Commentary

Coups or Military Rule?
Some Comments on Zimmermann's Article

In his article, "Toward a Causal Model of Military Coups d'Etat" (*Armed Forces and Society*, Spring 1979), Ekkart Zimmermann makes a number of comments on my work that require a response. First, his remark that "some of Wayman's results seem to be in line with the theorizing of Huntington," stated as it is without subsequent qualification, misrepresents a study in which I attacked, with supporting data, Huntington's entire treatment of the concept of social mobilization as a cause of military seizures of power. As I pointed out, the data supported Huntington's emphasis on political institutionalization as a check on military involvement in politics. There are, however, several problems with his approach: Huntington's theoretical statements do not distinguish the *level* of social mobilization from the *rate* of social mobilization; the level of social mobilization has the opposite effect of what Huntington's theory would suggest; the effect of the rate of social mobilization is that suggested by Deutsch—not Huntington; a high rate of social mobilization increases military rule only in societies divided by underlying social cleavages.[1] Having gathered hypotheses and evidence to say, Huntington's glass is half empty (or half full), I am frustrated now that I am cited as being in line with him.

Zimmermann also remarks, "While not quoting Hibbs, Wayman uses many of the variables Hibbs has dealt with in his study." I hope none of your readers has subsequently come to suspect me of plagiarism. In fact, the full report of my analysis is in my dissertation, copyrighted in 1972, a year before the publication of Hibbs' *Mass Political Violence*.[2] Furthermore, as I made clear at length in my work, "a cause of military intervention will not always be the same as a cause of military rule."[3] Hibbs' study of political violence is different from the study of military rule, for the same reason that Huntington's discussion of social

mobilization is improperly conceived: the *level* of a variable (e.g., military rule) is not the same as the *rate of change*, or the occurrence of a *step-change*, in the variable (e.g., as in coups that either install or overthrow military rule). To his credit, Zimmermann notes this distinction, but then seems to forget it when he suggests that I failed to cite Hibbs' work.

These conceptual distinctions are troublesome partly because of some empirical shortcomings in the literature. Presumably, coups, which are very short-lasting and relatively nonviolent events (compared to war or revolution), are worthy subjects of study because of their lasting effects on the political system. One of those lasting effects is presumably a new level of military control over political decisions. We do not know the half-life or duration of such effects.

The effort to gain such knowledge is hampered by problems with the available data. Coups can be counted in a relatively replicable, scientific fashion, based on a documentary record in newspapers and journals. Military control is not so easily documented, and is often assessed by expert judgments. While academics will probably continue to prefer the hard data on coups to the judgmental data on military rule, the latter may continue to be a necessary complement in examining certain questions. For example, are there stable, or even institutionalized, military regimes, which endure in power long after the nation's last coup? Consider the following table (based on countries that have experienced at least one coup during the period 1946-1970) comparing coup frequency with military control.

	Frequent Coups[4]	*Infrequent Coups*
Subject to Direct Military Rule, 1969[5]	Relatively Unstable Military Regimes: N = 20, or 63% (E.g., Syria, Bolivia)	Relatively Stable Military Regimes: N = 9, or 38% (E.g., Egypt, Libya)
Not Subject to Direct Military Rule, 1969	Relatively Unstable, Civilian Dominated: N = 12, or 38% (E.g., Venezuela, Guatemala)	Relatively Stable, Civilian Dominated: N = 15, or 63% (E.g., Iran, Turkey)
	Total N = 32, or 101%	Total N = 24, or 101%[a]

a. The columns do not add to one hundred percent because of rounding error.

This table suggests that (1) coups and military rule would be positively correlated in a study of the world's nation-states; (2) a study of coups is not the same as a study of military rule (empirically, 38% of the cases do not fit on the principal diagonal of the table); and (3) a great amount of scholarship remains to be done to sort out some of these relationships conceptually and empirically. Zimmermann, as well as Thompson and the others who have established a data base for the study of coups, have made important contributions toward that scholarship. Zimmermann's call for more longitudinal analysis may help in making us all more sensitive to the important distinctions between levels and rates of change which have sometimes caused confusion in the past and which prompted my comment.

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Notes

1. For a discussion of these issues, see Karl Deutsch, "Social Mobilization and Political Development," *American Political Science Review* 55 (September 1961): 493-502; and Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968).

2. Francis Whelon Wayman, Jr., *When the Sword Is Mightier: A Theory of Military Involvement in Politics* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1972); Douglas A. Hibbs, Jr., *Mass Political Violence* (New York: John Wiley, 1973).

3. Frank Whelon Wayman, *Military Involvement in Politics: A Causal Model*. Sage Professional Papers in International Studies, #02-035 (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1975).

4. This count of coups is based on William R. Thompson, *The Grievances of Military Coup Makers*. Sage Professional Papers in Comparative Politics, Vol. 4, Series #01-047 (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1973). I have counted the average number of coups per year that the nation-state was independent. If coups occurred on the average of once every seven years or less, the nation was placed in the frequent coup category.

5. This classification is based on S. E. Finer, *Comparative Politics* (New York: Basic Books, 1971), as discussed in Wayman, *Military Involvement in Politics*, pp. 10-14.