

Is a Military Coup Considered Among the Styles for Seizing Power in Islam? (Part 2)

(Translated)

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The Third Element: A Factional Move

The third element of a military coup is that it is factional, meaning it is carried out by a faction from the people, led by an individual or a small group—military or civilian—using a military instrument. In both cases, executing the coup does not require a large number of conspirators; rather, a relatively small number suffices, provided it controls sensitive junctures within the command structure of the military establishment or its powerful segment.

The burden of manufacturing coups does not fall upon the units and divisions that carried them out, but upon the heads of the leadership who decide on the military move and transform it into a political action. It is not a condition that the executing tools share the coup plotter's project, loyalties, or political orientations; rather, they are required merely to execute. This factionalism manifests in two primary forms,

First: That it be for personal gain, whereby a high-ranking military officer personally takes command of the military unit loyal to him or over which he has military authority (a battalion, brigade, company, army, etc.) and carries out the coup, installing himself at the head of the state (example: Thomas Sankara in Upper Volta and Ibrahim Traoré in Burkina Faso); or that a group of officers undertakes the leadership of the coup and then nominates one of its members to rule (example: the Free Officers in Egypt, Muhammad Naguib then Gamal Abdel Nasser).

Second: That it occurs by proxy on behalf of another military or civilian party, meaning the coup plotter remains in the background and requests that a military leader or a military unit—whether loyal to the plotter or subordinate to the coup leader—carry out the coup on his behalf, hand over the reins of power to him, and protect him (examples: Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr in Iraq, and Atassi in Syria). Ultimately, a military coup is not an expression of a popular movement nor an embodiment of a popular will; rather, it is a top-down, elitist political action executed by a military instrument that plans and implements it in isolation from the people.

The Objective Is to Establish the Authority of Islam

Although the Caesarean section is also a factional operation, just like a coup—meaning it is sufficient to win over those who control the sensitive junctures within the command structure of a part of the army, enabling them to mobilize it—this factional nature manifests practically in a manner that differs, both in ruling and in reality, from a coup. For Hizb ut Tahrir does not adopt material action and restricts its work in carrying the Dawah to thought alone; as for armed military action, it is not permitted for the Hizb to adopt it, even to remove the evil of the rulers or to assume power. It is only permissible for the Hizb to undertake intellectual and political actions. Consequently, the Hizb does not seek nussrah (نصرة military support) from itself; that is, it does not form an armed military group from its members to achieve nussrah and entrust to it the matter of the Caesarean section. Instead, it seeks nussrah from the people of nussrah—those possessing military power and capability—to support it and hand over authority to it.

This is a Shariah ruling among the rulings of the method (طريقة tareeqah), which we are not allowed to contravene: The Messenger (saw) confined his Dawah to intellectual and political actions, and it is not established that he (saw) undertook any physical military actions

during the Makkan Stage despite his capability to do so. This is at the level of the entity from whom nussrah (نصرة military support) is sought and who is to undertake the Caesarean section. As for the reality of nussrah and its Caesarean section process, it is not represented by asking a faction—be it an individual or a group of individuals—to take up arms and fight to hand over power to him, regardless of whether he participates in the fighting or not. The matter is not about using an armed gang, employing a mercenary army, or harnessing a blind, mute military unit that executes orders without thought to carry out armed physical actions and hand over power to him. Instead, it is a request directed by a political structure, which carries a political project, to a strong, influential, and powerful entity that has adopted its political project and is prepared to sacrifice for its sake to grant it nussrah so that it may seize power. This means it is a request from a political party to its supporters and backers—those who possess political weight and the ability to provide nussrah—to use their weight and capability to remove the material obstacles preventing the Hizb from achieving power. What is required is the establishment of the authority of Islam through those who support Islam and support the Hizb, not merely the seizure of power in an absolute sense. This is precisely what the Messenger (saw) did: He would present himself as a sent Prophet and present Islam as an 'Aqeedah (creed), an ideology, and a political project to the Arab tribes. If they believed him and had Iman in him, he would then request nussrah from them. Emulating him (saw) requires that we act as he did, in the manner he did, for the sake of performing that very action.

Fourth Element: A Clandestine Move

The fourth element is that a military coup is clandestine: Given the vital nature of the decision and the objective, its lack of constitutional and legal legitimacy, and the fact that it is imposed upon the people and the military establishment, the coup event necessitates a high degree of secrecy and concealment—both in its general outlines and in its specific details and particulars—along with discipline, caution, wariness, and strict silence even from the executing elements, and this is because;

First: To ensure the neutrality of the executing group and the majority of the army who might not share the coup plotters' objectives, and to guarantee their compliance with military orders,

Secondly: To avoid being isolated before execution, which would cause the coup plotters to lose their legitimacy at the head of the military institution and, consequently, their ability to maneuver and deploy military forces,

Thirdly: To prevent information from leaking to the incumbent authority or to the foreign power that actually controls the country, thereby preempting the move and causing it to fail,

Fourthly: To ensure the element of surprise for the people, catching them off guard and presenting them with a fait accompli, thereby incapacitating them from taking any stance and compelling them to acquiesce and submit.

Deception, cunning, maneuvering, and absolute secrecy are fundamental characteristics of military coups. It is in the coup plotters' interest not to disclose their objectives, especially amid the international struggle for influence, interests, and wealth. Consequently, the armed forces move based on an order with an unknown objective or a fictitious or false purpose, enabling the military leadership to execute swiftly and effectively. Therefore, upon their success, the coup plotters hasten to break this blackout, sever ties with rumors, and promote their own perspective and narrative of events. They do this by broadcasting the coup communiqué and subsequent statements through local and international media outlets and in official newspapers, thereby generating a supportive public opinion and cloaking their actions with a presumed constitutional and legal legitimacy.

A Political Context, Not a Military Overthrow

As for the Caesarean section, even if it is militarily secretive like a military coup, its underlying reality differs from it fundamentally and essentially: it agrees with it on a

comprehensive, unchanging societal law that persists as long as humankind and its societies exist—namely, the necessity of relying on material power to establish or depose authority. However, it differs from a coup in the particulars, details, and practical application of this law on the ground: it is secretive like a coup, but its secrecy does not stem from a lack of constitutional and legal legitimacy. Instead, it arises from the desire to ensure the operation's success and to thwart any possibility of its failure and suppression in its infancy, based on the principle of (استعينوا علي قضاء حوائجكم بالكتمان) “Seek help in fulfilling your needs through secrecy.” Therefore, the Caesarean section is secretive in its specifics, details, and execution particulars (the individuals, location, time, timing, and method), but it is public in its preliminary signs and antecedents: it is not an intelligence operation plotted in the dead of night in the basements and corridors of embassies. A public opinion, emanating from a general awareness within the Ummah, has already consolidated around its intellectual-political project, and it has found a popular base for it. Everyone knows that the Hizb seeks nussrah (نصرة military support) to achieve power as a method to implement that project. Indeed, the military establishment itself knows that there is a political Hizb knocking at its door, seeking its allegiance, and is aware of its project. Furthermore, the soldiers executing the operation must be aware of and consent to what they are undertaking, considering it the mother of all Shariah obligations and the most obligated of obligations incumbent upon them.

In conclusion, the Caesarean section is a political act executed through military means, which crowns a complete trajectory of political struggle and intellectual and political work at the heart of the Ummah; it is not a military overthrow imposed upon it. In contrast, a coup, being an unconstitutional, colonialist intelligence operation, requires absolute secrecy—even from the execution tools, let alone the Ummah—be it in its preludes and precursors or in its circumstances and details, necessitating deception, cunning, maneuverings, espionage, and betrayal.

Fifth Element: a Move Driven by Demands

The fifth element of a military coup is that it is a demand-driven move, meaning its motive and goal are partial and demand-specific, not extending beyond changing the ruling faction due to its failure in economic, social, or political particulars. The coup plotters are not proponents of an ideological project aimed at changing the state's doctrine and building its governance upon a new idea that elevates the people. In other words, they do not work to assume power as a method to actualize the ideas they adopt within society. At best, if they succeed, they might carry out some superficial, partial patchwork measures, such as declaring martial law, amending the constitution, or repealing a specific amendment within it.

By examining the experiences of the Coup Belt in West Africa south of the Sahara, we easily discern that they share the same catalysts: deteriorating human rights indicators, poverty, unemployment, dire social conditions, demographic pressures, various crises, political failure, economic stagnation, monopolization of wealth by the ruling elite, corruption, cronyism, absence of justice, lack of transparency, incompetence among officials, organized crime, terrorism, jihadist movements and obstruction of the peaceful transfer of power. Although these partial, demand-specific catalysts are, in reality, pretexts, excuses, and a cover for a fierce international struggle among the major powers (America, France, Britain, Russia, and China) over the continent's wealth and resources, they are nevertheless a lived reality in that region and genuine problems from which Africa suffers, requiring immediate treatment that justifies the coup movements.

Therefore, military coups have no connection to overarching principles, ideologies, or ideas, unlike revolutions: for the demands of revolutions are ideological and comprehensive, targeting the entire system of life. They are a total upheaval and a radical change in life, and their demands go beyond minor details to reach the intellectual foundations from which those corrupt details emanate (the French Revolution, the Bolshevik Revolution, and the Chinese Cultural Revolution). They are destined for success if undertaken with the appropriate political causes and societal laws. However, if the military action—which crowns their political and popular trajectory—fails, this is an indicator that they were merely a popular uprising with

unclear objectives, lacking genuine popular support, and that their demands lack sufficient public opinion. Uprisings—even if they are popular in reality and have a specific, declared objective—have immature, unstudied, and unrefined movements. They are also intermixed with personal motives and base ambitions; they are merely an instinctive reaction to a deteriorating reality and a chaotic, unorganized, and undisciplined movement, and thus their fate is abject failure.

Changing the State's 'Aqeedah (Creed)

In contrast, the Caesarean section is not merely a demand-driven move with a limited objective that does not go beyond changing colonialist allegiances and the ruling personnel at the behest of competing major powers, exploiting the people's discontent with the failures of the government's specific policies. Instead, it is a style for bringing a new political project to power: Hizb ut Tahrir's cause is to revive the Islamic creed ('aqeedah) among Muslims, and its goal is to establish ruling upon the Islamic ideology that the Ummah embraces. Consequently, its project is an ideological, creed-based, and comprehensive one that targets the entire system of life, aiming to change the state's creed and build its ruling governance upon a comprehensive idea that elevates the people. Thus, the Caesarean section leads to sweeping away the creed of separating religion from life and to implementing the Islamic creed in governance, social relations, and all systems of life—that is, it leads to applying the Shariah of Allah (swt) upon the ruins of capitalist democracy.

It is a radical change that transcends partial patchworks to target the foundational ideological tenets that produced those corrupt particulars. Naturally, this targeting includes the bearers of those tenets and those responsible for implementing them, whether they are rulers or intellectual elites. Although it coincides with the concept of "revolution" in its societal sense—a popular movement to change the state's character and its ideology using military means—at the point of "radical ideological change," it remains a specific, distinct, and unique revolution, different from all other revolutions. Therefore, it must be distinguished by its ideological character, so we call it an "Islamic revolution." As for the reason for its distinction and uniqueness, it lies in the general awareness (الوعي العام al-waie al-'aam): the major revolutions that changed the course of history (the French Revolution and the Bolshevik Revolution)—despite being total, public, non-demand-based radical changes—relied on raw public opinion and rode the wave of popular discontent with a deteriorating reality to bring an elite consciousness to power on the people's shoulders. In these cases, the general awareness is after the fact and not prior; meaning, it is manufactured by the revolutionary system after its establishment, as a result of its control over power, and is neither a popular demand nor an expression of the people's authority.

Sixth Element: A Sudden and Immediate Action

The sixth element of a military coup is that it is sudden and immediate, meaning it is self-contained and confined to the coup event itself, without prior introductions or circumstances. The requirements of secrecy in execution and concealment of the true objective dictate that the coup action is sudden, lacking clear, public precursors or preceding political or military actions. It is not the culmination of an apparent political or military process that it crowns and reaps the fruits of; in other words, it is not a reward or a final stage within a series of stages and phases already traversed, whether on the political or popular level. For the ultimate goal of a military coup is merely to usurp power; it does not view the act of seizing power as part of the work of building a state, because it does not aim to establish governance based on a specific overarching ideology—which would necessitate a long political struggle and intellectual and political work at the heart of the people that precedes the seizure of power and is crowned by it, such as making the idea understood, generating responsiveness to it, consolidating public opinion and general awareness around it, and building a popular base for it.

And because they did not seize authority as an independent matter from its natural sources (the people or the strongest faction within it), the coup plotters are keen:

Firstly, to avoid targeting any specific political or societal party during the initial days, while distributing hope to everyone through a general and vague political discourse that satisfies all and displeases none, especially those who represent a potential danger (the remaining components of the army, parties, unions, journalists, businessmen, and religious figures).

Secondly, they carefully select elements from the old regime, either neutralizing them or forming temporary alliances with them, to soften the shock of sudden change upon them and their followers. This serves as a powerful political message about the futility of defending a system that even its closest associates have abandoned.

Thirdly, they diligently seek to win over the educated middle class—those who did not benefit from the outgoing regime—because their education qualifies them to provide effective support, and their deprivation gives them a psychological incentive to do so. Since the coup event is self-contained and confined to its immediate circumstances, it must be instantaneous, encapsulated within the initial military shock: it succeeds with the success of that shock and fails with its failure. The failure of the initial shock serves as an indicator of the failure of the entire movement, and may throw the country wide open to a popular uprising, a bloody civil war, or a military rebellion that could either fail or succeed.

Thus, the military action serves as the method, that is, the permanent modality of the coup phenomenon. Therefore, in its absence or if it is dispensed with, the reality and nature of the event change, turning it into a “white coup” – a coup from within the state apparatus using political, not military, tools. As for the Caesarean section, it is a style for seizing power that may be employed, but the state could also be born using other styles, depending on what the reality of the support point dictates.

Building a State, Not Merely Assuming Power

The Caesarean section is not a sudden, immediate act that stands alone, reduced to mere military action like military coups. Instead, it is a political act executed through military means. It has public precursors, antecedent circumstances, and subsequent repercussions. It culminates a visible, overt political process and reaps its fruits as a partial and final stage within a series of actions, movements, and stages traversed across the Ummah to revive the Islamic creed, correct ideas, concepts, and convictions, and purify them from the blemishes of democracy and the filth of the Western viewpoint on life.

Therefore, the Hizb’s assumption of power differs from merely seizing power in that it necessitates establishing a popular base first before material power is secured. This is because the Ummah’s adoption of the Hizb’s project and the formation of a public opinion emanating from a general awareness about it are a fundamental condition and an essential matter for its success in achieving its goal. For our cause is not merely about assuming power alone; rather, our cause is building a state by reviving the creed within its presumed Muslim subjects. When this is achieved and rapport with the Ummah is attained, the assumption of power follows naturally.

This direction is confirmed, **firstly**, by the nature of the desired state: It is an entity established upon the Islamic ideology adopted by the Hizb, serving as an executive apparatus for the concepts, criteria, and convictions emanating from it. To build this entity soundly and solidly, it is essential to fuse the Ummah within the crucible of the Hizb by establishing a public opinion emanating from a general awareness about that ideology and creating the popular base that embraces both the ideology and its carriers. For the state is the Ummah, such that if the idea of the state exists within the Ummah, then the state has been established. As for ruling governance, it is an act of its construction, and the Caesarean section is a style for its birth, not for its establishment.

Secondly, it is confirmed from the perspective of the nature of the desired revival (نهضة nahdah): Elevating society does not mean usurping power through a military coup and then establishing it upon the Islamic idea, for this does not bring about a revival. Instead, it means making the Ummah understand the Islamic idea with which it is to be revived and unifying it

to proceed with this idea in the struggle of life. Then, power is taken to be established upon it, for governance is a method for renaissance if it is established upon the idea.

Thirdly, it is confirmed from the perspective of the reality of governance: Usurping power and imposing it upon the Ummah does not establish an Islamic rule—even if Sharia is applied—nor does it provide it with the means to endure and remain steadfast. Consequently, it will soon be uprooted or lose its Islamic character under pressure from the populace and enemies. As for the real guarantee for the stability and continuity of governance, it is the process of societal integration and the popular base: Beyond being the foundation upon which public opinion and general awareness are built, it is what preserves the state and the Ummah, safeguards Islam, consolidates its ideas within society, and ensures the proper implementation of its rulings.

In this manner, the Khilafah (Caliphate) state becomes a true expression of the Ummah's authority and a genuine realization of its desire to live by Islam. It is thus born strong and resilient, secure on both its domestic and foreign fronts, with its formidable might, resounding reputation, and the Ummah's rallying around it. This provides it with the means for steadfastness, stability, security, and prosperity, especially in the face of the initial shock of its establishment and the onslaught of the disbelieving colonialists. Therefore, the failure of the Caesarean section operation to seize power—though unlikely—does not at all signify a failure of the movement akin to military coups: losing a battle does not mean losing the war, nor does it mean a change in the nature of the military action from a coup to a rebellion resembling immature popular uprisings, for the public opinion emanating from a general awareness and the popular base keep the ember of the movement ablaze until the state is established.

In Conclusion:

Following this comparative study, we conclude with full confidence that the military coup and the Caesarean section are two distinct political terms, differing fundamentally in their underlying reality (مناط *mana'at*), constituent elements, meaning, and governing principles—which necessarily reflects on the semantic charge of each. Even though the military action upon which it is built or with which the political action is crowned is the common denominator between the coup phenomenon and the Caesarean section, this does not at all mean that both fall within the circle of military coups: each is a political term standing on its own, established by political and military sociologists, as well as scholars of Shariah and law, even if they resemble and share some aspects and details:

Moreover, besides being a term with a negative connotation, open to chaos, barbarism, constitutional violation, and legal transgression—thus stigmatized as dictatorial and illegitimate—the constituent elements of a military coup explicitly declare its contradiction with the Caesarean section, leading us to conclude with certainty that it is not among the styles through which power is seized in Islam. The underlying reality (مناط *mana'at*) of a military coup is entirely different from the underlying reality of the Caesarean section, and we are not permitted, from a Shariah perspective, to apply a ruling to a reality other than its own. Seizing power through a military coup means usurping power without it being the natural culmination of a process of political struggle within the heart of the Ummah—that is, without the establishment of public opinion emanating from general awareness, without the existence of a popular incubator, and without the societal integration process having occurred. Besides contradicting the method, this is practically barren: just as a Caesarean section is only performed on a pregnant woman when the fetus is fully developed, the gestation period is complete, signs of birth appear, and a specific obstacle exists that prevents the fetus from exiting naturally and threatens the demise of both it and its mother, so too do we only resort to the Caesarean section for seizing power when it is confirmed that there is a rapport between the Dawah carriers and society, that the state has formed within the womb of the Ummah, and that nothing remains to complete its construction but the actual seizing of power, yet an unnatural foreign backing has prevented this, empowering the agents and obstructing the birth of the state.

This ultimate conclusion was the fruit of an ascending, progressive intellectual process, practically and field-engaged with carrying the call (dawah), theoretically and intellectually illuminated by the fragrant Prophetic Seerah (Sunnah). Herein, the Hizb distinguished between the style (أسلوب usloob) of seizing power and the method (طريقة tareeqah) of establishing the state. It explicitly stated in its bulletin titled "Our Cause is not Merely Seizing Power" dated 1968 that establishing governance upon the idea of Islam does not mean carrying out a military coup. This was followed by another bulletin, "Adopted Concepts," in 1970, in which it declared that it does not wish to assume power through a military coup, thereby definitively excluding it from the list of styles for assuming power and, consequently, from the scope of the Caesarean section operation. (Concluded).