

The military's role and the effects in a civilian supremacy, civilian control, an...

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The Military's Role and the Effects in A Civilian Supremacy, Civilian Control, and Military Regime Natasha Vattikonda Student ID: 250480013 Professor Mellon Political Science 2245E Section 570 The concept of 'civilian supremacy' is one which has proven to be a controversial issue because it deals with the factors surrounding how a state chooses to govern itself and in whose hands the power and right to govern lies in. A state is known to be most concerned with self-preservation and protecting its own interests, and therefore some degree of military is almost always present somewhere within the hierarchy structure of the government.

However, it is important to note that the level at which the military is actually involved politically and socially within the state varies. Military intervention can range anywhere from very limited entrance into issues regarding society to the military having complete control over the country. A country that claims to be democratic will either have a civilian supremacy, civilian control, conditional subordination, or military tutelage however, to be considered a liberal democracy the state must be either under civilian supremacy or civilian control. In states of autocratic rule, the government is under either military control or military rule.

In today's modernized version of a democracy, it is not only considered necessary to have a clear division between the government and the military but a high degree of control is needed for the military to be under civilian control. For this sense of the word, 'civilians' refer to all persons or organizations that have no attachment to the military. Civilian control, therefore, refers to governments and their agencies having the authority to

determine the resources and purpose of the military without needing to concern themselves with the chance of military interference.

As the average of military control globally decreases it allows the average of civilian control to globally increase and while most countries currently operate under either civilian supremacy or civilian control, only a minority of this number operate as a true civilian supremacy. There are, however, a small number of autocratic countries in which the military dominates. There are three that will be the analytical focus of this paper regarding the levels of military power and control over the state. The first is the Republic of South Africa, which is a country located at the tip of Africa. It is an area that has been inhabited for over a thousand years by modern humans and has three different capitals, Cape Town, the legislative capital, Pretoria, the administrative capital, and Bloemfontein, the judicial capital. They operate via a bicameral parliament and have an upper house, the National Council of Provinces (90 members), and a lower house, the National Assembly (400 members). The second is the country of India, which is located in South Asia and has the second largest population. India is also a bicameral parliament and is described as "quasi-federal" because of its strong centre and weaker states, although since the 1990s it is becoming more and more federal.

The Prime Minister is considered the head of government and is able to exercise the most executive power. The third location under analysis is Burma, or now officially as the Union of Myanmar. Burma has an extraordinarily diverse population and thus has extremely diverse cultures and they are still struggling to ease the tension caused by the variety of

different ethnicities. Burma is under the military control of the State Peace and Development Council and is governed by a military junta.

Some sense of military exists in each of these places and yet the degree of involvement in civilian affairs varies depending on the individual circumstance which will be further explored. South Africa operates under a civilian supremacy, which falls under the category of democratic control because the military in South Africa is fully accountable to both the rule of law as well as elected officials. The civilian supremacy model requires decisions to be made, in areas such as the purpose of the military, its involvement in foreign affairs and domestic politics, and its allocation of resources by people not involved whatsoever in the military. Civil supremacy is based on the ideas that the potential for military intervention must be limited, in terms of their involvement in political affairs, and provide the civilian officials with the power and authority to exercise their control over military affairs as well. There is a concern that exists regarding civil-military relations involving the maintaining of the control over the military. A separation between the military responsibilities and powers as well as the responsibilities and powers of the civilian government is necessary. On the Ibrahim Index of African Governance, South Africa placed 5th out of the 48 sub-Saharan African countries that were ranked in the year of 2008. South Africa scored very high in the categories of Participation and Human Rights, Corruption and Transparency, and, of course, Rule of Law.

This proves that it is extremely important to the civilian government of South Africa that even their military remains 100% subordinate to the Rule of Law.

The apartheid ended in 1994, and since then the foreign policy of South Africa has worked closely with the African Union and the Southern African Development Community. After the end of the apartheid, South Africa was readmitted to the Commonwealth of Nations. South Africa has complete civilian supremacy over the all areas of the military and is active in mediating the conflicts that have occurred over the last ten years in places like Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Comoros, and Burundi. South Africa is also a member of the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone. The South African National Defence Force was formed in the year of 1994 and is, in fact, an all volunteer force. The fact that South Africa's military is a volunteer-based force proves that the military has little to no involvement in the domestic politics of the state.

It seems that it exists mainly to serve two purposes, to provide a sense of security and safety to the members of the society and to aid in the mediating and peacekeeping of other conflict-ridden countries within Africa. The South African Defence Force consists of the former Bantustan defence forces, the former South African Defence Force, and the forces of other African nationalist groups. This volunteer defence force is divided into four separate branches, the navy, the air force, the medical service, and the army. It is a an extremely prominent and active peacekeeping force within Africa and is very involved in the UN peacekeeping forces as well. While on the Ibrahim Index of African Governance South Africa ranked so highly, in the category of Safety and Security they did rather poorly. Reasons for this are probably contributed to exterior conflicts happening all over the country, in which the military, though in efforts to keep peace, were still involved. The <https://assignbuster.com/the-militarys-role-and-the-effects-in-a-civilian-supremacy-civilian-control-and-military-regime-essay/>

effects of having a civilian supremacy on the country are, for the most part, extremely beneficial, however society still suffers from a degree of fear and uneasiness because of the conditions and existing bloodshed in surrounding areas.

I tend to disagree with Siaroff because Siaroff ranked South Africa as a 10 on his charts provided on pages 90 and 92, because according to these charts South Africa is a civilian supremacy where the military retains no right to intervene in times of crisis or have control over any policy areas. However, according to Finer, countries which were ranked as a 10 by Siaroff would also, therefore, fall under having a mature political culture. In these countries a military coup is seen as unthinkable. It is my own opinion that a country such as South Africa, which only recently overcame the apartheid and is surrounded by constant military bloodshed would be more likely to fall under having a developed political culture where a military coup is thinkable but would be extremely unlikely and highly contested. This seems, to myself, more suitable considering the circumstances. Nevertheless, the government of South Africa appears, thus far, to have complete control over their military and its purpose. Civilian supremacy and civilian control differ from one and another because civilian control occurs when civilians may lack the experience or knowledge in military affairs and allow the military to handle military aspects and retain control over security policy.

Also, the military is not held accountable for past human rights violations, unlike civilian supremacy and finally, the military is given control over their own internal matters. As quoted by Muthiah Alagappa, " the central paradox

of the modern state is how to create a military strong enough to protect the nation state from external and internal threats but at the same time prevent it from dominating the state or becoming an instrument for internal repression," and as stated by Richard H. Khon, " the purpose of the military is to defend society, not define it. " According to these two men, while the military should not be involved in every and all domestic political affairs, the military should have some control and ability to intervene in the case of national crisis or emergency because it is their duty to defend and provide that sense of security which is so important in nation-building and maintaining. This, it seems, insinuates that a state should be ruled via civilian control rather than civilian supremacy. India operates under a civilian control which, like civilian supremacy, holds the military fully subordinate to elected officials as well as the rule of law. Civilian controlled governments are generally those which are able to maintain their authority to make decisions regarding civil matters without worry of military interference.

In these types of places with developed political culture, military coups are improbable as they would be widely resisted and while military interference is extremely unlikely, unlike civilian supremacy, one can not say that it is impossible. Since India's independence, which occurred in 1947, India has remained a fairly peaceful country and has maintained relatively civil relationships with most other countries. India is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations as well as a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement. Although India has managed to remain cooperative with most other nations, that is not to say that India has not participated in its own fair share of military-involved disputes. Post-independence, India has been an

active member in three major publicized wars among other smaller tiffs with Pakistan over a number of areas which both places wanted to claim for themselves.

In 1971, India was involved in a war with Pakistan which eventually led to the birth of an area that is now referred to as Bangladesh. The Kashmir dispute is one which has been widely publicized internationally and the disagreement ongoing between both India and Pakistan over who should rightly claim the land as their own and, consequently, two wars have resulted from it thus far. According to Siaroff, civilians can retain control over the military in a number of different ways. This first way is through institutional and legal methods. This includes, changing the constitution in order to allot less power and control to the military, eliminating military political role if there is one present, creating an organization or position which would be set to oversee the role of the military and ensure that the military is acting only within the boundaries set out by the state. The second way is through methods of socialization and includes updating military equipment and training protocols, shifting missions from domestic to an external defence role, and reducing the size of military.

India is related to these different criteria used to retain civilian control over the military in a couple of areas. Pakistan is decreasing the size of its military and in turn, is hoping that India will follow suit and reduce the size of theirs. The purpose of this is to decrease the amount of damage that is being done through the downsizing of the military forces.

An issue that exists is the one regarding the suggestion of a shift from the military's involvement in domestic disputes to external missions instead. While India is at war with Pakistan, which is technically an outside force, the dispute is being brought into the country in places such as Kashmir and when Pakistan retaliates by bombing Indian communities. Pakistan is a neighbour and therefore the war is so close, focusing on the borders of the country, that it is in a sense domestic. The military of India is obviously still an active one and so the idea of a military coup is quite thinkable.

India has been a contributing member in 35 different peacekeeping missions posed by the United Nations and has provided military and police officers. Many do not realize that India's military includes an army, navy, and air force and is the third-largest in the world. They even conducted a nuclear test, Operation Smiling Buddha, and in 1974 became a nuclear power but maintain that they will commit to a "no first use" policy. As stated above, India is ruled via civilian control and thus still has a strong hold on the uses of the military and the procedures and rules it must adhere to, however, there are many countries which have very little to no control and are at the mercy of their military as it is their military that dictates the state's politics. Burma operates under a military rule, categorizing Burma under an autocratic rule, which essentially means that the government and the military are on in the same. All political decisions, regardless of whether or not they relate to the military directly, are decided upon militarily. The cabinet members are members from the armed forces.

The military is held accountable to no one but itself and has free reign to run the country. The military of Burma consists of an army, navy, and air force and is referred to as the "Tatmadaw". When a group of military officers attained power, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), their goal was to continue to maintain a military monopoly over the state through the policy of 'divide and rule'. In order to ensure their plan worked and they would remain in control, they made sure that the others parties' were censored to the public and the seemingly strong leaders were thrown in jail. Although Aung San Suu Kyi, the democratic symbol of Burma, the secretary general of the National League for Democracy, found her way to into leadership, she was assassinated a year before she was to bring independence to Burma. Currently, the military is still in full control of the country.

Burma is constitutently the focal point of conflict and bloodshed. As mentioned before, it is clearly stated in the Siaroff reading that shifting domestic missions to external defence roles, altering the constitution, eliminating the military's role politically, removing funds, and reducing army size are all methods or preventing the military from attaining total control over a state, it seems that Burma is headed in the complete opposite direction. Burma is involved deeply in domestic wars, and due to all the violent rebel groups, this is seemingly unavoidable at the time. Not only that but the Tatmadaw has expanded their armed forces from 186 000 in 1998 to 500 000 by the end of the decade. Furthermore, they have been reequipped and has received funding from India as well. It seems as though the military in Burma sees itself as apolitical, meaning that it feels it exists above

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political process and is not subordinate to the rule of law which, in a sense, is true because it dictates the law.

African politicians have traditionally relied on their military in order to help maintain a sense of stability and order. These politicians have often even allowed for their armed forces to enforce coercion and violence if it is necessary, especially in cases where they want to suppress political opponents. The effects of the military rule in Burma has had disastrous effects on those who reside there. The military regime makes it nearly impossible for women to go abroad which is fuelling the sex industry and many of these women work as prostitutes. The people are suffering from rural impoverishment and malnutrition. The cost of fuelling such an active military is grossly high and as a result costs are cut where they are needed most, in areas of education and medicine.

The Terrible state of the economy has left Burma with so very little that it is a country in the bottom billion that will continue down a black hole of destruction. What little money that can be spared to go towards development is focused on major cities and those who live in the rural communities are suffering even worse than those residing in the urban areas. In 2003, civil servants were forced to undergo a month of military training in order to learn how to fight. Almost 40% of the annual budget goes towards the military. Thousands are dying because of aids simply due to the fact that not enough money is being accredited towards obtaining medicine.

Burma is in a state of despair and is crying out for some civilian intervention.

The issue of the military in politics is quite a serious one because it affects

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nearly every aspect about the way a state is governed and thus every aspect about how the society and citizens live. The degree of military intervention can make a tremendous difference as we can see among the three different countries analyzed. While it is extremely difficult to escape a military rule, once civilian control is achieved there are simple ways of maintaining that control and they all involve decreasing the amount of power and influence the military has on political decisions. As long as there are people willing to fight, there will be war, and as long as there is war, there will be military regimes where the people will be suffering beyond our wildest imagination. By loosening the control of the military in areas like Burma and decreasing the activity of the military in places such as India, it will be easier and easier to reach the civilian supremacy that we see in places like South Africa and thus the closer our world will be to that seemingly unattainable goal of world peace. Bibliography Anonymous, "Burma," Wikipedia, April 2010, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burma> (accessed March 29, 2010). Anonymous, "India," Wikipedia, April 2010, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India> (accessed March 29, 2010). Anonymous, "South Africa," Wikipedia, April 2010, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Africa (accessed March 29, 2010). Arnott, David. "The military destruction of Burma's economy," *Once the Ricebowl of Asia*. February 1998, <http://burmalibrary.org/docs/ricebowl98.htm> (accessed March 29, 2010). Centre for Conflict Resolution, *Civil Supremacy of the Military in Namibia: A Retrospective Case Study*.

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