling coordination games rather than battles or elections. During a coup attempt each actor wants to be on the same side as everybody else, both to prevent a deep split from developing within the military and to avoid the punishment associated with supporting the loser. This imperative to coordinate creates a point of leverage for both the challengers and the incumbent. The side that prevails does so by “making a fact,” that is by publicly creating the impression that the victory of their side is inevitable and that resistance is futile. If actors believe that everybody will support one side and that everybody else believes that everybody will support that side, this creates self-fulfilling expectations in favour of that side, making it the side that wins

This theory adequately explains the likely dynamics and outcomes of military coups. This explanation allows us to understand why some coups fail despite the coup makers having tactical might and why others fail despite the unpopularity of the incumbent government. It also goes beyond observing that rank matters in coup making to explain why coups launched by military actors nearer the top of the military hierarchy have a better, though never guaranteed chance of success. It also provides a theoretical argument for why factors extraneous to the military do not determine the trajectory and outcomes of coup attempts.

Making a fact via the means of communication is central for coups to succeed. Those who can quickly acquire a country’s broadcasting facilities and broadcast the fact they have taken over and any opposition is futile and destined to fail will create self-fulfilling expectations. This is the central dynamic for coups to succeed; they are also the key way to stop a coup from succeeding by making counter claims using broadcasting facilities and the available communications.

There is a near 50:50 chance of success in any coup attempt, though the higher the rank of the coup plotters the more chance of success. But this does not guarantee success as all plotters are still required to undertake the ground work of making a fact and removing the incumbent. Coups are most likely to take place in the countries sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa and the Middle East. The factors that usually cause coups are when a country is poor, has past successful coups and are neither democratic nor undemocratic.

Those working for revival can use this framework to make sense of the many coups that take place in the Muslim lands and why they succeed or fail. It also highlights the key factors needed to make a coup a success. The work for Islamic revival is much wider than a coup and its dynamics, but removing the status quo brings coups into the framework of revival. Revival will require the removal of the status quo and those who uphold it, but not all coups are for revival.

The rise of social media raises many pertinent questions regarding making facts in a coup. For the moment however social media lacks the credibility of making a fact at the widescale level that Radio and TV currently offer. This may very well change in the future, which would challenge many of the central tenants in the coordination theory. Until such a day coordinating via making a fact is the central aspect of making a coup a success.

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# Notes

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