

Military Intervention in Politics

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Abstract:

The Military exhibits discipline and is organised by a chain of command system from superiors to subordinates. In liberal democratic systems where democracy is deep-seated and the existence of vibrant civil society and elected democratic institutions with very sophisticated political culture keep military force within its determined ambit and thus restrain the military from meddling with politics. The military remains under the control of the civilian authority. The influence of military authority has been trammelled by the all-pervasive legitimacy of a democratic system and a very enriched level of political culture. So reasonable possibility of a military coup or direct military intervention in this system is almost eclipsed. Contrastingly the dearth of democratic elements and low level of political culture in the countries of the Middle East, Latin America, and some countries of Southeast Asia, such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Myanmar have turned them vulnerable to military coups and frequent intervention of the military in the political domain. Lack of social cohesion, political instability, political and administrative corruption, a vicious circle of poverty, the existence of extremist and separatist groups, and religious fundamentalism provide a conducive atmosphere for military intrusion in politics.

Keywords- Chain of command, Civil society, Military coup, Social cohesion, Political instability, Religious fundamentalism.

Introduction:

Ball in his book “Modern Politics and Government” has discussed in detail the political role of the Military. The lengthy list of successful and unsuccessful direct interventions by the military since 1945 creates the impression that the seizure of political control by the armed forces, the replacement of one civilian government by another, is the norm rather than an exception in modern political systems. Of the states that have achieved independence since World War II, it has been estimated that one-third of these 75 states have experienced a successful military coup. Military intervention is accentuated by political instability and a dearth of democratic culture in most developing countries that have secured hard-earned independence from colonial countries. Trapping of political power by military personnel swept across the African continent like wild bushfire. Military incursion had shaken the foundation of civilian governments in African countries, such as Togo, Algeria, Dahomey, Nigeria, Congo, and Ghana. The failed democratic process and parlous financial situation were responsible for the obliteration of the foundation of civilian governments and the taking over of the administration by the military juntas. In the Asian subcontinent after the emergence of Pakistan as an independent country in 1947, the military has taken over the reins of civilian governments four times, in 1958, 1969, 1977, and 1999 respectively. The Military took a keen interest in internal security and foreign policy issues of Pakistan.

During the regime of General Gia-ul-Haq, Pakistan’s military blatantly controlled nuclear policy and remained a de facto decision-making body. Among other identified factors lack of an independent Election

Commission in Pakistan was the major cause behind military intervention. General Pervez Musharraf overthrew the government of Nawaz Shariff on 12th October 1999. Thereafter he imposed a ban on the entry of opposition party leaders and their participation in the coming parliamentary election. The Military government places utmost importance on its own class benefits and popularity. However, the military government is considered to be amateur when it comes to dealing with intricate issues of the country. Another Asian country, Myanmar was ruled by the armed forces from 1962 until 2011, when a new government ushered in a return to civilian rule. Aung San Suu Kyi, a pro-democracy leader organised a movement for the restoration of democracy in the country for a very long time. She was put under house arrest by military rulers. She was released in 2010 and in November 2015 she led the NLD (National League for Democracy) to a landslide victory in Myanmar's first openly contested election for 25 years and became the de facto leader. The military is now back in charge and has proclaimed a year-long state of emergency. It seized control on 1st February following the general election in which the military-backed party, the USDP (Union Solidarity and Development Party), performed poorly in the November 2020 election, whereas the NLD did better compared to the election held in 2015.

Finer in his book "Comparative Politics" has discussed in detail military interference in politics. The Possibility of military intervention in Third World backwards and weak states is great. Military intervention in the countries of Southeast Asia and the Middle East has become the order of the day. Most Latin American countries are also conducive to military intervention. Of course, western industrialised states are not free from military influence. He has mentioned the names of Germany, Japan, France, Spain, Latin America, etc. where military intervention occurred. It is not limited to Third world countries. According to Finer, the armed forces regard themselves as a supporter of the principle of sovereignty of the people, and in this way, the military takes the initiative to establish its authority. The goal of the military is the welfare of the people and development. He has mentioned four methods of military intervention.

1. The armed forces may adopt a constitutional way of establishing authority over the civilian government. The military authority exercises influence over civilian authority by giving advice and other ways. In this regard, the military assumes the role of bureaucrats. The civilian authority does not generally ignore the advice of military authority due to impending fear.
2. Sometimes the military moves in an unconstitutional way to interfere in politics. The military creates insurmountable pressure on the civilian government by threatening, intriguing, and also by creating fear. Under this circumstance, civilian government functions at the behest of the military and always keeps the interest of military authority in mind.
3. Sometimes the armed forces do not directly come to power; they appoint their own allegiant and support the civilian government. In this way, the military establishes its supremacy.
4. Again the armed forces removed civilian government directly and did not use power from behind. In this field, the military government controls the administration of the country. The main instrument of military government is their professional qualities.

Militarisation of Politics: By militarisation of politics, we mean excessive participation or involvement of military rulers in the political field. Sometimes when there is a grave law and order situation in the country military directly takes over the administration of the country through coup-d'état; as was the case in Chile, Myanmar, and Pakistan (under Pervez Musharraf). The military General becomes the chief

administrator of the country and inducts other military officers into key political and administrative posts. They dissolve the elected Parliament and take all political and administrative decisions of the country. In the case of indirect militarisation, military rulers render necessary administrative and political advice to the civilian government and the civilian authority cannot at all ignore them. Even the domestic political and foreign policy matters of the country are conducted according to the mandate of military authority. In American politics, military officers play a very important role in influencing political leaders. Despite being politically neutral, however, military members vote and these votes are actively counted by political parties. Indeed, voters from Union soldiers and sailors are widely believed to have been decisive in Lincoln's victory over McClellan in 1864. In military-ruled countries like Chile, Nigeria, and Thailand civilian authority is under the strict control of military rulers. They control the government administration, and take all key administrative decisions including defence and military matters. Further, despite the military's official position, there has been a growing concern that the officer corps is becoming increasingly politicised. The current officer corps regulatory votes and identity within political philosophy and party, usually Republican. Indeed, military voting patterns indicate that members of the armed forces vote "in greater percentage than that of the general population". The politicisation of the military since World War II has been a gradual process. Further, it has been pointed out that the military's more recent political orientation was a reaction to the Clinton Administration. The military leadership increasingly acted politically to counter some of that administration's policies and the administration responded by politicising the senior officer selection process to an unprecedented extent.

Reasons for Military Intervention in Politics: After the end of World War II, military intervention in the politics of the state system has become a natural phenomenon. Behind military intervention in politics, the political culture of the concerned state has (remained a potent factor) played a very important role. The nature of military intervention in politics depends on the weakness or flexibility of political culture. In a real sense, the upsurge of military intervention had been observed in those countries that have a comparatively very low standard of political culture along with fragile civil society. On the other hand, military intervention, in those countries that have developed a mature and high standard of political culture, has become exceptional.

S.E. Finer has mentioned four types of political systems with different standards of political culture as reasons for military intervention in politics. These political systems are (I) A political system with mature political culture. (II) The political system with developed political culture. (III) The political system with low political culture, and (IV) The political system with the least political culture.

- 1. Political system with mature political culture and military intervention:** Military intervention does not take place in a political system with mature political culture. Here executive departments of the government are well organised and the government is directly elected by the people. For this reason, the government becomes very powerful and sturdy. The elected government, with a vibrant civil society, actively runs the administration of the country. As a result, the military does not get an opportunity to interfere in government administration and politics. Britain, America, etc. are examples of mature political cultures.
- 2. Political system with developed political culture and military intervention:** In those political systems where there is the growth of political faith and values but has not reached the stage of maturity and political consciousness of the people has not developed, the military, in order to influence civilian government, interferes in politics. In this regard, we may cite the examples of Germany and France

under Hitler during World War II. In these countries' military authority has blackmailed civilian governments and, in this way, tries to influence government and politics.

3. **Political system with low political culture and military intervention:** There is a possibility of frequent military intervention in the political system with low political culture. Fragile political culture and lack of vibrant civil society in countries like Bangladesh, Argentina, and Pakistan provide a fillip for the military authority to interfere and meddle with the politics of these countries. The political consciousness of the people in the mentioned countries is not developed. Most of the people are illiterate; society is ridden with numerous problems like poverty, fundamentalism, a bad state of the law-and-order system, food crisis, civil riots, administrative corruption, etc. Sometimes government lacks the majority support of the people, lacks legitimacy, etc. has made the democratic government vulnerable to military intervention. So, the military under this condition can easily intervene in politics.
4. **Political system with the least political culture and military intervention:** Military intervention in the political system with the least political culture has become the order of the day. In the countries of Latin America, there is a lack of political consciousness among the people. As a result, military intervention in the politics and administration of these countries takes place. In a real sense, people of those countries show reluctance to government and politics, and governments in these countries, on most occasions become autocratic. To control the autocratic tendency of the government and to protect the public interest military authority intervenes in political matters and administration and also conducts politics in these countries.

Professor Alan Ball has also mentioned two other reasons for military intervention in politics. One is the nature of the military and the other is the nature of the political process. Professor Alan Ball has shown that if the military authorities are, by nature, highly ambitious and hankering for political power then they generally try to interfere in state politics. Again, if the political process of the state system is well-developed and powerful then there is less possibility of military intervention in politics. On the other hand, in case of a weak political process of the state system, there is ample opportunity for military rulers to interfere in politics. We observe that there is a natural tendency for military intervention in politics. But that does not mean the military always interferes in politics. Military intervention largely depends on the political process and the nature of the structure of the state system. In this regard also the nature and trends of the political culture of a country become the determinant factor behind military intervention.

According to Ball, the matter of the relationship between military and political processes is very complicated in nature. The political influence of the military stretches from direct assimilation of complete political control to complete subservience. There are intermediate stages between those two extremes. At present, the role of the military is not free from politics. In this matter traditional ideas are invalid. In some cases, the relationship between political lives and the military is closely related. Apart from interference in civilian government functions, the military takes the initiative directly in the matter of capturing government power as a whole. The political attitude of the military and the role of the military depend on two variables-(a) the nature of the military and (b) the strength of the civilian government. The nature of the military largely influences its political attitude and role. Some military is more professional compared to civilian authority. The existing political system is a more important determinant of the political role of the military.

Ball has emphasised two forms of military interference (I) Limited interference by the military (II) Direct Interference and (III) Interference leading to military rule. As regards limited interference, the military tries to influence government principles. Especially the military is taking the initiative in the matter of

influencing foreign and defence principles. Moreover, the military takes an active initiative in securing various types of privileges, and incentives including their conditions of service from the government. Ball said that in a liberal democratic system, the event of direct interference in the political matter is the exception rather than the rule.

However, limited interference of the military in the political process of the country is not always the same. In liberal democratic countries like the UK, USA, Canada, Belgium, Switzerland, India, etc., and in a one-party Communist system like China the military controls its activities under civilian government authority. The military never challenges the validity of the civilian government of these countries.

But in the American political system, the matter of the military under the control of a civilian government is above debate. In fact, in the USA, the control of the civilian government over the military has been established. The British military is in general under civilian authority. In the UK, there is an absence of direct military interference in the military process of civilian government. Ball said that it should be noted that war conditions are exceptional in affecting the civilian-military relationship in all political systems.

Civilian authority is supreme in a liberal democratic system. Here in the 19th century, the idea of the sovereignty of the people was recognized and established. This strengthens the validity of civilian government in the political system. Moreover, in other political systems, the military enjoys the status which is not possible in the liberal democratic system, and in this type of political system, not so much importance is given to the autonomy of the civilian army.

But it is not that there is no possibility of military intervention in the politics of the liberal democratic system. In this type of political system, the military gives status to the civilian government and is subservient to the former. Despite this, in the political process, it plays an important role. In the USA huge amount is spent for military purposes and the US military machinery is of a very complicated nature. We cannot deny the importance of the US military influence on American foreign policy. For this reason, in the USA the military exercises great influence in the matter of decision-making in the political field. In Socialist states like USSR civilian supremacy over the armed forces is as worked as in most liberal democracies. Ball said that it is useful for a socialist government to build up armed forces that are completely separate from the regular army and in whole political reliability the government can fully trust.

(2) As regards, direct interference Ball said that direct interference by the military in politics may occur in any type of political system. The military may exert direct pressure to attempt to achieve a particular political goal, may create the conditions for a change of government, or even dictate what type of civilian government achieves power.

There are various elements in different times behind direct military intervention in politics. In this field generally, it is difficult to mention any universal reason. It is difficult to find general reasons underlying the military interventions in other African states with similar problems of development. Ball has stated French history in this case. In 1958 military intervention was significant in the field of the abolition of the Fourth Republic. The non-military organizations of France were of a very high standard. But at that time in France, the governments formed were very temporary in nature. In that situation, the military challenged the right to rule and the validity of the civilian government of France. The military violated the order of the government and took decisions freely.

According to Ball, the example of Germany after 1818 exposes the limitations of the Army's role in the political process. At the end of the Fourth Republic of France, the military did not enjoy sufficient power in the political process of the country. Similarly, between 1918 and 1933 the role of the German Army in the political process of the country was very important. At that time the weakness of the civilian

government of Germany and the political institutions of the state were well known. As a result, the weakness of the civilian government increased.

As regards military control the government power is under the control of the military. There are differences in nature and method of military control. Ball said that there are difficulties in measuring the exact degree of military interference short of direct military control and arriving at a broad classification of the reasons why this particular level is reached in particular regimes. The same problem is present in an examination of the regime that suffers direct military control.

Sometimes military and civilian authority forms a collective government and control it. Sometimes military ruler takes this path to increase the validity of their rulers. For example, Ball has talked about Argentina. The rate of economic development of Argentina is comparatively developed. Despite this like other states, this state is the victim of military intervention. Military governments may become more civilized over time. Without any democratic political changes taking place, “some military dictatorships are camouflaged by Presidential elections and representative assemblies without the military leaders assuming civilian status in order to perpetuate army control, as in Brazil”.

Ball said that in the states that experience direct military control, the legitimacy of existing political institutions and of the ruling elites is disputed. The regime has not acquired the respect that puts it beyond the challenge of the armed forces. Ball said that generally, the military tends to support conservative groups. However, the low level of economic development may lead the Army to intervene on the part of the radical forces in the country aiming at a more egalitarian social structure.

According to Ball, the nature of the armed forces is a factor of great significance in the establishment of a military government. In many states, the military is regarded as a symbol of national unity, integrity, and nationalism. It is said that values, discipline, and efficiency are possible only within the military. The degree of professionalism of the army is important but a factor that may cut across it and have important results is the area of recruitment. Ball has discussed the social platform of the members of the armed forces of the Middle East. Generally, most of the members of the military of the Middle East are appointed from the lower middle class. They were willing the matter of radical change in the political system.

Concluding Observations: In all political systems, the military has some advantages and also disadvantages. Of these disadvantages’ the military faced encumbrances in the matter of imposing controlling behaviour over civilian governments. There may be different types of military interventions in the political process. The nature of military intervention depends on existing political character, stability of political organisations, rate of socio-economic development, corruption, elite class crisis, nepotism, and lack of moral ethos amongst the political leaders. Military authority generally tries to usurp the reins of civilian governments if they are not properly functioning and creates a perilous situation for the unity, integrity, and security of the state. The constitution of any country does not allow the military to take part in the politics of the country but unfortunately military dislodges the civilian government taking advantage of the prevailing turmoil in some countries. The factors that determine the level of military incursion and interference are seldom removed by subsequent intervention and are usually consistent features of the political system. The spread of democratic principles, elected representative government, sturdy political institutions with a very refined form of political culture, and amelioration of underprivileged sections of the society, making available economic privileges in abundance can effectively curb the tendency of military intervention in most underdeveloped countries of the world.

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