

Session 15: Establishing Civilian Control Over the Military and Transitional Justice.

Civil-Military Relations in Latin America

Main causes of intervention

- Samuel Finer, *The Man on Horseback*: "instead of asking why the military engage in politics, we ought surely to ask why they ever do otherwise. For at first sight the political advantages of the military vis-à-vis other and civilian groupings are overwhelming. The military possess vastly superior organization. And they possess arms."¹
- Need to define military intervention
- Coup or no coup
 - Personal gain
 - Crucial element is perception of civilian competence
 - Civilian support

Why does military leave power?

- Mission accomplished
- Worries about corrupting armed forces (professional institution)
 - Military-as-government vs. military-as-institution
- Economy is falling apart; they turn it over to civilians
 - E.g., Bolivia in 1982, Ecuador in 1977-79
 - in name of democracy, hand over mess
- Loss in war (Greece in 1974, Argentina in 1982)
- Tide is changing, cut a deal and get out while getting is good
 - All military regimes face a fundamental problem of legitimacy
 - By definition, rule by force; almost inherently don't enjoy legitimacy

Why does military cling to power?

- Residual threat (mission not accomplished)
 - Guerrilla movements (e.g., Algeria)
 - Perceived civilian incapacity (e.g., Argentina: Peronists would win)
 - Millenial transformation that they dreamed of remains incomplete
- Institution is already too corrupted
- Blood on their hands; afraid of what might happen to them

¹ Samuel Finer, *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 1988), p. 4.

But simply asking whether or not there is a coup -- is this too simple a way of defining intervention?

- If I avoid a coup, is that sufficient to say there is civilian control?
- Aren't there gradations of military involvement
- Stepan, Trinkunas

Strategies for constraining the military

- Incorporation
 - Create true people's army a la classical Sparta
 - Every able-bodied citizen (or at least every male) is a member; no difference between military and society
 - Impossible to imagine conducting a coup; against whom? Against themselves?
 - Advocated by Machiavelli, who loved this idea, and by revolutionaries subsequently; most recently by Gary Hart in his book *The Minutemen*
 - Switzerland and Israel; few examples in Latin America, though Nicaragua might qualify during the revolutionary period (1979 to 1990)
- More common approach is to go the other direction
 - Create an isolated, professional military
 - Give them toys; let them have their own separate culture
 - Potentially could launch a coup, but in practice is likely to be too small and isolated from rest of society to carry one off
 - In developing world: Mexico
 - One of most impressive examples
 - Military simply not a major political actor in Mexico since 1940s
 - In 1920s, totally by Revolutionary generals; rebellions common
 - Steadily shrunk military
 - Now, 5x as many unionized teachers as servicemen
 - At the extreme, you abolish the army and just have a heavily armed police force (Panama, Costa Rica)
- What if you need a large army, but it also needs to be professional? (e.g., U.S. and USSR in Cold War era)
 - Most common solution, used in both US and USSR, is **penetration**
 - U.S.: Defense Department is all civilian; half-step above the military officers at each level of hierarchy
 - USSR: People's commissars in each unit who report to Party; KGB spies
 - Copied by number of other regimes; e.g., Vietnam, Cuba
- If all else fails...
 - **Divide and conquer**
 - Venezuela: inter-service rivalry; all spying on each other
 - Create separate force to balance military
 - danger of peeving military, or politicizing them (Venezuela)
 - Mexico: rumor during the 1970s: military had only three day's supply of gasoline designed to hobble military
 - Can be used in concert with other strategies
 - Mexico: Navy separated from Army; small; resource-starved; isolated

What happened in Brazil?

- Civilians really bided their time
- Appears to have worked, for the most part
- Military budgets cut, military industries privatized; military less of a political player than ever before in Brazil
- One thing they didn't get, and will never get, is punishment for abuses committed under their regime

- Basically, this is what Stepan would have advised them. Sort of what Huntington would have advised as well
- Subtext of Stepan's argument: look at all the stuff you can get if you just give up on the human rights front